

external morality and restraining a large degree of external immorality by means of laws and penalties.

Some Christians approach the question of helping others to obey God's standards in a pluralistic society in a slightly different way. They say, "No matter how much morality you impose on a person, you can't change his or her character. That can come only through the new birth. Once his character is transformed through regeneration, his conduct will change also. So why try the impossible?"

It should be admitted that as Christians we don't expect laws and penalties to produce internal morality and to extinguish internal immorality. We know that only the gospel and the new birth and the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification can do that.

Nevertheless we can expect laws and penalties to help make our society as externally moral as possible, so that the greatest amount of sin and the evils it produces will be as restrained as possible in a sinful world.

If an emphasis on the securing of external morality by means of laws and penalties will influence men and women to be relatively better citizens, better husbands and wives, better parents, better children, better civic officials, better judges, better legislators, better policemen, better politicians, better professional people, better businessmen, better employers and workers, then it is well worth it.

If this emphasis will help reduce outward occasions of temptation, so as to restrain the tendencies all around us to greater and greater expressions of lawlessness, sexual immorality, abortion, divorce, homosexuality practices, dishonesty, and injustice; and if it will help to discourage crime, encourage cooperation, and secure and maintain external order, peace, and justice, then it is well worth it.

In fact, if this emphasis on the securing of external morality by means of laws and penalties can accomplish only some of these things, it is well worth it!

If Christians are to be salt and to try to hold back the corruption in the evil world-system; and if Christians are to be light and to try to shine the light of truth and righteousness upon wickedness in the world, and to try to shine the light of the gospel into the sin-darkened hearts of human beings; then does it make any difference whether Christians live in an orderly, peaceful, relatively safe, relatively just society ruled by relatively decent human beings and just laws, or whether they live in a lawless, strife-torn, dangerous, unjust society ruled by evil men and unjust laws? And if it makes a difference; and if external morality, peace, safety, and justice are desirable, should Christians do anything to help make the difference?

It should frankly be noticed that many Judaeo-Christian values and norms have already been incorporated into our society via laws that govern external behavior.