

IDEA, DEFINITION AND CHRISTIANITY

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Christian faith is a matter of confidence in things that transcend our own individual experiences (Hebrews 11:1, 6). None of us saw the Risen Lord, but we know He arose as well as if we had. That faith and trust are components of the definition of Christianity. This is the essence of 1 Corinthians 15 wherein Paul ties trust in the resurrection of Jesus to the reality and truthfulness of the Christian religion.

There are other components of the definition of Christianity. A Christian believes not only in the resurrection of Jesus, but also that He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God (Matthew 16:18; John 8:24). Christianity is about the gospel (Romans 1:16, 10:17) that saves the believer who obeys the Lord (Hebrews 5:8-9; Mark 16:16). A Christian is further defined as a member of the church (the “called-out ones”) to which he or she is added upon being saved (Acts 2:47; Ephesians 5:23).

There are other components of this definition. The source of the definition is the Book of words that reveal ideas from the mind of God. Christianity is defined by the Word of God, rightly divided (2 Timothy 2:15).

And here is the rub. Folks are in general not happy with the idea of a once for all defined religion (Jude 3). For many people definition is not a static and settled thing. In our world definitions are said to change with the times and with the situation. In other words, for these modern (and postmodern) times, definitions are not defined. This is a problem, not only Biblically, but also logically. By the way, problems with the Bible and with logic are related because the same mind (that of God) is behind both. If something is true, it can be traced back to God. Though subjectivists may object; definitions do not change.

Correct definitions (as results when a Bible doctrine is correctly understood) do not change because it is not in the nature of a definition to change. Were a definition to change it would not be a definition. This is an aspect of an old argument about the nature of reality. The physical world is real, of course. But there is a world of things that are beyond the physical that are also real. This is the world of ideas, the metaphysical or spiritual world. It is the world of love, hate, error, truth, and faith. Definition belongs to the world of ideas.

This is true even when the definition (the idea) comes from the observation of physical reality. One observes many Boston Terriers to determine the definition of a “perfect” one. But one may also imagine perfection and then look into the physical world to find or produce that which is closest to the idea imagined. We know that tires are best when rounded. Then it becomes a matter of making the physical reality match the idea. Common to all such processes is the emergence of a “form” or idea of how something should be. God had an idea of what the Tabernacle should be. Men made it according to the pattern. Plato saw this principle but he did not invent it.

When any society, government, culture or religion chooses to reject or change the definition that formed it, dissolution and destruction follows. Richard Weaver wrote about the world of ideas. He said that understanding definition allows people “...to see what is most permanent in existence, or what transcends the world of change and accident.”

The point here is that God has defined the religion of Christianity in the Bible by revealing the idea He has about how we are to approach, serve, obey and worship Him. Christianity is defined by God. We must not attempt to “re-define” it. We must instead follow the way of God, (Jeremiah 10:23).