

Why Would We Want to Legislate Something Other than Morality?

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If you've tried to argue a political point from a Christian perspective, it's likely someone's used this phrase to scold you into silence: "You can't legislate morality!" They're afraid your Biblical views on right and wrong will have some influence on American civil law, and then it's a slippery slope until we're all living under a Christian Taliban or something like that. You know, like it happened when all those stuffy, religious guys got together and ratified the Declaration of Independence. You remember those dark days, surely. ***"You can't legislate morality!" Okay, what's the alternative? Immorality?***

Someone will suggest that American civil law should be morally neutral. Try not to laugh at them when they say this, as they may genuinely believe it.

All law is moral in nature. It's not possible for it to be otherwise. How's that? Because every law that gets dreamed up and foisted upon us started out as someone's idea for how to "make things better," or how to make sure people act "the right way," or don't do things that are wrong or bad. All law hopes to tell its subjects what they should and shouldn't do. And all these words we're using here, about things being "better," and distinguishing between right and wrong, and what "ought" to be done, all of this is the language of morality. There is no escaping it.

On the "macro" scale, we now have Obamacare, because a

bunch of gormless statisticians came to the conclusion that forcing one group of people to pay the bills for another group is “good” or “right” or “fair.” (All moral concepts.) On a smaller scale, we have speed limit laws on the freeway because some legislator somewhere proposed that limits are reasonable in the effort to make things safer. This reflects a previous moral judgment which says that “safe” is to be preferred over “unsafe.” We have local leash laws in my town as a result of similar moral reasoning.

Whether we agree with the morality of the above examples is beside the point. The point, for now, is that every law is the outgrowth of someone’s (or some group’s) opinions of right and wrong. ***Law is nothing other than the codification of morality.*** In Washington D.C. right now, legislation is being actively debated, and the outcome of that debate will reflect the moral opinion of whoever was able to persuade enough votes to agree with him/her. All legislation is a reflection of someone’s morality.

You, Bible-believing Christian, are shouted down with, “You can’t legislate morality!” However, the sort of person who is likely to say this to you is generally in favor of a whole host of legislation that is intended to do just that. (Think gay marriage legalization, for instance, touted as the key to creating a more tolerant, fair, loving society, none of which has anything to do with morality, right?) What they’re really saying when they say, “You can’t legislate morality!” is, “My own, personal morality should be legislated, not yours.”

There is no neutrality. How can there be, Christian, when your God has claimed exclusive sovereignty over all things? An area of genuine neutrality would mean there’s a piece of God’s world that He doesn’t have any interest in ruling. But the Great Commission excludes this as a possibility: the Lord

expressly claims all authority over heaven and earth, and commands His people to teach all the nations to obey His commandments. (See Matthew 28:18-20.) It is therefore neither arrogant nor intolerant for you to insist that God's own morality ought to receive chief consideration in the formation of our laws—it is merely obedient.

Consequently, [for us to abandon the public sphere to the pagans and their brain-dead ideas about morality is rebellion toward God. It is salt volunteering to lose its savor.](#) The question is not whether to legislate morality, but only which morality will become law?

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