A Look at the *You-Can't-Legislate-Morals* Myth

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Every time someone wishes to perpetrate or justify some kind of societal or personal moral evil, his or her watchword is, "You can't legislate morals." This has been true of the protagonists for abortion, pornography, homosexual behavior, lax divorce/remarriage laws, legal sale of liquor, and several other issues. The liquor industry, along with its agents and consumers, used this mantra extensively to deceive a gullible public.

I submit to you that this statement is a myth and a lie. If "You can't legislate morals," then why is the bulk of legislation (at whatever level) even ":on the books"? If the statement is true, then we should remove the laws that prohibit theft, arson, shoplifting, rape, prostitution, illegal drug use, armed robberies, assault, grand larceny, income tax evasion, perjury, murder, and perhaps hundreds of other offenses—all of which are rooted in personal and/or corporate morality?

Admittedly, laws prohibiting a practice are never going to be obeyed without exception, whether they are human or Divine legislation. However, God must believe in the value of "legislating morals," or He would not have used so many pages of the Bible forbidding His people to participate in certain types of behavior (e.g., the 10 Commandments {Exo. 20:1–17]). But the sophisticated moderns know more than God. They would have us believe that God did not know what He was doing when He legislated man's moral behavior through His Word and demanded submission to it.

Sensible, sober-thinking men and women still understand the value of laws relating to our moral behavior. The very fact that there are laws prohibiting sale of liquor in specified areas and limited to a certain age of customers in every area keeps a certain kind of "moral cloud" hovering over consumption in the mind of youth and adult alike. When such prohibitions are absent, that which is detrimental to all health, happiness, and prosperity and is in every way unworthy of respect is given a measure of implied respectability by non-legislation.

When a person says, "You can't legislate morals," what he really means is, "I don't want any legislation against my favorite immoralities."

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