

“You’ve Got the Cart Before the Horse!”

Jack H. Williams

I can remember a number of times in my life when I did things without thinking and my father would say to me, “Son, you’ve got the cart before the horse!” What he meant was that I was going at things a bit backward. Those words still echo in my mind sometimes when I look at what I have done and realize I have gone at things wrong. The other day as I was reading an article in the *Reader’s Digest* it made me think how so many Christians today have “got the cart before the horse” when it comes to confronting unchristian attitudes and actions in this world. In the *Reader’s Digest* of August, 1997 in an article entitled “The Global War On Christians” we are told:

The collapse of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European Client states shook China’s leaders who noted the church’s role in fostering the collapse. According to a Puebla Program report, China’s state-run press, referring to Christianity, proclaimed, “If China does not want such a scene to be repeated in its land, it must strangle the baby while it is still in the manger.”

Imagine that! The last great stronghold of communism and they realize the danger to its system of Christian principles in the hearts and minds of its people! When are we going to wake up and realize the same? Now I am not saying we should not take part in activities which promote efforts to improve society, such can be beneficial to all. But how often have we seen such efforts take precedence over the work of the church—the salvation of souls (Luke 19:10; Ephesians 3:10-11). How sad it is to see the efforts of many in the church in such things as pro-family movements; anti-abortion; anti-evolution; anti-gambling and the like and then fail to be even more zealous in the “pro-salvation” movement of the church—*evangelism*. Imagine if the zeal we have seen in these areas, the massive funds channeled to these efforts were to be put into evangelism. Some have seemingly failed to realize that a society that is zealous for the family, opposed to drugs, opposed to gambling, opposed to immorality . . . is still lost if they are not in Christ! Salvation is not found in “good works” of a society but is found in Christ (Ephesians 1:3, 7) and the “good works” that glorify God are the *product* of a heart that is thus converted to Him. Some say, “Well, we have to change society in these things so the gospel can be received.” But God never said such. Note the following Bible teachings on how God dealt with “social ills”:

- *God dealt with slavery* by appealing to the Christian heart (Philemon 15,16).
- *God dealt with immorality* by appealing to one’s past conversion to Christ (Romans 6) and the fact that the child of God is a “temple of the Holy Ghost” and is “bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).
- *God dealt with such things that would control the Christian (such as drugs)* by appealing to the fact that as Christians we should do only those things lawful, expedient and which do not enslave us (1 Corinthians 6:12).
- *God dealt with social disorder* by appealing to the Christian’s respect for powers ordained of God (Romans 13:1-7).
- *God dealt with the family as it ought to be* by appealing to Christians to pattern their family after the family of God of which they were members—the Christ and His bride, the church (Ephesians 5:22-33).

What are we to conclude from such passages? *If we wish to make lasting and effective changes in any society we must change the hearts of those in that society.* Jesus said, “If a man love me, he will keep my words . . . he that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings . . .” (John 14:23-24). Let’s do what we can to better society by every scriptural means available. But let’s put our zeal, our support, our monies into taking the soul saving, heart changing gospel to the lost and dying world. When we change the members of society, we will change the ills of society. To emphasize otherwise is to “get the cart before

the horse.”

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