

And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law as without law (although not lawless toward God but committed to Christ's law) that I might gain them are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

From the consideration of the proscription of participating in heathen religious worship or in things where the pagan religious symbolism or practice is still closely associated, and the example of Paul identifying himself with the life of the people where he could profitably do so for the gospel's sake, I think we can derive a helpful guideline to assist us in distinguishing between lawful identification and unlawful accommodation. Briefly stated it would be this: in religious practices, separation; in daily life, identification. By this is meant, that whenever there is a direct or close and well-known association with pagan religious practice in their cultural life, the Christian must separate himself from it. On the other hand, where it is a matter of a Christian identifying himself with the life of the non-Christians, where such close religious associations do not exist, in order to win them to the gospel, such identification is lawful and exemplary.

The objection may be raised that in the last analysis all that the heathen do is related to their religion; that heathen religion is a total world and life view as is Christianity. Although this is true, yet there are very different degrees of that relation. Not all that they do is directly related to their religious practices. Many of their cultural practices, having to do with etiquette, dress, diet, house construction, may have long since lost the significance of religious practice, or are in a gray area, whereas certain cultural phenomena still prominently maintain it. It is where that obvious religious practice aspect exists that the Christian is warned to be uncompromising. If an effort is being made to carry over into Christianity something from pagan symbolism to make the break between the two seem less sharp, to maintain some seeming connection, to make Christianity more palatable to the non-Christian by lessening its uniqueness, then a form of syncretism is being advocated and unlawful accommodation is in view.

Conclusion

There is great need today for the covenant interpretation of Scripture, the covenantal perspective of identifying the God of Scripture as the Lord of his people and his people as obedient servants gratefully serving him with the world of nature, the world of human cultural effort, and the world of his revealed Word for, as Gen 2:5 states, God made Adam for "there was no man to serve (him with) the earth," With the motive of love we must aim at bringing out the blessing in all three worlds, It requires full alertness of heart and mind to be faithful interpreters taking the Biblical text into the surrounding context, understanding yet firm in the gray areas where light meets darkness, graciously accommodating in the light ones and uncompromising in the dark ones. Yet, with the help and grace of