

Changes In The English Language

by John Isaac Edwards

In my possession is a copy of *Noah Webster's First Edition Of An American Dictionary Of The English Language*. Mr. Webster considered “education useless without the Bible.” In his view, “the Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government, ought to be instructed...No truth is more evident to my mind than that the Christian religion must be the basis of any government intended to secure the rights and privileges of a free people....”

Dictionaries define words as they are commonly used among people. As a people's values change, we may expect their language to change. Such is indeed the case in the English language. Consider a few examples:

1) *The Word “Marriage.”*

A modern dictionary may define “marriage” in this manner: “the legally or formally recognized union of a man and a woman (or, in some jurisdictions, two people of the same sex) as partners in a relationship.” Compare with this the definition of the 1828 Webster Dictionary: “The act of uniting a man and a woman for life; wedlock; the legal union of a man and a

woman for life. Marriage is a contract both civil and religious by which the parties engage to live together in mutual affection and fidelity, till death shall separate them. Marriage was instituted by God Himself for the purpose of preventing the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, for promoting domestic felicity, and for securing the maintenance and education of children.”

In the first definition, mention of the religious side of marriage, or reference to the union being lifelong, is wanting. Also, provision has been made for same-sex marriage. This was not the case in 1828, nor was it in Bible days. “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mt. 19:4-6).

2) *The Word “Sin.”* You may find a definition of sin, in a modern dictionary, as follows: “The act of breaking a religious or moral law. An offense, error,

or fault.” Now observe the definition of the 1828 Webster Dictionary: “The voluntary departure of a moral agent from a known rule or rectitude of duty, prescribed by God; any voluntary transgression of the divine law, or violation of a divine command; a wicked act; iniquity. Sin is either a positive act in which a known divine law is violated, or it is the voluntary neglect to obey a positive divine command, or a rule of duty clearly implied in such command. Sin comprehends not actions only, but whatever is contrary to God's commands or law.”

We seldom hear the word “sin” anymore, and when we do, it is often used in a light that is completely foreign to the Bible. It would not surprise me, if someday the word “sin” is omitted from our dictionaries, as we have just about whitewashed sin out of our vocabulary. Even though attitudes toward sin may have changed, sin is still what it has always been and will do what it has always done! Sin “is the transgression of law” (1 Jn. 3:4), “All unrighteousness is sin” (1 Jn. 5:17), and “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

3) **The Word "Law."** A modern dictionary may define law as: "A binding custom or practice of a community: a rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority." In the Noah Webster 1828 Dictionary, "law" is defined in this way: "A rule, particularly an established or permanent rule, prescribed by the supreme power of a state to its subjects, for regulating their actions, particularly their social actions. Laws are imperative or mandatory, commanding what shall be done; prohibitory, restraining from what is to be forbore; or permissive, declaring what may be done without incurring a penalty. The laws which enjoin the duties of piety and morality, are prescribed by God and found in the Scriptures."

Have you noticed the shift in thinking toward law? The latter definition views law as objective, while the former renders law subjective in nature. We have a growing disrespect and disregard for the rule of law today. Many look upon laws as being merely suggestive and not regulatory or mandatory. Only when we are made to respect the laws of God will we have respect for the laws of the land. We should not expect attitudes toward civil law to improve until attitudes toward divine law are made better.

Of course, there are some words in the modern dictionaries not found in the 1828 dictionary, as new discoveries, inventions and experiences bring new words. You will not find "automobile," "internet," "telephone," "velcro" or "zipper" in

Webster's first dictionary. There are words to which new meanings have been ascribed as well, like the words "gay" and "swing." Noah Webster thought the word "swing" meant "Motion from one side to the other. A line, cord or other things suspended and hanging loose; also, an apparatus suspended for persons to swing in." Today, we may hear people talk about "swinging," and they are not talking about sitting out on the front porch! The children of the devil have taken perfectly good words and completely perverted them after their corrupt and deviant ways. These changes in the English language show the degeneration and digression of the American people, and the pressing need for us to call men back to basic Bible teaching!

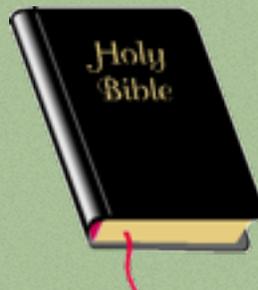
***We Invite You To Come
Hear Bible Lessons
Today - Friday
At The Church Of Christ At Terre Haute!***

The Terre Haute **SPEAKER** is published weekly by the church of Christ at Terre Haute, Indiana.

Assembling At:
4017 E Margaret DR
Terre Haute, IN 47803
[Exit 11 (I-70) W on HWY 46,
W on Margaret DR approx. 1 mile]

Assembling Times:
Sunday @ 10:00 a.m. & 3:00 p.m.
Wednesday @ 7:00 p.m.

Come be with us!



***We Speak Where the
Bible Speaks.***

***We Are Silent Where the
Bible Is Silent.***

***We Do Bible Things in
Bible Ways.***

www.churchofchristatterrehaute.com