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CARTS BEFORE HORSES

By: C. D. Cole

When a person gets confused in his thinking, when he gets his logic mixed, when he puts effect before the cause, we have a way of saying he gets the cart before the horse. And this is a very apt metaphor of the confessed thinking of many people in religion.

At a horse show it would be rather funny to see carts hitched to horses instead of horses hitched to carts, as if the carts were to pull the horses. The simplest sort of person knows that the horse pulls the cart. It would be a simpleton indeed who would argue that the cart caused the horse to run. And yet this is the very thing many people do in their religious thinking: they get the cart before the horse, they have the effect or evidence before the cause, they confound the ground of something with the evidence of it, in short they put man where they ought to put God.

The natural man, the man who has not been born from above, can think straight in everything except in matters pertaining to God and spiritual things. Men do not get mixed up in physics as they do in religion. In the physical senses it is very important to keep cause and effect properly related. In the laboratories at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, they are careful about this matter of cause and effect. To get the cart before the horse in dealing with atomic energy would be a tragedy, somebody would be blown into eternity.

The Bible says that the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit. The unregenerate man is in the dark about the truths of saving religion. Religious truth is foolishness to him, for it has to be spiritually discerned or understood and the natural man is without the Spirit. "*Which things we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of*

God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man," I Corinthians 2:13-15.

FEELING BEFORE FAITH

In this message we shall deal with faith and feeling in their relation to each other. I do not believe in a cold speculative religion that has no emotion or feeling. I do not have a salvation that has no feeling. Whatever religion I have there is a deep feeling connected with it. I believe and therefore I feel. My feelings are the result of my faith. But feelings can be dangerous and deceitful. When one puts feeling before faith and refuses to believe in Christ until he can have a certain feeling, he is getting the cart before the horse.

There can be a religious feeling where there is no saving faith, and there can be a feeling which is anti-faith, the very essence of doubts.

Illustration:

Suppose I offer you something. It is something you want and need, but you say that you just can't feel that I will give it to you. By your feelings you would be saying that you doubt my word. You would be making a liar of me. Christian doctrine not mere religious feeling, is the cause of Christianity as a distinctive religion.

FEELING A PRODUCT OF FAITH

Feeling is the effect of saving faith and not the cause of it. In our preaching we must not aim at feeling but at faith, even faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST as Saviour. And where there is true faith the feeling will take care of itself. And we will not have to resort to sob stories to produce faith. It is my firm conviction that the sob story technique in evangelism has

done much harm to our churches and has deceived many lost people. Most anybody can be made to cry and there is danger of mistaking his crying for faith. However, if the sinner weeps under the conscious burden of his sins that is all well and good. Sin is something to cry about and Christ is something to shout about. So, if he is happy when he trusts the Lord Jesus Christ that is also well and good. The sinner ought to weep over his sins and the believer ought to rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ. The point I am trying to drive home is this: there can be a religious feeling when there is no real conviction for sin, and no real saving faith in Christ. "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,"* John 3:5.

I am not so sure we ought to dramatize the death of Christ in a effort to break down resistance and create sympathy for the dying Saviour. A man may be made to weep over the death of Christ and not trust him for salvation. Even the death of a dog may be told in such a dramatic fashion as to make people cry. If the Moral Influence Theory of the Atonement were true, this method would be safe and sound. Anything to make people tender and sympathetic towards Jesus would work. But Jesus does not want mere sympathy; he wants our trust and obedience. To the woman who followed him to the cross, bewailing and lamenting him, Christ said, "*Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children,"* Luke 23:28. It is not our tears but our trust that saves.

MANY WAYS TO HAVE A GOOD FEELING

A. The way of the atheist. He begs others to give up religion and enjoy life with the atheists. The atheist has a good feeling because he has persuaded himself

to believe there is no God to fear. He has no concern for the eternal future because he has believed he will not exist beyond death. If a good feeling is the important thing, I would recommend atheism and say, eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.

B. The way of the self-righteous. If one can build himself up in his own eyes until he feels he is the pink of perfection, he will have a good feeling. The Pharisee had a much better feeling than the Publican. He had a feeling but no faith in the sprinkled blood behind the veil. The Publican had faith in the blood, for he literally said, as he thought about the blood, "*by thou propitiated for me the sinner,*" Luke 18:13. He was trusting the atoning blood of Christ.

C. The way of the drunkard. The drunkard has a good feeling for a while. Whiskey deranges the mind and builds a man up in his own mind. The drunk man feels rich and important, but the morning after is quite different. Any religious feeling apart from faith in Christ is like that of the drunkard.

D. The way of the Physician. Psychiatry proceeds upon the assumption that sin is only a mental disease and that peace of mind is the important thing. Most psychiatrists recommend religion, just any religion for that purpose. They often effect a cure by making a person feel better. Physicians and preachers alike are more and more resorting to the technique of the psychiatrist to help people live without worry and frustration. But this does not touch the question of eternal salvation. One may enjoy this life and miss the life to come. One may learn how to relax and how to keep from getting upset and yet spend eternity in hell. One may have peace of mind and not have peace with God or have the peace of GOD. It is not enough to be mentally sane; one must be upright in heart.

SAVED BY FAITH AND NOT BY FEELING

We are saved by faith, not by feeling. We are not saved because we feel good; we feel good because we are saved.

Illustration:

Word comes to me that I have fallen heir to a large sum of money. If it should be the first day of April, I am apt to think it is a April fool trick, and so the news does not arouse any good feeling. But if I am convinced of the truth of the report, I

will feel good. My faith in the report produces a feeling of gladness. While waiting for the money I rejoice in the hope of getting it. Now the basis of my faith would be the word of the person who told me the good news--that a certain person had died and left me the money. My hope of getting it would be the good feeling caused by my faith in the report.

Now let us apply this to salvation. "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,*" Romans 10:17. God tells of the wonderful blessings laid up for us in heaven because of what Christ did in his death and resurrection. The Gospel is the good news of salvation we have in Jesus Christ. God tells us there is justification now and glory to come through faith in his Son. I take God at his word and put faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST. I am happy in present forgiveness and in the promise of future glory. Paul puts it better than I can: "*Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God,*" Romans 5:1-2.

In conclusion: Let me say that any good feeling that is not the fruit of faith in Jesus Christ is dangerous and deceptive. Let's keep the horse before the cart. Faith preceeds and produces feeling--a feeling of love for our Saviour and faith and trust in his word.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

BY: C. D. COLE

Christianity is distinctly a religion of redemption. The death of Christ is the most prominent doctrine in the Bible. There was a Parliament of religion held in Chicago some years ago in connection with the world's fair. The national religions were represented at this Parliament. One by one, leading men arose and spoke for Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Mohammedism. The Dr. Joseph Cook, who had been chosen to represent Christianity, arose to speak. He began thus: "Here is Lady Macbeth's hand, stained with the foul murder of King Duncan. See her as she strolls through the halls and corridors of her palatial home, rubbing her hands and crying, 'Out spot! Out, I say! Will these hands never be clean?'" Then turning to the representatives of the other religions, he said, "Can any of you who are so anxious to propagate your religion offer any cleansing efficacy for the sin and guilt of Lady Macbeth's crime?" There was an oppressive silence for there was nothing in these religions to redeem sinners from the guilt of sin. Other religions teach ethics and morals but they have no redemption for the unethical and immoral, and therefore no salvation for anybody, for all are immoral, having sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The Purpose of the Death of Christ

1. He died as a substitute for sinners; that is, in their place. The just for the unjust. "*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*" II Corinthians 5:21. As sinners we

deserved to die the second death, which is eternal existence in the lake of fire. What He suffered on the cross was equal to eternal suffering for us. The divine law was as much satisfied with the punishment inflicted upon Him for a few hours as it would have been if inflicted upon us in the lake of fire forever.

2. Looking at his death from another angle we think and speak of it as a redemptive death. As sinners we were under the moral law of God and cursed by it. "*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*" Galatians 3:10. Now to get us out from under the curse Christ became a curse for us and therefore redeemed us from its curse. Since the law cursed him for my sins it cannot curse me for them. There is a redemption department in the Treasury Building at Washington. There are always huge piles of greenbacks or paper money to be found here. When paper money through use has become so torn and ragged or soiled it is sent to this department and new money is given in exchange. I heard of a pile of bills that went through a fire and was almost reduced to ashes. There was enough of each bill left to determine the exact amount. The merchant left the redemption department with a bundle of new money. Our lives have become soiled with sinful thoughts and deeds--useless in the wonderful business of glorifying God. And failing in this business we are cursed by God and apart from redemp-

tion would have that curse executed in the day of judgment. That we might escape God's **WRATH** in the day of judgment, Christ bore it on the cross. "*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*" Ephesians 1:7. It is not a change of character but a change of position before the law.

"*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*" II Corinthians 5:21. Here is an exchange: Christ made sin for that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Our sin was made over to Him; His righteousness made over to us. He took our sin; we get His righteousness. Not an exchange of character or nature. He did not take our sinful nature; neither do we have his holy nature. It was not an exchange by importation but by imputation. He was not given our sinful nature but charged with our sinful debt. We do not have His sinless nature but we do have His righteous standing before the law, justified from all our sins, though not yet delivered from all our sinful passions.