

Freedom of religion and the separation of Church and State

When the state took over religion with the Edict of Milan, in 313, the church began a major downhill decline theologically. The church should not be allowed to dictate civil law. If this were to happen, you might see a return to the imposition of many antiquated and outdated laws which would be best relegated to the archives of ancient history. The civil laws here in the USA are for the most part based on reason and logic and are well-intentioned. The principles of human dignity and freedom of thought, which the Apostle Paul championed, are best served in a democratic environment.

What does it matter if the government sanctions gay marriage at the same time that you do not? The government isn't imposing gay marriage on anyone. Your freedoms are protected, not limited, by government. True, fundamentalist Christians are not free to impose their "young earth creationist" beliefs on the general educational system. However, they remain free to believe and teach their children whatever they want.

The moral practices related to sexual promiscuity, pornography, and abortions should not be "regulated" by the church. The church needs to exert moral, not legal, influence in these areas. If the church had its way, and had the ability to impose legal restrictions in these areas, that would only serve to drive an even greater wedge between Christians and non-Christians than what already exists. There is truth to the adage that you catch more flies with honey than vinegar. The love of God has won more people to Christ over the centuries than the threat of hell.

When tempted to legislate morality and impose our beliefs on others, we need to remind ourselves that God Himself does not work that way. For the most part He does not impose His will on us. He allows us the freedom to make our own choices, in order that we might learn from our mistakes. He exerts moral influence on us but does not impose, by threat of immediate punishments, a rigid set of legal restrictions. There are times when I wish God would take matters into His own hands, and more directly impose His will on society. We all have those thoughts. But God is a lot smarter than we. He has given us a better way, the way of love, and has given us the example of Jesus. As a result, we are forced to endure many, shall we say, unpleasanties, but everything will work out OK in the end.

As an aside, I personally am not a "young earth creationist" but I do believe in theistic evolution. I am OK with gay marriage, but I am not OK with legalized abortion. I am not OK with sexual promiscuity of any kind (both heterosexual and homosexual), or with the use of alcoholic beverages or cigarettes. I don't believe people should be overeating and I believe that it would be a good idea for everyone to exercise more. I don't believe that there should be so much profanity in the movies I watch, and I believe that everyone should be in church every Sunday.

I believe the government should protect my right to live according to the dictates of my conscience. However, at the same time, I have no desire to force my beliefs on others. I am grateful that the government protects me from people who would do physical harm to me and my

family, and I am grateful that I live in a country that legally protects my religious and moral freedoms.