

## God's Culture

Abraham's call in Mesopotamia is a call to leave a culture expressive of pagan rejection of God for one based on the covenant promises of God.

Though the nations are to receive a blessing through the covenant people, the forms and content of God's revelation to Israel are never to be adapted to the cultures of these other nations.

We have, however, some examples of the opposite process of foreigners being joined to the covenant people to share in Israel's blessings. The inclusion of Moses' wife, Rahab, Ruth and others involves their adaptation to the culture of Yahweh's people.

This is ideally the culture created by the covenant relationship of this people to God, even though it is in fact confused by sin. Strangers or foreigners who were residents among the Israelites were thus subjected to the law Moses.

Israel's culture under the law involves a freedom within clear parameters which are intended to reveal and reflect God's character and the nature of the covenant relationship.

The law lays on Israel, as God's redeemed people, the necessity of avoiding the idolatrous culture of the Canaanites. They spoke a similar language and wrote with the same *aleph-bet*, but they were nevertheless to stay separate.

The holiness code in Leviticus is a potent rejection of non-theistic culture. Israel's failure to remain culturally and theologically separate leads to all kinds of syncretism and idolatry.

Solomon's cultural adaptations to his foreign wives bring about his apostasy and the destruction of Israel. The history of Samuel, with the institution of the monarchy, continues the theme of the cultural incompatibility between Israel and her neighbors.

The problem with the highly cultured Philistines was not, as is popularly thought, due to some kind of barbarism, but to the fact that they were "uncircumcised": they were outside the covenant and worshippers of other gods

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