

it is God's method to use our efforts to accomplish His purposes

- (3) We are moved to obey specific commands of God by the realization that whatever we are able to achieve is all to the good, and brings glory to God and blessing to our fellow human beings as well as to ourselves

Scripture places a heavy responsibility upon Christians to try, by the grace of God, to hold back the secularization process. They are to do this first, by attempting, through the proclamation of the Law and the gospel, to change the character and moral conduct of individuals; and second, by attempting, through the application of the Law of God to their community, state, and nation, to change the present drift of their culture and society toward Secular Humanism.

VI. What Is the Place of Christian Moral Values and Standards in a Pluralistic (and largely secular) Society?

A. Pluralism in the United States

From the birth of the United States, its society 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 assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." (note particularly what are called "the establishment clause" and "the free exercise clause")

Although from the founding of the United States its culture was heavily influenced by the basic principles of the Bible; and although its Constitution was formulated within the context of that culture and those principles; nevertheless its society is a pluralistic one. Its citizens and office-holders are not bound to believe or to practice any one religion. Article 6, section 3 of the Constitution states that all legislative, executive, and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the separate States, "shall be bound by oath or affirmation to support this Constitution; but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

Pluralism arises out of a commitment to freedom; yet pluralism does not guarantee that all beliefs and opinions will be given equal status or accorded equal respect. It simply guarantees equality of opportunity to all citizens to freely exercise their religious beliefs. Some religious beliefs do not seem to deserve equal status or respect. Some are built upon ignorance and superstition; some are illogical or mindless or fanatical; some appeal to the baser desires; and some are physically harmful to their adherents.