

eliminated until He would come, even if a total worldwide effort to eliminate poverty were undertaken. But this does not tell Christians what they ought to do; the Law of God tells us that. In applying the implications of the second table of the Ten Commandments, Jesus in Matthew 19:21 told a rich young man, "Go, and sell your possessions and give to the poor." And in Galatians 2:10 James, Peter, and John asked Paul to continue to remember the poor, which Paul was eager to do.

By the Plan of God we know that poverty will not be eliminated before Christ's coming. We know that many persons will still be unsaved at Christ's coming. We know that those believers who are alive at His coming will not be sinless. But knowing these things should not prevent us from attempting to relieve poverty or to win the lost for Christ or to pursue growth in holiness. We ought to try to do these things out of obedience to God and love to our neighbors, while at the same time realizing that these things are not going to be completely achieved until our Savior comes and sets all things right.

As Christians, we need to realize that no matter how much effort we put into certain kinds of work for the Lord, we are not going to be so successful that we prove the Lord to be wrong. On the other hand, we also need to realize that whatever degree of success the Lord achieves through us is all to the good, and brings glory to Him and blessing to our fellow human beings as well as to ourselves.

Thus, even though the Bible predicts that evil men will grow worse and worse, and that the cultures and societies in the world will become increasingly secularized, nevertheless Christians need to struggle against the development of evil in the world, and resist the increasing corruption and deterioration of their culture and society. Christians need to be salt and hold back the corruption in the world; Christians need to be light and shine the light of God's Law upon wickedness and the light of God's gospel into sin-darkened hearts. And as they do so, they do not need to concern themselves with ultimate success, for ultimate success belongs to God in His good time, and it is assured!

C. What is the place of Christian moral values and norms in a pluralistic (and largely secular) society?

1. Pluralism in the United States of America

From the birth of the nation, the United States has by law guaranteed that its citizens will have freedom to hold a variety of beliefs and opinions, including those about religion. This is what is meant by the term "pluralism."

The Constitution of the United States of America guarantees that all citizens will have freedom to practice the religion of their choice, and prohibits any one religion from lawfully being made an officially sanctioned national religion.

The First Amendment to the Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to