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SITTING AT THE FEET
OF OUR LORD
May I assume that whoever assigned this topic to me was referring to the Word of God as recorded in Luke 10:42. and I quote: “But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her”? The incident in that scripture is well-known to us. Jesus had retired into a village, Bethany, into the home of His friends, Martha and Mary. Lazarus is not mentioned here. It was the house, we read, of Martha. While Martha busied herself with much serving, serving her Lord's physical and material needs, Mary sat at Jesus' feet. This irritated her sister, Martha. Martha thought that her sister should assist her in her service of the Lord. But the Lord administered to Martha a tender rebuke, saying unto her: “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.” And then we read in verse 42: “But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

We have been asked to discuss in this article the subject: sitting at the feet of our Lord, in connection with church attendance, or, if you will, our divine worship services. We understand, of course, that this sitting at our Lord's or Jesus' feet must occur not merely during our worship services. We must always sit at Jesus' feet. When our Lord spoke these words concerning Mary in Luke 10:42 He was not limiting what He said concerning her to the services in a synagogue. In this article, however, we confine our remarks to our sitting at Jesus' feet during our worship services upon the Lord's Day.

How can we sit at Jesus' feet while
attending church? We can, of course, understand what we read in Luke 10:42. After all, the Lord was visiting with His friends in their home in Bethany. And while Martha was busy serving their Master with material things, Mary was literally sitting at Jesus’ feet, devotedly looking up to her Master and Teacher. We can easily picture this. But, how do we sit at Jesus’ feet? Nevertheless, for us to sit at Jesus’ feet is far more wonderful than it was for Mary. Mary sat at Jesus’ feet in the Old Dispensation, the New Dispensation not beginning until the day of Pentecost. The Old Dispensation was the dispensation of the types and shadows. We live in the New Dispensation, the dispensation of the fulfillment of all these types and shadows. Jesus has suffered and died and He is risen from the dead. He is now glorified at His Father’s right hand and has received the Spirit beyond measure. Thomas, according to John 20:29, believed because he had seen the Christ. However, blessed are they, we read in verse 29, who have not seen, and yet have believed. Fact is, how much more blessed it is to believe while not having seen the Lord. And this is not too difficult to understand. That this is more wonderful and blessed is simply because this implies a risen and glorified Lord. That we do not see Him in Whom we believe is because He is risen and glorified, and that we believe in Him is because He now lives within us by His good and holy Spirit and reveals unto us all the mysteries whereof the Old Testament speaks typically and symbolically. The shadows of the Old Dispensation have attained unto their fulfillment and this blessed fulfillment has now been revealed to us. Indeed, we see the same wonderful salvation that was also seen by the saints of the Old Dispensation, but we see and enjoy them in a much clearer light. Indeed, how true is the saying: the New Testament concealed in the Old Testament, the Old Testament revealed in the New Testament.

What does it mean to sit at the feet of Jesus? It means simply that Jesus is our teacher. We must attend our divine worship services to be taught by the Lord. That must be our desire.

Besides being reminded of Jesus’ word in Luke 10:42, we are also reminded by this subject of what we read in Lord’s Day 12 of our Heidelberg Catechism. Our Lord Jesus Christ, besides being our only High Priest and Eternal King, is also our Chief Prophet and Teacher Who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption. That this counsel and will of God concerning our redemption is called secret is because it is a mystery which could never be conceived of by us, could never enter into the heart and mind of man. A mystery, we all must understand, as held before us in the Word of God, is not a contradiction. Today it is generally taught that the Lord loves and hates the same sinner at the same time, that He has eternally willed not to save him, as in His counsel of reprobation, and also that He desires to save him and tries to save him through the preaching of the gospel, which is set forth as a general and well meaning offer of salvation to all to whom the gospel is preached. And if we object that this is a contradiction and that contradictions do not exist in the Bible because the Bible is one, then the advocates of this view say that this is not a contradiction but a mystery.
it appears as a mystery to us because of the defectiveness of our minds. In Scripture, however, a mystery is not a contradiction, but something that lies beyond the scope of our understanding and must therefore be revealed to us. It is in this sense that the counsel and will of God concerning our redemption is a mystery. We could never conceive of it. We have just remarked that the advocates of the theory that a mystery in the Word of God is an apparent contradiction, base their contention upon the allegation that it appears as a contradiction because of our defective minds. However, we must bear in mind that, although it is true that sin has indeed affected our understanding and minds, this can never mean that our minds are therefore defective. that black can therefore appear as white, what is crooked can appear as straight, etc. Sin has affected our minds spiritually, not naturally. Fact is, if sin has affected our minds naturally, then we could never read the divine scriptures; then we could never discern the true from the false. Indeed, the counsel and will of God concerning our redemption is a mystery. It is beyond the scope of our understanding, it must be revealed to us. We could never conceive of it. Of us it is true, according to Isaiah 53:6, that we all like sheep have gone astray and that we have turned every one to his own way. All we can do is go astray, wander away from our Father’s house; never can we return to it. How true this is of a natural sheep: how absolutely true this is in the spiritual sense of the word. All we can do is sin; never can we redeem ourselves from it. We can heap up, increase our guilt of sin; we can never pay for sin. Our redemption is, therefore, hidden from us, a secret as far as we are concerned. We, I repeat, can wander away from our Father’s house; we can never return to it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is our Chief Prophet and Teacher who has revealed to us this secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption. This will of God concerning our redemption is a secret, hidden from us because we can never conceive of it. It is a redemption that must, therefore, be revealed to us. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as our Chief Prophet and Teacher, did exactly this. Notice: He revealed it to us. This refers, first of all, to the holy Divine Scriptures. These scriptures are Christ’s word. He inspired them by His Holy Spirit. They are, therefore, the infallible, unerring will and counsel of God concerning our redemption. These scriptures are perfect and complete. They lack nothing as far as our knowledge of our redemption is concerned. All that we need to know in this life concerning our redemption from sin and that we are heirs of everlasting life and glory is held before us in that Word of God. They lack nothing. Jesus is our infallible Teacher.

However, He has not only revealed this will of God to us, but He also continues to reveal it to us. As we sit at Jesus’ feet He continues to be our Teacher. The Lord tells His disciples in John 10:27: “My sheep hear My voice.” We have here a figure of speech. Many flocks of sheep would be kept in a safe place or enclosure during the night. When, in the morning, various shepherds would call their sheep to lead them into green pastures, each sheep would recognize the voice of its shepherd. How spiritually true this is! Through the preaching of the gospel, upon the Lord’s Day, Jesus
speaks His own powerful, efficacious, irresistible word by His Spirit, convicting ever anew of sin, assuring them of its forgiveness, comforting and leading His own in the way everlasting, assuring them of life and glory, everlasting and immortal. We hear and receive the gospel, the good news or glad tidings of our salvation, not only intellectually but also personally and spiritually. This is the good part which would not be taken away from Mary, and which will not be taken away from us. This must motivate us as we attend our divine worship services. Sunday, the first day of the week, is indeed the most important day of the week for the child of God. Upon that day, while attending church, we hear the voice of Jesus speak to us, which the Lord Himself speaks to us, through His Word and by His Spirit, sanctifying His gospel of good news unto our hearts, instructing us, personally and spiritually in the blessed gospel of our redemption and salvation, assuring us of the eternal and unchangeable love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. And let me add: this surely applies also to our young people, as we read in I John 2:12-14 (notice that the apostle also speaks of the young men in this passage).

And now we must sit at Jesus' feet. We must be instructed by Him. We understand, of course, that Jesus does not teach us a social gospel. A social gospel is a gospel that is geared to our human society, to heal all its diseases, make this world a better place in which to live. Now we must certainly bear in mind that Jesus promises His people relief from all this world's ills and diseases. He surely comforts us with the wonderful words: "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He will surely heal all our diseases, lead us out of all death and misery. However, we must also remember that this deliverance out of all death and misery will occur only in heavenly glory and immortality, and this only in the way of the cross, through the blood and Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. The social gospel, however, speaks of this deliverance without the cross and without deliverance from sin. The social gospel is always anti-God and anti-Christ. Our Chief Prophet and Teacher does not teach us this social gospel. His instruction is exclusively spiritual and centers in the living God as the God of our salvation.

And now we return to the thought that we must sit at Jesus' feet. This certainly has something to say to us, first of all, negatively. First, we must not neglect our divine worship services. We must not be "oncers." Jesus addresses His voice to us through the preaching of the Word. It is true, of course, that the Lord also speaks by His Spirit to His people who cannot go up to God's house. But, did you ever notice how often the preacher mentions those who are with us in spirit if not in body? Although absent from the worship services, their thoughts are nevertheless with us who congregate in the house of God. But it is surely true that the Lord does not speak His Word to those who deliberately neglect the worship services. They do not hear the voice of Jesus, are not instructed by Him, do not sit at His feet. When we are summoned to go up to God's house, we must obey these summons. Second-ly, we must not sleep in the house of the Lord. Sleepiness, drowsiness is a terrible affliction. We need not eluci-
date here. One cannot hear, consciously, the voice of our Shepherd while asleep. As a preacher of the Word I have been troubled on many occasions by this affliction as evident in the house of the Lord. Thirdly, there must be no interference in our worship services with the preaching of the Word. I now refer to the presence of infants and very young children in the house of our God. Of course, I do not object to the presence of these infants and children in the church. But I am speaking of interfering with the worship services. I believe in the old saying that children must be seen and not heard in the house of God. Incidentally, this is a saying that is also applicable outside of God’s house. The talking and crying of these little ones can be and is very distracting. These children who are so distracting, not only to the preacher but also to those in their immediate vicinity, should be confined to the nurseries when provided by the church or they should be left at home. They prevent others from hearing the voice of Jesus and from being instructed by our heavenly Teacher, our Lord Jesus Christ. This may suffice, as far as our negative comments are concerned.

However, to sit at Jesus’ feet also has something to say to us, positively. And this, of course, is its primary significance. This means, first of all, that Jesus must be our Prophet and Teacher and that we absorb His instruction. We must believe, appropriate unto ourselves His Word and teaching concerning our sin, hate it, flee from it, and also the way of salvation which is the way of His precepts and commandments, leading us to put off the old man with all his evil and carnal lusts and to put on the new man, to set our eye upon the city that has foundations, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of our God, to seek the things that are above. We have already called your attention to the truth that the teaching and instruction of our heavenly Teacher is not a social gospel. We must be spiritually fed and refreshed.

Secondly, to sit at Jesus’ feet means that we must attend the worship services as spiritually prepared. How do we prepare ourselves for the sabbath day? How do we spend our Saturday evenings? Are we eager to attend church and ready to do so? The Lord’s Day, the Sabbath Day is an oasis for the Christian in this dry and thirsty land in which no waters flow. How the weary desert traveller, in the natural sense, looked forward to this oasis, there to rest, to eat and drink! Weary of his journey he would pause at this oasis and be refreshed there to resume it the following day. How true this is of the Christian! He must travel, as a pilgrim and stranger, to the city that is above. The way is always difficult. Constantly he must fight against sin, within him and all around him. And now the Lord’s Day furnishes him with an oasis, to rest there, refresh himself anew, enabling him to continue his journey on the morrow to the Jerusalem that is above. This is the positive significance of the Sabbath Day. Do we understand? Also and particularly as young people? If we love the world, have our friendships in the world, seek the world, the Sabbath Day will mean nothing to us. The world as all around us uses this day as its day of pleasure. But, if we have become weary in the struggle against sin, God’s day of rest, to sit at Jesus’ feet, be quickened anew in the knowledge and assurance of the forgiveness of sin and be strengthened

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in the sure promises of our God that this weary night will presently be over, that we shall be inducted into the City of our God, the heavenly Jerusalem, our Father’s house with its many mansions, will be a most blessed day indeed. Now we can also understand what we read in Lord’s Day 38. Answer 103: “Secondly, that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works and yield myself to the Lord, to work by His Spirit in me: and thus begin in this life the eternal sabbath.” Indeed, let us, also as young people, be pilgrims and strangers in the midst of the world, sit at Jesus’ feet, all the days of our life, but now especially upon the Sabbath Day during our divine worship services.

From the Pastor’s Study
CHOSEN UNTO A PARTICULAR ATONEMENT

by Rev. John A. Heys

The day Adam disobeyed God and ate of the forbidden fruit, he died spiritually. He did not become spiritually sick, weak or partially paralyzed but spiritually dead. Did God not tell Adam that the day he sinned he would die? We must insist that he died that day and that God did not simply mean that physical death would begin in Adam that day. That is true, it did begin in him and was complete 930 years later. But spiritual death came completely that day. And that is why Jesus told Nicodemus that we must be born again before we can even see the kingdom of heaven. We must be given a new spiritual life before we can even want salvation or know wherein it consists. And we must be born again with that new spiritual life, because having died spiritually that day, Adam and Eve had no spiritual life that they could hand down to their children. A parent cannot hand down to his child what he does not have. That is why we need to be born again. In fact what Jesus told Nicodemus is that we must be born from above, born with something that is beyond our reach and which no one here below on this earth can give us.

And now another truth, young people, that we must maintain is that God gives this new life only to those whom He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world. We must understand and believe that this gift of everlasting life is a very, very limited gift, that is, limited to a special group of people. Christ did not die to make it possible for all men who hear the preaching to be saved. He died for a definite number of people, and for definite members of the human race, and for no other people. In the angel world there is no salvation. All the fallen angels perish. In the world of mankind only a small percentage of the human race is saved, because God decided before He created the world to
blot out the sins of a limited number of people and of definite individuals of the human race.

Read once again Ephesians 1:4, 5. There we are told: “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him. In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” Here we clearly have a limited atonement as well as an unconditional election. God chose us in Christ before we were born, in fact before Adam was created and was there to fulfill any condition. But take special note of the fact now that Paul writes that we were chosen in Christ so that we should become holy and without blame before Him. If we want to be honest with Scripture — and we must! — then we have to say and must insist upon the truth that we were not holy and without blame when we were born the first time and to our earthly parents. Why would God chose us to become holy and without blame, if we came into this world with a small spark of holiness and a little bit of blamelessness? If we deny total depravity and will not call it absolute depravity and insist that man only became spiritually weak and partially paralyzed, but had some good points in him so that he could want salvation and fulfill the condition of accepting Christ, why did God have to chose us? Then the atonement of Christ was for every man in the human race and God would not have to choose some in Christ. In fact then Paul should have written that God chose us in Christ because we had a small part of holiness and blamelessness.

Most of the church world today insults rather than praises God, because it is maintained that Christ’s cross was and realized an unlimited atonement. John 3:16 is quoted to defend such a stand. It is true that John quotes Jesus as saying that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” But that word “world” does not, and plainly cannot mean every man, woman and child in the world. The text itself shows that to be the case. To that we will come in a moment. But that same John quotes that same Jesus as saying in John 17:9, “I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine.” This same John writes in I John 2:15, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Jesus does not say that one who loves the world does not have very much love of the Father. No. here again total depravity means that we come into this world without any love for God. Total depravity means absolute depravity, an hopeless condition as far as man is concerned. But even more, John writes that we must not love the world, and he makes a sharp distinction between the world and the things in the world. There is then a question as to whether that word “world” here means the unbelievers or creation. For the word Jesus uses here is the word cosmos. But turn to John 17:9 where the same word is used in the Greek as in John 3:16. There we read: “I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given me; for they are thine.” Plainly Jesus is speaking of people, not simply material of the universe. Then
skip down to John 17:4. There we find these words, "I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Can that mean anything else than that Jesus is speaking of People, and that God does not love all the people in the world?

Even if you want to take that word "world to mean this universe rather than to refer to the unbelieving people in this world, the fact remains that John writes here in I John 2:15 that it any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. There is then a world that God does not love. And why make a distinction between the world and the things in the world, if you want that word world to mean the inanimate and irrational creation God brought forth?

As pointed out a moment ago, the word "world in John 3:16 cannot mean every man, woman and child in the world. For Jesus plainly states here that God loves only those that believe in Him. And He, Jesus, continues and states: "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." Get that young people! The world God and Jesus have in mind here is the world that God DOES save, not tries to save and "invites" to come and get salvation. And remember that we are speaking here of God, the Almighty and Sovereign One. If He has to wait and see whether one will accept His "invitation", is He almighty and sovereign? Many do not "accept the invitation" in Arminian preaching. Then God fails! Then He is not sovereign and does not rule all men; but most of those who hear the preaching rule God and make Him disappointed. Perish the thought! Have nothing to do with such God-insulting philosophies! He is the I AM. Many who hear the preaching but reject Christ do not make Him the I WAS! John 3:16 does not mean that Jesus says here, "I AM one Who loves everybody that comes into this world; but many of them can make Me one Who has to say, 'I WAS one Who loved all men in the world; but many changed me and made me one Who can by the creature be forced to change My mind and My heart.' " No, a thousand times NO! the atonement, the satisfaction of God's justice and removal of guilt by the cross of Christ, is limited to a people He from all eternity has loved and continues to love everlastingly in the new creation.

What kind of love is it that lets the object of that love turn it to hatred? God loves everybody in the world and sends His Son to the cross and to hell, so that they may be saved: but that love is not great enough to give them the faith that they need to obtain salvation? God loves everybody: and that love is so strong that He will send His Son to suffer all that agony for nothing? Yes, a few will be saved; but most of those God loves can keep Him from saving them and dealing in love with them? Here you have the lie of Satan. Men can become like God and know what is good and what is evil. It is good for him to refuse to "accept Christ" and evil to believe in Him. No, let us hold fast to the truth that He is God and gets His way every time and in everything He sets out to do.

Young people, let Scripture interpret Scripture. In John 10:11 Jesus, Who spoke of God's love for the world in John 3:16, says, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." That reference
to sheep excludes wolves and clearly teaches a very limited atonement. In verse 14 He states, "I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine." Here again we certainly have limited atonement on the cross of Christ. Very limited is that atonement as Jesus Himself declares in verse 15. He states, "I lay down My life for the sheep." That excludes many people in this world. To some in this world Jesus said in verse 26, "But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep." Can you find a more limited atonement? All in the world are not His sheep; and He does not lay down His life to give all men in the world a chance to be saved. As the Almighty Sovereign God He takes no chances. And giving men a chance means that He takes chances. What a weak, shameful love that would be to risk and take a chance that the ones you love might go to hell! And why was not the gospel given to more people in the Old Testament dispensation, if God loves everybody in the world? Why were many nations not given the gospel long before God sent missionaries there, if He loved all the men in the world? Why would He let some of the atonement of Christ go to waste, if He loved everybody? How can we even call that love?

Hold on to the truth, young people, that all those whom God loves will be saved and will be given the grace to believe in Christ and His cross as the way of their salvation. The atonement of Christ on His cross was not a possible way of salvation, or a salvation contingent upon what man would do. It was a successful, triumphant way whereby the sins of a limited number of people in the human race, and of definite individuals who were chosen by God eternally and long before they were born, were completely blotted out and removed from them.

We were chosen to receive a very particular atonement; and our faith in Christ is the evidence that God chose us, in distinction from many others in the world, not only to have our sins blotted out, but also to be given faith in His Son and what He did through His cross. God decided for whom Christ would die. Totally depraved sinners do not make the choice for the sovereign, almighty and unchangeable God.

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Focus on Christian Women
Responsibilities of Conception VIII:
THE RESPONSIBILITY TO LOVE FOR LIFE

by Mrs. H. Brands

Young Jon has lived with his parents for twenty-three years. He has been, on the whole, a son of whom they can be properly proud. He has obeyed his parents and matured to take his place in the church and society with
sincerity. Now he is about to marry and set up his own Christian home.

Jon has a brother Stu who is rather difficult. While he has not veered into outright heathenism or into drugs or drinking or anything personally destructive, nonetheless he is totally indifferent to any serious Christian contemplation. Stu has never made confession of faith. He quit attending societies several years ago. Whenever spiritual things are in discussion, he appears bored or even leaves the room. He is not yet serious with a girl but dates occasionally with little concern over whom he dates. He is thinking of moving into an apartment for greater personal freedom.

Jon and Stu have both been raised by parents who love God from the heart, as both boys know. Though the parents have admittedly often sinned, often failed, yet they tried hard to raise their children in the fear of God. The parents have been a godly example in most ways. They have tried to instruct their children to understand godliness and to walk in godliness in every area of life. They sought to train their children, insisting on external conformity to the ways of godly living even while they prayed for God to work true godliness in the hearts of their children.

And now, those years of training are at an end. . . . The children are grown. They have to assume responsibility before God and the Church for their own adult lives.

What now? What responsibilities do the parents now have? Are their parental ties totally broken? Have they reached the point where they can gleefully exclaim, "I am finished! I am free!"? What relationship now exists?

The best way I can think of to illustrate the parent’s role to his adult child is to compare this role with that of an elder in the church.

An elder is given a role in the church of overseeing, leading, supervising, admonishing, visiting, disciplining—everything summarized by the word “rule”. This role he holds for a given number of years, however long his term of office lasts. The Bible compares this rule in the church with the rule of a father in the home, making good home rule a prerequisite for church rule, “for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?” (I Timothy 3:5).

An elder’s authoritative rule in the church comes to an end with the end of his years in office. As he steps out of office, he leaves behind him the responsibilities to visit church families officially, to make church decisions, to exercise church discipline, to safeguard and provide pure preaching and sacraments.

Just so, when his children mature and marry and set up their own homes, a parent’s responsibility to train his children comes to an end. No longer does he have the responsibility and authority to supervise the lives of his children, to discipline when they stray, to train in godliness, to rule their lives. The training and its responsibilities have ended.

But that does not mean all responsibility ends. With both an elder and a parent, the responsibilities of godly example continue and are magnified because of their prior calling. An elder who would begin to talk and to behave loosely as soon as he leaves office would become a mockery to the office he left, a source of confusion and
blasphemy in the church. So too, a parent who drops all leadership qualities, who quits trying to be an example to his children, who expects his children suddenly to lead him or to be superior to him, becomes an embarrassment and a source of confusion to his children. The parent must remain an example of godliness to his children. . . for life! He must be always ready to apply the Word of God to his children's lives. . . until he dies! Until death, he must pray for his children, love them, show his concern for them, and admonish them when he sees them walking in sin. Spiritual love never comes to an end.

In return, both an ex-elder and a parent of grownup children deserve honor for life. To honor these ex-authorities means to respect the labors they performed during the years of their authority. It means to hold fast to all the instruction they gave which was truly Biblical. It means to continue to seek and respect their advice as veterans in Christian warfare. It means to value their godly example and to walk in their footsteps. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor" (I Timothy 5:17a) . . . and likewise the well-ruling parent. Such honor never comes to an end, not even when old age may strip a parent of all abilities.

This continuing godly example means so much to the maturing child of a godly parent. Now he understands the training which occurred and how he now values advice from his veteran parent! As the struggles of life mature his Christian perceptions, how he appreciates more and more the struggles of his parents! From an adult perspective, he can understand . . . and yes, even forgive! . . . the failures of his parents, while respecting and imitating that which was honorable. And the love they always gave him he now understands, returning this love with gratitude to God.

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The principle is then clearly applied to all the Jons and Stus in our families. To both of them, the parents continue for life to be an example and to speak godly instruction. For both of them, training has ended but example and exhortation and love never end.

The difference comes in the response of the children. The one responds with the godly respect and honor due to his parents. The other responds by throwing away his training, rejecting all past and present instruction, and walking in the desires of his heart. Failing to honor his parents, he fails to honor the God Who gave him those parents. The one is a joy to his aging parents, the other a grief.

May we as covenant children always honor the parents God has given us . . . until death. That is God's way of blessing for us.

And may we as covenant parents be faithful always in our calling . . . until death. May we train our children while they are "under our roof" and then continue to love them as long as we have breath. That is the way of blessing for both parents and children.

"In our own personal affairs we should be meek and condescending, and endeavor, as far as in us lies, to maintain peace, though its maintenance should prove to us a source of much trouble and inconvenience. -John Calvin (on Ps. 34)
Critique

OPINIONATING IN LOVE [3]

by Mitch Dick

By faith we have seen that what is basic to loving ourselves is knowing ourselves. And part of the basics to knowing ourselves is knowing the difference between what we know for certain and what we do not. I say by faith and in certain conviction that God is Creator and I am a creature. Yet exactly all my weaknesses and strengths or even any of them is not so certain to me.

We must be both content and humble both in this certain knowledge and in the various opinions we have of ourselves. I am content, that is, I accept the fact that I am a sinner. I am humble in the understanding that salvation from his sin is of the Lord and not of me. So too I am content with what in my opinion is my ugly nose. Yet I am humble with the gifts and talents I have been given.

Being so content and so humble in all aspects of our knowledge of self we are beginning to do something in and with that knowledge. This deed we perform is the means God has ordained and given to make us more conformable to His own image. The Bible calls this action of ours self-denial.

Self-denial is what love demands from the sinner who would love God and the neighbor in deed and speech. It is taking up the cross (e.g. Matthew 16:24) in our following Jesus. Or, in other words, being so humble and content in our certain knowledge and opinions of self, we sacrifice or give up all our earthly and selfish desires. This we do that we might be filled with all the fulness of God loving Him as our Creator and Redeemer and Friend. (Ephesians 3:17-19)

So when we greet the neighbor they will see. They will see that we know who we are and who they are in themselves and that none of us can extricate himself from his miserable sin except by grace. And they will see that we are only hard against sin and not against personality or looks or whatever is not sin. They will see also that we see ourselves as the chief sinner and are not judges of men. Thus we will begin and end our conversation, will we not, by denying ourselves and not the one to whom we speak.

"Coffee tastes good on a cold day," Mom will say to the fellow-shopper motivated by her desire to have that cup of coffee with the other woman and to tell her of the Lord. And when the Covenant Christian High School student talks to his friend he ought maybe to think more before he speaks. He will do this in a humble way, revealing that he has thought to love his friend before he spoke.

In this way of loving self-denial in our opinionating, we assert God. In all areas of our lives, especially in the rather large arena of our opinions, may our Sovereign God who loves us be proclaimed in love!
MIND OVER MATTER

by Barb Bergman

Mary Baker Eddy founded a church, Christian Science, which teaches that a person’s well-being depends on the way he thinks about life and especially about God. What does this mean?

To explain and understand this one must think of every person having two minds. The first is a mortal mind and the second an immortal mind. According to Christian Scientists the mortal mind sends out earthly messages of pain, illness and sin. These messages are just illusions; they are evil inventions of one’s mind. Therefore, a person must listen to his immortal mind, which tells him that there are no such things as illness or sin. A person has only to think on God in the right manner in order to remember this; and, in the meantime whatever pain or sickness he might have had will disappear.

This sounds good — living in a world in which pain, illness, sin, and even death are just illusions. What a joy it would be to live like this; and, in a way it seems to be right.

Many people have contracted terminal diseases and have been told that they only have a very short while to live. But, through their will to live and tremendous effort they have overcome the odds.

Now, doesn’t this sound like the Christian Science beliefs? Christian Scientists say that there is a total spiritual discipline rather than an isolated will to believe. This seems to be exactly what is happening. A person not only wills to live, but disciplines himself to live. This is amazing.

Another thing which seems to prove the Christian Scientist right is placebo. Placebo is an often sugary substance which contains no medicine and is actually used by doctors to “heal” patients. Now, of course this isn’t a real cure. Doctors use this when a patient is convinced that he is ill when he really isn’t. The sickness is all in his head.

This is exactly what the Christian Scientists teach, that sickness is a matter of the mind.

So, the big question is: Are the Christian Scientists right?

Actually, despite all these convincing stories, they are not.

It is obvious that illness is real no matter what Christian Scientists say. Scripture shows this in many instances. In one case a woman with “an issue of blood” touched the hem of Jesus’ garment and was healed. (Mark 5: 25-30) When Jesus felt the virtue pass from him it was proof of the true healing power. This healing was necessary because of an illness.

Another issue which shows the lie of Christian Science is the matter of death. Death, for man, is real and inevitable; man can not conquer death. This is shown in the following passages:

Job 7:6 “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and are spent without hope.”
James 4:14 "For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheath away."

What better proof than Scripture is needed to show that death is real?

Because of their belief in mind over matter Christian Scientists teach that medical care is not necessary. Therefore, they refuse all medical care.

This is wrong. God has given man the abilities and tools to fight disease and sickness. Man should use these gifts instead of just praying. Prayer is necessary, but all God's gifts to man must be used.

Throughout all of these examples it has been shown that the Christian Science movement is not truly Christian. Many of their beliefs are contrary to the Scriptures, even though they seem right.

This is exactly what Satan intended. He, as the root of all cults tries to deceive man into believing that cults are actually in agreement with the Scriptures even though they are not.

True Christians do not fall for such beliefs, for Scripture warns against these. This warning is summed up in Titus 1:16:

"They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

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Truth Vs. Error

BACK HOME IN DISTELFINK COUNTRY

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

The expression has reference to "Pennsylvania Dutch country." We once thought Deuteronomy 11:12 could apply to it: "A land which the Lord thy God careth for. The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year unto the end of the year." By the way, this would make a good sermon text for New Year's Day, or for Old Year's night. The earliest, if not the original, inhabitants of the above mentioned land thought of it in terms of this Deuteronomic text. For they had come to it seeking religious freedom. They came to it from Saxony, that part of Europe called that long before there was a Germany. Of course, God in His providence has a care for the whole world and all its parts. For the earth is His and the fulness of it. God's providential care reaches everywhere. But the land
which we call the Holy Land is representative of the church. the place God had chosen for His own residence, the place of His worship as a habitation for His peculiar people. Doth God care for lands? He does. Why? Because of, and for the sake of, His church in those lands.

The well known Quaker, William Penn, became owner of the vast wilderness of Pennsylvania, securing its sylvan acreage on March 4, 1681. However, the Pennsylvania Dutch were already there before Penn. Migration had begun with another pietist, Pastorius, who arrived in what was called Germanopolis, later Germantown, on August 20, 1683. Streets in this new town had to have names. One was named after this Christian pioneer, Pastorius Street (near 6200 Germantown Avenue); Pastorius Park (near 8200 Germantown Avenue) was also named after him. The settlers at this time were linen weavers, so Germantown early became known for its knitting mills, and adopted for its motto, Vinum, linum et textum, or Wine, Flax and Weaving. As an example of phenomenal growth of this area, William Frey, from Altheim, Alsace, settled in Germantown, in 1683 on 57 acres, which, on his acquiring more land was soon enlarged to 2,750 acres on 1689. Another well known Germantown street is Penn Street, within two blocks of which we all lived.

Later, many of the Germantown streets were named after Revolutionary War generals, as (Gen. "Mad Anthony") Wayne Ave., (Gen. Nathanael) Greene St., (Gen. Philip John) Schuyler St., (Gen. Henry) Knox St., (Gen. Count Casimir) Pulaski Ave., Rittenhouse St., named after David Rittenhouse, mathematician/astronomer in Revolutionary War days; Sherman St., named after the signer of the Declaration of Independence, Roger Sherman. Logan St. was named after secretary to Washington, James Logan. Washington Lane was named for Gen. George Washington.

Some positive critical comment is necessary at this point. When the British occupied Germantown during the War, the Continental Army retreated to Valley Forge. Pennsylvania farmers would not come to the aid of Washington's men with supplies because Continental money had depreciated. Evidently so had Pennsylvania patriotism, at least until that patriotic naming of Germantown's streets, later, which had the effect of setting up as permanently as possible memorials to America's revolutionary resistance to authority. Scripture forbids such resistance. Consider Rom. 13:1-4, in one of the most faithful translations of the original, that of the New American Standard Bible: 1 "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is (exists) no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. 2 Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. 3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil" (bold added). It has been argued that this passage allows for forcibly opposing a lawless, tyrann-
nical authority, appealing to 1 Sam. 14:45, which, however, not only does not prove this, but shows rather that the people did not oppose the authority, but instead had successfully protested an injustice, which gained the day for Jonathan. Later, Jonathan himself did not forcibly oppose the authority, but effectually protested another injustice: 1 Sam. 19:5. It has also been argued on the ground of this passage that the American Revolution was a revolution of necessity. But it is not necessary to resist and oppose the authorities in order to preserve property, liberty and life. These may be lost in the way of dutifully submitting to authority. The one and only necessity in relation to what is owed the authorities is to ensure that in obeying them we do not disobey God. The revolutionary under General George Washington, and the rebel under Confederate President Jefferson Davis thought that they were fighting only men, but they were fighting against God!

So, “Distelfink country” is Pennsylvania Dutch country. The word Dutch means both “Belonging to the Netherlands, or its people; Hollandish; and belonging or relating to the Teutonic or Germanic race.” Formerly Dutch and Dutchland were used in England for German and Germany. The dictionary also has Dutch consolation: “it might have been worse;” and Dutch nightingale: a frog. Further, the dictionary states, “Dutch, the Low Germans, especially the Hollanders; the Teutonic German race in general, including the High German and the Low German: Pennsylvania Dutch: the High German dialect spoken in Pennsylvania by descendants of emigrants from German and Swiss provinces of the Upper Rhine, many of them fleeing from religious persecution and received by Pennsylvania at the beginning of the 18th century: a Dutch, a Hollander, a German. Low German. German of the Netherlands, including Frisian, Dutch, Flemish, and Old Saxon; High German. Alsatian, Swiss and Bavarian dialects. Modern High German was made the literary language of Luther’s Germany by his translation of the Bible. “The Low German dialects of the Continent are yielding to its influence.”

As children we had but a fleeting glimpse of our paternal Pennsylvania German grandfather. Some of our aunts, teasing us, warned not to get too close to him, as his “fat tummy was always ready to explode.” In those days we loved to get our fellow Sunday School pupils talking like the comic strip Katzenjammer Kids, and like early radio fame’s Baron Munchhausen (patterned after Baron Hieronymus Karl Friedrich Munchhausen, a Hanoverian cavalry officer, 1720-1797, known for his amusing “tall stories.” The radio Baron when interrupted with an objection in annoyed disbelief, would invariably reply, “Vus you dare, Sharley?” (or Sharlotte?). All this greatly appealed to the Pennsylvania Dutch sense of humor. But humor must be purified and sanctified, so that we do not laugh at sin, whether lying, childhood naughtiness, disrespect to parents, or whatever. Another sample of P. D. humor: Pop-Pop and Nanny are looking at a modern painting. Nanny: “Vot iss it?” Pop-Pop: “I sink it giffs beans mit ham all beat up viss eggs!” Nanny: “Ach! No vunder I got hiccups zo sodden!” Or, tourist asks her: “Will you attend the annual Hershey Fair’s Pennsylvania Dutch Days this year? Answer: ‘Vy, I don’
sink so; I guess I’m Dutch enough viss out!” Or, a kitchen plaque in a P. D. home reads: “Kissin’ wear out — Cookin’ don’t!” Or, perhaps a wall plaque hanging in the hall reads: “NECK is something which if you don’t stick out you don’t get into trouble up to!” Or more modern P. D. humor may suggest: “Fill your waterbed with Lebanon’s Birch Beer and get a foam mattress.”

Pennsylvania Dutch food, even up to within about forty years ago, was incomparable. For this reason, General George Washington made Christopher Ludwig, a P. D. farmer in Germantown, “Baker-General of the Continental Army.” His bakery products were magnificent, as long as the ingredients were available to him. Another man from Germany, Jung by name, became a neighbor of ours in Germantown, Americanized his name to Young and opened up a famous candy and ice cream store. His ice cream was the best in Philadelphia, the Ice Cream City. At a P. D. restaurant in Lancaster, we were seated at a round family-size table loaded with the entire meal—bowls of oyster soup, with the sperical, hard oyster crackers, vegetables, meats, chicken-and-dumplings, home made bread and butter, apple butter, hard rolls, milk, buttermilk, schmierkase, shoo fly pie. . . . A very food-conscious people, providing the most ambrosial, gastronomic delights. Yet no one thinks of the Amish, Mennonite, Moravian, Dunker, German Reformed farmers, dairymen, manufacturers, millers, bakers, confectioners, butchers, restaurateurs as idol-worshipers of the “belly-god.” No, for the Pennsylvania German had learned on the farm this doggerel: “He who prayerless starts to eat and prayerless finishes his meat is like my ox and stupid mule, who does not live by God’s good rule.” Furthermore, “Distelfink country” from of old has been dotted with churches of every denomination, and the towns, as in Germantown, had a church located at about every two-and-a-half blocks.

Some of us were baptized from infancy in a Presbyterian church allied with those ministers who did not sign the notorious “Auburn Affirmation.” Through this church connection we were introduced to the radio ministry of Dr. J. Gresham Machen who preached Sundays on the Westminster Shorter Catechism. We learned, even in the poor, hungry Depression years, that the Creator/Redeemer God above gives all things richly to enjoy, not the least, but the most important of which is the spiritual food of the Reformed Faith. Then this must be said: aside from Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation under his leadership, his works, and his German Bible, I am ashamed of my paternal German descent, ashamed of all the German destructive higher criticism, the German Liberalism, Modernism, rationalism, irrationalism, Barthianism and Neo-Orthodoxy.

“Distelfink country” is, outwardly, still there. But old Germantown is no more. It has become a “Soweto” with its own Apartheid. True, nothing remains the same. (We recall Southeast Grand Rapids, MI) What will our own present home areas be like a few years hence? But instead of living in the past, sentimentally dreaming over those “dear, dead days beyond recall,” let us labor to have the Faith of our churches “spoken of throughout the whole world” (Rom. 1:8). Know the trend of the times, and fight against it. The
trend is, first, faith is gone, then the preaching of the Word is gone, the evening worship is then abandoned, mid-week Bible Study ceases, the church becomes a second class restaurant, a soup kitchen, or a Bingo Arcade. Finally, the church is no more at all. Therefore, let us pray and labor that the existing true churches abide and thrive until Jesus comes!

Singspirations for 1988:

April 10        Hudsonville
June 19         Hope
August 7        First Jenison CRC
September 18    Southeast
October 16      Southwest
November 20     Faith
December 18     Hudsonville

Mass Meeting:

March 20        Faith