

## THE STORY THE STATUE AND JESUS

I'm sure you have heard of the little eight year old Dutch boy who saved the city of Haarlem by putting his finger in the dike. A brief synopsis of the story goes like this. One autumn afternoon the eight year old hero is given permission to take cakes to a blind man. He was returning just at sunset when he heard the sound of trickling water. He rushed up the dike and thrust his chubby little finger in the hole. Fighting the cold and the pain the brave little boy remained at his post until he was discovered the next day.

While most people in America have heard the story, the people who lived in Holland had not. When they did hear it they thought it was silly. The story never happened!.

The legend of the brave Dutch boy was actually a literary invention by the American writer Mary Elizabeth Mapes Dodge (1831-1905), who was born in New York and had never been to Holland at the time she wrote the story. In the original version the boy was given no name, later however, he came to be known as "Hans Brinker". The same writer in 1865 wrote the fictitious story of Hans Brinker, or the Silver Skates. Since the author did not speak the Dutch language some of the names she used in her novel, like Gretel, were actually German names.

Art historian Annette Stott says of the story: *"The fanciful tale of a finger in the dike, which was repeated by other authors of juvenile literature, undoubtedly went some distance toward establishing in young American minds a belief in the courage, independence and trustworthiness of the Dutch" (Holland Mania, p. 241). Somehow, Mary Mapes Dodge tried to depict Holland as an ideal and idyllic nation of brave, righteous, godfearing farm folk on wooden shoes."*

Now you know something of the story, but what about the statue? When American tourists visited Holland they wanted to see the dike made famous by the American novel. Since the story never happened it created an awkward situation for the people of Holland. Finally, in 1950, the Dutch Bureau of Tourism decided to erect a statue of the heroic Dutch boy in order to please American tourists. In 1954 Dutch author Margreet Bruijn also rewrote the story.

Today the statue is there for all to see, and the inscription on the statue (in both English and Dutch) discretely states: "Dedicated to our youth, to honor the boy who symbolizes the perpetual struggle of Holland against the water."

Note the use of the word 'symbolizes'. Even though the story is not true, it still "symbolizes" the perpetual struggle of Dutch citizens. Nor has the story become a part of the popular folk tales there. Furthermore, the name Hans Brinker is missing from the statue (because it isn't there in Mary Mapes Dodge's novel either). Still, thanks to the statue the American tourists can visit the Dutch hero that never was.

Now we have talked about the story and the statue, what does this have to do with Jesus? Perhaps nothing directly, but it does give to every believer a sense of relief that there is dramatic difference between a fable about a little Dutch boy and the historical reality of Jesus. The first part of the Bible is filled with predictions about the coming of Jesus, and the last part of the Bible tells what Jesus did after He came. The story of Jesus is the central theme of the whole Bible. Skeptics have tried for centuries to prove the Bible wrong. The skeptics are gone and the Bible is still here!

Not only is Jesus at the center of the Bible, but also at the very center of all human history. It is not by accident that the history of the world is divided into B.C. and A.D. There really was a Jesus and you can document that reality by historians both sacred and secular. Those closest to Him became His most credible "witnesses". The word "martyr", as you know, literally means witness and the martyrdom of His disciples is strong evidence that cannot be casually cast aside by those who are intellectual honest.

So now we have come full circle about the story, the statue, and Jesus. What you believe about the little Dutch boy will have little relevance to the way you live, or what will happen to you after you die. What you believe about Jesus is of pivotal importance. It will not only determine how you live in this present evil world, it will also determine where you will spend eternity!

JESUS IS LORD!

