

KOINONIA KONNECTION

A Publication of Sheffield Reformed Church

Winter 2002

Volume 3, Issue I

CHRIST IS OUR LADDER

PART 2 OF 2

REVIEW

In the first part of this two-part article, we discussed five properties of Christ - our ladder. Our ladder is alive - arisen from the dead! Our ladder is long - spanning that incredible chasm from sinful humanity to holy God. Our ladder is lasting - useful already to saints from the beginning of time. Our ladder is free - useful to whosoever will use it. Our ladder is strong - able to save from the guilt and dominion of sin. Our ladder is fitted in every way for the use for which it was intended.

We also saw that this ladder can be traversed upward and downward. Blessings descend from heaven via this ladder. By this ladder our prayers, praises, alms, fastings and humiliations ascend to God.

WHAT INFERENCES ARISE?

The inferences shall be by way of answer to five questions.

1. If Christ be our ladder for us to ascend on, how is it then said here, that Jacob saw the angels of God ascending and descending?

The ascending and descending of the angels of God upon this ladder, Christ, is for our good, benefit, and advantage. The angels are ministering spirits for us, Heb. 1:14. The design of the vision was to comfort Jacob at his entrance upon a perilous journey in his flight from his angry brother. It was seasonable refreshing cordial, Ps. 91:11, 12; 34:7; 2 Kings 7:17.

But why ascending?

- a. For fresh orders, to act for their good every day, Matt. 18:10, their angels; though nothing else be theirs, "their angels always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven,"—expecting the least nod or beck.
- b. To give account of their stewardship; what they have done. Allude to Luke 14:21. Read Job 1 and Zech. 1.
- c. With separate, departed souls in their arms to place in Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22.

But why descending?

To execute their orders, for preservation, provision, society, supply. Jacob was alone here, he had no company. O how sweet is it to see both the ladder, and the travellers going up and down! Note, all are either ascending or descending, none standing still, none idle, all busy. This may comfort all the Lord's poor Jacobs in all their straits and troubles; not the Esaus, the wicked of the world; their attendants are ugly devils, living and dying.

2. If Jesus Christ be our ladder, what is faith? The hand by which we take hold of the ladder.

The foot also, by which we come to it, and climb by it. As good then even no ladder as no hands and feet; as good there were no Christ as no faith, John 8:24, an unbelieving soul is a maimed soul, handless and footless, and therefore helpless. Then be not faithless, but believing. Reach hither thy hand, as Christ said

to Thomas, John 20, in a sight and sense of thy undone condition without him; receive the report of the gospel concerning him, his ability and willingness to save. Renounce all other ladders, and cleave to this alone; behold, he calls thee.

3. What are the rounds of this ladder?

The several particulars of his undertaking: steps downward first, and then upwards; on each of which there is matter for faith to fasten on,—his incarnation, temptation, passion, resurrection.

4. Is Christ alone the ladder? are there no other ladders but he? No other: how should there be? Who are they? Who besides him hath his foot on earth, and his head in heaven? Name who.

The papists fancy other ladders to themselves; saints and angels; the Virgin Mary. Are these God? The angels ascend and descend upon the ladder; they are not the ladder.

'But their end in ascending and descending is as mediators for us; they ascend with our prayers and descend with God's answer.'

What Scripture is there for that? Where doth the word of God tell us so? If nowhere, there is no ground for faith, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin; nay, it says the contrary, 1 Tim. 2:5.

The protestant pharisaical self-justiciaries make a ladder of their own righteousness. They hope to work out peace, pardon and salvation for themselves, by their own performances, as the poor carnal mistaken Jews of old did, Rom. 10:3. Paul disclaims this way to heaven, Phil. 3:7, 8. How can we be a ladder to ourselves? Alas! the best of our doings are imperfect, and defiled. However, they are duty, therefore they cannot merit anything. Say then, I beseech you, None but Christ.

5. Why is it said, Behold a ladder?

It is common both in the Old Testament and the New, when Christ is spoken of, to say, Behold, Isa. 7 14; 43: 1 ; John 1:29. This notes to us what our duty is in reference to him.

We are to admire and wonder, as oft as we think of him: Isa. 9:6, his name is Wonderful. They do not know him, that do not wonder at him; at what he is, at what he hath done and suffered, at what he is doing, at his love and free grace especially.

Behold and bless God for making and rearing this ladder.

To behold him is to believe in him, Isa. 65:1; 66: 22—Look unto me, as the stung Israelites to the brazen serpent.

There are four special seasons wherein to behold this ladder:

- a. When we are doing anything for God, then behold it as the only way and means of being strengthened for it, and of being accepted in it.
- b. When we have done anything against God, when guilt stares us in the face, then behold it, as the only way and means of peace and pardon.
- c. When distress, and trouble, and danger are before us, then behold it, and the angels ascending and descending on it.
- d. When death is about to lay his cold hand upon us,—as Stephen, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God," Acts 7:56.

-Written in 1691 by Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry.

FAMILIES IN FOCUS

MARRIAGE - ITS CHALLENGES AND ITS REDEMPTION



In the previous issue we reflected on sin's devastating effects on marriage. In particular we discussed how the heart sin of lust explodes into more flagrant sin such as adultery.

Not only is lust a cancer that eats at marriage, but so also selfish ambition (strife - KJV) precludes a happy and intimate relationship. Perhaps the best way to demonstrate the meaning of the term is with a biblical example. At Genesis 13:5-7a we read, "Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock." Since the land could not support both groups of herdsmen, and each group gave priority to its own flock, there arose contentions between them. An attitude of strife or selfish ambition gave expression to physical demonstrations of strife and contention, so much so that in this case the heathen witnessed it. This led Abram to seek to resolve the issue lest the heathen should feel threatened by these who claimed to follow God.

This sinful condition not only plays havoc with our relations to those around us, but even more devastatingly, it ruins more intimate relationships. Marriage thus suffers most from this plague. Those we are most intimate with experience the most pain when we betray their confidence and trust. Its effects are clearly seen in every marriage that is destroyed and it is also painfully experienced in many marriages where there is no separation. Certainly where selfish ambition exists, one party to the marriage does not seek to serve the other, when the other stands in the way of personal goals.

If the wife gives place to selfish ambition, it gives expression through nagging, manipulation and ultimately failure to submit to leadership of her head her husband. In our culture this personal passion is fed through the promotion of a 'self fulfilling career' for the woman. It is as if a woman could find fulfillment in a selfish pursuit rather than to be a complement to her husband and to serve her family that the Lord has graciously given her. Since the bride of a man is a picture of the bride of God, for the woman to lead a pursuit of selfish goals is idolatry. Please don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that a woman should never hold an outside job. A woman working outside the home should always do so under the leadership of her husband and for the purpose of best serving her family. If circumstances require her to work outside of the home, she should not feel guilty for enjoying such work. It is hard to conceive, though, how she could serve the family best by working out if it requires leaving her children under the supervision of a sitter who has less natural affection for her children than she does. The scripture teaches the high love a mother has for her children to emphasize the love of God for His children. "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb?" Selfish ambition may corrupt a woman's love. "Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you." Isaiah 49:15

One more thing needs to be said regarding the leaving of children void of parental involvement and oversight. Though teenagers are quite capable of the mechanics of looking after themselves, they are at an age of extreme vulnerability. Their horizons are being broadened, their skills developed, they experience hormonal changes, and they are being challenged with the philosophical questions of life. They are seeking to establish their identity. Perhaps

there is no time so important in the life of a teen where parental presence and involvement and guidance are necessary.

Men have an uncanny ability to twist the meaning of the words of scripture. Husbands are very adept at hiding their selfish ambition behind their leadership position. But selfish ambition is a heart issue and not just a matter of words. We see many women left lonely while the husband pursues his own career; after all he is the breadwinner for the family. But it doesn't stop at this. He also engages his time playing with the boys, working at hobbies and consequently never has time to devote to his wife and children. Even in Christian homes, the man of the house becomes busy with the 'things' of the church. Personal goals and ambitions are justified under being in the position of leadership. But we men are called to examine our motives. Are we making our wives lives empty because of our selfishness? This will inevitably lead to coldness in the relationship and eventually estrangement.

How is a man to protect himself and his wife and children from his own selfish ambition? He needs to look to Christ, the heavenly bridegroom who came to rescue a bride to Himself from among sinners. "Husbands, loves your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his

wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

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Eph. 5:25-33 We see that Christ loved His bride with a self-sacrificing love. He came down for her, died for her, is eternally united to her and in that He lives, He lives for her. He has come that He might give to her peace and blessedness. "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy may be full." John 15:11 Mortifying the selfish passions of the flesh is accomplished only by the transforming grace of God. Col.3:3-5 "For you died, and

your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death, mortify, your members which are on earth."

Repentance or a new beginning in this area of your life will bring tangible rewards for your relationship with your spouse as well as spiritual blessings. "Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving, honour to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." 1 Peter 3:7 The fruit of the spirit is love. Do you love your wife? Do you live out of the love of Christ?

-Bill Kroesbergen

YOUTH'S CORNER

ALL THE WORLD GUILTY - ROMANS 3:1-20

S	P	I	L	A	L	R	E	N	T	R	U	S	T	E	D	Q	R
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J	M	J	U	D	G	E	P	S	O	I	A	F	B	C	C	A	S
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ACCOUNTABLE	MOUTH
ASIDE	ONE
BENEFIT	OPEN
BETTER	ORACLES
BITTERNESS	PEACE
DECEIVING	POISON
DESTRUCTION	RATHER
ENTRUSTED	RESPECT
EVIL	SEEKS
FAITHFULNESS	SIN
FEAR	SINNER
FEET	THROAT
GLORY	TOGETHER
GOD	TONGUES
GOOD	TRUE
GRAVE	TURNED
GREEKS	UNBELIEF
JEWS	UNDER
JUDGE	UNDERSTAND
KNOWLEDGE	UNRIGHTEOUS
LAW	USELESS
LIPS	WORLD

BOOKS IN REVIEW

A JOURNEY IN GRACE
A Theological Novel
 by Richard Belcher

This novel is the story of a young pastor with a typical twentieth century theology and his pursuit of a burning theological question which was triggered in his first experience with a pulpit search committee. He cannot and does not rest until he has answered the challenge of the question. "Young man, are you a Calvinist?"

The story of young Ira Pointer's theological quest is more than a cold theological presentation. Ira's search from its beginning on the first pages to the end on the final pages is set in the context of real life people such as the reader has no doubt encountered in living the Christian life. The main character's roommate in college, his professors at school, the churches he pastors and his experiences in them, his friends, and his fiancé are all woven into an interesting and surprising story. The conclusions Ira finally reaches are drawn from the Bible with numerous Scripture references and explanations.

Even those who think they do not have an mind to plunge into the depths of the intricacies of theology will be amazed at the theology they learn from the reading of this unique story. It is written in a style that any lay person can understand.

-submitted by Cope Jonkman

ALONE

It is human to stand with the crowd; it is divine to stand alone. It is man-like to follow the people, to drift with the tide; it is God-like to follow a principle, to stem the tide.

It is natural to compromise conscience and follow the social and religious fashion for the sake of gain or pleasure; it is divine to sacrifice both on the altar of truth and duty.

“No man stood with me, but all men forsook me,” wrote the battle-scarred apostle in describing his first appearance before Nero to answer for his life for believing and teaching contrary to the Roman world.

Truth has been out of fashion since man changed his robe of fadeless light for a garment of faded leaves.

Noah built and voyaged alone. His neighbours laughed at his strangeness and perished in style.

Abraham wandered and worshipped alone. Sodomites smiled at the simple shepherd, followed the fashion, and fed the flames.

Daniel dined and prayed alone. Elijah sacrificed and witnessed alone.

Jeremiah prophesied and wept alone. Jesus loved and died alone.

And of the lonely way His disciples should walk, He said, “Straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there be that find it.”

Of their treatment by the many who walk in the broad way, He said, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

The church in the wilderness praised Abraham and persecuted Moses. The church of the Kings praised Moses and persecuted the prophets.

The church of Caiaphas praised the prophets and persecuted Jesus. The church of the popes praised the Saviour and persecuted the saints. And multitudes now, both in the church and the world, applaud the courage and fortitude of the patriarch and prophets, the apostles and martyrs, but condemn as stubbornness or foolishness the same faithfulness of truth today.

-authour unknown (Youth Living Ideals magazine)

WANTED:

Who: men and women

Age: young and old

Race: any

Description: willing to obey their convictions of truth and duty at the cost of fortune, friends and life itself



MISSION SPOTLIGHT

MISSION WORK IN ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Our churches are enthusiastic about spreading the good news of God's salvation locally and around the world. As a denomination, we carry out our outreach mission through three ministry committees of the General Assembly: the Committee on Foreign Missions, the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension, and the Committee on Christian Education.

These ministries are supported by the gifts within and outside the OPC. Under a unified plan of giving called Worldwide Outreach, undesignated gifts are divided among the committees on a percentage basis set by the General Assembly. Gifts may also be designated for individual committees or special purposes. The work of two of the five major standing committees is outlined below.

FOREIGN MISSIONS

The 1937 General Assembly established the Committee on Foreign Missions to carry on the work of foreign missions. We are committed to pursue aggressively every opportunity our Lord presents to us to further the proclamation of the gospel to the nations, remembering that ultimately he is the one who provides the opportunity, the necessary personnel, and the required support.

Our goal is to establish healthy, indigenous national churches fully committed to Reformed standards, that are self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. The Committee sends missionaries to nine fields:

China. We assist a congregation near the North Korean border to prepare qualified men to preach the whole counsel of God's Word.

Eritrea. We continue to assist the young church, established through the labors of our missionaries, even though the government forced them to leave the country in 1997.

Ethiopia. We continue to strengthen and assist the young indigenous Ethiopian Reformed Church, established in 1998 through the labors of our missionaries.

Japan. We work with the Tohoku Presbytery of the Reformed Church in Japan to strengthen the gospel witness in this spiritually barren land.

Kenya. Missionary work was suspended in the wake of serious difficulties in the indigenous church, which threatened to compromise our witness. Please pray that the door for service may be reopened.

Korea. Our mission operates the Missionary Training Institute in Seoul, which has helped prepare more than 600 missionaries for their cross-cultural labors in more than 50 nations.

Middle East. Along with the Middle East Reformed Fellowship, the OPC labors to strengthen Reformed churches throughout the Muslim world through theological instruction, radio broadcasts, church-extension work, and ministries of mercy (including persecuted believers in the Sudan).

Suriname. We labor in both the capital city and among the Arawak Indians in the surrounding jungle to establish congregations of an indigenous Reformed church in this former Dutch colony in South America.

Uganda. We work with the Presbyterian Church in Uganda to extend the gospel into eastern and northern Uganda. An expansion is planned into Karamoja, where people live in very primitive circumstances, and in which the gospel has made little inroad.

HOME MISSIONS

Half of our Lord's Great Commission strategy is directed toward the home front. He spoke of

his disciples being witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea as well as in Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). The Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension works in partnership with the presbyteries and congregations of the OPC to help establish new churches throughout the United States. Here are some of the ways that the Committee serves the OPC:

Financial Help for New Churches. Up to four years of financial assistance is provided at the request of the presbytery for assistance in employing an organizing pastor and keeping the whole church informed of prayer needs on the field. Approximately twelve new churches are assisted each year. About 35-40 mission works are currently receiving denominational financial assistance.

Regional Home Missionaries. These specialized church planters work to develop new churches where organizing pastors will be called to labor. The Committee helps to find, train, and support them in their work.

Training and Equipping. Through staff visits and contacts, and an annual training conference, church planters are provided with the information and encouragement they need to do their work effectively.

Assistance to Presbyteries. The Committee staff remains in close contact with presbytery home missions committees and works with them to develop new churches. An annual gathering of home missions committee chairmen helps coordinate the church planting efforts of the OPC's fourteen presbyteries.

Church Planter Recruitment and Training. Seminars are held annually at selected Reformed seminaries to identify and encourage men with interest in church planting.

The OPC Loan Fund. This fund provides loans to churches and mission works for building worship/education facilities through the investments of individuals who desire a reasonable return while having their money used to serve the Lord.

-submitted by Evert Winkels

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