MISPLACED APOSTROPHE'S AND TRUTH

Posted on September 25, 2014 by Eddie

This misuse of language should concern us as Christians. Our God is a God of truth who has chosen the written word as one of the key way to reveal himself to us. If we allow, or even encourage a culture to exist in which we can pick and choose the meaning of words to fit our own idealogical agenda, then we risk undermining one of the key planks of our faith.
Category: Observations

When I was at school, I was repeatedly sent to have my eyes tested by teachers who were frustrated by my inability to copy things from a blackboard. The response of the optician was always the same; there was nothing wrong with my eyes. What the teachers simply couldn't understand is that I can't copy things down accurately. Almost fifty years later, I still can't be trusted to accurately take down a phone number or to write a blog post without typos (thank you to the kind friend on Facebook, who spots some of them for me). They didn't talk about dyslexia, when I was at school, but I show all the symptoms.

For me, the advent of personal computers with spell checkers has been a life saver. I'm no longer embarrassed to have people read the things I write. Or, at least, if I am embarrassed, it's by the content and not the spelling and punctuation. Â This is just as well, because people can get very annoyed about spelling and the misuse of the apostrophe is seen by some to be one of the greatest threat's to modern life.

However, while my writing may have an eccentric approach to the use of the comma and be littered with needlessly doubled letters; it does take the truth and the use of words seriously. To my mind, this is better than the converse.

You know what? I really don't care about the use of apostrophes, but I do care about the accuracy of language use. Let's take a couple of examples which are common in political discourse at the moment.

I don't know how many articles I have read over the last couple of years complaining about the "bedroom tax". This measure seems ill-judged and unhelpful to me, but it isn't a "tax", it is a reduction in benefits paid by the state. Calling it a tax isÂ dramatic, eye-catching and effective as a political slogan; but it isn't true. It is a misuse of language. Likewise the proposed "mansion tax" may actually be a tax, but if it is to be levied on houses worth Â£2M or more, it will cover far more than just mansions. Of course, the four-bedroom-house-in-London-tax, would not sound half as attractive to those who are proposing it.

Before anyone accuses me of political bias, I'm not making any comment on the worth or otherwise of these positions. My comments are purely about the use of language and these two issues happen to be current at the time I'm writing.

I'm not exercised about the misuse of apostrophes; but calling something a tax when it isn't, is wrong. Implying that something only applies to mansions in the country when it covers a significant number of houses in big cities, is being economical with the truth. Â All political parties are guilty of this sort of thing as are advertisers and many others.

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agenda, then we risk undermining one of the key planks of our faith.

I would advise anyone whoÂ *has words to thank for their position* to readÂ Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies. It has a message which needs to be heard in today's climate.

Let's stop worrying about misplaced commas and start getting exercised about people twisting the language into places it cannot go.

One last reminder; this is not a party political piece (even if the illustrations both happen to come from the same party). Comments which ignore the language issue and encourage a party political discussion will vanish into moderation hades.Â