

IV. CHRISTIAN ETHICS IN A PLURALISTIC WORLD

- A. Does a Christian have a responsibility to attempt to change the character and conduct of non-Christian members of his or her society?

Some societies are comprised of a greater proportion of Christians than others. Very few societies have ever been made up largely of Christians. Usually, Christians are in the minority; and sometimes that minority is small. This means that, generally speaking, a Christian's society is largely non-Christian in character.

Should a Christian attempt to change the non-Christian members of the (largely) non-Christian society in which he or she lives? Does a Christian have any responsibility in this direction?

It would appear that a Christian has a twofold responsibility to the non-Christian members of his or her society, with regard to both their spiritual character and their moral conduct.

1. The Christian's obligation to attempt to change the spiritual character of the non-Christian members of his or her society

Since according to Scripture non-Christians are spiritually dead (they need to be made spiritually alive through the new birth), morally corrupt, and unable to do anything to please God, it follows that they must undergo a radical change of spiritual and moral character if they are to become truly righteous members of society.

And the only way this can happen is by the application of Christ's saving work through the proclamation of the gospel. The gospel is the Christian's means of changing the character of the non-Christians in his or her society.

Does the Bible teach that Christians have a responsibility to proclaim the gospel? The answer is plain. In a number of places we learn that as the Father sent His Son into the world to accomplish salvation, so the Son sends Christians into the world to be His instruments in the application of that salvation.

2. The Christian's obligation to attempt to influence the moral conduct of the non-Christian members of his or her society.
 - a. The need for a definite and clear standard of right and wrong behavior that applies to all human beings

Christians desire to influence others for good. This requires a standard of right and wrong behavior that applies universally. Christians find that standard in the revealed will of God directed to man's obedience (the Law of God) as that will is found in the Bible.

But what about the non-Christian? What about the follower of Islam or Hinduism or Buddhism or Confucianism or Sikhism or Shamanism or Bahai'ism or Shintoism or Jainism or Taoism or Secular Humanism, who does not acknowledge the Bible as an authoritative revelation of the will of God addressed to man's obedience? Does the biblical standard of right and wrong conduct apply to her/his also? Or is there some other standard by which