

## Just Slide On Over ...

*[The following is a literary illustration with an extended metaphor known as an analogy or parable. As in all cases with such a method of illustration, the metaphor will break down at some point, since there is not an exact correspondence between the source (vehicle) and the target (tenor). It does, however, get the point across.]*

*The monologue begins as a bus driver named Angel of Light welcomes his passengers onto the Fashionable Gospel Bus. ...*

“Welcome aboard the Fashionable Gospel Bus! My, don’t you all look content! My name is Angel of Light, and I will be your bus driver to Eternity. Sit back and enjoy the ride!

“And, heh-heh, speaking of enjoying the ride, you’ll notice that some of our passengers have chosen the *most enjoyable* ride by going First Class Calvinist. I’ll be telling you a little more about this luxury class as we go along our trip, and I’ll make no bones about it – I’d like to see *everyone* eventually want to go First Class Calvinist. It really is top-of-the-line travel.

“As you see, we have a very unique arrangement on the Fashionable Gospel Bus. The First Class Calvinist seats are the window seats, and the Second Class Arminian seats are the aisle seats. Remember how you always wanted to sit by the window when you were little kids? There’s just so much more to see and to experience in the First Class Calvinist window seats! And, believe it or not, it’s really not that difficult to go from Second Class Arminian to First Class Calvinist – you just *slide on over*.

“I know, I know – some of you in the Second Class Arminian seats are just a little nervous about trying out the First Class Calvinist seats. You’re saying, ‘*Hey, Angel of Light, you make it sound so easy when you say we can just slide on over. We really have some strong reservations about the First Class Calvinist seats.*’ That’s quite alright, my friends. There’s plenty of time for you to weigh the pros and cons. Don’t fret too much – after all, we’re *all* going to the same place. It’s just that the First Class Calvinist seats are a much classier and more consistently comfortable way of going to the same place. But don’t worry if you’re not quite ready yet. In fact, many of our Second Class Arminian passengers have slid on over gradually – so gradually that they hardly even noticed it. Each bump in the road brings them closer and closer to First Class. Sometimes it takes years, or even a lifetime, to slide on over, but that’s okay. We’re all going to the same place.

“You’ll notice that in some rows, there is a middle seat between the First Class Calvinist and the Second Class Arminian seats. Perhaps if you’re not comfortable sliding all the way to First Class, you could use the middle seat as a sort of ‘transition’ seat until you ‘come into’ the First Class Calvinist seat. Most who sit in the middle seat choose to hang onto the Universal Atonement part of the Second Class Seat as they begin to see the merits of First Class. The middle seat is a little cramped, and, frankly, you won’t feel very comfortable if you stay there for a long time; you’ll feel much better and much more consistent when you make the full transition to First Class. But if you don’t ever want to get out of that middle seat, that’s okay. In fact, that

middle seat used to be the First Class Calvinist seat on the old Fashionable Gospel Bus. Many of the First Class Calvinists who went before you still hung onto a piece of Universal Atonement during their trip.

“Take some time to say ‘Hello’ to your neighbor in the seat next to you! It just fills me with joy to see the Calvinist and Arminian brothers having fellowship with each other, even though they may not be at quite the same place and may be coming from a little bit of a different perspective on the Fashionable Gospel Bus. Our bus is the ultimate in harmony and unity. We realize that those in First Class and Second Class might see things a little differently, but we speak peace to our brothers in the seat next to us, knowing that we’re all going to the same place and that we’re all very sincere and dedicated. After all, we *all* have ‘TO ETERNITY OR BUST’ stickers on our suitcases, so we’re really not that different.

I see that the Second Classers are still happy – it’s that ‘happy, felicitous inconsistency’ that you hear your First Class brothers talk about sometimes. As long as you’re happy and your inconsistency is a happy one, then everything’s okay, even if you see things a little differently.

“And, heh-heh, speaking of seeing things a little differently, I must say again that those in First Class do have the window seats, and they are able to see much more clearly than those of you in Second Class. A-ha! I can see some of you Second Class Arminians straining to see what’s outside. Why don’t you ask your Calvinist brothers to explain what they’re seeing to you? They have a much better vantage point and can tell you all of the intricacies of what you see. Of course, many of you Second-Classers might not be intelligent enough to grasp all the intricacies, but you’ll find that your Calvinist brothers are more than willing to try to help you see what they see, since they all know that even though you may be Second Classers in your heads, you’re really First Classers in your hearts. I’m sure they’d love to tell you about how much better the view is from their seats! Maybe they can even convince some of you to try out a First Class Calvinist seat! It’s really not that difficult – you just slide on over.

“We’re coming up on a terrific landmark on both sides of us – it’s the Doctrines of Grace. I can see all of you First Class people smiling, because you love the looks of it. Isn’t it beautiful? You in Second Class don’t know what you’re missing. Your life would be so much more enriched if you could just see it. Yes, I know – many of you Second Class Arminians say you don’t really like the looks of it. But I think it’s because you haven’t been able to take a really good look at it. If you’d just slide on over, you’d be able to see it better. It has perfect symmetry. Oh, how beautiful! Your First Class brothers really hope that you’ll appreciate its beauty some day. They call it a ‘full-orbed precious gem.’ But they realize that the lower classes aren’t as aesthetically adept as they are and haven’t read all the advanced books on the Doctrines of Grace and don’t have the educational background of Reformed Heritage to be able to analyze the minutia of this incredibly intricate landmark. That’s okay, because they know that, even though you see through the window glass darkly, you’re heading the same place they are.

“Oh – look! Did you see that black bus zooming in the opposite direction? They almost hit us!

Oh – here they come again! They must’ve made a U-turn and are following us! That’s the Party Bus on its way to Hell. Look at all those people in their drunken revelry! How disgusting! They don’t even go to church. Look – I think I see a pro-abortion lesbian feminist! And look – there’s a man with long hair with an upside down cross and an inverted pentagram on his shirt, listening to Satanic heavy metal! Oh, how horrible! I think we should all take a moment to thank God that we are not like them. And then we should all get our notebook computers out (um, well, you in Second Class can get your pencil and paper out) and write letters to the editor of our local newspaper against this Sodom and Gomorrah country we’re living in! What a blessing it is to join together, First Class Calvinist and Second Class Arminian, to combat these evils. We’re on the Fashionable Gospel Bus, and we’re fighting the good fight, waging spiritual warfare. We’re lean, mean, Christian machines. Those in Second Class have a Bible in one hand and Wesley in the other, and those in First Class have a Bible in one hand and Calvin in the other, and we’re ready to fight together against the world! Look – there they go, off in another direction again. They don’t know where they’re going – unlike us.

“Okay, now back to the merits of First Class. As you can see, the First Class seats adjust to an unlimited number of settings, depending on your comfort level. The Universal Love and Well-Meant Offer levels seem to be the most comfortable to most of our First Class Calvinist passengers. These settings put you a little closer to the Arminian friend beside you, so you can be in closer communion. Perhaps you in Second Class will be more apt to try First Class now that you know there are settings that enable you to remain in close communion with your Second Class Arminian friends. Yes, I know you don’t want to leave them behind. That is so very thoughtful of you.

“For those of you in First Class who sometimes yearn for the days of being in Second Class, there’s the Salvation Conditioned on Faith setting, which basically feels the same as the Second Class seat, only with a ‘God-Given Non-Meritorious Faith’ massager for you to rest on to ease your conscience.

“Ahhh ... just sit back and relax. Sing a hymn by John Wesley, that perpetual Second-Classer whom the First-Classer Charles Spurgeon said was fit to be added to the number of the twelve apostles, along with First-Classer George Whitefield. See how all of us have gotten along throughout history? We all recognize that we’re going to the same place.

“Ahhh ... how peaceful. How soothing. How ... WHAT?? What do I see coming toward us? Oh, no. I was hoping we wouldn’t meet up with them. Well, here they come – The True Gospel Bus. I need to warn you – these are the most mean and dour and grim and miserable people you ever want to meet. They think they have exclusive truth. They even say that in order to be on their bus, we need to become totally transformed into new creatures who think totally differently! They won’t even let us walk off our bus and onto theirs! They say it’s not just a matter of sliding on over from our bus to theirs! Of course, who would want to be on theirs, anyway, as you’ll see.

“Okay, here they come. Take a look at that bus! Is that the most ugly, unattractive bus you’ve ever seen? How are they going to attract people if they eschew what’s fashionable?”

“Look at this! They’re getting right in front of us, trying to stop us! They’re pleading for us to stop! How mean of them! We’ve been cruising along, making good time, and now these mean people are going to make us late! Well, we’ll stop, but we’re not going to talk to them.

“What are they saying? That we’re going the wrong way? How dare they. What are they doing now? They’re holding a map up toward the windows so we can see where to go. What is the title of that map? Do you see it? It says BIBLE. What an insult. It’s like they think we don’t know what’s in our Bibles. Just because we interpret our Bible maps a little differently, they’re saying we’re going the wrong way. See how unloving and judgmental they are?”

“They’re saying that there’s only one True Gospel, and that is God’s promise to save His people, giving them all the blessings of salvation from regeneration to final glory, conditioned exclusively on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, totally apart from the sinner’s works and efforts. Come on now. That’s for the Super Duper Premium First Class seats. They’re saying that if you sit in Second Class, you don’t believe the True Gospel! How insulting to those of you who haven’t even seen the full-orbed precious gem yet! And get this – they’re saying that even those sitting in First Class don’t believe the True Gospel! They’re saying that in order to believe the True Gospel, you need to be totally transformed into new creatures, taken off of our bus and put onto their bus! See – what did I tell you? I told you so!

“Look, they don’t even have First and Second Class seats on their bus! It’s all just one kind of seat! What kind of luxury is that? Is there no room for growth? No room to slide on over to a more comfortable and more consistent seat with a better view? They say that all of them have the same view, that they’re all equal. Who are they kidding? Do they think they’re all perfect? What kind of cult are they, anyway?”

“That must be a really unbalanced bus, with everybody on the same kind of seat. I’m really glad we have different kinds of seats that balance each other out. Like our friend A.A. Hodge said, ‘The difference between the best of either class [Second Class Arminians and First Class Calvinists] is one of emphasis rather than of essential principle. Each is the complement of the other. Each is necessary to restrain, correct, and supply the one-sided strain of the other. They together give origin to the blended strain from which issues the perfect music which utters the perfect truth.’ Ah, that purrrfect music of the Fashionable Gospel Bus! The motor is purring, and we are totally balanced, thanks to the First Class Calvinists and the Second Class Arminians complementing each other and giving origin to that blended strain! Away with the one-sided, unbalanced True Gospel Bus! You’ll never attract anybody!”

“And what are they saying now? They’re saying that all in the True Gospel Bus count all their former buses as trash! That means they count OUR bus as trash! They’re saying that they count our bus just as much trash as the Party Bus and that it will be more tolerable for the Sodomites in

the black bus than for us on judgment day! How dare they even mention those dirty people in the same sentence with us! How hateful and spiteful!

“And what else are they saying? That I’m not a real Angel of Light but an imposter? Uh, don’t listen to them. They, uh, don’t know what they’re talking about. I’m here to take you to Eternity! And we’re going to Eternity in style!

“Enough of this nonsense from the ugly, mean, unloving, harsh, arrogant, judgmental cult bus. Time for some fancy maneuvering around these nuisances. ... Okay, hold on, here we go ... alright! Success! We will not be stopped!

“Well, as we head off, they’re pointing in the direction they’re going and in the opposite direction that we’re going. There they go again, saying we’re going in the wrong direction! Don’t mind them, folks – they’re just wacko kooks. They’ll never be fashionable. Good riddance. Here we go! TO ETERNITY OR BUST!

“Man, are we zooming now! We’re almost at our destination! Hold onto your suitcases, everybody! See that cliff up ahead? Yep, that’s where we’re headed! Okay, we’re almost there! Three, two, one, wheeeeeeeeeeee! We’re sailing off the cliff and into the air! What? You’re asking why we’re going down? Because that’s Eternity for you! And look at all the other buses all around that ran off the same cliff and are headed down! Hey, look – there’s the Mormon Bus! And there’s the Muslim Bus! And there’s the Buddhist Bus! And there’s the Hindu Bus! And what do you know – take a look over there – it’s the black Party Bus! And so many other buses from all over! You’re all going to the same place! See, you all have the same mark on your foreheads! You’re all going to where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched, and there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and you will be tormented by fire and brimstone, and the smoke of your torment will go up forever and ever!

“Yeah! I made it past the True Gospel Bus without anyone being transformed into a new creature! Chalk another full Fashionable Gospel Bus up to Eternity in Hell! Oh, hey everybody, I’ve gotta go. I have another bus to drive. See ya!”

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