

kills) [proper contextualization] affords a New Covenant Church the opportunity to orient/center herself, her conduct, along with her interpersonal relationships (within and without the community of out-called believers) according to the teachings of her Savior Christ Jesus the Lord: This centered-orientation would be interpersonal and in accordance to the New Covenant in His blood.

The role of hermeneutics in the achievement of an “operational definition” is to precisely describe how the characteristics of a construct are to be quantified; specifically, in this text the construct: “the Church.”

Interpreting constructs, and subsequently, understanding them according to their operational definitions is often an iterative/reiterative process which begins with a de-contextualized concept: A concept viewed from its irreducible to its hyper degrees of understanding. The operational/functional definition satisfies the intention of the author, while allowing for adherence by the hearers; for, no one can engage an “abstract construct” in any sense of its expression.

Jesus, wherefore, spoke the phrase (the construct) “the Church” according to both His meaning and His usage. Concerning the abandonment of this kind of “operational definition” of the construct “the Church,” Paul the Apostle, an avid Ambassador for Christ admonished certain out-called believers accordingly:

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised). And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Note: In Matthew 18:20, the term “gathered together” is from a Perfect Passive Participle and transmits according to “inflectional morphemes” accordingly: “...ones who, having been gathered, remain gathered into the name of Me...” His Name is instrumental as the agency of the Passive Voice, that is, all that is recalled, aroused, felt and remembered by the mention of His Name provides the necessary catalyst to find these “out-called” as ones who have been gathered, and remain gathered unto His Name.

Note: The term “assembling” in Hebrews is from the noun G1997 epi-syn-agōgē and transmits accordingly: “full-gathering-together with.” Contextually, then, the purpose for their gathering together with (each other) [and of course, with Christ] was a “full, and deliberate” gathering whose purpose was exemplified in the context as that which was so efficacious (relationally speaking) as to improve their consideration for one another, direct their provocation of one another “unto love and to good works....”

Asserting preferred characteristics of the construct “the Church,” while omitting others is simply that about which we must all be on guard; namely, Confirmation Bias.

Landmark Missionary Baptist Church

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The logo features a large, stylized, black Gothic-style letter 'K' on the left. To its right, the word 'oine' is written in a clean, black, sans-serif font. The 'K' and 'oine' are positioned on a white rectangular background.

Church

Church

We believe that a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the teachings of Christ; governed by his spiritual laws, and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his Word; that its scriptural officers are Bishops, or Pastors, and Deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

The Church according to Matthew's Gospel

Matthew 16:18

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; G1577 and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matthew 18:17

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: G1577 but if he neglect to hear the church, G1577 let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

-Jesus

In the text 16:18 recorded by Matthew, Jesus is accounted as having used the term G1577 ekklesia.

Matthew 16:18

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; G1577 and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. KJV

Without additional context one must rely only upon “meaning,” that is, the conceptual definition of the term ekklesia, which will, however, provide a necessary platform for an operational definition: The function of an operational definition is to precisely describe the characteristics of a term.

An operational definition is sometimes called “the usage” of a term. That is, through consideration of various contexts a reader can ascertain the way a term is used which in turn will yield a more concrete understanding of that term.

So, the author Matthew translates the term ekklesia into an operational (concrete) for the reader in 18:17 of his gospel:

“And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” –Jesus

Again Matthew records Jesus as having spoken the term ekklesia G1577

Thus far, in Matthew’s Gospel (the only Gospel to use the term G1577 ekklesia-the term appears in only Matthew 16:18 & Matthew 18:7: It appears in no other Gospel)

Two characteristics are identified in Matthew’s Gospel:

1. **The First characteristic** of the phrase “the Church” as spoken by Jesus appears in Matthew 16:18. The term ek in ekklesia refers to an

“exit” from a previous (established) connection. In the Gospels, therefore, the “exit” was from “the establishment,” the religious and political order (the politico-religious one): That politico-religious order was that one about which Jesus warned His followers, indicting the politico-religious order as the ones who would deliver up His disciples to be afflicted, and killed: Indeed, the ones by whom they would be hated for the sake of His name. The phrase “the Church” further included “called.” Ex-called by Him is disclosed by the term “My.” These disciples belonged to Him by virtue of His “out-calling” of them.

2. **The Second characteristic** extends from the “two-or-three” described as “gathered together ‘with Christ’ for the prescribed purpose of hearing a ‘reluctant-to-hear’ brother’s complaint [cf. Matthew 18:20 ‘For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.’] Thus, a second characteristic of the phrase “the Church” as Jesus taught it is disclosed in “the Out-called of Me’s” function “the out-called who are gathered together with (Christ) for the purpose of hearing a *‘reluctant-to-hear [the two or three] brother,*’ in order that the matter might be adjudicated by ‘the Church’ which received the ‘reluctant-to-hear’ brother’s case from the ‘two or three.’”

Thus, according to the only two texts mentioned in the four Gospels, the phrase “the Church” holds implication for anyone who has believed the Gospel; for, those who have deliberately caused themselves to believe that

Jesus is the Christ have been fathered out from God; and subsequent to their regeneration through the Gospel, each one (individually) is personally, directly and immediately called-out. This, therefore, is the first implication of the meaning of the term Church (ekklesia) for every individual believer.

The second characteristic of this “operational definition” includes the function described as “gathered together;” specifically, with Christ for the “prescribed” purpose of hearing any type of trespass against another brother.

An “operational definition” of the Church is possible when one includes the characteristics of the term/phrase as presented in the only texts in which Jesus mentioned it, and used it. In meaning, therefore, the phrase “the Church” is a collective term, referring to out-called individuals; and in usage, the term refers to the regal function of adjudicating any and all trespasses (actual or alleged) between out-called brethren/individuals.

Omission of any characteristic can easily occur by “over contextualization” through “hyper-hermeneutics.” **On the one hand**, “over contextualization” could find two-or-three gathered in Jesus name, supposing themselves to be “the Church,” being indicted by an extreme expositor (a letterist) who might inform them that “two-or-three” aren’t “the Church,” missing the larger context entirely. **While on the other hand**, however, over contextualization could lead one so misguided as to pronounce her or himself as an individual to be “the Church,” likewise missing the larger context.

Over contextualization can generate and sustain an “Irrelationship” within any Church; but, honest hermeneutics (Hermeneutics according to the spirit; not the letter which