

Redefining “Church”

Words, at least in so-called *living languages*, change in meaning. Perhaps better stated, words are continuously “redefined” and thus changed in meaning by those who use them. For instance, “gift” was once a noun meaning *some thing that was given*. Now, it seems, it can also be a verb referring to the act of *giving*. Additionally, I have an American Heritage and a Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary at home. I think they were both “gifted” to me for my High School Graduation in 1983, though one may have been purchased about the same time. The only entry they have for “googol” is defined as a number equaling 10 raised to the power of 100 (10¹⁰⁰ or 1 followed by 100 zeros), and they go from “internee” to “interneuron” with a listing for “internet” between! As someone whose vocation is heavily invested in the proper discernment and specific use of words, even I must say that some of these “evolved” meanings are relatively harmless (though irritating!) and perhaps even helpful (surely in some very limited circumstances!). Most dictionaries, unlike lexicons, *define* words by current usage. If enough people alter the way they *understand* and *utilize* a particular word, its *definition* will reflect as much. Thus...

When we, as a society chose to think of and refer to “God” as we desire rather than as He describes Himself, and likewise redefine His “Word” according to our dictates and purposes, it allowed us to redefine “ourselves” as we want also. And now we’re witnessing the fruits of our labors.... “men” redefined- though certainly still biologically *men* regardless of surgeries endured and hormone injected/ingested, not only go into “women’s” restrooms/dressing rooms, but compete against them in “women’s” sports and even “women’s” beauty pageants. Perhaps we need to be reminded that God not only *created* humans as “*male and female*,” and delineated clear distinctions between them to allow *reproduction*, cf. Gen.1:27-28; but also defined their divergent *roles* within the relationship, cf. Rom.1:27; Eph.5:22-32. How does one “get around” such inherent distinctions? “Redefine” *God* and His *Word*, Rom.1:26-23,25,28! Thus, “God” became not only *all-loving* but *all-accepting*, and His “Word” became *all-grace/mercy* with no *condemnation* or *repentance* required.

But when “God,” His “Word,” and even “Man” is thus “redefined” according to common understanding and usage, then “church” (*universal*) generally, and even *local congregations* specifically will also be changed in meaning...at least in the minds of those who don’t know any better.

The *church* (*ekklesia*- a *called out body* or *assembly of people*) is not, nor was it ever meant to be or function as:

- *Entertainment*, but the pageantry of paganism has influence the masses to expect precisely that in its “worship” complete with show lights, music, and drama, cf. Heb.9:1; Matt.21:13; 1Cor.14:1-12.
- *Social Center*, but ours is not the first generation to “redefine” its purposes thusly, 1Cor.11:22. It was not *built/purchased* (Matt.16:18; Acts 20:28) to provide “programs” such as dating services for young or otherwise, bridal and baby showers for couples, and pop-psychology “counseling” for marriages or dissolution of them by death or divorce.

- *Secular Education*, despite that many “church members” ascribe to such only so their children can attend “school” there. Regardless of the ills or virtues of “public education,” such is the responsibility of parents, not the church, 1Tim.3:15; cf. Gal.2:9; 2Tim.2:19; Rev.3:12.
- *Political or Social Action Committee/Center*. Question: Of what *political party* or *persuasion* was Jesus? How did He think/feel and teach about non-spiritual “social issues” of His day? Or, did He perhaps have a more *singularly focused* agenda, cf. Luke 19:10?
- *Humanitarian Relief Organization*. There is no doubt or argument at all that Jesus *healed the sick and feed the hungry*, MIRACULOUSLY...and for the express purpose of proving that He was the Messiah and provide “*the bread of life*,” cf. Luke 7:22; John 6:48. But when there was “*a great famine all over the world*” the church (made up its individual *disciples* not *investment portfolios*) *collected and dispersed contributions “for the relief of the brethren living in Judea,”* Acts 11:28-30. Why not “everyone” everywhere? Because *universal benevolence* was not then and should not now be a let alone *the work* of the church, cf. Rom.15:25-27; 1Cor.16:1-2. *Local congregations* have a *limited obligation* (cf. 1Tim.5:16) to benevolently assist its own members, and brethren in other places can, as per the examples given above, assist in that endeavor. But there is no command, example, or inference that authorizes it to function as a benevolent organization to feed and/or care for the world either locally or worldwide.

When “church”- both *universal* and *local* is redefined according to our desires and purposes rather than God’s, then it becomes part of man’s problem rather than part of his eternal solution.

The work/mission of *the church* should be molded (and restricted) by the primary mission of its *Founder*, i.e. to “*seek and save the lost.*” To accomplish this task, it must shed the “redefinitions” born of the *desires, ideas, and precepts of men for the commandment(s) of God*, Matt.15:9,3. Such will allow (and require!) it to focus on:

1. **Evangelism- *sowing the seed*, which is *saving power of the gospel*, Luke 8:5,11; Rom.1:16; 1Pet.1:22-23;**
2. **Edification- the *building up of one another* to keep “the saved,” *saved*, Eph.4:11-16; and,**
3. **Benevolence- toward *its own* rather than the world, cf. Rom.15:25-27; Mark 14:7.**

Everything else ascribed to the church is just the pageantry of paganism in man’s efforts to *redefine* “church” to his own desires and intentions... just as he did with *God, His Word*, and even *Man* himself.