

Many cultures one God

The relationship of culture to Christianity and its impact is such a significant subject that has not explored well enough by the church and yet it has far reaching consequences in the worship of God in truth and in Spirit.

Firstly, let us consider the meaning of the word culture. The word culture is often used in many different contexts and its actual meaning is elusive or difficult to define and often very confusing.

Culture does not refer to a particular level of life.

The arts are frequently identified with culture in the minds of many together with other segments such as music, dress, foods, values, traditions, beliefs and so no.

Is that all there is to know about culture? What exactly does the word culture mean?

Academics have come up with an array of definitions for the word:

- "(2) Donald Bloesch, a theologian, says that culture "is the task appointed to humans to realize their destiny in the world in service to the glory of God.
- "(3) An anthropologist, E. Adamson Hoebel, believes that culture "is the integrated system of learned behavior patterns which are characteristic of the members of a society and which are not the result of biological inheritance.
- "(4) And the definition that I like is by Hans Rookmaker (in the Book - The Creative Gift) "Culture" is the **full range of human activity**, subject to God's creation norms in all realms.

Christians have through the ages understood the relationship between Christianity and culture in different ways.

Our understanding of this relationship is not merely an academic/educational matter; rather, it is one of fundamental religious importance.

To better understand the importance of the relationship between Christianity and Culture I would like to consider the following questions:

- Does Culture have any significance in the relationship between Christians and non-Christians?
- Does Culture have any influence in the earthly life of a Christian?
- Does Culture play a fundamental role in relationships amongst Christians?

1. Does Culture have any significance in the relationship between Christians and non-Christians? Read Matthew 5:13-16 New International Version (NIV)

Salt and Light

13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

14 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Jesus in the popular Sermon on the Mount uses two metaphors to describe the responsibility of the Christians' conduct to the non Christians. Salt and light are the metaphor used to illustrate morality and discipleship as the cultures that are desirably of Christians.

Salt renders food pleasant and palatable, and preserves from rotting. So Christians, by their lives and instructions, are to keep the world from entire moral decadence.

The light of the world often denotes the sun, [Joh 11:9](#). The sun renders objects visible, shows their form, their nature, their beauties, their deformities. The Christians therefore represent the light of the world, because they, by their instructions and example, show what God requires, what the condition of man is, what the way of duty, peace, and happiness is, as well as the way that leads to heaven.

2. Does Culture have any influence in the earthly life of a Christian?

There are so many cultures today that surround us and a lot of things that are against God's Law and the Christian Culture. Not only are these cultures permissible in the societies that we live in; they require our attention and loyalty as well. How is a Christian supposed to respond to such conditions? Or, how should we deal with the cultures that surround us?

The church therefore finds itself in a 'tug of war'. The body of Christ finds itself in the centre of a great controversy between the culture of the world and the Christian culture. To settle the matter some Christians have decided to accommodate the two contending forces. This unfortunate practice has unfortunately provoked a very stern warning from God through John the Revelator.

Rev. 3:15-16 "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would rather you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth."

God forbid that these words of condemnation should apply to us.

3. Does Culture play a fundamental role in relationships amongst Christians?

Paul's in his epistle to the Corinthians suggests that in fact culture plays a central role in the relationships of Christians.

I Corinthians 12:12-13

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

If we consider the general intolerance of people in the world on racial or tribal lines in relation to the expectation of Christian's unity despite the inherent diversity in the body of Christ then a deliberate and determined effort should be made to understand the effects of culture on the relationships of the Christians. Verse 12 says that we are unified in one body, and Paul is so intent on driving home this point of our oneness in the church that he refers to Christ as the church. We can no more separate Christ from his church than we can separate a head from a body and expect it to have any life.

In Colossians 1:18 Paul says, "[Christ] is also the head of the body, the church...."

Whenever Christ is referred to as the Head of the church in the New Testament, it's always in the sense of the mind, the spiritual life, the leadership, or the direction of the church. When a human body loses its mind and its spirit, it ceases to be a living body. It still has physical structure, but it doesn't have life. It's still physically organized, but it's no longer a living organism.

God has blessed the church with a diversity of gifts. He wants us to honor one another, to serve one another, and put to work, the gifts that he has blessed us with.

May the Lord Richly Bless you!