

Cultural Transformation and the Bible

Many Christian organizations have called believers to be involved in “redeeming” or “transforming” the world’s cultures toward Christian values, starting with the culture in which they live. It is not my purpose here to discuss the secular (liberal or conservative) ideas of social justice. My concern is only about the Christian form of it. The danger is that Christians are being deceived by the leadership of this movement. The leaders have changed the definition of the gospel, with the result that believers are wasting precious time involving themselves in futile cultural projects. I shall develop a position that the Bible does not teach cultural involvement. Therefore, Transformationalism, redeeming the earth’s cultures, is not a biblical idea.

There should be no doubt that the Christianity of many godly missionaries has had a positive moral impact on the cultures where they ministered the gospel. There should be no doubt that the Bible consistently exhorts believers to care for widows, orphans, the poor and needy. There should be no doubt that we are to create a biblical culture in our families, our extended families, and our Christian organizations. But where is the biblical mandate to impact secular culture?

In the Old Testament, attempting to impact the world’s culture was never an assignment from God. *Enoch walked with God* (Genesis 5:24), and Noah *found grace in the eyes of the Lord* (Genesis 6:8), but neither were told to change their pre-flood culture. Abraham was never told to impact the culture of the Canaanites. Joseph was never told to impact the culture of Egypt, even when he was in a position of authority. Neither Moses nor Joshua were told to transform the cultures of the *Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites* (Exodus 23:23). David was given no directive from God to impact the culture of the Philistines. Daniel was given no directive to make culture changes for Babylon. Nehemiah was not told to suggest culture changes for the Persians.

The New Testament gives no example, command, or suggestion for transforming the culture of the Greeks or Romans, say, away from their cruel slavery, homosexual and heterosexual temple cult prostitution, or polytheism. Paul said believers were to be *...making the most of your time, because the days are evil* (Ephesians 5:16), not attempting to change the culture so the days are less evil. He told Timothy to *Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called* (1 Timothy 6:12). Cultural change is not about *eternal life*—it’s the wrong fight.

In both the Old and New Testaments, God’s people were commanded to *love your neighbor as yourself* (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19). But nowhere in the Bible was that understood as an exhortation for believers to influence the cultures of the world that surrounded them. If God wanted His people to redeem the cultures of the world, you would think He would have mentioned it to somebody.

*For more information see study paper **Transformation and the Bible** on Relational Concepts web page: <https://relationalconcepts.org/>*