

THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE

Primitive Baptists differ from other religious orders in many things. One of the main differences is that others think some sort of spiritual activity must be exerted by those who are dead in sin in order for them to obtain spiritual life, while the Primitives believe spiritual life comes first, followed by spiritual activity. In other words, most people believe in action before life, while the Old Baptists believe in life before action.

There is a so-called gospel song by the title, "When I Looked Up And He Looked Down." This is a good illustration of "getting the cart before the horse." The song carries the message that if the sinner will look up, then God will look down; but Primitive Baptists would arrange it thus: "When He looked down, then we looked up."

In the regeneration of His people God is always active and the sinner passive. All those He quickens, or to whom He gives divine life, are "dead in trespasses and sins" when he visits them (See Eph. 2:1-6). Dead people cannot take any steps, much less the first step in obtaining life. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt 11:27). The new birth is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). "So is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

Primitive Baptists believe in the arrangement set forth by the apostle Paul when he told the Athenians that in the Lord "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Others put this in a different order, and say, "If we will move, then we will live," etc. The Old Church stands firm upon Paul's view of it. Men cannot move naturally in order to have natural life, and neither can they move spiritually in order to have spiritual life.

---Elder Ralph Harris