

## Too Little, Too Late

Very soon the Argentine Senate will vote on a law that would liberalize abortion. (The House of Deputies approved it earlier.) The evangelical church is greatly alarmed about this legislation. A giant demonstration is planned for August 4. I heard a pastor urge his congregation to participate because, he said, politicians listen to numbers. We must express our collective opposition to this law, saying: "We do not like this!"

This is fine. We should express our opinions about public policy. We should exercise our moral and patriotic duty to tell the ruling class how we feel.

But, is it too little and too late?

Politicians know that evangelicals will protest, bang their pots, and pray. But, they also know that afterwards we will return to our spiritual ghetto and lament quietly our loss.

To them, we are regressive and reactionary, the party of "no." In their eyes we oppose social progress. We are ignorant and we only react over moral issues that offend us. We have little constructive to offer in public policy -- about law, education, crime, economics, or health, for example. We pose no real political threat to the ruling class and the cultural elite. We do not have a place at their table regarding policy and practice.

Too little, too late.

Perhaps we should ask ourselves: How much of this present crisis is our fault?

Where were the Christian thinkers in public health and social ethics who could have influenced the policy debate *at a much earlier stage*?  
Where were the articulate Christian spokesmen in the Congress, government, or media?  
Where were the evangelical intellectuals who could engage the elites of Argentina?  
Where were the Christian university students seeking higher academic degrees, who sensed a call to missions in the public square?  
Where were the thinking evangelicals who could express what the Bible is *for*, not just what it is against?

I am glad that evangelicals are raising their voice about this new law. But, I wonder:

Will it simply be too little and too late?

Consider carefully this provocative statement by J. Gresham Machen (1921) with reference to the current abortion debate:

False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the Gospel. We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer and yet succeed in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which, by the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion. Under such circumstances, what God desires us to do is to destroy the obstacle at its root....What is today a matter of academic speculation begins to move tomorrow armies and pull down empires. *In that second stage, it has gone too far to be combated; the time to stop it was when it was still a matter of impassioned*

*debate.* So as Christians *we should try to mould the thought of the world* in such a way as to make the acceptance of Christianity something more than a logical absurdity.

Looking ahead, are some of you called to minister in the public square, world of ideas, or in the realm of politics, business, and culture? Are you willing to prepare intellectually over the long term to “try to mould the thought of the world” for the sake of the gospel, the church, and the glory of God?

If not, the next time there is a critical public policy debate, we will lament once again:

Too little, too late.