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BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES

GENESIS

THE BOOK OF
THE BEGINNINGS

Volume IV

C. C. CRAWFORD, Ph.D., LL.D.

College Press, Joplin, Missouri

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COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

art., article
cf., compare
ch., chapter
chs., chapters
edit., edition
e.g., for example
esp., especially
et al., and others
ff., following
fn., footnote
Gr., Greek
Heb., Hebrew
ibid., the same
i.e., that is
in loco, in the proper place
l., line
ll., lines
Lt., latin
infra, below
Intro., introduction
op. cit., in the work cited
p., page
pp., pages
par., paragraph
per se, by or of itself
sect., section
supra, above
s.v., under the word
trans., translated
v., verse
vv., verses
viz, namely
vol., volume

SPECIFIC ABBREVIATIONS (BIBLIOGRAPHICAL)

- ACB Young's *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*. Twentieth American Edition (revised by Stevenson). (Funk and Wagnalls, New York).
- ACR Wilhelm Moeller, *Are the Critics Right?* Trans. by C. H. Irwin. (Revell, New York, 1899).
- AD J. W. McGarvey, *The Authorship of Deuteronomy*. (Standard, Cincinnati, 1902).
- AOT Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*. (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1954).
- ARI W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*. (Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1956).
- ASV, or ARV American Standard Edition of the Revised Version of the Bible (1901).
- AtD Gaalyahu Cornfeld (Editor), *From Adam to Daniel*. (Macmillan, New York, 1961).
- AV Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible
- BA J. A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology*. (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1961).
- BA Emil G. Kraeling, *Bible Atlas*. (Rand McNally, Chicago, 1956).
- BBA Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Baker's Bible Atlas*. (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1961).
- BC J. W. McGarvey, *Biblical Criticism*. (Standard, Cincinnati, 1910).
- BCOTP C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch*, Vol. I. Translated from the German by James Martin. (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids).
- BE George Gamow, *Biography of the Earth*. (Mentor Book, New American Library, New York, 1948).
- BGJI Julian Morgenstern, *The Book of Genesis: A Jewish Interpretation*. (Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 1927).
- BMBE Ashley S. Johnson, *The Busy Man's Bible Encyclopedia*. (College Press, Joplin).
- CC C. S. Lewis, *The Case for Christianity*. (Macmillan, 1943).
- CDHCG John Peter Lange, *Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical Commentary: Genesis*. Trans. from the German, with Comments, by Tayler Lewis and A. Gosman. (Scribners, New York, 1868).
- CEHS H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*. (Harper, New York, 1928).

- CG Adam Clarke, *Commentary: Genesis*. (Waugh and Mason, New York, 1832).
- CHB J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*. (Macmillan, 1909, 1950).
- Conf. Augustine, *Confessions*. Pusey Translation. (Everyman's Library, Dutton, 1907).
- Cos J. A. McWilliams, S.J., *Cosmology*. (Macmillan, New York, 1939).
- Cr Arnold Guyot, *Creation*. (Scribners, 1884).
- CS A. Campbell, *Christian System*. (Christian Board of Publication, St. Louis, 1835).
- CU George Gamow, *The Creation of the Universe*. (Mentor Book).
- CVSS Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*. (Eerdmans, 1954).
- CWB Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (in one volume). (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1961).
- DC James H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience*. (Scribners, 1939).
- DD H. W. Everest, *The Divine Demonstration*.
- DGL Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*. (Augustine's Treatise on Genesis).
- DG William Robinson, *The Devil and God*. (Abingdon-Cokesbury, New York and Nashville, 1945).
- EA Julian Huxley, *Evolution in Action*. (Mentor Book).
- EB Joseph Bryant Rotherham, *The Emphasized Bible*. (Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1959).
- EB Isaac Errett, *Evenings with the Bible*. (Standard, Cincinnati; now available from Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville).
- EBG Marcus Dods, *The Expositor's Bible: Genesis*. (Armstrong, New York, 1895).
- EHS Alexander Maclaren, *Exposition of Holy Scriptures: Genesis*. (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1904, 1912).
- ELD William Smith and Theophilus D. Hall, *English-Latin Dictionary*. (American Book Company, and Harper, 1871).
- EM Gilbert K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*. (An Image Book, Doubleday, 1925).
- EOM Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*. (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1944).
- ET Ernest C. Messenger, *Evolution and Theology*. (Macmillan, 1932).
- FBM O. T. Allis, *The Five Books of Moses*. (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, 1943).

- FPOTC D. E. Sharp, *Franciscan Philosophy at Oxford in the Thirteenth Century*. (Oxford University Press, 1930).
- FSAC W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*. Second Edition. (A Doubleday Anchor Book, 1957).
- FYPR Hamlin Garland, *Forty Years of Psychic Research*. (Macmillan, 1936).
- GB Charles Shook, *The Gist of the Bible*. (Standard, Cincinnati),
- GBBD Charles F. Kraft, *Genesis: Beginnings of the Biblical Drama*. (Board of Missions, The Methodist Church, 1964).
- GEL Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*. New Edition, Revised by Jones and McKenzie. (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1843, 1948).
- GP C. E. M. Joad, *Guide to Philosophy*. (Victor Gollancz, London, and Dover Publications, New York, 1936).
- HC Robert Ulich, *The Human Career*. (Harper, 1955).
- HDT Jules Lebreton, S.J., *History of the Dogma of the Trinity*, Vol. I. Trans. by Algar Thorald from the Eighth Edition. (Benziger Brothers, 1939).
- HHH *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns, and Homerica*. Trans. by Evelyn-White. (Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1929).
- HSGP John Owen, *The Holy Spirit: His Gifts and Power*. (Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1954).
- HHH H. I. Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History*. (Wm. Jewell Press, Liberty, Missouri, 1949).
- HU Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*. (Harper and Row, 1961).
- IBG Cuthbert A. Simpson, Walter Russell Bowie, *The Interpreter's Bible: Genesis*. (Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1952).
- ICCFTh James Everett Frame, *The International Critical Commentary: First Thessalonians*. (Scribners, 1953).
- ICCG John Skinner, *The International Critical Commentary: Genesis*. (Scribners, 1910).
- ICCH James Moffatt, *The International Critical Commentary: Hebrews*. (Scribners, 1924, 1952).
- IGOT Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*. (Zondervan, 1951).
- IH Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*. Third Revision, trans. by J. W. Harvey. (Oxford, 1925).
- IHR C. H. Toy, *Introduction to the History of Religions*. (Harvard University Press, 1924).
- ISBE *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. James Orr, editor. (Howard-Severance Co., Chicago, 1915).

- ISA Herbert Wendt, *In Search of Adam*. (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1955).
- JCHE Meade E. Dutt, *Jesus Christ in Human Experience*. (Standard, Cincinnati).
- Lang. Edward Sapir, *Language*. (Harvest Book: Harcourt, Brace, 1921, 1949).
- LAF Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*. (Princeton University Press, 1947).
- LCL Loeb Classical Library of the Greek and Latin writings, in the original and in English translation. (Harvard University Press, Cambridge).
- LD Harper's *Latin Dictionary*. Andrews's Freund, revised by Lewis and Short. (American Book Company; Harper, 1879; copyright, 1907, by Margaret Lewis).
- LIP Harold W. Titus, *Living Issues in Philosophy*. Third Edition. (American Book Company, 1959).
- LOTB Albert T. Clay, *Light on the Old Testament from Babel*. (Sunday School Times Co., 1907).
- LOT Julius A. Brewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament*, Third Edition. Revised by Emil G. Kraeling. (Columbia University Press, 1962).
- LP Alexander Campbell, *Lectures on the Pentateuch*. (H. S. Bosworth, Cincinnati, 1867).
- MC C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*. (Macmillan, 1952).
- MDNSA A Cressy Morrison, *Man Does Not Stand Alone*. (Revell, New York, 1944).
- MDCB Theodore Christlieb, *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*. (Scribner, Armstrong and Company, New York, 1874).
- ME George Gaylord Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution*. (Mentor Book, 1951).
- MFJH Max Lerner, *The Mind and Faith of Justice Holmes*. (Modern Library Edition, 1954).
- MG James G. Murphy, *Murphy on Genesis*. (Estes and Lauriat, Boston, 1873).
- MG Ralph H. Elliott, *The Message of Genesis*. (An Abbott Book, Bethany Press, St. Louis).
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- MM Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker*. (Living Age Book, 1956).
- MPR Samuel M. Thompson, *A Modern Philosophy of Religion*. (Regnery, Chicago, 1955).

- MS A. J. Gordon, *The Ministry of the Spirit*. (Revell, New York, 1895).
- MS Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*. (Doubleday Anchor Book. Yale University Press, 1946).
- MSH Rollo May, *Man's Search for Himself*. (Norton, 1953).
- MU Alexis Carrell, *Man the Unknown*. (Harper, New York, 1935).
- MUB Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible*. (Macmillan, 1924).
- NBG C. H. Mackintosh ("C.H.M."), *Notes on the Book of Genesis*. (Loizeaux Brothers, New York. First edition in 1880; twenty-sixth printing, 1959).
- NBS Sir James Jeans, *The New Background of Science*. (Macmillan, New York,).
- NMG Oliver L. Reiser, *Nature, Man and God*. (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1951).
- NMR George P. Fisher, *The Nature and Method of Revelation*. (Scribners, 1890).
- NPW Sir Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*. (Macmillan, 1933).
- NU Fred Hoyle, *The Nature of the Universe*. (Mentor Book, 1957).
- OG Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *The One God*. Trans. by Dom Bede Rose, O.S.B., S.T.D. (Herder, St. Louis, 1943).
- PBG Joseph Parker, *The People's Bible: Genesis*. (Hazell, Watson, and Viney, London, 1896).
- PC F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*. (Harcourt, Brace, 1937).
- PCG Thomas Whitelaw, Exposition, *The Pulpit Commentary: Genesis*. New Edition. (Funk and Wagnalls, London and New York).
- PCH J. Barmby and C. Jerdan, *Pulpit Commentary: Hebrews*.
- PCTH P. J. Cloag, *Pulpit Commentary: Thessalonians*.
- PE Timothy J. Brosnahan, *Prolegomena to Ethics*. (Fordham University Press, New York, 1941).
- PM Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*. (Harper Torchbook, 1961).
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- PPT Hocking, Blanshard, Hendel, Randall, Jr., *Preface to Philosophy: Textbook*. (Macmillan, 1947).
- PR Edgar S. Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion*. (Prentice-Hall, New York, 1946).
- PR D. Elton Trueblood, *Philosophy of Religion*. (Harper, 1957).

- PURT Erich Frank, *Philosophical Understanding and Religious Truth*. (Oxford, 1945).
 RD Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert*. (Farrar, Strauss, and Cudahy, New York, 1959).
 RF L. P. Jacks, *Religious Foundations*. (Rufus M. Jones, Editor. Macmillan, 1923).
 RI Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*. Translated and abridged by Moshe Greenberg. (University of Chicago Press, 1960).
 RTOT Albert C. Knudson, *The Religious Teaching of the Old Testament*. (Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1918).
 RS H. C. Christopher, *The Remedial System*.
 RSFI W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions*. (Appleton, New York, 1889).
 RSV The Revised Standard Version of the Bible.
 SBG W. E. Powers, *Studies in the Book of Genesis*. (Christian Alliance Publishing Company, New York, 1928).
 SH C. W. Ceram, *The Secret of the Hittites*. Trans. from the German by Richard and Clara Winston. (Knopf, 1956).
 SMP *Selections from Medieval Philosophers*, Richard McKeon, Editor. (Scribners, 1929).
 SOTI Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. (Moody Press, Chicago, 1964).
 SR Robert Milligan, *Scheme of Redemption*. (Christian Publishing Company, St. Louis, 1868).
 SRG James H. Jauncey, *Science Returns to God*. (Zondervan, 1961).
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 ST Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.
 STS R. M. MacIver, *Society: A Textbook of Sociology*. (Farrar and Rinehart, New York, 1937).
 SUW Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington, *Science and the Unseen World*. (Macmillan, 1930).
 TMB J. W. Monser, *Types and Metaphors of the Bible*. (F. L. Rowe, Cincinnati, 1936).
 TMV Sir James Jeans, *This Mysterious Universe*. New Revised Edition. (Macmillan, 1943).
 TSMR Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Translated by Audra and Brereton. (Henry Holt, 1935).
 TP Nathaniel Micklem, *The Theology of Politics*. (Oxford, 1941).

- UBG William Henry Green, *The Unity of the Book of Genesis*. (Scribners, 1895).
- UDE Lincoln Barnett, *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*. (Sloane Associates, New York, 1948).
- VS George Matheson, *Voices of the Spirit*. (Hodder and Stoughton, New Work).
- WLP E. V. Miller, *Within the Living Plant*. (Blakeston Company, Toronto, 1952).
- WMIA John Gillin, *The Ways of Men: An Introduction to Anthropology*. (Appleton-Century, 1948).
- WPNT A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. In six volumes. (Broadman Press, Nashville, 1930).

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- AC Miguel de Unamuno, *The Agony of Christianity*, trans. by Pierre Loving. Payson and Clarke Ltd., New York, 1928.
- ADB John W. Haley, *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*. Originally published in 1874. Out of print.
- Anth. Alexander Goldenweiser, *Anthropology*. Crofts, 1946.
- BG Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Book of Genesis*. Shield Bible Study Series, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1963.
- BMS Henry M. Morris, *The Bible and Modern Science*. Moody Press, 1958.
- BS Godet, *Biblical Studies*. Out of print.
- BWR Hugh J. Schonfeld, *The Bible Was Right*. Signet Key Book, New American Library of World Literature, 1959.
- CAL Edw. F. Campbell, Jr., *The Chronology of the Amarna Letters*. Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, 1964.
- CBL Kitto, *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*. Out of print.
- CDD G. K. Chesterton, *Chesterton Day by Day*, Second Edition. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, et al, 1912.
- CG F. E. D. Schleiermacher, *Christliche Glaube*.
- CR Moses E. Lard, *Commentary on Romans*. Christian Publishing Company, St. Louis, 1975.
- CR F. A. Filby, *Creation Revealed*. Revell, 1963.
- DBI Kitto, *Daily Bible Illustrations*. Out of print.
- DEAM J. D. Thomas, *The Doctrine of Evolution and the Antiquity of Man*. Biblical Research Press, Abilene, Texas, 1963.
- DHS John Owen (1616-1683), *Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*. Earlier issues undated. Reissued by Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1954.
- DM Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*. Paris, 1957.
- EE Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, trans. by Galantieri and Philan. Pantheon Book, 1948. Image Book, 1957.
- EG H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 2 vols. Baker, 1942.
- EHS F. E. Marsh, *Emblems of the Holy Spirit*. Pickering and Inglis, London, 1888, 1923.
- Exst. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism*. Trans. by Frechtman, New York, 1947.
- FG John W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton, *The Fourfold Gospel*. Standard Publishing, Cincinnati.

- FL Alfred M. Rehwinkel, *The Flood*. Concordia, St. Louis, 1951.
- FM Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Man*. Trans. by Denny, Harper, 1964.
- GEOTP Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, Second Edition. University of Chicago Press, 1949.
- GF Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb, Jr., *The Genesis Flood*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, 1966.
- GP Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Trans. from the original Arabic by Friedlander, Dover, 1956.
- GPE Jacques Maritain, *God and the Permission of Evil*. Trans. by Evans, Bruce, Milwaukee.
- GPS T. W. Brents, *The Gospel Plan of Salvation*. Gospel Advocate, Nashville, 1928.
- HBD *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, Sixth Edition. By Madeleine S. and J. Lane Miller. New York, 1959.
- Herm. D. R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics*. Standard, Cincinnati. Out of print.
- HSWS W. E. Biederwolf, *A Help to the Study of the Holy Spirit*. Revell, New York, 1904.
- HU Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*. Trans. by Bartholomew. Harper, 1965.
- ICR John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Trans. by Battles. Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 2 vols., 1960.
- IHI William Jennings Bryan, *In His Image*. Revell, 1922.
- ILSM Morris R. Cohen and Ernest Nagel, *Introduction to Logic and the Scientific Method*. Harcourt, Brace, 1934.
- IRP John Wild, *Introduction to a Realistic Philosophy*. Harper, 1948.
- ISA Herbert Wendt, *In Search of Adam*. Trans. from the German by Cleugh. Houghton Mifflin, 1956.
- JB *The Jerusalem Bible*. Alexander Jones, Editor. Doubleday, 1966.
- KV *Knowledge and Value*, edited by Sprague and Taylor. Harcourt, Brace, 1959.
- LPh *Living Philosophies*. "A series of intimate credos." Simon and Schuster, 1931.
- LS J. W. N. Sullivan, *The Limitations of Science*. Mentor Book, 1949.
- MOT Abba Hillel Silver, *Moses and the Original Torah*. Macmillan, 1961.
- MP Will Durant, *The Mansions of Philosophy*. Simon and Schuster, 1929.
- NBD J. D. Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*. Eerdmans, 1962.
- NG C. H. Mackintosh ("C.H.M."), *Notes on Genesis*. First Printing, 1880; Twenty-sixth Printing, 1959. Loizeaux Brothers, New York.
- OBH B. S. Dean, *Outline of Bible History*. Standard, Cincinnati.
- OK Glenn Negley, *The Organization of Knowledge*. Prentice-Hall, 1942.

- OTH William Smith and Wilbur Fields, et al, *Old Testament History*. College Press, Joplin, Missouri, 1967.
- PA Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Patriarchal Age*. Baker, 1961.
- PC William Henry Roberts, *The Problem of Choice*. Ginn, Chicago, 1941.
- PHD James R. Illingworth, *Personality: Human and Divine*. Bampton Lectures for 1894. Macmillan, London, 1923. A small book, now out of print, but a classic in its field.
- PLS John G. Kemeny, *A Philosopher Looks at Science*. Van Nostrand, 1959.
- PPI Gordon W. Allport, *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*, Holt, 1937.
- RH *The Restoration Herald*, Cincinnati, Ohio
- RMNC M. M. Davis, *The Restoration Movement of the Nineteenth Century*. Standard, 1914.
- RSB Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Ras Shamra and the Bible*. Baker, 1962.
- SBS Henry M. Morris, *Studies in the Bible and Science*. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Philadelphia, 1966.
- SHS C. Gordon Brounville, *Symbols of the Holy Spirit*. Out of print.
- SIB *The Self-Interpreting Bible* (in four volumes), James W. Lee, Editor. N. D. Thompson Publishing Company, New York and St. Louis, 1896.
- SMP Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*. Scribner, 1936.
- STC R. M. MacIver, *Society: A Textbook of Sociology*. Farrar and Rinehart, 1937.
- TAB Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Tell El Amarna and the Bible*. Baker, 1963.
- TBHB A. P. Weiss, *A Theoretical Basis of Human Behavior*, R. G. Adams Co., Columbus, Ohio, 1925.
- TP Robert E. Brennan, O.P., Ph.D., *Thomistic Philosophy*, Macmillan, 1941.
- TWC Edw. Chiera, *They Wrote on Clay*. University of Chicago Press, 1956.
- WSAE Robert T. Clark and James D. Bales, *Why Scientists Accept Evolution*. Baker, 1966.
- YGOT Robert W. Gleason, S.J., *Yahweh: The God of the Old Testament*. Prentice-Hall, 1964.

ADDITIONAL SPECIFIC ABBREVIATIONS (BIBLIOGRAPHICAL)

- ABG E. A. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible: Genesis*. Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1964.
- AOTW John Gray, *Archaeology and the Old Testament World*. Harper Torchbook, 1962.
- BWDBA Charles Pfeiffer, Editor, *The Biblical World: A Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*. Baker, Grand Rapids, 1966.
- CECG Robert Jamieson, *Critical and Experimental Commentary, Genesis*. Vol. I of the complete Commentary on the Bible by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948.
- COTH G. F. Maclear, *A Classbook of Old Testament History*. Macmillan, London, 1881.
- COTP, or KDCOTP Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentaries on the Old Testament*, Vol. I, translated from the German by James Martin. Reissued by Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.
- DB John D. Davis, *Dictionary of the Bible*, Fourth Revised Edition. Reprinted by Baker, Grand Rapids, 1962.
- ELBT Samuel Noah Kramer, section "The World of Abraham," in *Everyday Life in Bible Times*. National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C., 1967. A work which literally makes alive the story of the Patriarchal Age. Thoroughgoing, profoundly interesting, entertaining, and beautifully illustrated. A book for your permanent library.
- FBE Fairbairn's *Imperial Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, edited by Patrick. Art., Vol. III, p. 66, by Duncan H. Weir, on the names *Hebrew*, *Israelite*, etc. Complete work in six volumes, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1957.
- GL George M. Lamsa, *Gospel Light: Comments from the Aramaic and Unchanged Eastern Customs on the Teachings of Jesus*. A. J. Holman Company, Philadelphia, 1939.
- HEW John Owen, *Hebrews—The Epistle of Warning*, Reissued by Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1955.
- HH Frank Sanders, *History of the Hebrews*, Scribners, 1914.
- HSB Harold Lindsell, Editor, *Harper Study Bible*. Harper and Row, New York, 1946, 1952, 1962, 1964. An excellent work.
- IOT Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Revised Edition, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964. An exhaustive refutation of the critical theories of the Old Testament books.
- JIBG Rabbi Julian Morgenstern, *A Jewish Interpretation of the Book of Genesis*. Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 1920.

- NG Frederick W. Robertson, *Notes on Genesis*, E.P. Dutton, New York, 1877.
- NSB Orville J. Nave and Anna Semans Nave, *Nave's Study Bible*, 81st Edition. Moody Press, Chicago, 1907.
- NTCH R. Milligan, *New Testament Commentary: Hebrews*, Christian Publishing Company, St. Louis, 1875.
- OOH J. Barton Payne, *Outline of Hebrew History*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1954.
- OOH Will Durant, *Our Oriental Heritage*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1942.
- OTS Samuel J. Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*, Harper and Row, 1960.
- PCJ *The Pulpit Commentary: Joshua*, Exposition by J. J. Lias. New Edition. Wilcox and Follett, Chicago.
- RS H. Christopher, *The Remedial System*, Transylvania Press, Lexington, Ky., 1876; John Burns, St. Louis, 1880.
- SC A Cohen, Editor, *The Soncino Chumash*, The Soncino Press Ltd., London, Sixth Edition, 1966.
- SHANE S. J. Schwantes, *Short History of the Ancient Near East*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1965.
- SH C. W. Ceram, *The Secret of the Hittites*, Knopf, New York, 1956.
- SJL Rabbi Julian Morgenstern, *Studies in Jewish Literature*, Kohler Volume, George Reimer, Berlin, 1913.
- WNCD *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, Merriam, Springfield, Mass. 1949 Edition.

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GENESIS

THE BOOK OF
THE BEGINNINGS

PART THIRTY-SEVEN

THE STORY OF ISAAC: THE TWINS AND THE BIRTHRIGHT

(Gen. 25:19-34)

1. Introduction

Having concluded the account of all that needed to be known about Ishmael and his progeny, the inspired historian now turns to the main theme of the Bible, that is, the history of the Messianic Line as continued through Isaac. "The collateral branch is again put first and then dismissed" (TPCC, 52). V. 19 of this section marks the opening of another chapter in the story of the unfolding of God's Eternal Purpose.

We are pleased to introduce this Volume (IV) with the following excerpt verbatim (SIBG, 254): "REFLECTIONS—Before I part with Abraham, the celebrated patriarch, let me, in him, contemplate Jesus the everlasting Father. How astonishing his meekness—his kindness to men—his intimacy with, fear of, obedience to, and trust in his God! He is the chosen favorite of JEHOVAH—the father and covenant-head of innumerable millions of saved men. To him all the promises relative to the evangelical and eternal state of his church were originally made. All obedient at his Father's call, he left his native abodes of bliss, and became 'a stranger and sojourner on earth,' not having where to lay his head. At his Father's call, he offered himself an acceptable sacrifice to God; by his all-prevalent intercession, and supernatural influence, he offers men salvation from sin and from the hand of their enemies; and, after long patience, he wins untold disciples in the Jewish and Gospel church. In his visible family are many professors, children of the bond-woman, the covenant of works, who, in the issue, are like Ishmael, or the modern Jews, whose unbelief brings them to misery and woe; others are chil-

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dren of the free-woman, the covenant of grace, and are, like Isaac, begotten to God because of their faith in Christ. Now let me observe, how invigorating is a strong faith in God's promise; for God delights to add abundant blessings to such as, by courageous believing, give him the glory of his power and faithfulness. Often the best of men have little remarkable fellowship with God in old age, but must live even to the end by faith, and not by sight; while wicked families are loaded with temporal mercies for the sake of their pious progenitors. Promised events are often ushered in by the most discouraging appearances; and mercies must be long prayed and waited for ere they be granted. It is good when husbands and wives unite their supplications; for to spread our griefs before a throne of grace is the greatest and surest relief. How often much trouble and vexation attend what is too eagerly desired! But how tender is God, in fixing the temporal, and even eternal, states of persons according to their faith! And how early are children known by their doings! Yet in their education great care is to be taken in consulting their tempers and dispositions. Parents frequently expose themselves to future troubles by their partial regard to children. But why should we set our hearts on them, or any other worldly comfort, when we must so quickly leave them by death? At that time it should be the concern of parents so to dispose of their effects, that there may be no disputes after they are gone; and such deserve to have most assigned them as are likely to make the best use of it. How often the wisest worldlings act the most foolish part, while 'the Lord preserveth the simple!' How marvelously God overruleth the sins of men, to the accomplishment of his purpose or the advancement of his glory! How dreadful, when men, even those who have had a religious education, gratify their sensual appetites at the expense of the temporal and eternal ruin of themselves and their seed; and when God

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permits them to be afterwards hardened in their sin, and standing monuments of that affecting truth, that numbers of the descendants of God's children are sometimes left out of his church, and unacquainted with their parents' blessings!" (John Brown, D.D., LL.D.)

2. *Review*

It will be recalled that Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah, was born in the south country (the Negeb), doubtless at or near Beersheba (Gen. 21:14, 31), when his father was 100 years old and his mother about ninety (17:17, 21:5). When the divine Promise was made to Abraham that Sarah should bear a son, after she had passed the age of childbearing, Abraham laughed, with some degree of incredulousness, it should seem, although some commentators hold that it was joyous laughter (17:17-19). When the Promise was reiterated later, by a heavenly Visitant, at this time Sarah, who was eavesdropping, "laughed within herself" with laughter that bespoke sheer incredulity, for which she was promptly reprimanded by the Visitant (18:9-15). Then when the Child of the Promise was born, Sarah joyfully confessed that God had prepared this laughter for her and her friends (21:6). To memorialize these events and the faithfulness of God, Abraham named the boy Isaac ("laughing one," "one laughs"). Isaac was circumcised on the eighth day (21:4), and as the Child of Promise he had higher privileges than Ishmael had, Abraham's son by the handmaid, Hagar (17:19-21, 21:12, 25:5-6). Later, to exhibit (prove) Abraham's faith, God commanded him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. "Isaac was then a youth (22:6), perhaps 25 years old, as Josephus says, but he filially acquiesced in the purpose of his father. When Abraham had laid him upon the altar, and thus shown his readiness to give all that he possessed to God, the angel of the Lord forbade the sacrifice and accepted a ram instead, thus testifying against child-sacrifices practised by

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the Canaanites and many other idolatrous peoples, and teaching to all men that human sacrifices are an abomination to the Lord (22:1-18)," (DDB, 337). This was an unparalleled demonstration of personal faith on Abraham's part. Tradition puts the offering on Mount Moriah in the Old City of Jerusalem—present site of the Dome of the Rock. "Abraham left the servants and walked in silence to the hilltop. Isaac carried the wood and Abraham the knife. After a time the boy asked his father, 'Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?' Abraham replied that God would see to it. As Dr. Speiser puts it, 'The boy must by now have sensed the truth. The short and simple sentence, *And the two of them walked on together*, covers what is perhaps the most poignant and eloquent silence in all literature.' At the last moment—but only at the last moment—an angel stayed Abraham as he raised his knife to destroy his son and all his hopes. The awful ordeal was over" (ELBT, 98).

Abraham, now well advanced in years, bought for its full value from Ephron the Hittite the Cave of Machpelah, near the oak of Mamre, with the field in which it stood, and there he buried Sarah. Here Abraham himself was buried by his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael; also were buried there later, Isaac and Rebekah, his wife, and Jacob and his wife Leah. Abraham's last care was for the marriage of his son Isaac to a woman of his own kindred, to avoid a possible alliance with one of the daughters of the Canaanites. He sent the aged steward of his house, Eliezer, formerly of Damascus, on the long journey to Haran, in Mesopotamia, where Nahor, Abraham's brother, had settled. Providentially, at the end of the journey, a sign from God indicated that the person he sought was a maiden named Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, son of Nahor. "The whole narrative is a vivid picture of pastoral life, and of the simple customs then used in making a marriage contract, not without characteristic touches of the ten-

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dency to avarice in the family of Bethuel, and particularly in his son Laban (Gen. 24:30). The scene of Isaac's meeting with Rebekah seems to exhibit his character as that of quiet pious contemplation (24:63). Isaac was forty years old when he married, and his residence was by *Beer-la-hai-roi* (the well of *La-hai-roi*) in the extreme south of Palestine (Gen. 25:62, 26:11, 20) (OTH, 89). "The courtship of Rebekah is one of the highlights of the sagas of the Patriarchs" (HBD, 603). "The story of the wooing of Rebekah is a literary masterpiece. Its sketch of the faithful, trusted steward, of the modest, brave, beautiful maiden and of the peace-loving husband is inimitable. It is almost like a drama, each successive scene standing out with vividness. It has much archaeological value, also, in its mention of early marriage customs, of the organization of the patriarch's household, and of many social usages. Religiously it suggests the providential oversight of God, who directed every detail. Chapter twenty-four of Genesis with chapters eighteen and twenty-two are worth reading frequently" (HH, 39). To Isaac Abraham gave the bulk of his great wealth, and died, apparently at Beersheba, "in a good old age, an old man, and full of years" (25:8). His age at death was 175 (25:7). His sons Isaac and Ishmael met at his funeral and buried him in the Cave of Machpelah (25:1-10). Ishmael survived him just 50 years, and died at the age of 137 (25:17). Thus the Saga of Abraham came to its end. Shall we not firmly believe that his pilgrimage of faith was crowned with a glorious fulfilment in that City to which he was really journeying—"the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God"? (Heb. 11:10, Gal. 4:26, Rev. 21:2).

Isaac continued to live in the south country (24:62). "In disposition he was retiring and contemplative; affectionate also, and felt his mother's death deeply" (DDB, 337). (Cf. Gen. 24:63, 67). But after all, this seeming

tendency toward introversion may have been lack of strength of character: it should be noted how susceptible he was to Rebekah's machinations. His life was the longest of those of the Patriarchs: he married at the age of 40, and died at 180 (25:20, 35:28); yet though the longest, it has been described rightly as the least eventful. In comparison with the careers of Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, that of Isaac manifests the earmark of mediocrity.

3. *The Birth of the Twins* (25:19-26)

19 *And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac: 20 and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian, to be his wife. 21 And Isaac entreated Jehovah for his wife, because she was barren: and Jehovah was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, wherefore do I live? And she went to inquire of Jehovah. 23 And Jehovah said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, And two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels: And the one people shall be stronger than the other people; And the elder shall serve the younger. 24 And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. 25 And the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. 26 And after that came forth his brother, and his hand had hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.*

V. 19—the usual formula for introducing a new section: see under *toledoth* (in the index).

A *Second Delay in the Fulfilment of the Messianic Promise* occurs here, vv. 19-21. In Abraham's case, the

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delay continued until some time after Sarah had passed the age of childbearing; in the case of Isaac and Rebekah, it continued through the first twenty years after their marriage. During this time Isaac was "entreating" Yahweh, because his wife continued to be "barren." Again, in this continuing "test" (proof) of his faith, Isaac followed in the steps of his father: he maintained implicit faith in God. And he kept on speaking to God about the matter. ("God's delays are not necessarily refusals"). With this prolonged barrenness of Rebekah we might well compare the cases of Sarah, and Rachel (29:31), the mothers of Samson (Judg. 13:2), Samuel (1 Sam. 1:2), and John the Baptizer (Luke 1:7). "The protracted sterility of the mothers of the patriarchs, and other leading men amongst the Hebrew people, was a providential arrangement, designed to exercise faith and patience, to stimulate prayer, to inspire a conviction that the children born under extraordinary circumstances were gifts of God's grace, and specially to foreshadow the miraculous birth of the Savior" (CECG, 188).

The Pre-natal Struggle of the Twins (vv. 22-23). When the conception actually occurred and Rebekah felt the twins struggling in her womb, "she went to inquire of Yahweh." According to Abraham Ibn Ezra, her complaint, "wherefore do I live?"—literally, "why then am I?"—meant, Why in view of my longing for children must my pain be so great? Immediately there was an answer from God. How was this divine answer communicated? Some modern interpreters would have it that there was a sanctuary at hand, where there was an altar at which such "oracular" utterances were received. Some will say that Rebekah resorted to a native Philistine shrine at Gerar, others that "presumably this sanctuary was at Beersheba" (26:33; cf. Exo. 33:7-11). We see no valid reason for such an assumption. "The opinion . . . that she repaired to a native Philistine shrine at Gerar, supported by the

tithes of all Monotheists in that district, is inconsistent with her relation to Jehovah, the covenanted God of the Hebrews; and the hypothesis that in the family place of worship at Beersheba there might have been an oracle, is equally at variance with the usages of that early period. A great many conjectures have been made as to the mode of her consultation—some, as Luther, supposing that she would apply to Shem; others, to Melchizedek or to Abraham (20:7), who was still living. But she could not inquire either by shrine or by prophets (Exod. 18:15; 1 Sam. 9:9, 28:6; 2 Ki. 3:11), for both of these belong to the institutions of the theocracy. The only solution of the difficulty is, that Rebekah had prayed earnestly for light and direction, and that she had received an answer to her prayers in the way usual in the patriarchal age—in a vision or a dream” (CECG, 188-9). It is significant that the Divine communication here follows the form of the speech of the “angel of Jehovah” to Hagar (16:10-12) in that both are couched in parallelisms. “Whether communicated directly to herself, or spoken through the medium of a prophet, the Divine response to her interrogation assumed an antistrophic and poetical form, in which she was informed that her unborn sons were to be founders of two mighty nations, who, ‘unequal in power, should be divided in rivalry and antagonism from their youth’” (PCG, 317).

The struggling of the twins in Rebekah’s womb presaged that they and their posterity would live at variance with one another, and differ greatly in their religion, customs, laws, etc. The Edomites (Idumeans), descended from Esau, were at first the stronger people (ch. 36), but the Israelites, sprung from Jacob, under David (2 Sam. 8:14), again under Amaziah (2 Chron. 25:11, 12), and finally under John Hyrcanus, about 126 B.C., subdued them. Indeed Hyrcanus subjugated them completely and put them under a Jewish governor (Josephus, *Antiq.* 13,

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9, 1). (*Idumea*, "pertaining to Edom," was the name used by the Greeks and Romans in slightly different spelling, for the country of Edom). As a matter of fact, Jacob's obtaining the birthright and the blessing (25:29-34; 27:29, 37, 40) rendered him and his posterity superior to Esau and his Edomite seed.

The Birth and Naming of the Twins (vv. 24-26). The first to come forth from the womb was named *Esau* which means "hairy"; the name *Edom*, which was given to Esau and which became the name of his descendants, the Edomites, means "red." (Cf. v. 30, 36:1-8). "That redness and hair marked the present strength of Esau's body, and the savage and cruel disposition of him and his posterity (27-11, 40, 41; Obad. 10; Ezek. 25:12, 35:1-9)." Rashi derives *Esau* from *Asah* ("he made") and so translates the name, "completely made," meaning that he was developed with hair like a child several years old (SC, 141). "And after that came forth his brother, and his hand had hold of Esau's heel." "Jacob took hold of his heel, as if he would have drawn him back, so that himself might have been born first, or as if he would overthrow and suppress him, as he afterwards did, v. 33, ch. 27. And rightly was he named *Jacob*, a *heel-holder*, or *supplanter*, on that account, ch. 27:36" (SIBG, 254). "Popular etymologies: Esau is red, *admoni*, his other name being Edom, v. 30, 36:1, 8; he is like a mantle of hair, *se'ar*, and is destined to dwell in the land of Se'ir, Numb. 24:18. According to this passage, Jacob *Ya'aqob*, gets his name from gripping the heel (*'aqeb*) of his twin, but in Gen. 27:36 and Hos. 12:3-4 the name means that the child has supplanted (*'aqab*) his brother. In fact, however, the probable meaning of the name (abbreviated from *Ya'aqob-El*) is 'May Yahweh protect!' " (JB, 43, n.). Skinner (ICCG, 359-360) on v. 25: "*tawny* or *red-haired* is a play on the name Edom; similarly, *all over like a mantle of hair* is a play on Se'ir the country of the Edomites."

Mount Seir is the range of mountains extending southward from the Dead Sea, east of the rift known as the Arabah, almost to the Gulf of Aqabah. Mount Seir is first mentioned in Scripture as being inhabited by the "Horites" (Gen. 14:6); these were the Hurrians, non-Semites, who, between 1750 and 1600 B.C. invaded N. Mesopotamia from the eastern highlands and spread over Palestine and Syria. They are a people now well-known from the cuneiform tablets from ancient Nuzi and other sites. The mention of Esau's removal to Mount Seir follows immediately the account of Isaac's death and burial (35:27-29, 36:1-9). The Israelites were forbidden to enter this region, as Jehovah had given it to Esau for a possession (Deut. 2:1-12; cf. Josh. 24:4). Chieftains of the Horites were called "the children of Seir in the land of Edom" (Gen. 36:20-30; cf. Ezek., ch. 35, esp. v. 15; also 1 Chron. 4:42, 2 Chron. 20:10, 22-23). Esau is represented as having dispossessed the Horites of Mount Seir (Gen. 32:3, 36:20ff.; Deut. 2:1-29, Josh. 24:4). Undoubtedly these various passages indicate the fusion of cultures that almost always followed invasion or infiltration of an inhabited area by a different people: the tendency of the invaders to adopt many of the customs and laws of the people whom they dispossessed is an oft-repeated fact of history. We have noted heretofore the influence of Hurrian culture in the events related in Genesis in the lives of the patriarchs; we shall see this influence again in the story of Jacob and Esau *in re* the disposition of the birthright. (See Speiser, ABG, 194-197). Other interesting facts of the history of Seir are recorded in the Old Testament. We read, for example, that Simeonites pushed out the Amalekites who had hidden in Seir (1 Chron. 4:42-43). The majesty of God was associated with the awesome grandeur of Mt. Seir (Deut. 33:2, Judg. 5:4). King Amaziah of Judah (c. 800-783 B.C.) went to "the Valley of Salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand," and then proceeded to

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pay homage to their gods (2 Chron. 25:11-24). Isaiah tells us that his words, "Watchman, what of the night?" came out of Seir (Isa. 21:11).

4. *The Prophetic Communication* (v. 23)

Before proceeding with our study we must underscore here the very heart and core of the Divine communication to Rebekah. It is embodied in the last sentence: "And the elder shall serve the younger."

This has been interpreted by Calvinistic theologians to mean that God's choice of Jacob over Esau in the Messianic development was completely arbitrary on His part. For example, note the following statement: "Isaac's family is a further example of divine election, v. 23, even seemingly arbitrary. The choice, before birth, of Jacob over Esau indeed concerned national status, not salvation, Mal. 1:2-4; but it illustrates God's bestowal of saving faith, a matter of pure race, irrespective of human worthiness, Rom. 9:10-13" (OHH, 43). Cf. TPCC, 52: "The younger son is again chosen, for God's will, which, though not understood by us, is supreme (Eph. 1:5, 9, 11)." Kraeling (BA, 81) sees here "an underlying substratum of national history mirrored in the basic idea that Esau (Edom) was outstripped by Jacob (Israel)." It was only natural, however, that Edom as the elder people, "should have had the more glorious history." He suggests, therefore, that *three parallel explanations* are offered, in the over-all story we are now considering, why it did not happen that way: "1) God willed it so, and predicted it even before the ancestral brothers were born (Gen. 25:23); 2) Esau sold his birthright (Gen. 25:29-34); 3) Jacob rather than Esau obtained the history-moulding blessing of the dying Isaac (Gen. 27:27f.)." We see no reason for these more or less labored attempts to explain the Divine communication to Rebekah about the varying fortunes of her twins, when, as a matter of fact, if verse 23 is taken simply as *prophetic*, all difficulties seem to vanish. The

communication was to this effect: two sons were to be born, namely Esau and Jacob, and they were to become the progenitors of two peoples; moreover, the nation sired by the elder son was to "serve" the nation to be sired by the younger son. The word of Yahweh here had reference, not to individuals, but to nations (peoples): this fact is accepted by practically all Biblical scholars. Esau never served Jacob in his entire life; on the contrary, it was Jacob who gave gifts to Esau at the time of their reconciliation (Gen., ch. 33). The meaning of the passage is that God, as He had both perfect right and reason to do, had selected Jacob, and not Esau, to become the ancestor of Messiah. The statement, "the elder shall serve the younger," was simply a prophetic announcement that at a future time the Edomites (descendants of Esau) should become servants of the Israelites (descendants of Jacob): the prophecy is clearly fulfilled in 2 Sam. 8:14. The Apostle Paul, in Rom. 9:12-13, combines two different Scriptures. The first, it will be noted is Gen. 25:23, the verse we are now considering. But the second is found in Mal. 1:2-3, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." This statement was uttered several hundred years after both Jacob and Esau had long been dead. It referred to the two nations or peoples: it simply points out the fact that the Edomites suffered divine retribution because of their sins (cf. Gen. 32:3, ch. 36; Num. 20:14-21; Isa. 34:5-8; Obad. 1:21, etc.).

Did God arbitrarily select Jacob instead of Esau to become the ancestor of Messiah? Of course not. The individual human being is *predestined to be free*. By virtue of having been created in the image of God, he has the power of choice, that is, within certain limits, of course, particularly within the limits of his acquaintanceship. (One could hardly choose anything of which one has no knowledge. Could a Hottentot who has never heard of ice, ever choose to go skating?). It follows, therefore,

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that the totality of man's free acts constitutes God's foreknowledge. Strictly speaking, God's knowledge embraces—in a single thought—all the events of the space-time world; hence, He can hardly be said to *foreknow*, but rather, speaking precisely, to *know*. If it be objected that foreknowledge in God implies fixity, we answer that the argument still holds, that the fixity is determined by man's free acts and not by arbitrary divine foreordination. To hold that God necessitates everything that man does, including his acceptance or rejection of redemption, is to make God responsible for everything that happens, both good and evil. This is not only unscriptural—it is an affront to the Almighty. (Cf. Ezek. 18:32, Jn. 5:40, 1 Tim. 2:4, Jas. 1:13, 2 Pet. 3:9). Foreordination in Scripture has reference to the details of the Plan of Redemption, not to the eternal destiny of the individual. The elect are the "whosoever will's," the non-elect, the "Whosoever won't's." (Rev. 22:17).

In Rom. 9:11, we are told expressly that God did choose before their birth which of the two sons of Isaac should carry forward the Messianic Line; hence, election in this instance was specifically "not of works, but of him that calleth." Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of subsequent history, it did turn out to be one of works (works of faith, cf. Jas. 2:14-26) in the sense that their respective acts proved the one ancestor (Jacob) to be more worthy of God's favor than the other (Esau). Hence, in view of the fact that men are *predestined to be free*, surely we are right in holding that this superior quality of Jacob's character was foreknown by God from the beginning. Although it may appear at first glance that the choice was an arbitrary one, our human hindsight certainly supports God's foresight in making it. Of course, Jacob's character was not anything to brag about, especially in the early years of his life, but from his experience at Peniel, he

seems to have emerged a changed man with a changed name, Israel (32:22-32); certainly it was of nobler quality than that of Esau, as proved especially by their different attitudes toward divine institutions—rights and responsibilities—such as those of primogeniture (Exo. 13:11-16, Deut. 21:17). Hence the Divine election in this case was not arbitrary in any sense, but justly based on the Divine knowledge of the basic righteousness of Jacob by way of contrast with the sheer secularism (“profanity”) of Esau. (We may rightly compare, with the antics of Esau, the unspiritual attitude of church leaders—the “clergy”—and church members toward the ordinance of Christian baptism. Think how this institution has been changed, perverted, belittled, ignored, and even repudiated by the professional “theologians” throughout the entire Christian era!).

“It is important to observe that God chose Jacob, the younger, to be over his brother Esau before they were born. Before the children were born, neither having done anything good or bad, it was God’s declared purpose that the older should serve the younger (Rom. 9:10-13, Gen. 25:23). Subsequent events may lead us to condemn Jacob for his fraudulent methods of obtaining the family blessing. But that which Jacob sought was his by divine decree. Certainly God was within His sovereign right to make this choice. And assuredly the characters of Jacob and Esau that subsequently emerged showed God’s wisdom and foreknowledge in choosing Jacob” (Smith-Fields, OTH, 92-93). Let us not forget, however, that the choice was *not* an arbitrary one, but a choice emanating from the divine foreknowledge of the worthiness of Jacob above Esau, as demonstrated by what they did—the choices they made—in real life. *How can God use any man effectively who has little or no respect for His ordinances?* (The birth of Jacob and Esau took place before Abraham died. Abraham

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was 160 years old, and Isaac sixty, at the time the twins
were born, Gen. 21:5, 25:26, 25:7). (See my *Genesis*,
II, pp. 237-264).

5. *Esau the Profane* (25:27-34).

27 *And the boys grew: and Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents.* 28 *Now Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: and Rebekah loved Jacob.* 29 *And Jacob boiled pottage: and Esau came in from the field, and he was faint:* 30 *and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.* 31 *And Jacob said, Sell me first thy birthright.* 32 *And Esau said, Behold, I am about to die: and what profit shall the birthright do to me?* 33 *And Jacob said, Swear to me first; and he sware unto him; and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.* 34 *And Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: so Esau despised his birthright.*

V. 27—In due time the twins were born. Esau grew up to become “a skilful hunter, a man of the field.” And Jacob “was a quiet man, dwelling in tents.” From the very first these boys were opposites in character, manners, and habits. The older was a man of the field, leading a roving, unsettled kind of life; the younger preferred a quiet domestic life, dwelling in tents, attending to his father’s flocks and herds. Esau becomes experienced in hunting, as opposed to Jacob who is a man “of simple tastes, quiet, retiring.” “The over-all contrast, then, is between the aggressive hunter and the reflective seminomad” (Speiser, ABG, 195). “Jacob was ambitious and persevering, capable of persistence in selfish scheming or in nobler service; the latter, although frank and generous, was shallow and unappreciative of the best things. In the long

run God can do more with the former type of men" (Sanders, HH. 39). Thus it will be seen that the descriptions of the two boys are clearly antithetical. This contrast, moreover, persisted through the centuries between their respective progenies, the Israelites and the Edomites. As previously noted, the latter were inveterate enemies of the former, thus authenticating God's pronouncement through Malachi, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Mal. 1:1, cf. again Rom. 9:13).

V. 28. "*Now Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison.*" "Isaac, himself so sedate, loves the wild, wandering hunter, because he supplies him with pleasures which his own quiet habits do not reach" (MG, 368). "*And Rebekah loved Jacob.*" "Rebekah becomes attached to the gentle, industrious shepherd, who satisfies those social and spiritual tendencies in which she is more dependent than Isaac," and thus "the children please their parents according as they supply what is wanting in themselves. Esau is destructive of game; Jacob is constructive of cattle" (MG, 368). "Persons of quiet and retiring disposition, like Isaac, are often fascinated by those of more sparkling and energetic temperament, such as Esau; mothers, on the other hand, are mostly drawn towards children that are gentle in disposition and homekeeping in habit" (PCG, 320).

In those days, we are told, it was not an uncommon thing for the huntsman to come half-starved to the shepherd's tent and ask for some food. In these circumstances the "man of the field" was pretty largely at the mercy of the tent-dweller. This seems to have been the condition in which Esau found himself, and when he scented the "potage" which Jacob was boiling in his tent, he rushed inside and shouted, "Feed me some of that red stuff, I pray, for I am faint with hunger." "Jacob *stewed something*: an intentionally indefinite description, the nature of the dish being reserved for v. 34" (ICCG, 361). "Let me gulp

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some of that red stuff there," cried Esau, "some of that red seasoning," literally, "some of that red red . . ."—in his excitement Esau seems to have forgotten the name of the dish. "*Therefore was his name called Edom,*" that is, "because he had eaten the soup which was of a red brown color (*adom*)—another play on words" (JB, 43). "The name Edom, signifying *red*, at once marked his origin and color, and his excessive lust after the red pottage, and his selling his birthright to obtain it" (SIBG, 254). "Both marks characterize his sensual, hard nature" (Lange, CDHCG, 499). "It quite accords with the Oriental taste to fasten upon certain incidents in the life, or upon peculiar traits in the character, of individuals, as the foundation of a new name or soubriquet. The Arabians are particularly addicted to this habit. So are all people in an early state of society; and there is no ground to wonder, therefore, at the names of Isaac's sons being suggested by circumstances attending their birth, apparently of a trivial nature, especially as no fault can be found with them on etymological grounds" (CECG, 190). "Therefore his name was called Edom. There is no discrepancy in ascribing the same name both to his complexion and the color of the lentile broth. The propriety of a name may surely be marked by different circumstances. Nor is it unnatural to suppose that such occasions should occur in the course of life. Jacob, too, has the name given to him from the circumstances of his birth, here confirmed" (A. Gosman, Lange, *ibid.*, 500).

It is not surprising to read that Jacob took advantage of this opportunity to drive what we might properly call a "hard bargain." Jacob said, "Sell me first thy birthright," v. 31. Esau answered, in substance, "Oh well, I am about to die of hunger," or perhaps, "I am risking my life daily in the hunt," etc., "of what use would the birthright be in any case?" (A good example of rationaliza-

tion). "Jacob said, Swear to me first; and he swore unto him; and he sold his birthright unto Jacob," v. 33. As it turned out, there was no hard bargain at all; there was not even any haggling on Esau's part; with jaunty nonchalance, he tossed away, as if it were not worthy of his concern, the most precious privilege that God conferred on the firstborn—the right of primogeniture, the birthright.

What was the birthright? That is, what did it include?

"The birthright was of little practical importance when there was an only son. Isaac was Abraham's only true heir, Ishmael not being of the seed of promise. Thus Isaac was the only one in the line of promise and the natural heir of his father's possessions. But Isaac's wife bore him two sons, Esau and Jacob. Now the birthright assumed greater significance. Esau, as the firstborn, should have been the one through whom the people of God descended. But he foolishly sold that birthright for carnal considerations and lost it to Jacob. Jacob claimed the privileges of the birthright and from him came the twelve tribes of Israel. The firstborn received a double portion of the inheritance (cf. Deut. 21:16-17), and, at least before the establishment of the Aaronic priesthood, the firstborn in each family exercised the priestly prerogatives in the home after his father's death" (HSB, 42). "This birthright entailed upon the possessor a double portion of the paternal inheritance (Deut. 21:16-17); a claim to his father's principal blessing, and to the promise of Canaan, and a peculiar relation to God therein. . . . Altogether this is a most painful narrative. One does not know whether most to condemn the folly and recklessness of Esau, bartering his birthright for a mess of pottage; or the unbrotherly spirit and grasping selfishness of Jacob, refusing to a fainting brother a mouthful of food until he had given him all he possessed" (SIBG, 254).

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The birthright in this instance was of extraordinary significance. Esau's "impatience was natural, for food is not readily procured in an Eastern tent, and takes time to prepare. Jacob seized the occasion to obtain Esau's birthright as the price of the meal; and Esau consented with a levity which is marked by the closing words of the narrative: 'thus Esau *despised* his birthright.' For this the Apostle calls him 'a *profane* person, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright,' and marks him as the pattern of those who sacrifice eternity for a moment's sensual enjoyment (Heb. 12:16). The justice of this judgment appears from what the birthright was, which he sold at such a price. If he had received the birthright, he would have been the head of the family, its prophet, priest and king; and no man can renounce such privileges, except as a sacrifice required by God, without 'despising' God who gave them. But more than this: he would have been the head of the *chosen* family; on him devolved the blessing of Abraham, that 'in his seed all families of the earth should be blessed'; and, in despising his birthright, he put himself out of the sacred family, and so became a '*profane* person.' His sin must not be overlooked in our indignation at the fraud of Jacob, which . . . brought its own retribution as well as its own gain" (OTH, 93). Disregard for positive divine ordinances (such as the birthright and the paternal blessing, in patriarchal times) is known in Scripture as *profanity* (from *pro*, "before" or "outside," and *fanum*, "temple," hence unholy); consequently this is the vilest insult that can be perpetrated against God—a fact which the sophisticated, the "respectable," the worldly wise of humankind are usually too biased to understand or too proud in their own conceit to be willing to admit. This is the charge leveled against Esau: his profanity was such that he blithely and unconcernedly sold his birthright for a bowl of beans (Heb. 12:16, "mess of meat"). And this general irreligiousness of the paternal character

seems to have passed down to his offspring (Num. 20:14, 21; Judg. 11:16-17; 2 Sam. 8:14; Ps. 137:7; Ezek. 25:12-14, 35:1-15; Amos 9:11-12; Joel 3:19; Obad. 1-20; 1 Tim. 1:9).

Note the oath, v. 33. "An oath is prostituted when it is exacted and given to confirm an improper and sinful contract; and a person is chargeable with additional guilt when, after entering into a sinful engagement, he precipitately confirms it by an oath. This is what Esau did: he despised or cared little about it in comparison of present gratification to his appetite: he threw away his religious privileges for a trifle; and hence he is stigmatized by the apostle as a 'profane person' (Heb. 12:16, cf. Phil. 3:19). 'There was never any meat, except the forbidden fruit, so dearly bought as the broth of Jacob' (Bishop Hall). That Esau deserved to be superseded in his honors, in consequence of his irreligious character, cannot be denied nor doubted; for it is principally or solely on this transaction that the charge of profanity is founded. But what was justice on the part of God was cruelty on the part of Jacob, who had no right to make Esau the instrument of his own degradation and ruin. Besides, it was impolitic as well as wrong. For he might have concluded that, if God had not ordained him to possess the envied honors, he could never obtain them; and, on the other hand, if it was the decree of Providence, a way would be opened for his obtaining them in due time. Jacob's heart was right, but he sought to secure good ends by bad means" (CECG, 190). Lange (CDHCG, 500): "If Jacob's demand of an oath evinced ungenerous suspicion, Esau's giving of an oath showed a low sense of honor."

The pottage of lentils. "The red lentil is still a favorite article of food in the east; it is a small kind, the seeds of which, after being decorticated, are commonly sold in the bazaars of India. Dr. Robinson, who partook of lentils, says that he found them very palatable and could

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well conceive that to a weary hunter, faint with hunger, they would be quite a dainty (*Bib. Res.* I, 246). Kitto also says that he has often partaken of red pottage, prepared by seething the lentils in water, and then adding a little suet to give them a flavor, and that he found it better food than a stranger would imagine; 'the mess,' he adds, 'had the redness which gained for it the name of *adom*' (*Pict. Bib.*, Gen. 25:30, 34.)" (OTH, Smith-Fields, 93, n.). This *pottage* brewed by Jacob was a soup, we are told, made of a decoction of lentils or small beans, called '*adas*, which were and are extensively grown in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine (cf. 2 Sam. 17:28, 23:11). (They were also included in Ezekiel's recipe for bread-making in an emergency, Ezek. 4:9). "It is probable that Jacob made use of Egyptian beans, which he had procured as a dainty; for Esau was a stranger to it; and hence he said, 'Feed me, I pray thee, with that red, red (thing).' The Hebrew 'red,' includes the idea of a brown or chocolate color. This lentil soup is very palatable, particularly when accompanied with melted butter and pepper; and to the weary hunter, faint through hunger, the odor of the smoking dish must have been irresistibly tempting" (CECG, 189).

V. 34. Esau "*did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way.*" A rather pathetic description of a character and life given over, one might say exclusively, to sensual self-satisfaction; yet a life that is paralleled millions and millions of times in practically every generation! Dr. Chappell, in one of his books of sermons on Old Testament characters, writes of Esau under the caption, "The Story of a Fine Animal." The title is especially fitting.

6. *Interesting Appraisals of the Characters of Esau and Jacob.*

Speiser (ABG, 195): "Esau is depicted as an uncouth glutton: he speaks of 'swallowing, gulping down,' instead of eating, or the like." Skinner (ICCG, 362): "Esau's

answer reveals the sensual nature of the man: the remoter good is sacrificed to the passing necessity of the moment, which his ravenous appetite leads him to exaggerate. . . . The climax of the story is Esau's unconcern, even when he discovers that he has bartered the birthright for such a trifle as a dish of lentil soup . . . if Esau was defrauded, he was defrauded of that which he was incapable of appreciating." Again, *ibid.*, the name *Edom* is 'a memento of the never-to-be-forgotten greed and stupidity of the ancestor' (Gunkel)."

Murphy (CG, 369-370): "Jacob was no doubt aware of the prediction communicated to his mother (v. 23), that the elder should serve the younger. A quiet man like him would not otherwise have thought of reversing the order of nature and custom. In after times the right of primogeniture consisted in a double portion of the father's goods (Deut. 21:17), and a certain rank as the patriarch and priest of the house on the death of the father. But in the case of Isaac there was the far higher dignity of chief of the chosen family and heir of the promised blessing, with all the immediate and ultimate temporal and eternal benefits therein included. Knowing all this, Jacob is willing to purchase the birthright as the most peaceful way of bringing about that supremacy which was destined for him. He is therefore cautious and prudent, even conciliating in his proposal. He availed himself of a weak moment to accomplish by consent what was to come. Yet he lays no necessity on Esau, but leaves him to his own free choice. We must therefore beware of blaming him for endeavoring to win his brother's concurrence in a thing that was already settled in the purpose of God. His chief error lay in attempting to anticipate the arrangements of Providence. Esau is strangely ready to dispose of his birthright for a trivial present gratification. He might have obtained other means of recruiting nature equally suitable, but he will sacrifice anything for the desire of

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the moment. Any higher import of the right he was prepared to sell so cheap seems to have escaped his view, if it had ever occurred to his mind. Jacob, however, is deeply in earnest. He will bring this matter within the range of heavenly influence. He will have God solemnly invoked as a witness to the transfer. Even this does not startle Esau. There is not a word about the price. It is plain that Esau's thoughts were altogether of 'the morsel of meat.' He swears unto Jacob. He then ate and drank, and rose up and went his way, as the sacred writer graphically describes his reckless course. Most truly did he despise his birthright. His mind did not rise to higher or further things. Such was the boyhood of these wondrous twins."

Leupold (EG, 712, 713): "Fact of the matter is, Jacob's character is one of the hardest to understand; it is complicated; it has many folds and convolutions. But in this particular incident the Scriptural point of view must be maintained: *Esau* was primarily to blame . . . Jacob was really a spiritually minded man with appreciation of spiritual values and with distinct spiritual ambitions. Especially in the matter of carrying on the line of promise from which the Savior would come did Jacob have ambitions. The aspirations apparently, however, were begotten by the divine word of promise (v. 23). Yahweh had destined Jacob to pre-eminence. Jacob gladly accepted the choice and aspired to attain the treasure promised. His eagerness was commendable. His choice of means in arriving at the desired end was not always above reproach. He felt he had to help the good Lord along occasionally. He was not fully confident of God's methods for arriving at the goal. He felt the need of occasionally inserting a bit of assistance of his own. Such an attitude was one of mistrust: confidence in human ingenuity rather than in divine dependability—in one word—unbelief. But his spiritual aggressiveness was by no means to be despised, nor was it wrong. Approaching this incident with these facts in

mind, we seem compelled to assume one thing in order to understand Jacob's request. It appears, namely, that the subject of the birthright . . . had been under consideration between the brothers on a previous occasion. It would also seem that Esau had made some derogatory remark about its value, or had even spoken about his own readiness to part with the privilege. Otherwise we can hardly believe that Jacob would have made this special request without further motivation, or that Esau would have consented to the bargain without more ado. This, indeed, puts Jacob into a more favorable light, but so does our text (v. 34). Indeed, there is left on Jacob's part a measure of shrewd calculation in so timing his request that he catches Esau at a disadvantage, a form of cunning which we must condemn without reservation. Yet the act does not call for such strong criticism as: he was 'ruthlessly taking advantage of his brother, watching and waiting till he was sure of his victim.' (Dods)." Again, (*ibid.*, 715): "The last part of the chapter, vs. 27-34, seems to us to come under a head such as Spiritual Aggressiveness, or even, The Right Goal but the Wrong Way. In any case, it should especially be borne in mind that the one censured by the text is Esau not Jacob."

Incidentally, there are commentators, Leupold included, who hold that the material blessings of the covenant may not have been fully revealed as far back as Jacob's time. According to Mosaic law of a later date the right of the firstborn involved a double portion of the father's inheritance (Deut. 21:17) and supremacy of a kind not wholly defined over his brethren and his father's house (Gen. 27:29, cf. 49:3). It would be well to note in this connection also the *deference* manifested by Jacob to Esau after the former's return from Mesopotamia (cf. 33:1-12).

Again, it is now known that under Hurrian law—a likely source of some of the patriarchal customs—the elder son "could be designated as such by the testator contrary

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to the actual order of birth," that is, inheritance could be "regulated by a father's pronouncement irrespective of chronological precedence" (Speiser, ABG, 195, 213). "Selling inheritance rights far under value, has a Hurrian parallel: in Nuzi a brother transferred rights to a whole grove for only three sheep, apparently under duress" (OHH, 43). The rigidity of the details of primogeniture seems not to have been firmly established until after the organization of the Theocracy.

Marcus Dods (EBG, 261-265): "It has been pointed out that the weakness in Esau's character which makes him so striking a contrast to his brother is his inconstancy. Constancy, persistence, dogged tenacity is certainly the striking feature of Jacob's character. He could wait and bide his time; he could retain one purpose year after year till it was accomplished. The very motto of his life was, 'I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.' (Gen. 32:26). He watched for Esau's weak moment, and took advantage of it. He served fourteen years for the woman he loved, and no hardship quenched his love. Nay, when a whole lifetime intervened, and he lay dying in Egypt, his constant heart still turned to Rachel, as if he had parted with her but yesterday. In contrast with this tenacious, constant character stands Esau, led by impulse, betrayed by appetite, everything by turns and nothing long. Today despising his birthright, tomorrow breaking his heart for its loss; today vowing he will murder his brother, tomorrow falling on his neck and kissing him; a man you cannot reckon upon, and of too shallow a nature for anything to root itself deeply in. . . . Esau came in hungry from hunting, from dawn to dusk he had been taxing his strength to the utmost, too eagerly absorbed to notice his distance from home or his hunger; it is only when he begins to return depressed by the ill-luck of the day, and with nothing now to stimulate him, that he feels faint; and when at last he reaches his father's tents, and

the savory smell of Jacob's lentils greets him, his ravenous appetite becomes an intolerable craving, and he begs Jacob to give him some of his food. Had Jacob done so with brotherly feeling there would have been nothing to record. But Jacob had long been watching for an opportunity to win his brother's birthright, and though no one could have supposed that an heir to even a little property would sell it in order to get a meal five minutes sooner than he could otherwise get it, Jacob had taken his brother's measure to a nicety, and was confident that present appetite would in Esau completely extinguish every other thought.

"Which brother presents the more repulsive spectacle of the two in this selling of the birthright it is hard to say. Who does not feel contempt for the great, strong man, declaring he will die if he is required to wait five minutes till his own supper is prepared; forgetting, in the craving of his appetite, every consideration of a worthy kind; oblivious of everything but his hunger and his food; crying, like a great baby, Feed me with that red! So it is always with the man who has fallen under the power of sensual appetite. He is always going to die if it is not immediately gratified. He *must* have his appetite satisfied. . . . But the treacherous and self-seeking craft of the other brother is as repulsive; the cold-blooded, calculating spirit that can hold every appetite in check, that can cleave to one purpose for a lifetime, and, without scruple, take advantage of a twin-brother's weakness. Jacob knows his brother thoroughly, and all his knowledge he uses to betray him. He knows he will speedily repent of his bargain, so he makes him swear he will abide by it. It is a relentless purpose he carries out—he deliberately and unhesitatingly sacrifices his brother to himself. Still, in two respects, Jacob is the superior one. He can appreciate the birthright in his father's family, and he has constancy. Esau might be a pleasant companion, brighter and more vivacious than Jacob on a day's hunting; free and open-handed,

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and not implacable; and yet such people are not satisfactory friends. Often the most attractive people have similar inconstancy; they have a superficial vivacity, and brilliance, and charm, and good nature, which invite a friendship they do not deserve. . . .

"But Esau's despising of his birthright is that which stamps the man and makes him interesting to each generation. No one can read the simple account of his reckless act without feeling how justly we are called upon to 'look diligently lest there be among us any profane person as Esau, who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright.' Had the birthright been something to eat, Esau would not have sold it. What an exhibition of human nature! What an exposure of our childish folly and the infatuation of appetite! For Esau has company in his fall. We are all stricken by his shame. . . . Born the sons of God, made in His image, introduced to a birthright angels might covet, we yet prefer to rank with the beasts of the field, and let our souls starve if only our bodies be well tended and cared for. . . . Not once as Esau, but again and again, we barter peace of conscience and fellowship with God and the hope of holiness, for what is, in simple fact, no more than a bowl of pottage." (It is interesting to note the somewhat different picture of Esau that we find in chapter 33).

"Esau is an example of how a man with a bad reputation can be more attractive than another who has managed to acquire a good one. In the O.T. estimates Esau has a black mark, while his brother Jacob has all the marks of favor. Jacob is listed as a prince in Israel, and the father of the twelve tribes of the chosen people; but the Edomites, whom the Jews hated, were called sons of Esau. Yet notwithstanding all that, in the choice of a companion as between Esau and Jacob, almost anyone would have chosen Esau." Among the assets on the "plus side of the ledger" the following might be named: (1) his physical vigor.

"Esau was rough but he was virile, and his old father Isaac turned to him instinctively because he knew that if there was anything he wanted done, Esau could do it; and as he grew old he leaned increasingly on Esau's strength."

(2) He was a warmhearted man. "Evidently he loved his father, as his father loved him. When Isaac was old and blind, the rough Esau was gentle with him and quick to respond to everything he wanted. . . . If Esau was careless about the particular advantages of the birthright, he was not careless about his father's blessing. He wanted that, whatever else was lost." (3) He was not the kind of man who could hold a grudge. Cf. the reconciliation with Jacob on the latter's return from Paddan-Aram (ch. 33, esp. v. 4). What, then, was Esau's basic fault? "He was a man who lived only in the immediate moment, and by the light only of what was obvious. . . . He showed that he did not care enough for life's great possibilities to pay the price of present discipline. He must have what he wanted when he wanted it, and the consequences could go hang. That was the critical weakness of Esau and that was his condemnation. He lost tomorrow because he snatched so greedily at today. Consider his descendants in every generation, including ours: the young men who cannot let any long-range dedication stand in the way of appetite; the frivolous girl who says of something trivial, 'I'll die if I do not get it'; the mature people for whom comfort always comes first and for whom anything like religious responsibility is ruled out if it is hard; the men in public office who will sell a birthright of great ideals to satisfy immediate clamor. Attractive traits will not save such people from ultimate dishonor" (IBG, 665-667).

7. *Summarizations*

"Esau was a wild, savage kind of man, spending most of his time in hunting, learning the art of war, and the like (cf. 10:9, 16:12). Jacob was a sincere, mild, plain-

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dealing man, keeping much at home, attending to his household affairs, and to his father's flocks and herds (cf. 6:9, 46:34). The early development of different propensities in Esau and Jacob is very remarkable, and the visible causes of their respective characters may be traced to the dispositions and partialities of the parents. Isaac loves venison, and first to please his father, and then to gratify his own acquired habits, Esau becomes a *cunning hunter*. Rebekah loves domestic retirement, finds her comfort in the society of her infant Jacob, and forms his future character on the model of her own. These things are to be carefully observed: (1) How early, and insensibly, some part of the character of a father or mother may be propagated in their children. (2) The consequent importance of well considering all the habits in which a child is indulged or encouraged, as part, and often the most influential part, of its education. (3) The danger of parental partialities, from which, in this remarkable instance, many of the future troubles of Isaac and Rebekah, and Esau and Jacob, arose" (SIBG, 254).

"The story of Esau's life may be written in four parts: (1) the sale of his birthright to Jacob for the mess of pottage (25:27-34), which indicated that he despised his birthright and was willing to barter it away for a small consideration; (2) the marriages of Esau which were consummated with women who were not related to his father's family, except for Mahalath who was his third wife and whom he married to placate his parents; (3) his failure to secure the patriarchal blessing just prior to the death of his father Isaac; (4) the re-establishment of brotherly relations with Jacob, and his departure from Canaan for Seir. Esau was careless, motivated by animal appetites, and revengeful after the blessing was stolen from him by Jacob" (HSB, 42). (Cf. Gen. 26:34-35, 28:6-9; 27:18-41, 33:1-18).

GENESIS
FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING
Esau the Profane

Gen. 25:34, Heb. 12:16-17

Much has been improperly inferred and said about Esau, from variant points of view. The notion especially that he bears "the broad seal of God's reprobation" is certainly dishonoring to God. "Surely such forget, that by representing him as hated of God and predestined to woe, with all feeling minds they must enlist pity for his wretchedness, and sympathy on account of his doom. Thus reasoning, God has been greatly dishonored, and, in opposition to His solemn asseveration, he has been declared a respecter of persons" (MSS, 315). (See discussion of Gen. 25:23, Mal. 1:2-3, Rom. 9:10-13 above). The simple fact is that God's disapprobation of Esau was based on His known (or "foreknown") profaneness of Esau's character. This profaneness certainly was not predestinated.

1. *Note the characteristics of Esau's profane barter.* As the firstborn he possessed many privileges: we find it difficult not to accept the fact that these privileges existed in patriarchal times (cf. again Deut. 21:15-17). These included (1) temporal privileges: pre-eminence of authority in the patriarchal family, and a double portion of the paternal estate; and in this case (2) *spiritual* privileges, viz., the descent of the priesthood in the family, from the first-born (even before the Law), the genealogy of the Messiah through his seed, the peculiar and precious promises associated with the paternal *blessing* which took the form of a prophecy. All this Esau bartered for just one mess of pottage.

2. How is this profanity to be accounted for? (1) On the basis of his inconsideration. He did not weigh the matter, but acted hastily. (2) As a result of his vo-

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racious appetite. This was so strong he could not control it until food was prepared. (3) Especially as a consequence of his utter depreciation of divine ordinances. "He was a worldly and carnal man." He lived in the here and the immediate *now*. "He was deficient alike in personal piety towards God, and filial piety towards his father: the two are often wedded." Consider the Biblical examples of men and women of his ilk. E.g., Gehazi, Elisha's servant, who, as a penalty for his avarice and lying about a talent of silver and two changes of raiment, and thus bringing the prophetic office into contempt, became afflicted with leprosy (2 Ki. 5:20-27). Or, Ananias and Sapphira, who, retaining a portion of the price they had received for a piece of property, lied to the Holy Spirit about it (Acts 5:1-11). (They lied to the Holy Spirit by lying to the Apostle Peter who was inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit). And what shall we say of Judas who, for thirty pieces of silver, betrayed the Son of God into the hands of His enemies (Matt. 27:3-10, Acts 1:15-20); and of Herod, who for daring to receive the flattering adulation of the crowd, was "eaten of worms" (Acts 12:20-23). These all were surely bad bargains, equally with that of Esau. Are not millions in our day living the life Esau lived, and hence acting with equal profaneness? Those who sell themselves for vanity: note the outrageous adornments—the long sideburns, the thick beards, the foppish mustaches, the silly contention between the miniskirters and the midiskirters, the subservience to the fashions of the moment—what "they" say and what "they" do—the strict conformists, the slaves of passing fads who fool themselves into thinking they are just being "free." Those who sacrifice truth, honesty, goodness, for the sake of money. Those who sacrifice themselves on the altars of pleasure. Those who barter their souls for riotous liv-

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ing. In many instances, these "bargains" are worse than that of Esau. He did obtain a good—a meal; he had his hunger alleviated. But think how often the sinner receives evil, and evil only, for the fearful price he pays!

In the first place, Esau is a fine animal, "a strong, upstanding husky fellow who makes a pleasing impression upon any crowd in which he chances to be." "He is possessed of a charming physical courage and daring. I do not think Esau would count for a straw on a moral stand, but physically he was unafraid." "In the next place he is generous and open-handed and open-hearted. . . . He is a breezy Bohemian type of man. He has a way of putting all his goods in the showcase and thus often winning an applause that is not his due." (There are many in our day who seem to think that practising a vice *openly* gives it a special kind of virtue). "Now if you are a reader of modern fiction you have possibly been struck with the fondness of many of our present-day authors for the type of character that Esau represents. Did you ever notice with what delight many of our fiction writers picture the virtues of some worldling against the background of the failures and vices of some churchman? It seems to be a most joyful pastime with a certain type of author. The name of such books is almost legion. Take, for instance, *The Calling of Dan Matthews*. The only three characters in this book that the author would have us respect are an infidel doctor, a nurse who is a rank materialist and a preacher who is an utter coward and who gives up his Christ and his vocation for the love of a woman. Now there are folks that are like these, but they are not the folks who keep up the moral standards of the communities in which they live. Yet the author tires to make us believe that this is the case. . . . Take the work of that literary scavenger who took a stroll down 'Main Street.'

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He is not without ability. But he is a self-appointed inspector of street gutters and sewers. He has an eye for the moral carrion of the community. Now whom does he seek to have us respect? Who are the ones that when sickness comes do the self-forgetful and the self-sacrificing deeds of service? Not the people of faith. Not those who believe in Christ. No, there are just two characters in the book that the author thinks are worthy of our admiration. There are only two who have fine, heroic qualities. One of them is a renegade Swede who is anchored to no place and who is mastered by no principles: a physical and a moral tramp. The other is a little bunch of feminine ignorance and conceit and ingratitude. She is the wife of the physician of the book. She is the one who plays the heroine when sickness comes to the Swede's house. But she sees nothing heroic in the common duties of life. She has no appreciation of her social relationships. As a wife she is a travesty and as a mother she is a cynical joke" (MSBC, 116-117).

Esau lived his life *outside the temple*: he was profane. His sin was secularism. His life is described in one graphic statement: "He did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way." This sin—secularism—was the besetting sin of the people of the antediluvian world: "in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away." This, our Lord tells us, will be the besetting sin of the age that will immediately precede His Second Coming: "so shall be the coming of the Son of man" (Matt. 25:37-39; cf. vv. 3:13, 29-31, also 16:27). (See also Gen. 6:11-13). Can it be that we are now entering upon these "last days"? "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

GENESIS

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART THIRTY-SEVEN

1. What special significance does Gen. 25:19 have in relation to the over-all theme of the Bible?
2. Review briefly the circumstances of the early life of Isaac?
3. How old was Isaac at the time of his marriage to Rebekah?
4. How old was Abraham at the time of his death?
5. How old was Ishmael at the time of his death?
6. In what region of Palestine did Isaac continue to dwell?
7. How would you evaluate in general the life and character of Isaac?
8. How long after their marriage did Isaac and Rebekah live without children?
9. How many instances of the wife's protracted barrenness are related in Scripture? In what sense may each of these be described as a *providential* arrangement?
10. What did Isaac do about this barrenness of Rebekah?
11. What did Rebekah herself do about the pre-natal struggle of the twins? What was probably the method of her "consultation" with Jehovah about this experience?
12. What reason may be given for rejecting the view that this consultation took place at some established oracular shrine? What were the means usually employed to communicate Divine revelations in the Patriarchal Age? Cite examples.
13. What facts were presaged by the struggling of the twins in Rebekah's womb?
14. When the older of the two was born, what was he named and why?
15. When the younger was delivered what was he named and why?

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16. How were the names "Esau," "Edom," and "Seir" associated as to meaning?
17. How was Mt. Seir later associated with the life of Esau and his descendants?
18. Who were the Horites? Where was Mt. Seir geographically?
19. What was God's prophetic communication to Rebekah? What was the most significant part of this communication?
20. Does v. 23 teach us that God's choice of Jacob instead of Esau to be the progenitor of Messiah was an *arbitrary* one? Explain your answer.
21. What three parallel "explanations" are given of this Divine choice of the younger son above the older one?
22. What do we mean by saying that "when this communication, v. 23, is considered simply as *prophetic*, all difficulties vanish"?
23. Correlate Gen. 25:23, Mal. 1:2-3, and Rom. 9:12-13. In this connection, distinguish between Divine foreknowledge and foreordination.
24. What is meant by the statement that God does not *foreknow*, but simply *knows*?
25. Discuss the distinction between *real time* and *mathematical time*. Distinguish between *time* and *timelessness*.
26. Explain our statement that God's choice in this instance proceeded from His foreknowledge of the worthiness of Jacob above Esau, and of the Israelites above the Edomites, as demonstrated by *their* respective choices and deeds.
27. How old were Abraham and Isaac respectively at the time the twins were born?
28. How did the attitudes and pursuits of the two boys become indicative of their differences of character?
29. What reasons may be given to explain Issac's preference of Esau, and Rebekah's preference of Jacob?

GENESIS

Show how these parental preferences caused domestic chaos in this household.

30. What lesson should we learn from this story about discord caused by such parental bias toward children? How was this folly of parental preference later repeated in the life of Jacob?
31. What was the "pottage" that Jacob was cooking when Esau came to his tent?
32. How is the name "Edom" associated with this "pottage"?
33. What "hard bargain" did Jacob drive when Esau asked for food? Was it in any sense a "hard bargain" from Esau's point of view?
34. What "rationalization" did Esau indulge to justify his nonchalant acceptance of Jacob's demand?
35. What patriarchal privileges were included in the birthright? What special Messianic privileges in this particular case?
36. On what grounds is Esau denounced in Scripture as a *profane* person?
37. In what sense was the accompanying *oath* in this instance a source of additional guilt on Esau's part?
38. What statement in v. 34 epitomizes Esau's attitude and life?
39. How do Dr. Speiser and Dr. Skinner, respectively, appraise Esau's character and life?
40. On what grounds does Leupold appraise Jacob's conduct "in a more favorable light"? Compare Murphy's appraisal.
41. What is the significance of Deut. 21:17 in relation to the patriarchal birthright?
42. What light is thrown by Hurrian law upon this incident of the birthright?
43. How does Marcus Dods compare the characters of the two sons?

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44. What three important lessons do we get from this story in regard to parental influence and conduct?
45. What were the chief aspects of Esau's profane barter?
46. How is this profanity to be accounted for?
47. Review other Scriptural examples of such profanity.
48. How is this profanity exemplified in the attitude of many professing Christians toward the ordinance of Christian baptism?
49. What do we mean by saying that Esau's besetting sin was *secularism*?
50. Where do we read that secularism was the over-all besetting sin of the antediluvian world? Also that it will be the over-all besetting sin of the age immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ? What should these facts indicate to all Christians of the present generation?

PART THIRTY-EIGHT

THE STORY OF ISAAC: HIS SOJOURN IN PHILISTIA

(Gen. 26:1-34)

The Biblical Record

1 And there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines, unto Gerar. 2 And Jehovah appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: 3 sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; 4 and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these lands; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; 5 because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. 6 And Isaac dwelt in Gerar: 7 and the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, My wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon. 8 And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife. 9 And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die because of her. 10 And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might easily have lain with thy wife, and thou wouldest have brought guiltiness upon us. 11 And Abimelech charged all the people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

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12 And Isaac sowed in that land, and found in the same year a hundredfold: and Jehovah blessed him. 13 And the man waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great: 14 and he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and a great household: and the Philistines envied him. 15 Now all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped, and filled with earth. 16 And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we. 17 And Isaac departed thence, and encamped in the valley of Gerar; and dwelt there.

18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. 19 And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. 20 And the herdsmen of Gerar strove with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him. 21 And they digged another well, and they strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah. 22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now Jehovah hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

23 And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba. 24 And Jehovah appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. 25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of Jehovah, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

26 Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Abuzzath his friend, and Phicol the captain of his host. 27 And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore are ye come unto

me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? 28 And they said, We saw plainly that Jehovah was with thee: and we said, Let there now be an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee, 29 that thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of Jehovah. 30 And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. 31 And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. 32 And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water. 33 And he called it Shibah: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.

34 And when Esau was forty years old he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: 35 and they were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

1. Isaac's Migration to Gerar (vv. 1-6). It will be recalled that Isaac was "tenting" in the vicinity of Beer-lahai-roi ("the well of the Living One who sees me," cf. 16:14) at the time of his marriage to Rebekah (24:62). Later, he journeyed to Hebron where he and Ishmael buried their father, Abraham, in the cave of Machpelah (25:9). Isaac then returned, we are told, and continued to dwell "by Beer-lahai-roi" (25:11); evidently it was here that the twins were born and Esau sold his birthright (25:11, 19-26, 27-34). This is obviously where we find him at the beginning of the account in ch. 26, prior to his removal to Gerar. But "there was a famine in the land" (26:1), a second famine, long after the first, which was the one "that was in the days of Abraham." In time of famine, people of Palestine were accustomed to migrate

to Egypt or to the fertile Philistine maritime plain (about 50 miles long and 15 miles wide) extending along the Mediterranean Sea from what in our time is Joppa at the north to some distance below Gaza at the south. All Semitic peoples seem to have done this: the Egyptian records are full of accounts of such migrations for the purpose of obtaining food. (Cf. for example, Abraham, Gen. 12:10; Jacob and his sons, chs. 45, 46; Elimelech and his family, in Moab, Ruth 1:1).

"And Isaac went unto Abimelech, king of the Philistines, unto Gerar." The presence of the Philistines in this region in patriarchal times has been dubbed an anachronism by the critics. This view, however, is expressly refuted by evidence now available. In Scripture, the Philistines are said to have come from Caphtor (Amos 9:7, Jer. 47:4, Deut. 2:23; cf. Gen. 10:14—here the sentence, "hence went forth the Philistines," is commonly viewed today as misplaced by a copyist and to belong after the name "Caphtorim,"). The monuments indicate that the Peleste or Philistines invaded Palestine with other "sea peoples" around 1200 B.C. In time they became amalgamated with other inhabitants of Canaan, but the name "Palestine" (Philistia) continued to bear witness to their presence. It is further evident that the Philistines had established themselves in this region in smaller numbers long before 1500 B.C. The region around Gerar and Beersheba was occupied by them as early as the patriarchal age (Gen. 21:32, 26:1) and before the Mosaic era settlers from Crete had driven out or destroyed the original inhabitants of the region of Gaza and settled there (Deut. 2:23). The consensus of archaeological evidence in our day almost without exception identifies these "sea peoples" as spreading out over the Eastern Mediterranean world from Crete: at its height in the third and second millennia, Minoan Crete controlled a large part of the Aegean Sea. "C. H. Gordon and I. Grinz consider that these early

Philistines of Gerar came from a previous migration of sea people from the Aegean and Minoan sphere, including Crete, which is called Caphtor in the Bible and Ugarit tablets, and Caphtorian is the Canaanite name for Minoan" (Cornfeld, AtD, 72). "Biblical notices, which are commonly viewed as anachronistic by critics, place scattered groups of these people in S. W. Palestine centuries before the arrival of the main body in the first quarter of the 12th century B.C." (UBD, 859). Recently an Israeli archaeologist, D. Alon, surveyed the site of Gerar and "found evidence from potsherds that the city had enjoyed a period of prosperity during the Middle Bronze Age, the period of the Biblical patriarchs" (DWDBA, 251). "The early Caphtorian migration was one of a long series that had established various Caphtorian folk on the shores of Canaan before 1500 B.C.E. They had become Canaanitized, and apparently spoke the same language as Abraham and Isaac. They generally behaved peacefully, unlike the Philistines of a later day, who fought and molested the Israelites. They were recognized in Canaan as masters of arts and crafts, including metallurgy" (Cornfeld, AtD, 72). The word "Philistine" is said to have meant "stranger," "sojourner" (sea peoples?). These people gave their name to the country where they settled, "Philistia" (Joel 3:4; cf. Amos 1:6-8, Zech. 9:5-7); from this name the Greek name "Palestine" was derived in turn. The five cities of the Philistines in Palestine were Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath. Gerar, though not one of the five great urban centers, was the seat of the royal iron smelting operations producing iron swords, spearheads, daggers, and arrowheads (1 Sam. 13:19-22). (See my *Genesis*, Vol. III, pp. 387-390).

2. *Abimelech*. Cf. the incident in Abraham's life, 20:1-20. The name means "father-king" in pure Hebrew; apparently it was the customary *title*, rather than personal name, of the kings of Gerar, as *Pharaoh* was of the kings

of Egypt, as *Agar* was of the kings of the Amalekites (1 Sam., ch. 15), or as *Ceasar* was in later times, of the Roman emperors (cf. also *Kaiser* or *Czar*, etc.). Since some seventy or eighty years intervened between the accounts in chs. 20 and 26, we must conclude that the Abimelech of ch. 26 was the successor to the Abimelech of ch. 20. Leupold (EG, 717): "The common assumption that Abimelech was a standing designation of all Philistine kings, like Pharaoh for the Egyptian, finds definite support in the heading of Psalm 34, where Abimelech is used as a title for the man who in 1 Sam. 21:10-15 appears as Achish. 'Gerar' appears to be identical with *Umm-Jerar*, about ten miles south of Gaza." (Achish was the personal name of the king of Gath, also a Philistine city). (For a discussion of the Abimelechs of these two chapters, see my *Genesis*, Vol. III, 390-396). For a discussion of the similarities of the stories in Gen. 12:10-20, 20:1-18, and 26:6-11, and also of the striking differences, see my *Genesis*, Vol. III, 396-401, and especially 405-406. We conclude that these are not three variant accounts of the same event, as claimed by some of the critics, but three different accounts respectively of three different originals).

3. *The Divine Communication to Isaac* (vv. 2-5). The situation seems to be sufficiently important to call for Divine intervention. God appeared to Isaac as well as to Abraham, but twice only to the former (here and in v. 24). The wording of Scripture here surely indicates that Isaac was contemplating a journey into Egypt such as his father Abraham had made under the same circumstances, *i.e.* a famine in the land. Evidently Yahweh interfered to prevent such a move. Probably his original purpose in going to Abimelech was to request permission to leave for Egypt or he may have gone to the king of Gerar to make special arrangements that would avert the necessity of his going there. At any rate, Yahweh intervened, and in doing so reaffirmed the Abrahamic Promise. V. 2, "You were

consecrated as a sacrifice to God and must therefore not leave the Holy Land. Set up your shepherd's tent here and do not fear for lack of pasture" (SC, 144). The Oath, v. 3, was made directly and separately with each of the patriarchs. "By remaining in the country you will take possession of it, to be able to transmit it to your children, and thus My oath will be confirmed" (SC, 143). "It had been previously announced to Abraham that Isaac was to be his sole heir; and now that, on the death of his father, he had succeeded to the patrimonial inheritance, he was to receive also a renewal of the Divine promise which guaranteed special blessings of inestimable value to him and his posterity. The covenant securing these blessings originated entirely in Divine grace; but it was suspended on the condition that Abraham should walk before God and be perfect (17:1); and since he had, through the grace which had enabled him to attain an extraordinary strength of faith, fully met that condition by an obedience honored with the strongest expression of Divine approval—Isaac, his son, was now assured that the covenant would progressively take effect, the assurance being made doubly sure to him by a reference to the oath sworn to Abraham (22:16). The first instalment of this promise was the possession of Canaan, here designated 'all these countries,' from the numerous subdivisions amongst the petty tribes which then occupied the land (15:19-21); and in prospect of this promissory tenure of the land, Isaac was prohibited leaving it. . . . At all events, now that the Abrahamic covenant had to be executed, the elect family were not henceforth allowed to go into Egypt, except with the special sanction and under the immediate superintendence of an overruling Providence" (CECG, 191). V. 5—"my *commandments*" ("particular injunctions, specific enactments, express or occasional orders," cf. 2 Chron. 35:16), "my *statutes*" (permanent ordinances, such as the Passover, 'literally, *that which is graven on tables or monuments,*

cf. Exo. 12:14'), "*and my laws*" ("which refer to the great doctrines of moral obligations"). "The three terms express the contents of the Divine observances which Abraham obeyed" (PCG, 324-325).

"Remarkable is the scope of divine blessings that are mediated through faithful Abraham. In order to make prominent the thought that Abraham conscientiously did all that God asked, *the various forms of divine commandments are enumerated*; sometimes, of course, a divine word would fall under several of these categories. They are a 'charge' or 'observance' if they are to be observed. . . . They are 'commandments' when regarded from the angle of having been divinely *commanded*. They are 'statutes' when thought of as immutable, and 'laws' insofar as they involve divine instruction or teaching. Under these headings would come the 'commandment' to leave home (ch. 12); the 'statute' of circumcision, the instruction to sacrifice Isaac, or to do any particular thing such as (15:8) to sacrifice Isaac, or (13:17, 18) to walk through the land, as well as all other individual acts as they are implied in his attitude toward Jehovah, his faithful God. By the use of these terms Moses, who purposes to use them all very frequently in his later books, indicates that 'laws, commandments, charges and statutes' are nothing new but were already involved in patriarchal religion. Criticism, of course, unable to appreciate such valuable and suggestive thoughts, or thinking Moses, at least, incapable of having them, here decrees that these words come from another source, for though J wrote the chapter, J, according to the lists they have compiled, does not have these words in his vocabulary, and so the device, so frequently resorted to, is employed here of claiming to discern traces of a late hand, a redactor" (Leupold, EG, 719-720). (The hypothetical redactor is, of course, an indispensable factum for Biblical critics). Speiser translates v. 5 as follows: "All because Abraham heeded my call and kept my

mandate: my commandments, my laws, and my teachings." "Mandate" he defines as "something to be scrupulously observed," adding, "the three nouns that follow spell out the contents" (ABG, 198, 201). Note that the same Promise, in its various details, which was originally given to Abraham, is here renewed to Isaac (cf. 12:3, 22:17, 18). Cf. v. 24: that is, "not for the sake of Abraham's merit, but from respect to the covenant made with him, 12:2, 3; 15:8, 17:6, 7" (SIBG, 257). Cf. v. 6—Abraham's obedience was not perfect, as we know, but it was unreserved, and as it flows from a living faith, is thus honored of God" (Gosman, in Lange, CDHCG, 505).

4. *The Threat to Rebekah's Honor* (vv. 6-11). Because Gerar was situated in the Judean foothills south of Gaza and likely controlled the inland caravan route to Egypt, no doubt it was a commercial city. Therefore Isaac's needs during the famine were here supplied. "The men of the place" were attracted to Rebekah "because she was fair to look upon." Isaac, apprehensive of personal danger on account of his wife's beauty, followed the same deceptive course that his father had adopted (12:13, 20:2) of passing his wife off as his sister. At that time Rebekah was at least thirty-five years married and the mother of two fullgrown sons who evidently had been kept in the background, perhaps engaged in pastoral and other field pursuits. But after a considerable lapse of time, Abimelech, "king of the Philistines," happened to be "looking out at a window" and saw, "and behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife" (literally, he was "fondling" her, and certainly not in the manner by which a brother would show affection for his sister). Whereupon Abimelech constrained Isaac to admit that she was his wife, charged him with the impropriety of his conduct, and commanded his own subjects to refrain from harming either of them on pain of death. "Knobel pronounces this story to be a duplicate account of a similar incident in the life of

Abraham. But a close examination will show that the circumstances here detailed are different from those of the earlier transaction. Although the name of the principal personage in both narratives is Abimelech, a royal title, it is highly probable, considering that an interval of about seventy years had elapsed, another king was reigning in Isaac's day; then Rebekah was not taken into the royal harem; and there was a difference also in the way in which her conjugal relation to Issac was discovered. Altogether the stories are marked by distinctive peculiarities of their own; and though it is striking, it cannot appear improbable that, in the same country and at the same court, where Oriental notions as to the rights of royalty obtained, incidents of such a description should, from time to time, occur. Issac's conduct, however, in this affair, has been made the subject of severe animadversion by the friends as well as the foes of Revelation, as a compound of selfishness and weakness, as well as of cold indifference to his wife's honor, for which the same apology cannot be made as in the earlier case of Abraham. But *Waterland* ('Scripture Vindicated'), after a full and dispassionate examination of the circumstances, gives his verdict, that the patriarch 'did right to evade the difficulty so long as it could be lawfully evaded, and to await and see whether Divine Providence might not, in some way or other, interpose before the last extremity.' His hope was not disappointed" (CECD, 191).

Lange (CDHCG, 505-506): "In the declaration of Isaac the event here resembles Abraham's experience, both in Egypt and at Gerar, but as to all else, it differs entirely. With regard to the declaration itself, it is true that Rebekah was also related to Isaac, but more distantly than Sarah to Abraham. It is evident from the narrative itself that Isaac is not so seriously threatened as Abraham, although the inquiries of the people at Gerar might have alarmed him. It is not by a punishment inflicted upon

a heathen prince, who perhaps might have abducted the wife, but through the intercourse of Isaac with Rebekah that the true relation became known. That the Abimelech mentioned in this narrative is the same person who, eighty years before, received Sarah into his harem, appears plausible to Kurtz and Delitzsch, since it may be taken for granted that as a man gray with hair as he, did not send for Rebekah and take her into his harem. We reject these as superficial grounds. The main point is, that Isaac appears in this narrative as a very cautious man, while the severe edict of Abimelech seems to suppose a solemn remembrance in the king's house of the former experience with Abraham. The oath that follows seems also to show that the new Abimelech avails himself of the policy of his father, as well as Isaac. The windows in old times were latticed openings for the light to enter, as found in the East at the present day."

Finally in this connection, the following: "Criticism, with almost complete unanimity (we know only of Koenig as an exception) calls this a later (Isaac) version of the original (Abraham) legend, or else calls chapter 26 the original and chapter 20 derivative. Yet the differences, aside from the very plain statements of the text to the same effect, point to two different situations: here a famine, there none; here Rebekah is not molested, there Abimelech took Sarah; here accidental discovery, there divine intervention; here no royal gift, there rich recompense. Of course, criticism usually points to 12:10f. as being merely another form of the same incident. Yet at least one aspect of the critical approach can be refuted completely on purely critical grounds. For, as K.C. [Koenig's *Kommentar* on Genesis] observes, it is unthinkable that J, to whom chapter 12 as well as chapter 26 are attributed, should have preserved two versions of one and the same incident" (Leupold, EG, 721).

5. *Isaac's Successful Venture into Agriculture* (vv. 12-17).

Besides planting trees, Abraham was to the end of his life a nomad. Isaac, however, begins to pursue agriculture along with his nomadic life: this venture causes commentators to classify him as a kind of semi-nomad. (The only other allusion to husbandry in the patriarchal history occur in Genesis 30:14 and 37:7). "Isaac is described as living in the city of Gerar itself. He tried his hand successfully at a season of farming and his yield was 'a hundredfold,' a statement worth recording because nomads are poor farmers as a rule. Isaac's experiment is an interesting example of a nomad beginning to settle down to semi-nomadism. A recurring pattern in the Near East is that nomads are attracted to sown acres, where they plant their crops, thus supplementing the living they get from their flocks. So they become agriculturists; they turn into villagers, usually still grazing their flocks, for that is a noble tradition, in keeping with their origin. Isaac's career apparently marks this transition to that intermediate stage" (Cornfeld, AtD, 77).

This account agrees well with the area around Gaza: the soil is very rich, we are told. As a result, Isaac reaped from his initial venture a rich harvest, to the extent of a hundred measures ("a hundred fold"). Such a rich harvest was taken as a sign of divine favor. The man became very wealthy: "he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and a great household." Since Abraham was very rich (13:2, 14:23) and the bulk of his property had gone to Isaac, such an increase as this in Isaac's wealth must have brought his possessions up to a startling total. His establishment of necessity required also a great number of servants. "The man waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great," that is to say, he kept growing richer and richer. But a serious problem arose as a consequence of this unusual

prosperity: *the Philistines grew envious*. The statement is an intimation of the clash with them over the wells, the account of which soon follows. Hostilities began when the natives began filling with earth the wells which Abraham had dug at Gerar and which therefore belonged to Isaac. "This very act was already an indirect expulsion, for without wells it was not possible that Isaac should live a nomadic life at Gerar." As a matter of fact, Isaac's household was strong enough to constitute a threat to the safety of the Philistines had Isaac been inclined to use his power for personal ends. V. 16—the king's summons is a combination of flattery, "thou art much mightier than we," and ungraciousness, "go from us." "Isaac is a pacifist in the best sense of the word. Power is safe in his hands. He shows no inclination to abuse it. Secure in his strength but mindful primarily of his responsibilities to his God, he yields to pressure and moves farther up the valley, *i.e.*, southeast from Gerar, and there pitches his tent with the intent of staying there permanently (he "dwelt there," *i.e.*, he "settled down") (EG, 725-726).

6. *The Contention over Wells* (vv. 18-22). "The whole of the southern frontier of Palestine, called the Negeb or 'south country,' consisting of vast undulating plains, which extend between the hills of Judah and the desert of Sinai, were neutral grounds, on the natural pastures of which the patriarchs fed their large flocks, before they had obtained a permanent abode. The valley of Gerar . . . about fifty miles south of the city Gerar, is perhaps the remote extremity of that pasture land" (CECG, 192). Here Isaac "dugged again"—that is, *re-opened*—the wells which had been dug "in the days of Abraham his father," and which had been "stopped" (filled up) by the Philistines. "The statement that they were wells that Abraham had first dug is not superfluous after v. 15, but clearly establishes his claim to these wells. To indicate, further, his right to these wells and to indicate

his respect for what his father did, Isaac in every case revived their original names" (EG, 727). "The naming of the wells by Abraham, and the hereditary right of his family to the property—the change of the names by the Philistines to obliterate the traces of their origin—the restoration of their names by Isaac, and the contests between the respective shepherds for the exclusive possession of the water, are circumstances that occur among the natives in those regions as frequently in the present day as in the time of Isaac" (CECG, 192).

"The history of Isaac's sojourn in Gerar is very curious and instructive. Combining both pastoral and agricultural industry, it is not strange that he grew very great. The vast grazing plains around and south of his position enabled him to multiply his flocks indefinitely, while the 'hundred-fold' harvests furnished bread for his numerous servants; and, in addition to these advantages, the blessing of the Lord was on the labour of his hands in a manner altogether extraordinary. These things made the Philistines envy and fear him; and therefore Abimelech, king of Gerar, demanded and obtained a covenant of peace with him. Just so at this day the towns, and even cities, such as Hamath and Hums in the north, and Gaza and Hebron in this region, cultivate with great care friendly relations with the sheikhs of prosperous tribes on their borders. It appears that the country was deficient in water, and that wells, dug at great expense, were regarded as very valuable possessions. Isaac was a great well-digger, prompted thereto by the necessities of his vast flocks; and in those days this was an operation of such expense and difficulty as to be mentioned among the acts which rendered illustrious even kings. The strife for possession of them was a fruitful source of annoyance to the peaceful patriarch, as it had been the cause of separation between Abraham and Lot before him; and such contests are now very common all over the country, but more especially in these southern

deserts. It was the custom in former times to erect towers or castles to command and secure the possession of valuable watering-places; thus Uzziah built towers in connection with 'his many wells' (2 Chron. 26:9, 10). And to stop up wells was the most pernicious and destructive species of vengeance—the surest way to convert a flourishing country into a frightful wilderness. Israel was commanded thus to destroy the land of the Moabites, by stopping all the wells of water (2 Ki. 3:19, 25). It would be a curious inquiry for the explorer to seek out these wells, nor would it be surprising if they should be found bearing the significant names which Isaac gave them. All travelers agree that water is so scarce and valuable in that region, that the places where it is to be found are as well known by the Arabs as are the most flourishing towns in other parts of the country. Isaac's place of residence was the well Lahai-roi, as we read in Genesis 25:11 and 24:62—the same that was so named by Hagar (Gen. 16:14). It may have been first discovered by her, or miraculously produced by 'the God that saw her,' for the salvation of the maternal ancestor of the Arab race and her unborn son, as the fountain of Kadesh afterward was for all Israel, and perhaps that of Lehi for Samson (Num. 20:11, Judg. 15:19). It seems to have been the usual mode to designate the dwelling-place in patriarchal times, and indeed long after, by some circumstance or fact which made it memorable. Abraham dwelt under *the* oak at Mamre; Isaac at this well; Jacob hid the idols of his family under the *oak* at Shechem; and long after, Joshua took a great stone and set it up under the same oak, as I suppose. Thus, also, Deborah dwelt under *the* palm-tree of Deborah; the angel of the Lord that was sent to Gideon came down and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah; King Saul is said to have tarried under a pomegranate tree in Migron; and it is yet quite common to find a village better known by some remarkable tree or fountain near it than by its

proper name. The knowledge of these places and things is perpetuated from generation to generation; and I doubt not many of these wells in the south could be discovered, if one had the time and liberty to explore" (LB, 559-560). (Cf. Gen. 35:4, Josh. 24:25-27; Judg. 4:5, 6:11; 1 Sam. 14:2).

Apparently, the rapid increase of Isaac's wealth brought about a need of additional wells, and so Isaac's servants began digging "in the valley" and found there a well of "springing" (living, bubbling, gushing) water. But the Philistines were keeping close watch, and immediately on hearing of the discovery they asserted their claim to the new well. "No doubt, the distance from Gerar was sufficient to establish Isaac's claim to the well, otherwise this fair-minded man would never have sanctioned the digging. Isaac's policy is in keeping with the word, 'Blessed are the meek.' He leaves a memorial of the pettiness of the strife behind by calling the well *Esek*—'Contention'—the Quarrel Well. Perhaps a mild and tolerant humor lies in the name. Yet after all, what a fine testimonial to a great man's broadmindedness and readiness to sacrifice, lest the baser passions in men be roused by quarreling" (EG, 727). Isaac's servants then moved some distance and brought in a new well: this they named *Sitnah*, i.e., "enmity," "hostility." In this case the opposition seems to have been more spiteful, more violent, as indicated by the name. "Everyone must recognize that it is magnanimity and not cowardice on Isaac's part when he yields, because Isaac had ample manpower at his command" (EG, 728). Isaac then moved even further away and his servants brought in a well which he named *Rehoboth*, i.e., "wide places," "room," rather, "plenty of room," that is to say, the Lord hath made room for us. It seems that by now the patriarch had moved beyond the territory that Gerar could legitimately claim. It is possible, too, his generous example might have shamed

the opposition. "We shall be fruitful in the land," declared Isaac, that is, in this land where we now are. Is not Isaac thinking primarily in terms of that aspect of the Divine promise stated in v. 4? "The character of Isaac is very marked and peculiar. He never traveled far from this spot during his long life of one hundred and eighty years—probably never removed from Wady Gerar and its neighboring city. There are but few acts of his life on record, and several of these are not much to his credit. He seems to have been an industrious, quiet man, disposed to wander alone and meditate—at least when he had such an interesting theme to think about as the coming of the camels with his expected bride. He preferred peace to strife, even when the right was on his side, and he was 'much mightier' than those who annoyed and injured him" (LB, 561).

7. *The Theophany at Beersheba* (vv. 23-25). We now read that Isaac "went up" from Gerar to Beersheba. (Though Beersheba is said to lie lower than Gerar, "yet the general expression for approaching any part of Palestine from the southwest is to 'go up,'" EG, 729). Here Yahweh appears again to Isaac, for covenant matters must be again considered. Isaac has conducted himself in a manner that calls forth divine approval. "Besides, Isaac's faith needs to be strengthened in the matter of the realization of the covenant promise. For one part of the promise is: numerous descendants. . . . Isaac shall have to walk by faith very largely as did Abraham. That this faith might well be established he is informed that God will surely bring this promise to pass. So we see that the situation is sufficiently important to call for the appearance of Yahweh, *the second and last that is granted to Isaac*. The substance of Yahweh's promise is: Fear not as to the realization of the promise given thee, for I am with thee, I, the God of Abraham, thy father, who never failed to make good what I promised to him; I guarantee to make thy descendants (Hebrew 'seed') numerous, for the sake

of Abraham my servant. It is here only in Genesis that the title 'my servant' is applied to Abraham. By it another aspect of Abraham's relation to the Lord is covered: he stood in God's service all his days and faithfully did His will" (EG, 729).

Now, any place that is sanctified by a Divine appearance naturally became a sacred spot where Yahweh was wont to be worshiped (cf. 12:7-8, 13:4). Hence, following the example of his illustrious father, Isaac erected an altar, and of course offered sacrifice: a fact so obvious that it hardly need be mentioned. It is stated that "he called upon the name of Jehovah." This means, as it did from the very beginning (cf. 4:26), that Isaac acting on behalf of his entire household—as their priest—engaged in all the essentials of public worship of God characteristic of the Patriarchal Dispensation, the very heart of which was sacrifice that included the shedding of precious blood (Gen. 4:4-5, Heb. 11:4, Lev. 17:11, John 1:29, Heb. 9:11-22, Rev. 7:13-14). Because of Yahweh's manifestation at this place it became sacred to Isaac and he pitched his tent there, and as relatively permanent residence was involved, he ordered his servants to (literally) *start digging* a well there: "the success of the attempt is not reported until v. 32" (ABG, 202).

8. *The Covenant with Abimelech* (vv. 26-33). As "Abimelech" was the standing title of the Philistine kings, so "Phicol" seems to have been the standing title of the captain (or general) of the army. (Cf. 21:22f.) "As there was a lapse of seventy years between the visit of Abraham and of Isaac, the Abimelech and Phicol spoken of must have been different persons' official titles" (CECG, 193). "It is fair to conclude that Abimelech was the royal title, just as Pharaoh was in Egypt, and Caesar in Rome. *Phicol* may also have been a name of office, as *mudir* or *mushir* now is in this country. If one of these officers is spoken of, his *name* is rarely mentioned. I, indeed, never

know any but the official title of these Turkish officers" (LB, 560). Abimelech brought with him a certain *Abuzzab his friend*, that is, "his confidential adviser, or 'vizier'—an official title common in Egypt from an early period, and amongst the Ptolemies and Seleucids (I Mac. 2:18, 10:65; cf. 2 Sam., 16:16f., 1 Ki. 4:5, 1 Chron. 27:33" (Skinner, ICCG, 367). (In 1 Chron. 27:33, we find the rendering, "counsellor"). (Ahuzzath: note the Philistine ending of the name: cf. Goliath, 1 Sam. 17, also Gath). Note that one idea stands out in the conversation of these Philistines, namely, we are impressed by the fact of Yahweh's blessings which go with you continually: "they do not think it safe to be on bad terms with one who so manifestly stands in Yahweh's favor." "That the name 'Yahweh' should be used by Philistines need not surprise us. They naturally do not know Him as the One who is what this name involved. They simply take the heathen attitude: each nation serves its own God: we have heard that Isaac serves Yahweh; it must be Yahweh who has blessed His faithful follower" (EG, 731). Abimelech makes the overture. But Isaac chides him for his unkindness in sending him away and his inconsistency in now seeking a conference with him, v. 27. However, the king sees clearly now that Isaac's God is to be reckoned with: "thou art now the blessed of Jehovah"; therefore "let there now be an oath between us . . . and let us make a covenant with thee," etc. "By whatever motive the proposal was dictated—whether fear of his growing power, or regret for the bad usage they had given him, the king and his courtiers paid a visit to the tent of Isaac (Prov. 16:7). His timid and passive temper had submitted to the annoyances of his rude neighbors; but now that they wish to renew the covenant, he evinces deep feeling at their conduct, and astonishment, or artifice, in coming near him. Being, however, of a pacific disposition, he forgave their offence, accepted their proposals, and treated them to a

banquet by which the ratification of a covenant was usually crowned" (CECG, 193).

The *oath*, v. 28, in this case was what was known as a "curse-oath," that is, "the curse invoked on violation of the covenant." The Jews in later ages "were in the habit of using vain and frivolous oaths in their ordinary talk. They swore by the temple, by the earth, by heaven, by the head, etc. So long as they did not use the name of God in these oaths, they did not deem them particularly binding. This practice is alluded to in Matt. 23:16-22" (ADB, 243). This was known as *profane swearing* (cf. Matt. 5:33-37, Jas. 5:12). The *judicial oath* was of an entirely different character. The validity of this type of oath was recognized by Jesus: indeed He allowed Himself to be put under it (cf. Matt. 26:63-68), and He responded to the solemn *adjuration*. We find also that good men, an angel, and even God Himself, made use of the "oath" for confirmation (Gen. 21:23, 24; 1 Sam. 20:42; Heb. 6:17, 18; Rev. 10:5, 6). It should be noted that the oaths were exchanged on the morning after the "feast" (vv. 30, 31) before the Philistines departed. Apparently the feast, "the common meal," was a feature of the covenant ceremony (cf. 31:53, 54) even though the oath-taking did not occur until early the next morning.

9. *The Naming of the Well* (vv. 32-33). "On the same day" the oaths were exchanged Isaac's servants found water. "This is the well mentioned in verse 25. It is possible that it is the same well which Abraham had excavated and named Beer-sheba (21:31). The Philistines had stopped it up; now Isaac reopened it and gave it the same name it had borne previously (Nachmanides). Rashbam holds that it was a different well, there being two of that name (SC, 148). "To the rationalistic objection that 'identical names of places are not imposed twice,' we may reply, in general, that it is 'in full accordance with the genius of the Oriental languages and the literary tastes of

the people,' to suppose that a name may be *renewed*; in other words, that a *new meaning and significance* may be attached to an old name. (This is the testimony of a scholar thoroughly acquainted with Oriental manners and customs, Prof. L. J. Porter, in Kitto's Biblical Cyclopaedia, II, 132, latest edition.) This fact sweeps away a host of objections urged against this and similar cases. The whole series of events served to recall to Isaac's mind the former name and the circumstances which gave rise to it, hence he renewed it. From 26:15, 18 we learn that all the wells dug by Abraham had been filled with earth by the Philistines, but that Isaac re-opened them, and *called them by the old familiar names*. This would seem a sufficient explanation of the case before us" (ADB, 410).

"This was not the restoration of an old, but the sinking of a new well; and hence, by the formal ceremony of inauguration gone through with Abimelech, Isaac established his right of possession to the adjoining district. . . . One would naturally imagine that the place received this name [Beer-sheba] now for the first time from Isaac. But it had been so called long before by Abraham (21:31), in memory of a solemn league of alliance which he formed with a contemporary king of Gerar. A similar covenant, in similar circumstances, having been established between Isaac and the successor of that Gerar monarch, gave occasion to a *renewed proclamation* of the name: and it is accordant with the practice of the sacred writer to notice an event as newly occurred, while in point of fact it had taken place long before" (CECG, 193-194). For similar instances of twofold naming, cf. Gen. 35:6, 7, 15, with 28:18-22, as to the name *Bethel*; Gen. 35:10 with 32:28, as to the name *Israel*; Gen. 14:14 with Deut. 34:1, Josh. 19:47, Judg. 18:29, as to the name *Dan*; Num. 32:41, with Deut. 3:14 and Judg. 10:3-4, as to the name *Havoth-jair*). (For a description of the present-day Wady-es-Seba and the "two deep wells" on the northern bank, which

are still called Bir es-Seba, the ancient Beer-sheba, see again Jamieson, CECG, 193-194, quoting Robinson's *Biblical Researches*, I, 300, 301).

Isaac called the well *Shibab*, i.e., Sheba). "On account of the covenant (connecting *Shibab* with *shebuah* ('an oath, covenant'))" according to Rashi (Solomon ben Isaac, 1040-1105). "It was the 'seventh' well which he had dug," according to Ben Jacob Sforino, c. 1475-1550. (See SC, 148). Cf. 21:31—obviously, the name *Beer-sheba* is best interpreted "the well of the oath," rather than "of the seven." On the latter view, "seven" could have been variously interpreted, either as indicative of the seven ewe lambs given by Abraham to the Philistine king (21:28-30), or as signifying the seventh well which Isaac had dug, or as indicating that either (or both) of the patriarchs had put himself under the influence of the number *seven*, which was regarded among ancients generally as a *sacred* number. This last view is suggested by Skinner (ICCG, 326); to the present writer it seems rather farfetched. "Both points of view seem well justified: there were originally 'seven' wells; the place was the scene of an 'oath.' One account emphasizes the former; the other, the latter idea. For that matter, Isaac may well have remembered the name given to the place in Abraham's time and may have welcomed the opportunity for establishing that name. The expression 'unto this day' simply carries us up to the writer's time and is, of course, very appropriate coming from the pen of Moses" (EG, 733). At any rate Beer-sheba came to be the principal city in the Judean Negeb. It was situated at the junction of the highway running southward from Hebron to Egypt and the route that ran northeastward from Arabah to the coast. It marked the southern limit of Israelite occupation, so that the entire land came to be described as the territory extending "from Dan to Beersheba" (Judg. 20:1). "Beersheba still exists, and retains its ancient name in a slightly modified form.

The old wells too are there, of great depth, and of great value to the surrounding Arabs" (SIBG, 257).

10. *Esau's Hittite Wives* (vv. 34-35). At the age of forty, Esau took as wives two young women of Hittite stock who no doubt were well contaminated with prevailing Canaanite vices. According to Rashi, Esau "had been living a dissolute life until then, but now he hypocritically said he would follow his father's example and marry at the same age he had married" (SC, 148). These alliances were contrary to the will of God (Exo. 34:16, Deut. 7:3, Josh. 23:12, Ezra 9:1-3, Neh. 13:23-27, 2 Cor. 6:14-15, 1 Cor. 7:39; and of his grandfather and parents (Gen. 24:38, 27:46; 28:1, 2, 6; cf. 6:2). "Esau's incapacity for spiritual values is further illustrated by this step. He is not concerned about conserving the spiritual heritage of the family" (EG, 733). These marriages of Esau were "a grief of mind" to his parents, possibly because the young women's personal characters, "but chiefly because of their Canaanitish descent, and because in marrying them Esau had not only violated the Divine law which forbade polygamy, but also evinced an utterly irreligious and unspiritual disposition" (PCG, 332). (Cf. Acts 17:30). "If the pious feelings of Abraham recoiled from the idea of Isaac forming a matrimonial connection with a Canaanitish woman, that devout patriarch himself [Isaac] would be equally opposed to such a union on the part of his children; and we may easily imagine how much his pious heart was wounded, and the family peace destroyed, when his favorite but wayward son brought no less than two idolatrous wives amongst them—an additional proof that Esau neither desired the blessing nor dreaded the curse of God. These wives never gained the affections of his parents; and this estrangement was overruled by God for keeping the chosen family aloof from the dangers of heathen influence" (CECG, 194). Note that these wives were "a grief of mind" (according to the Septuagint, contentious

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or obstreperous) to Isaac and Rebekah. How could it have been otherwise? one might well ask. "To the various troubles which the Philistines prepared for Isaac, but which, through the blessing of God, only contributed to the increase of his wealth and importance, a domestic cross was added, which caused him great and lasting sorrow. Esau married two wives in the 40th year of his age, the 100th of Isaac's life (25:26); and that not from his own relatives in Mesopotamia, but from among the Canaanites whom God cast off. . . . They became '*bitterness of spirit*,' the cause of deep trouble, to his parents, viz., on account of their Canaanitish character, which was so opposed to the vocation of the patriarchs; whilst Esau by these marriages furnished another proof, how thoroughly his heart was set on earthly things" (BCOTP, 273).

FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

The Essentials of Life

Text: Gen. 26:25. Dr. Bowie (IBG, 675-676) presents some challenging thoughts concerning our text, v. 25. We have here, he writes, only the bare catalogue of what Isaac did on a particular day. However, there are three nouns in this text which have deep implications: an *altar*, a *tent*, and a *well*.

1. It should be noted that the *altar* was first. The first thing Isaac did when he moved up to Beersheba was to cause his servants to build an altar there. (Recall that the first thing Noah did on coming out of the ark was to build an altar unto Jehovah and offer the prescribed sacrifice, Gen. 8:20). "With Isaac, as with Israel in all its history, God was no afterthought." "Existence was not secular, but lifted up always to a religious reference." Isaac was doing what his father Abraham always did on moving into a new environment. *The altar was first. When a man is right with God all other matters fall into*

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place. In our affluent society today men have so much that they consider themselves self-sufficient, whereas if God did not provide the food they eat, the water they drink, and the air they breathe, they could not live five minutes. *Man is a creature.* When he loses sight of this fact, he loses his bearings and brings chaos upon himself and his fellows. *We must start with God* as the First Truth of all being. Hence if any part of life is to be worth anything, it must begin with the recognition and worship of God.

2. After erecting his altar and calling upon the name of Jehovah (in his office as the patriarch-priest of his household), Isaac then pitched his *tent* there. Naturally what went on in that tent was commonplace enough: "everyday human needs had to be provided for through the routine of ordinary work; the building of an altar could not obviate that, nor contact with the spiritual world take men out of this one." What Isaac kept in mind was "that family life—its duties, loyalties, and affections—needed always to be brought under the protection of the altar." Note, too, that Isaac had no mansion, not even a house solidly built and comfortable, adapted to present occupancy, such as men and women desire in our day. *He had only a tent.* Does not this suggest that the patriarchs were not rooted in material things; that, on the contrary, they confessed themselves to be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:12)? Are not we all just such? "In the civilization of today, complex and materially rich, there is danger that men may be so satisfied with what they already possess that they do not reach forward to that spiritual communion which pilgrim souls would seek to gain. Yet in the scale of eternal values the great man is he who knows that life here is a pilgrimage" (Job 14:1-2, Matt. 6:19-21, Col. 3:1-3, 2 Cor. 4:16-18), and that if he does not seek "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10), his life

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on earth will be aimless and empty. The only happiness to which man is ordained by the very nature of his being is ultimate *union with God*, the union of the human mind with the Mind of God in knowledge and the union of the human will with the Will of God in love (1 Cor. 13:12, 1 John 3:2): that alone will be perfect happiness (cf. Matt. 5:3-12; note that the Latin word for happiness is *beatitudo*, "blessedness," hence this ultimate union with God is known as the Beatific Vision; the Latin word was coined by Cicero; Aristotle used the word *eudaimonia*, which means, literally, well-being). To achieve this Beatific Vision, one must be steadfast in growing in the Spiritual Life here (2 Pet. 3:18) as programmed for him in the Divine Word (1 Cor. 15:58, Gal. 5:22-25; 1 Cor. 12:31, 13:1-13; Rev. 2:10, etc.).

3. Finally, having built his altar and pitched his tent, Isaac's servants digged a *well*. This was necessary to their existence. "Out of it must come the water to slake the thirst of men and cattle; and because of it there could be an oasis of growth and shade." Without water, physical life would come to an end soon. Hence, all through the Bible *water is a symbol for the satisfaction of a deeper thirst*. (Cf. Ps. 42:1, Isa. 55:1; John 4:14, 7:37-39).

Digging the Wells of the Fathers

Gen. 26:18. As stated heretofore, "digging again" here meant re-opening of the wells which Abraham had caused to be dug in previous years. Abraham, a powerful prince of the preceding generation had dug these great wells in Philistia when he was sojourning there. The supply of water was abundant and sufficient for generations to come. But the wells had been stopped up by the envious Philistines. Another great famine descended upon the same area in the time of Isaac. Isaac knew that there was an abundance of sparkling water flowing beneath the obstructions which had been placed in the old wells. He

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therefore did not dig new wells, but set about restoring (re-opening) the old wells. Having done this, Isaac's servants set about digging elsewhere in the valley and "brought in" (as men say in the oil fields) a well of springing (living) water, v. 13.

We all know that water is necessary to the existence of every living thing, including man himself. Because of this fact, the prophets especially, and many other Scripture writers, were wont to use wells and rivers of water as metaphors of the life-giving sources of salvation. Isa. 12:3—"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Isa. 41:18—"I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." Cf. again John 4:13-14, 6:35, 7:37-39; also Rev. 22:1-2. This living water—the Water of Life to all who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matt. 5:6)—poured forth from the old Gospel well, for the first time, on the first Pentecost after the Resurrection: it was on this day that the *facts* of the Gospel were proclaimed for the first time (1 Cor. 15:1-4, Acts 2:22-24), that the commands of the Gospel were stated for the first time (Acts 2:38), that the promises of the Gospel were communicated to man for the first time (cf. Luke 13:5, 2 Cor. 7:10, Rom. 10:9-10, Gal. 3:27, etc.), and that the *ekklesia* came into being, vitalized by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:41-42, 46-47). During the lifetime of the Apostles multitudes drank of this life-giving flow, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the educated and uneducated alike. The Pentecost multitude, the people of Samaria, the Roman centurion and his household, the Ethiopian treasurer, the seller of purple from Thyatira, the Philippian jailor, the fanatical Saul of Tarsus, Crispus the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, and many others, including "a great company of the priests," alike drank of this living water and went on their way rejoicing. (Cf.

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Acts 6:7, 2:41, 8:12-13, 10:1-44, 8:26-39, 16:11-15, 16:27-34; 9:1-22, 18:8). The supply of the water of the Life Everlasting in this old Gospel well was sufficient to quench the spiritual thirst of obedient believers of all ages. (Cf. John 6:63, Matt. 7:24-27; John 5:40, 10:10, etc.).

As the centuries rolled on, however, the ugly face of human authority reared itself above the glorious image of the Logos. Man presumed to improve upon what the Spirit had revealed in the New Testament. The debris of human wisdom, tradition, and creed (stemming from the attempt to explain Christian doctrine by the use of philosophical gobbledygook and to improve upon the design of the ordinances of Christ by borrowings from the pagan mystery religions) continued to accumulate from generation to generation. Human interpretations, human speculation, human tradition filled the old Gospel well with the debris of "the wisdom of the world" (1 Cor. 1:19-21). The result was apostasy, heresy, clericalism, sectism, and all the devices that Satanic ingenuity could muster to destroy the structure of the Church of Christ as it existed at the beginning. Theologians, priests, cultists, sectists alike departed from the faith "once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), and hewed for themselves and their misguided followers *broken cisterns* that held no relief for deep spiritual thirst.

Following the "Protestant reformations," a group of spiritual leaders, by name Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, and other spiritually-minded men who developed a keen appreciation of the simplicity of apostolic Christianity, its laws, its ordinances and its fruits, set out like Isaac of old to re-open the wells of the apostolic fathers and bring to men again the Water of Life that flowed from the old Gospel well that was opened on Pentecost. Not reformation, said they, but only *restoration* will revive the spiritual power that

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characterized the life of the church of the first century. Back of Wesley, back of Calvin, back of Luther, said they, indeed back of Roman Catholicism, back of Greek Catholicism, all the way back to Pentecost, and to the permanent features of *the New Testament pattern* of the church. The movement which resulted from their work came to be known as the Restoration movement. The message of this movement was essentially a plea for the recognition and acceptance of the Lordship of Christ over His church. This message became known as a *Plea*, a plea for Christ.

The chief thing in Catholicism is the *machine*, the visible hierarchy; in fact, Catholicism *is* the machine. The chief thing in Protestantism is the *creed*. True, men are breaking away from the creeds, yet the fact remains that the so-called "Protestant" systems have been built upon their respective creeds and the traditions of the fathers founded on these creedal statements. But the fundamental thing in Christianity as taught and practised by the Apostles and the first Christians was, not the machine (there was no ecclesiastical hierarchy in the apostolic age), not the creed (there were no stereotyped creeds until after the Apostles had passed from the stage of human events), but *the personal Christ* Himself. Christ was, and is, Christianity; and Christianity was, and is, Christ. That He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and that He ascended to the Father and was made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36, 10:39-43, 17:29-31, Rom. 10:9-10)—this was the essence of the apostolic message. Christ was all in all apostolic preaching (Acts 8:12, 8:35, 16:31, etc.). (Cf. also 2 Tim. 1:12, 1 Cor. 2:2, Gal. 2:20, Rev. 19:11-16).

As the Restoration movement stands for the reproduction of New Testament Christianity, it follows that the central thought and theme of its preaching is likewise the *personal Christ*. The Restoration movement differs from

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Catholicism in that it repudiates all ecclesiastical machines; it differs from Protestantism in that it rejects all human names, creeds and ceremonials. It is a protest, not only against Catholicism, but also against those things which Protestantism has borrowed from Catholicism that are not to be found in the New Testament church. The fundamental message of the movement is the preeminence of Christ. The Restoration plea may be defined in a single sentence as a plea for Christ. This plea comprehends the following particulars:

I. *The name of Christ.* The Restoration message pleads that the name of Christ may be worn by His people, to the exclusion of all human designations, for these reasons: (1) it is the name in which they are baptized, Acts 2:38; (2) it is the divine name, because Christ is divine; (3) it is the preeminent name, Phil. 2:9-11; (4) it is the only name in which we can be saved, Acts 4:12; (5) it is the name which was divinely bestowed upon the disciples, Acts 11:26; (6) it is the name in which we should do everything that we do, Col. 3:17. Human names are denounced by apostolic authority, *i.e.*, as *religious* designations, I Cor. 3:4-5, Rom. 8:6-8. The name "Christian" is both Scriptural and catholic; it is the only name upon which the followers of Jesus can unite.

You and I have no credit at the Bank of Heaven. Suppose you were to step up to the window in that glorious Bank and present a check for your soul, what would the Great Teller say? He would tell you that your check must have an endorsement. Then, suppose you were to offer as endorsement the name of Paul, or Peter, or Martin Luther, or John Wesley, or Alexander Campbell—would any of these names be sufficient security for your soul? No—you would find them insufficient. There is one Name, and one only, that will be recognized at the Bank of Heaven—the name of Jesus Christ. In it there is salvation, but in no other.

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"Tis noble to be a Christian,
 'Tis honor to bear the name,
To know that we're honored in heaven,
 Is better than earthly fame.

The name implies one is noble,
 It means he is honest and true;
It means his life is Christlike—
 Does it mean all this in you?"

II. *The Person of Christ.* The Restoration message includes the *Person* of Christ as the one sufficient creed for all Christians. The word *creed* comes from the Latin verb, *credo*, meaning "I believe." The only article of faith imposed upon Christians in New Testament times was personal belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, Matt. 16:16, John 20:30-31, Acts 16:31, Rom. 10:9-10, etc. But belief in Christ as the Son of God includes acceptance of the fact of His *personal atonement* for sin. That He offered His body as a living sacrifice, and shed His blood for the remission of sins, are the two facts of the atonement; and the atonement was sufficient because His Person was divine. Matt. 26:28, Rom. 3:24-25, Heb. 9:22, 10:20; John 1:14, etc. The creed of Christianity is the personal Saviour.

Human creeds are incomplete statements and can not be universally accepted. At best they are nothing but the opinions of uninspired men. They set limits upon intellectual progress. They divide God's people by submitting tests of fellowship separate and apart from God's Word; they are written and enforced without divine sanction. They are superfluous and unnecessary. If a creed contains less than the Bible, it doesn't contain enough; if it contains more than the Bible, it contains too much; if it teaches what the Bible teaches, it isn't necessary because we have the Bible. Human creeds are the un-

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inspired products of theological speculation and contribute tremendously to the spread and perpetuation of denominationalism.

The true creed of the church of Christ is a Person. It could not be otherwise, logically. Faith does not center in a dogma, nor in an institution. I do not believe in baptism as such, but I believe in the Christ who instituted baptism and to please Him I shall be baptized according to His example. I do not believe in the Lord's Supper, but I do believe in the One who said, "Do this in memory of me," and I shall exert every effort to be in my accustomed place when the memorial feast is spread on each Lord's Day. We do not believe in things, but in *persons*. Therefore, says Paul, "For I know him *whom* I have believed," 2 Tim. 1:12.

This divine creed is Scriptural—no question about that. It is also catholic, *i.e.*, universally accepted by all who are worthy of the name Christian. It is the all-embracing creed. It includes everything in God's revelation to man, and embraces everything in man's relation to God. It is as high as heaven, as broad as the human mind, and as inclusive as the illimitable spaces. "This creed was not made at Nice, nor at Westminster, nor at Augsburg. The creed of the living church of the living God is *the living, ever-living Christ*. Christ is our creed; that is a simple creed; that is a growing creed; that is a heaven-sent creed." (Combs, *Call of the Mountains*, p. 85).

III. *The Word of Christ*. The Restoration message includes the word of Christ as the sufficient book of discipline for His church. The word of Christ is the New Testament, John 16:14-15, 20:21-23. It is quite sufficient to furnish the Christian unto every good work, 2 Tim. 3:16-17. I recall a lady, who had been reared a strict denominationalist, asking me on one occasion for the "book of rules" of the church which I was serving as minister. I could do nothing but offer her a copy of the

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New Testament; this I did, even at the risk of having been pronounced discourteous. *Truth* is sometimes more needed than *courtesy*.

The New Testament is the Christian's book of discipline. He should have no other—he needs no other. If the Scriptures are sufficient to furnish the man of God unto all good works, written disciplines of human origin are unnecessary. Take this divine discipline and follow it. Are you inquiring what to do to be saved? Read John 3:5. If Jesus says you can not enter into the kingdom without being born of water and the Spirit, then *how can you?* Read Acts 2:38. What the Holy Spirit has joined together by the conjunctions, “and” and “for,” let no theologian put asunder. May every Christian follow the apostolic exhortation, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom,” Col. 3:16.

IV. *The Authority of Christ.* The Restoration plea is essentially a plea for the *authority* of Christ. This is fundamental. Most of our present-day religious controversies are not over questions of interpretation, but questions of authority. The Bible teaches that God delegated all authority to Jesus, who, in turn, delegated the same authority to His apostles and clothed them with the infallible presence of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth and to protect them from error in revealing His word to mankind, John 16:13-14. There is no evidence anywhere in the Bible that divine authority was ever delegated to any one else; in fact divine authority ended with the work and revelation of the apostles. All authority in Christianity is vested in Christ. Matt. 28:18, Eph. 1:22. Every local church is a *theocracy democratically administered*. In matters of faith and doctrine it is an absolute monarchy subject to the will of Christ which is the absolute law from which there is no appeal. In matters of expediency, or method, it is a democracy subject to the wish and will of the majority. The “historic episcopacy”

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has no authority to make any changes in the teaching of Christ: therefore I am not an Episcopalian, but a Christian. The presbytery has no authority over the teaching of Christ; therefore I am not a Presbyterian, but a Christian. Not even the congregation has any authority over the teaching of Christ; therefore I am not a Congregationalist, but a Christian. (How utterly absurd that the Board of Officers of any church of Christ should even discuss such a question as the reception of the "pious unimmersed!" That question was settled for us by Christ and the apostles almost twenty centuries ago. We are presumptuous to even consider or discuss it). I do not believe in baptism, but I do believe in the Christ who commands me to be baptized; therefore I am not a Baptist, but a Christian. I believe that everything in the local church should be done "decently and in order," but I do not believe that the church should be named after the *methods* used; therefore I am not a Methodist, but a Christian. Again, who instituted the ordinances? Our Lord instituted them; therefore, He alone has the right to alter them, to make changes in their observance, or to take them away. The Pope did not institute baptism; therefore the Pope has no right to annul baptism or to substitute something for baptism. The church did not institute baptism or the Lord's Supper; therefore the church has no right to change these ordinances in any way. They are the ordinances of *Christ* which are to be perpetuated by the church.

Restore the authority of Christ over His church and bring all professing Christians to accept His authority, and you will have solved many of the problems which harass modern Christendom. You will have swept away all popes, councils, synods, presbyteries, conferences, associations and assemblies which, in the past, have presumed to speak with authority. You will have swept Catholicism off the face of the earth and you will have destroyed every

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vestige of humanism that lingers in Protestantism. When all professing Christians recognize the exclusive authority of Christ over His church, Christian unity will soon be a reality. May God hasten the day when He shall reign on earth even as He now reigns in Heaven!

V. *The Church of Christ.* The Restoration message includes a plea for the restoration of the *church of Christ*. The modern world is so befogged by "churchanity" that Christianity has largely become obscured. We hear so much in these days about Luther's Church, Calvin's Church, Wesley's Church, and so on, we are liable to forget—in fact the world at large has almost forgotten—that our Lord Himself established a church. This church came into existence on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 30. Matt. 16:18—here he speaks of it as His church. It is the church of Christ and the only church to which I care to belong. Let us go back of Wesley, back of Calvin, back of Luther, back of Rome, back of Constantinople, all the way back to Jerusalem and find, reproduce and restore the church of Christ, or, using the adjectival form, Christian Church. This is the supreme objective of the Restoration movement of the nineteenth century.

VI. *The Ordinances of Christ.* The Restoration plea has a specific message with reference to the ordinances of Christ. It says they are not ordinances of the church, but ordinances of Christ to be perpetuated by the church as sacred trusts committed to the church for safekeeping.

The ordinances of Christ are three in number: (1) *Baptism*, to test the loyalty of the penitent believer. (2) *The Lord's Supper*, to test the loyalty of the Christian. (3) *The Lord's Day*, which is a memorial of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

True obedience does a thing commanded, does it without question, and does it in the way the author of the command wants it to be done. I might illustrate as follows: A gentleman who is about to die calls his two sons to his bedside. He tells them he owns a farm out in Kansas, that he has made extensive plans for the development of that farm, but

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that death threatens to prevent the execution of his plans. He asks for a map of the farm. He tells the boys just how he wants the farm developed. He points out on the map the spot where the house is to be erected, also the spot where the barn is to be built. Pointing to a certain place on the map, he says: "This is all bottom land. I have prepared it for corn and I want you to plant corn there next spring when you begin to develop the land. Up here on this rolling ground I want you to sow the wheat because it is especially prepared for wheat. Then along the road here is a patch of new ground. The soil is fresh and fertile and I have planned to put an orchard on this spot. "Now, boys," said he, "after I am dead and gone, I shall depend upon you to develop the farm according to the plans I have given you." The sons agree to do so, and in a few days thereafter the father dies. Several months later the boys decide to go to Kansas and take a look at the farm. Taking the map with them, they make what would be called in modern language a "survey." They find the place where the house is to be erected and they agree it is an ideal location. They next find the spot where the barn is to be built and again they agree. They take a look at the bottom land and they see it is quite evident that this is the ground which will produce the corn. They take a look at the rolling land and again they are of the same mind and judgment. They express their astonishment at the wise judgment manifested by the father; thus far they are in complete accord with his plans. By and by they stroll over the patch of new ground. John looks at it for a moment and Bill looks at it, then they look at each other and shake their heads. John says: "It seems to me that father has slipped just a bit in selecting this spot for an orchard. It is full of roots and stumps that will retard the growth of the trees. Besides, it is right here along the road and all the bad boys in the neighborhood will be clubbing the apples, pears, and peaches. I think we had better put the orchard back from the road," etc. Bill is of the same opinion. Now I have a problem in mathematics for you. That father gave his sons five specific commands. The commands were very clear-cut; there was no danger of their being misunderstood. In how many of these commands did the boys obey their father? You say, They obeyed him in four particulars, but disobeyed him in one. No, my friends, *they didn't obey him in anything*. They accepted his judgment in the four particulars because *it so happened that their judgment coincided with his*; but when it came to the last item, they did not agree with the father's judgment, and instead of obeying him without question, they followed their own judgment in the matter. How like people today! They are perfectly willing to believe and repent of their sins; but when they come to the baptismal water, they stop and say, "This is a matter for me to decide in my own conscience," and in many cases they follow their own preference or inclination instead of submitting to the ordinance of Christ in the way it was performed in New Testament times.

That Christian baptism was immersion, under the preaching of the apostles, is readily admitted by scholars of all denominations. There is no more clearly established

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fact in church history than this. No man of any standing in the world of scholarship questions it for a moment. Moreover, *immersion* is the only catholic baptism: one who has been buried with Christ in baptism will be accepted in any church in Christendom with but one or two exceptions. There is no argument about immersion; all are agreed that it is baptism; the argument is all over the matter of substitutes for baptism. In other words, the controversy is not over what baptism is, but over what baptism is *not*. Why not accept the baptism that is unquestionably Scriptural and that is universally admitted to be right?

The plea of the Restoration movement is that the ordinances may be restored to their proper place and significance in the faith and practice of the churches of Christ.

VII. *Unity in Christ*. One of the most important items in the Restoration message is the plea for Christian unity—not *union*, but *unity*. There is a great difference between *union* and *unity*. Someone has facetiously remarked that by tying two cats together by the tail and throwing them over a clothesline one would have a union, but not much unity. Our Lord prayed for the unity of His people, John 17:20-21. The apostles condemned division in no uncertain terms, I Cor. 1:10-13, 3:1-5. The church of the New Testament was a united church, Eph. 4:4-6.

It is quite evident that the present divided condition of Christendom is the direct antithesis of the ideal for which our Lord prayed. It is equally evident that divisions are wasting the church and nullifying the effects of gospel preaching. As John R. Mott has said, "The price that has been paid for a divided Christendom is an unbelieving world."

Someone inquires: Is Christian unity possible? If Christian unity is impossible, then our Lord prayed for an

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impossibility. Moreover, if Christian unity does not come to such an extent as to include all who claim to be Christians, it will be due to the fact that *men will not allow it to come*.

The question arises here: How did Christ, through the apostles, go about the task, in New Testament times, of building a *united body*? This is a worth-while question. The answer is very clear. The first thing the apostles did under the guidance of the Spirit, was to bring into existence a local church of Christ which was a united church. See Acts 2.44-47, 4:32. Note that the "multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." This church in Jerusalem was a wonderfully united church. In establishing such a united church of Christ, it should be noted that the apostles did not make their appeal to the Pharisees, nor to the Sadducees, nor to the Herodians, etc., *as sects*. No—they made their appeal to *individuals* to come out of Judaism; those who obeyed the gospel were then added together into a local church and as other individuals came from time to time they were added to the original group. Thus there was a united church of Christ in Jerusalem. The next step was to establish churches of the same faith and order in adjoining cities and towns. By and by there was a church of Christ in Antioch, another in Samaria, another in Philippi, another in Thessalonica, and so on. In this manner the united church of Christ spread over the entire known world even before the death of the Apostle Paul. How was it all done? It started with a *united local church in Jerusalem; thence the lines were extended by establishing local churches of Christ in other cities; and the sum total of all the members of these united local churches constituted the united universal church of Christ*.

Herein lies a great lesson for the churches of Christ of the present century. Not only the Scriptures, but observation and experience as well, proclaim the absolute

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folly of appealing to any denomination or denominational group, as such, in the matter of bringing about unity. The appeal must be made to individuals to come out of denominationalism and to unite in Christ. This was the method used in apostolic times and by divine authority. It was the method used by the pioneers of the Restoration movement and the Word of God prevailed mightily. Churches of the New Testament order sprang up all over the country in an incredibly short time. Later, out of an exaggerated conception of religious courtesy, the method was changed from *proclamation* to *negotiation*. The result has been temporary stagnation. It should be remembered that a merger of denominations is not unity. The ideal for which Christ prayed is not achieved in a "league of denominations," it can be achieved only by the elimination of denominational barriers and the breaking down of denominational walls. I look upon the time and energy that is being spent at present negotiating with the self-constituted leaders of denominationalism, in vain endeavors to achieve consolidation through human schemes of union, as nothing but sheer waste of effort. The thing to do is to rekindle the fires of evangelism; to extend the lines into every community in the land; and leave the results with God. Preach the Word to individuals; plead with them to abandon sectarianism and to become one in Christ Jesus; go here, there, everywhere with the New Testament message; until the whole Christian world shall come to recognize and accept the New Testament basis. Then, if it should turn out that the ideal for which Jesus prayed can not be achieved to the extent of taking in the whole of Christendom, due to the prejudices and perversities of mankind, we may have the satisfaction of knowing that it shall have been realized, to a limited degree at least, in the unity of the churches of Christ; and we shall be comforted by knowledge of the fact that when the Son of man cometh, He will find the faith on the earth (Matt.

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24:14). The present-day ecumenical movement has been dubbed rightly, "a conglomerate of conflicting units" (Bulletin by Harry L. Owens, San Antonio, Texas.)

VIII. *Consecration to Christ.* The last, but by no means the least, item of the Restoration message, is a plea for personal consecration to Christ.

Baptism is not the end, but just the beginning, of Christian life and service. It is only the consummation of the divine plan whereby we are adopted into the family of God. It is the act in which we "put on" Christ. Gal. 3:27, John 3:5, Rom. 8:14-17. Following baptism we are given the Spirit of adoption as the earnest of our inheritance, and this indwelling Spirit endows us with the privilege of calling God our Father. Baptism is the final act of primary obedience through which we are saved from a state of alienation and by means of which we obtain the right to approach our Father through Christ, our High-Priest, in daily confession and prayer. I John 1:9, Heb. 10:19-22, etc.

In other words, baptism is the consummating act of conversion. Conversion is the complete surrender of self and substance to God, the submission of the human will to the divine. New converts thus inducted into the body of Christ must "continue stedfastly" in the essentials of Christian worship, Acts 2:42; they must grow in divine grace, 2 Pet. 1:5-11; they must bring forth in life and conduct the fruit of the Holy Spirit, Gal. 5:22-25. They must work out their own salvation, Phil. 2:12; they must fight the good fight of faith; they must press on toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God; they must run the race with patience. The crown of life is promised only to those who endure, Rev. 2:10, the "overcomers."

The Restoration ideal not only demands the proclamation of first principles; it also includes going on to perfection. It takes in the Lord's Supper, prayer, liberality,

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meditation, consecration, personal piety and zeal. It includes everything essential to a devout Christian life.

"There's a sweet old story translated for man,
But writ in the long, long ago,
The gospel by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
Of Christ and His mission below.

"Men read and admire this gospel of Christ
With its love so unfailing and true;
But what do they say and what do they think
Of the gospel according to you?

"Tis a wonderful story—this gospel of love
As it shines in the Christ life divine,
And oh, that its truth might be set forth again
In the story of your life and mine.

"You are writing each day a letter to men,
Take care that the writing is true,
'Tis the only gospel some folk will read—
The gospel according to you."

"God highly exalted him and gave unto him a name that is above every name." And to think that He loves us so much He is willing to extend us the privilege of wearing that name! That privilege is yours this very moment if you will but accept Him as your Savior and obey him in Christian baptism. Allow Him to enter your heart and assume authority over your soul. No privilege vouchsafed a human being is comparable to this! May God help you to decide—*now!*

The wells of the fathers must *be kept open*: no ecumenical conglomerate must be permitted to fill them with theological rubbish. The pure water of the primitive Gospel, the true Gospel, the only Gospel, must be allowed to flow in all its pristine purity. Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Savior of the world. This must be the positive

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message sounding out from every pulpit that dares to call itself Christian, from now unto the end, His Second Coming, even until the redeemed shall join with the angels before the Heavenly Throne in proclaiming praise to His matchless name:

“O that with yonder joyful throng,
We at His feet may fall,
We'll join the everlasting throng
And crown Him Lord of all.”

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART THIRTY-EIGHT

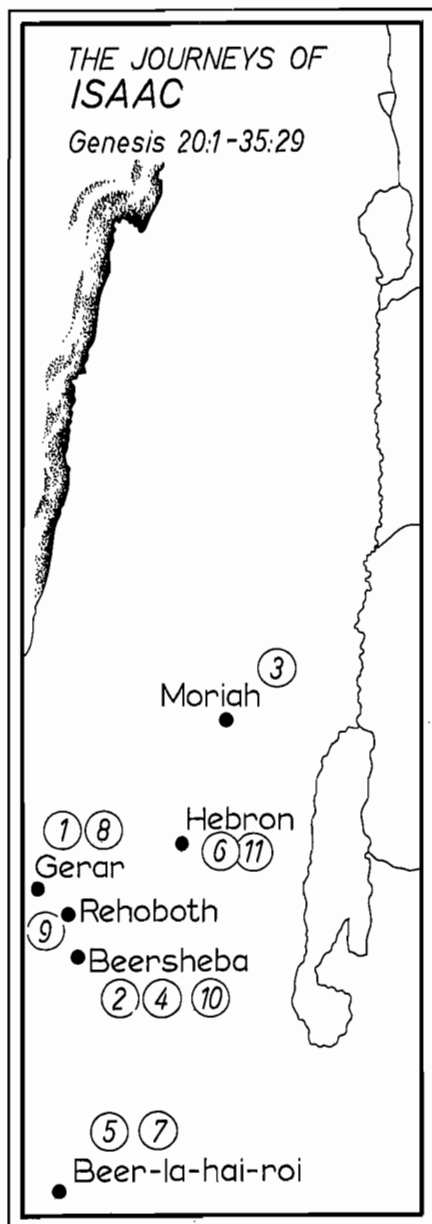
1. Where was Isaac “tenting” when he married Rebekah?
2. Where was the Philistine maritime plane geographically?
3. Who were these Philistines who infiltrated the region around Gerar in earliest times? From what region did they come? By what name are they otherwise known in the ancient records?
4. Name the five cities of Philistia? Of what special significance was Gerar?
5. What was the meaning of the word “Philistine”? What was the origin of the name “Palestine”?
6. What Divine assurance was vouchsafed Isaac at this time? What did God prevent his doing and why?
7. To what place did God tell Isaac to go?
8. How did Isaac’s experience with Abimelech in regard to his wife Rebekah differ from Abraham’s experience with the king’s predecessor in regard to Sarah?
9. What reasons have we for accepting these stories as two separate accounts of two separate episodes?
10. What was the result of Isaac’s venture into agriculture?
11. What did Isaac do about the wells which had been dug by Abraham?

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12. What were the names of the new wells dug by Isaac and what did each name signify?
13. What was the substance of the Divine communication at Beersheba?
14. How many times in Isaac's life did Yahweh appear to him?
15. What was the probable significance of the terms "Abimelech" and "Phicol"?
16. What was the substance of the covenant of Isaac with Abimelech?
17. Distinguish what was Scripturally known as *profane* swearing and what was known as *judicial* swearing? Cite scriptures to authenticate this distinction.
18. What was the character of the oaths exchanged between Isaac and Abimelech?
19. What was the other feature of the covenant ceremony? What light does this incident throw on Isaac's character?
20. What was the name given to the last well "brought in" by Isaac's servants?
21. How may we relate the naming of this well to the similar naming in Gen. 21:31?
22. Cite other instances of twofold naming in the Old Testament. How is this to be explained?
23. What was the location of the ancient city of Beersheba? Does it still exist? What role did this city play in the geography of Palestine?
24. At what age did Esau first marry? From what ethnic group did Esau select these two wives?
25. What do these facts of Esau's marriage indicate as to his character?
26. How did Esau's marriage affect his parents?
27. Name and describe the essentials of life as specified in v. 25.

THE JOURNEYS OF ISAAC

Genesis 20:1-35:29



LIFE OF ISAAC

1. *Gerar*
 - a. Birth: Gen. 20:1; 21:1-22.
 - b. Rejection of Ishmael; 21:8-21.
2. *Beersheba*
 - a. Command to sacrifice Isaac; 21:32-22:2.
3. *Moriah*
 - a. Sacrifice of Isaac; 22:3-20.
4. *Beersheba*
 - a. Death of mother; 23:1-20.
5. *Beerlahairoi*
 - a. Marriage to Rebekah; Ch. 24.
6. Trip to *Hebron* and back
 - a. Death and burial of Abraham; 25:7-10.
7. *Beerlahairoi*
 - a. Birth of twin sons; 25:11, 19-26.
Birthright sold; 25:27-34.
8. *Gerar*
 - a. Lie about Rebekah; 26:1-11.
 - b. Great crops and herds; 26:12-17.
 - c. Disputed wells; 26:18-21.
9. *Rehoboth*
 - a. Undisputed wells; 26:22
10. *Beersheba*
 - a. Covenant with Abimelech; 26:26-33.
 - b. Esau's wives; 26:34-35.
 - c. Blessing given to Jacob; Gen. 27.
 - d. Jacob sent away 28:1-5.
11. *Hebron*
 - a. Reunion with Jacob; 35:27.
 - b. Death and burial of Isaac; 35:28-29.

PART THIRTY-NINE

THE STORY OF ISAAC: THE TWINS AND THE BLESSING

(Genesis 27:1-45)

The Biblical Account

1 And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his elder son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Here am I. 2 And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death. 3 Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me venison; 4 and make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

5 And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. 6 And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, 7 Bring me venison, and make me savory food, that I may eat, and bless thee before Jehovah before my death. 8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. 9 Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savory food for thy father, such as he loveth: 10 and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, so that he may bless thee before his death. 11 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. 12 My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. 13 And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. 14 And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved. 15 And Rebekah took the goodly gar-

THE TWINS AND THE BLESSING 27:15-29

ments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son; 16 and she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: 17 and she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

18 And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? 19 And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first-born; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. 20 And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because Jehovah thy God sent me good speed. 21 And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. 22 and Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. 23 And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. 24 And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am. 25 And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank. 26 And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. 27 And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said.

See, the smell of my son

Is the smell of a field which Jehovah hath blessed:

28 And God gave thee of the dew of heaven,
And of the fatness of the earth,
And plenty of grain and new wine:

29 Let peoples serve thee,
And nations bow down to thee:
Be lord over thy brethren,

*And let thy mother's sons bow down to thee:
Cursed be every one that curseth thee,
And blessed be every one that blesseth thee*

*30 And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31 And he also made savory food, and brought it unto his father; and he said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. 32 And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy first-born, Esau. 33 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who then is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed. 34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. 35 And he said, Thy brother came with guile, and hath taken away thy blessing. 36 And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? 37 And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with grain and new wine have I sustained him: and what then shall I do for thee, my son? 38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me even also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept. 39 And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, of the fatness of the earth shall be thy dwelling, And of the dew of heaven from above;
40 And by thy sword shalt thou live, and thou shalt serve thy brother;
And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt break loose,*

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That thou shalt shake his yoke from off thy neck.

41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. 42 And the words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah; and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. 43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; 44 and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; 45 until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence; why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?

1. *Significance of the Patriarchal Blessing.* The "modernistic" critical explanation of this section is clearly stated by Skinner (ICCG, 368) as follows: "This vivid and circumstantial narrative, which is to be read immediately after 25:34 (or 25:28), gives yet another explanation of the historical fact that Israel, the younger people, had outstripped Edom in the race for power and prosperity. The clever but heartless stratagem by which Rebekah succeeds in thwarting the intention of Isaac, and diverting the blessing from Esau to Jacob, is related with great vivacity, and with an indifference to moral considerations which has been thought surprising in a writer with the fine ethical insight of J (Di). [*Di* here stands for the German critic Dillmann]. It must be remembered, however, that 'J' is a collective symbol, and embraces many tales which sink to the level of ordinary popular morality. We may fairly conclude with Gu. [272: *Gu* is for Gunkel] that narratives of this stamp were too firmly rooted in the mind of the people to be omitted from any collection of national traditions." The student should not forget that

these hypothetical "writers" are all *hypothetical*; that the hypothetical Codes are likewise hypothetical, since no external evidence can be produced to confirm their existence or that of their authors or "redactors." All phases of the Documentary Theory of the Pentateuch are completely without benefit of evidential support externally, and there is little or no agreement among the critics themselves in the matter of allocating verses, sentences and phrases to the various respective writers and redactors. Hence, it follows that all conclusions drawn from the internal evidence of the text is based on *inference*, and that the inference is not necessary inference. I insert this explanatory statement here to caution the student to be wary of these analytical theories which have been spun out of the critics' separate imaginations much in the manner in which a spider spins its web out of its own being (to use an illustration offered by Sir Francis Bacon in his *Novum Organon*). There is no valid ground for not accepting these accounts of the significant events in the lives of the patriarchs at face value. They certainly serve to show us that human character (motivations, attitudes, virtues, faults and foibles) is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Cornfeld (AtD, 81) writes: "Ancient belief held that words spoken in blessing, or in curse on solemn occasions, were efficacious and had the power, as though by magic, to produce the intended result. The blessing of the father was binding, and when Isaac discovered the deceit he held his blessing to be effective, even though it had been granted under false pretences. . . . In patriarchal society, the effectiveness of the blessing was well understood. In Nuzu a man repeated in court the blessing his father had given him on his death-bed, willing him a wife. The terms of such a blessing were upheld by the Court. The Nuzu tablets recognized oral blessings and death-bed wills."

Acts of blessing may be classified as follows: (1)

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Those in which God is said to bless men (Gen. 1:28, 22:17). "God's blessing is accompanied with that virtue which renders his blessing effectual, and which is expressed by it. Since God is eternal and omnipresent, his omniscience and omnipotence cause His blessings to avail in the present life in respect to all things, and also in the life to come." (2) Those in which men are said to bless God (Psa. 103:1, 2; 145:1-3, etc.). "This is when they ascribe to Him those characteristics which are His, acknowledge His sovereignty, express gratitude for His mercies, etc." (3) Those in which men bless their fellow-men when, as in ancient times, under the spirit of prophecy, they predicted blessings to come upon them. (Cf. Jacob and his sons, Gen. 49:1-28, Heb. 11:21; Moses and the children of Israel, Deut. 33:1-29). "Men bless their fellow-men when they express good wishes and pray God in their behalf." It was the duty and privilege of the priests to bless the people in the name of the Lord. The form of the priestly benediction was prescribed in the Law: see Num. 6:24-26: here the promise was added that God would fulfil the words of the blessing. This blessing was pronounced by the priest with uplifted hands, after every morning and evening sacrifice, as recorded of Aaron (Lev. 9:22), and to it the people responded by uttering an amen. This blessing was regularly pronounced at the close of the service in the synagogues. The Levites appear also to have had the power of conferring the blessing (2 Chron. 30:27), and the same privilege was accorded the king, as the viceroy of the Most High (2 Sam. 6:18, 1 Ki. 8:55). Our Lord is said to have blessed little children (Mark 10:16, Luke 24:50). Note also that blessing occurred on the occasion of the institution of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26). (See UBD, s.v., p. 134).

Leupold obviously gives us the clearest explanation of the subject before us. He writes (EG, 737): "Esau, knowing his father's love for game, had no doubt shown this

token of love many a time before this and had noted what pleasure it afforded his father. In this instance the momentous thing is that the father purposes 'to bless' his son. Esau well understood what this involved. This was a custom, apparently well established at this time, that godly men before their end bestowed their parting blessing upon their children. Such a blessing, had it been merely a pious wish of a pious man, would have had its worth and value. In it would have been concentrated the substance of all his prayers for his children. Any godly son would already on this score alone have valued such a blessing highly. However, the blessings of godly men, especially of the patriarchs, had another valuable element in them: they were prophetic in character. Before his end many a patriarch was taught by God's Spirit to speak words of great moment, that indicated to a large extent the future destiny of the one blessed. In other words, *the elements of benediction and prediction* blended in the final blessing. It appears from the brief nature of Isaac's statement that this higher character of the blessing was so well understood as to require no explanation. From all this one sees that *the crude ideas of magic were far removed from these blessings.*" (Italics mine—C.C.). For similar instances, see Gen. 48:10ff.; 50:24ff.; Deut. 33; Josh. 23; 2 Sam. 23:1ff.; 1 Ki. 2:1ff.; 2 Ki. 13:14ff.

2. *Isaac Purposes to Bless Esau* (vv. 1-5). We have here the first reported instance of the infirmities of old age and consequent shortening of life. Isaac was then in his 137th year, a figure based on the following calculation: Joseph was thirty years old when he was first introduced to Pharaoh (41:46), and when Jacob went into Egypt, thirty-nine, as the seven years of abundance and two of famine had then passed (41:47, 45:6); but Jacob at that time was 130 years old (47:9); this means that Joseph was born before Jacob was 91; and as his birth took place in the fourteenth year of Jacob's sojourn in Mesopotamia (cf.

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30:25 and 29:18, 21, 27); it follows that Jacob's flight to Laban occurred in the 77th year of his own life and the 137th of Isaac's. (See KD, BCOTP, 273, 274, fn.). Murphy finds that Isaac was 136 years old at the time of the bestowal of the blessing. "Joseph was in his thirtieth year when he stood before Pharaoh, and therefore thirty-nine when Jacob came down to Egypt at the age of one hundred and thirty. When Joseph was born, therefore, Jacob was ninety-one, and he had sojourned fourteen years in Padan-Aram. Hence Jacob's flight to Laban took place when he was seventy-seven, and therefore in the one hundred and thirty-sixth year of Isaac" (MG, 381). What was the cause of Isaac's failing sight at this relatively early age? The Rabbinical speculations are rather fantastic and indeed amusing. Isaac's eyes were dim, according to one view, from old age; according to another "as a punishment for not restraining Esau in his wickedness, as happened to Eli"; according to other notions, "through the smoke of the incense which his daughters-in-law offered to idols"; or, "when Isaac lay bound on the altar for a sacrifice, the angels wept over him, and their tears dropped into his eyes, and dimmed them"; or, finally, "this happened to him that Jacob might receive the blessings" (SC, 150).

The approach of infirmity of sight certainly warned Isaac "to perform the solemn act by which, as prophet as well as father, he was to hand down the blessing of Abraham to another generation. Of course he designed for Esau the blessing which, once given, was the authoritative and irrevocable act of the patriarchal power; and he desired Esau to prepare a feast of venison for the occasion. Esau was not likely to confess the sale of his birthright, nor could Jacob venture openly to claim the benefit of his trick. Whether Rebekah knew of that transaction, or whether moved by partiality only, she came to the aid of her favorite son, and devised the stratagem by which Jacob obtained his father's blessing" (OTH, 94). "Isaac

had not yet come to the conclusion that Jacob was heir of the promise. The communication from the Lord to Rebekah concerning her yet unborn sons in the form in which it is handed down to us merely determines that the elder shall serve the younger. This fact Isaac seems to have thought might not imply the transference of the birthright; and if he was aware of the transaction between Esau and Jacob, he may not have regarded it as valid. Hence he makes arrangements for bestowing the paternal blessing on Esau, his elder son, whom he also loved" (MG, 381). "In the calmness of determination Isaac directs Esau to prepare savory meat, such as he loved, that he may have his vigor renewed and his spirits revived for the solemn business of bestowing that blessing, which he held to be fraught with more than ordinary benefits" (MG, 381). "It must be observed that Isaac was in the wrong when he attempted to give Esau the blessing. He could not have been ignorant of God's decree about the sons before they were born. However much we deplore the acts of Rebekah and Jacob, the greater fault was with Isaac and Esau" (OTH, 94). We suggest that the proper title for the study before us would be, "The Parents, The Twins, and the Blessing." *Both parents were more deeply involved in these transactions than were the sons themselves.*

"Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death," said Isaac; yet he lived forty-three years longer (35:28). "Without regard to the words which were spoken by God with reference to the children before their birth, and without taking any notice of Esau's frivolous barter of his birthright and his ungodly connections with the Canaanites, Isaac maintained his preference for Esau, and directed him therefore to take his things (hunting gear), his quiver and bow, to hunt game and prepare a savory dish, that he might eat, and his soul might bless him. As his preference for Esau was fostered and strength-

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ened by, if it did not spring from, his liking for game (25:28), so now he wished to raise his spirits for imparting the blessing by a dish of venison prepared to his taste. In this the infirmity of the flesh is evident. At the same time, it was not merely because of his partiality for Esau, but unquestionably on account of the natural rights of the firstborn, that he wished to impart the blessing to him, just as the desire to do this before his death arose from the consciousness of his patriarchal call" (BCOTP, 274).

"He [Isaac] seems to have apprehended the near approach of dissolution (but he lived forty-three years longer, 35:28). And believing that the conveyance of the patriarchal benediction was a solemn duty incumbent on him, he was desirous of stimulating all his energies for that great effort, by partaking, apparently for the last time, of a favorite dish which had often refreshed and invigorated his wasted frame. It is difficult to imagine him ignorant of the Divine purpose (cf. 25:23). But natural affection, prevailing through age and infirmity, prompted him to entail the honors and powers of the birthright on his eldest son; and perhaps he was not aware of what Esau had done (cf. 25:34). The deathbed benediction of the patriarchs was not simply the last farewell blessing of a father to his children, though that, pronounced with all the fulness and energy of concentrated feeling, carries in every word an impressive significance which penetrates the inmost parts of the filial heart, and is often felt there long after the tongue that uttered it is silent in the grave. The dying benediction of the patriarchs had a mysterious import: it was a supernatural act, in performing which they were free agents indeed; still mere instruments employed by an overruling power to execute His purposes of grace. It was, in fact, a testamentary conveyance of the promise, bequeathed with great solemnity in a formal address, called a BLESSING (vv. 30, 36; 22:17, 18 [Greek,

eulogese]; Heb. 11:20), which, consisting partly of prayers and partly of predictions, was an authoritative appropriation of the covenant promises to the person who inherited the right of primogeniture. Abraham, indeed, had not performed this last ceremony, because it had been virtually done before his death, on the expulsion of Ishmael (25:5), and by the bestowment of the patrimonial inheritance on Isaac (25:5), as directed by the oracle (cf. 17:21 with 21:12, last clause). But Isaac (as also Jacob) had more than one son in *his* family, and, in the belief of his approaching death, was animated by a sacred impulse to do what was still unperformed, and his heart prompted as right—that of transmitting the honors of primogeniture to his elder son” (Jamieson, CECG, 194).

Note especially v. 4, last clause: “*that my soul may bless thee before I die.*” That is to say “that, invigorated with the savory meat, I may bestow upon thee my blessing, constituting thee heir of all the benefits promised to me and my father Abraham: vv. 27-29; ch. 28:3, 4, 48:15; Deut. 31, 33; Heb. 11:20” (SIBG, 258). “Isaac intended to bless him that God’s promise to Abraham, that his seed would inherit the land, should be fulfilled through Esau. Presumably Rebekah had never told Isaac of the prophecy that the elder would serve the younger, 25:23” (SC, 150). “The expression ‘that my *soul* may bless thee’ does involve a bit more than the bare fact that the word ‘soul’ is used as a substitute for the personal pronoun. The expression actually indicates the participation of one’s inmost being in the activity involved” (Leupold, EG, 738). “As if the expiring *nephesh* gathered up all its forces in a single potent and prophetic wish. The universal belief in the efficacy of a dying utterance appears often in the New Testament” (Skinner, ICCG, 369).

3. *Rebekah’s Stratagem* (vv. 6-17). Rebekah *happened to be listening* (JB, 45) when Isaac was talking with his son Esau (cf. 18:10). But—did she just *happen* to be

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listening, or was she *eavesdropping*, constantly on guard to protect the interests of her favorite? Her jealousy aroused by what she overheard, "she instantly devises a scheme whose daring and ingenuity illustrate the Hebrew notion of capable and quick-witted womanhood" (ICCG, 370). Apparently her plan was formed quickly: indeed the likelihood is that she had the plan ready in case of just such an eventuality as this. Everything that follows makes Rebekah's initiative in the scheme more obvious. "She is a woman of quick decision, as she was from the moment of her first meeting with Abraham's servant as well as on the occasion of her assent to the proposition to go back to Isaac at once" (EG, 740). (Cf. 24:15-27, 55-60). As she unfolds her stratagem, Jacob obeys her at once. The fact that he sees a possible flaw, however, makes it crystal clear that he is not averse to carrying out her orders. His objection shows enough shrewdness on his part (vv. 11-12) "to throw his mother's resourcefulness into bolder relief." But it is obvious that his demurrer was not on any moral ground, but solely on the ground of *expediency*, namely, *that he might get caught red-handed in trying to perpetrate the deception*. To this Rebekah replied, "Upon me be the curse, my son," to which she added the demand that he *obey her voice*, that is, without question. Evidently she knew what she was doing, and so had made preparation for any eventuality. *Rebekah was truly in command of the situation: no doubt about it*. "Jacob views the matter more coolly, and starts a difficulty. He may be found out to be a deceiver, and bring his father's curse upon him. Rebekah, anticipating no such issue, undertakes to bear the curse that she conceived would never come. Only let him obey" (Murphy, MG, 381). "Jacob's chief difficulty was removed. He had been more afraid of detection than of duplicity. His mother, however, proved more resolute than he in carrying through the plan. Jacob provides the materials, Rebekah prepares them. After more than

ninety years of married life she must have known pretty well what 'his father loved' " (Leupold, EG, 743). Rebekah takes the festal raiment and puts it on Jacob: "the fact that this would have been put on Esau proves once more that the blessing was a religious ceremony." "Since the clothes were in Rebekah's charge, Esau must have been still an unmarried man" (ICCG, 370). Rebekah's part is now ended and Jacob is left on his own resources. v. 13—"The manner in which she [Rebekah] imprecates the curse cannot be justified; but, from the promise of God, and from Jacob's having obtained the birthright, ch. 25:23, 33, she was confident of a happy issue" (SIBG, 258). "The narrative stresses throughout that Esau was the elder and Jacob the younger, and this is done to the credit of Rebekah. Although a mother would normally recognize that the blessings and birthright belonged to the firstborn, she was determined that they should go to Jacob, because she perceived Esau's unfitness for them" (SC, 151).

4. *Jacob Obtains the Blessing* (vv. 18-29). Jacob, without further objection, obeys his mother. She clothes him in Esau's festal raiment and puts the skins of the kids on his hands and his neck. ("The camel-goat affords a hair which bears a great resemblance to that of natural growth, and is used as a substitute for it," Murphy, MG, 382). The strange interview between father and son now begins. "The scheme planned by the mother was to be executed by the son in the father's bed-chamber; and it is painful to think of the deliberate falsehoods, as well as daring profanity, he resorted to. The disguise, though wanting one thing, which had nearly upset the whole plot, succeeded in misleading Isaac; and while giving his paternal embrace, the old man was roused into a state of high satisfaction and delight" (CECG, 195). Isaac is reclining on his couch, in the feebleness of advancing years. His first reaction is to express surprise that the visitor could have had such good fortune in his hunting and in the

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preparation of the savory meal so quickly. Jacob blandly replied, hypocritically it would seem, "Because Jehovah thy God sent me God speed," that is, Yahweh has providentially come to my assistance. "To bring God into the lie seems blasphemous to us but the oriental mentality would see no wrong in it, being used to ascribe every event to God, ignoring 'secondary causes'" (JB, 47). (It is difficult, I think, for us to dismiss the matter so nonchalantly). "By making the utterance doubly solemn, 'Yahweh, thy God,' the hypocritical pretense is made the more odious" (EG, 745). On hearing Jacob's voice Isaac became suspicious, and bade Jacob come nearer, that he might feel him. This Jacob did, but because his hands appeared hairy like Esau's, Isaac did not recognize him; "so he blessed him." "In this remark (v. 23) the writer gives the result of Jacob's attempt; so that the blessing is mentioned proleptically here, and refers to the formal blessing described afterwards, and not to the first greeting and salutation" (BCOTP, 275). "The bewildered father now puts Jacob to a severer test. He feels him, but discerns him not. The ear notes a difference, but the hand feels the hairy skin resembling Esau's; the eyes give no testimony." Still there is lingering doubt: Isaac puts the crucial question: "Art thou my very son Esau?" The issue is joined: there is no evasion of this question (cf. Jesus and the High Priest, Matt. 26:63-64) Jacob now resorts to the *outright lie*: "I am" (v. 24). Isaac, his doubt now apparently allayed, calls for the repast and partakes of it.

The Kiss, vv. 26, 27. Originally the act of kissing had a symbolical character. Here it is a sign of affection between a parent and a child; in ch. 29:13 between relatives. It was also a token of friendship (2 Sam. 20:9, Matt. 26:48; Luke 7:45, 15:20; Acts 20:37). The kissing of princes was a symbol of homage (1 Sam. 10:1, Ps. 2:12). The Rabbis permitted only three kinds of kisses—the kiss of reverence, of reception, and of dismissal. The kiss of

charity (love, peace) was practised among disciples in the early church (Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12, 1 Thess. 5:26, 1 Pet. 5:4).

"The kiss appears here for the first time as the token of true love and deep affection. Isaac asks for this token from his son. The treachery of the act cannot be condoned on Jacob's part: the token of true love is debased to a means of deception. The Old Testament parallel (2 Sam. 20:9) as well as that of the New Testament (Matt. 26:49 and parallels) comes to one's mind involuntarily" (EG, 749). "The kiss of Christian brotherhood and the kiss of Judas are here enclosed in one" (Lange).

The Perfumed Raiment, v. 27. "But the smell of goatskin is most offensive. This, however, teaches that they had the fragrance of the Garden of Eden (Rashi). This comment is to be understood as follows: According to tradition, the garment had belonged to Adam, and had passed from him to Nimrod and thence to Esau. Adam had worn it in Eden, and it still retained its fragrance (Nachmanides). It was perfumed (Rashbam)" (SC, 152). (But, "we must not think of our European goats; whose skins would be quite unsuitable for any such deception. 'It is the camel-goat of the East, whose black, silk-like hair was used even by the Romans as a substitute for human hair'"—BCOTP, 279, fn.). And Isaac smelled the smell of Jacob's raiment: "not deliberately, in order to detect whether they belonged to a shepherd or a huntsman, but accidentally, while in the act of kissing. The odor of Esau's garments, impregnated with the fragrance of the aromatic herbs of Palestine, excited the dull sensibilities of the aged prophet, suggesting to his mind pictures of freshness and fertility, and inspiring him to pour forth his promised benediction; *and blessed him* (not a second time, the statement in v. 23 being inserted only by anticipation" (PCG, 338). "The aromatic odors of the Syrian fields and meadows often impart a strong fragrance to the

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person and clothes, as has been noticed by many travelers. This may have been the reason for besmearing the 'goodly raiment' with fragrant perfumes. It is not improbable, that in such a skilfully-contrived scheme, where not the smallest circumstance seems to have been omitted or forgotten that could render the counterfeit complete, means were used for scenting the clothes with which Jacob was invested, to be the more like those of Esau—newly returned from the field" (CECG, 196). "The smelling of the garments seems to have a twofold significance: on the one hand it is a final test of Esau's identity (otherwise the disguise, v. 15, would have no meaning), on the other it supplies the sensuous impression which suggests the words of the blessing" (ICCG, 371). (Note: "the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which Yahweh hath blessed," v. 27). "Isaac regarded the smell of Jacob's garment as a token that God had intended to bless him abundantly, and to render him a particular blessing to others" (SIBG, 258). "After eating, Isaac kissed his son as a sign of his paternal affection, and in doing so he smelt the odor of his clothes, *i.e.*, the clothes of Esau, which were thoroughly scented with the odor of the fields, and then imparted his blessing" (BCOTP, 275).

The Blessing, vv. 27-29. Isaac now gives the kiss of paternal affection and pronounces the benediction. Murphy (MG, 382) notes the threefold character of the blessing. 1. It contains, first, *a fertile soil*. "*The smell of a field which Yahweh hath blessed*" (cf. Deut. 33:23). "*The dew of heaven*" (an abundance of this was especially precious in a land where rainfall is limited to two seasons of the year). "*Fatness of the earth*" (Num. 13:20, Isa. 5:1, 28:1: "a proportion of this to match and render available the dew of heaven"). "*Plenty of grain and new wine*" ("often combined with 'oil' in pictures of agricultural felicity; cf. Deut. 7:13, Hos. 2:8, 22). 2 It contains, second, *a numerous and powerful offspring*. "Let

peoples serve thee" (pre-eminence among the neighboring nations: cf. 25:23, 2 Sam. 8). "*Be lord over thy brethren*" (pre-eminence among his kindred: "Isaac does not seem to have grasped the full meaning of the prediction, "The elder shall serve the younger," (Murphy). But—can we be sure that Rebekah had told Isaac of this prediction, 25:23?) 3. It contains, third, *temporal and spiritual prosperity*. Let everyone that curseth thee be cursed; and let everyone that blesseth thee be blessed. "This is the only part of the blessing that directly comprises spiritual things." "In this blessing Isaac at once requested and predicted the benefits mentioned. These temporal favors were more remarkable under the Old Testament than under the New, and represented the spiritual and temporal influences and fullness of the New Covenant and of the church of God: cf. Deut. 32:2, Isa. 45:8; 1 Cor. 1:30, 3:22; Rev. 1:6, 5:10; Eph. 1:3" (SIBG, 258). "On the whole, who would not covet such a blessing? Bestowed by a godly father upon a godly and a deserving son in accordance with the will and purpose of God, it surely would constitute a precious heritage" (Leupold, EG, 751). "The blessing is partly natural and partly political, and deals, of course, not with the personal history of Jacob, but with the future greatness of Israel. Its nearest analogies are the blessings on Joseph (Gen. 49:22-26, Deut. 33:13-16)" (ICCG, 371).

5. *Esau's Bitterness and Hatred* (vv. 30-41). Note how very nearly Jacob was caught redhanded (v. 30). "He had just about closed the door, divested himself of the borrowed garments and the kidskin disguise, when his brother appeared on the scene" (EG, 751). "Scarcely had the former scene been concluded, when the fraud was discovered. The emotions of Isaac, as well as Esau, may easily be imagined—the astonished, alarm, and sorrow of the one, the disappointment and indignation of the other. But a moment's reflection convinced the aged patriarch that the transfer of the blessing was 'of the Lord,' and now

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irrevocable. The importunities of Esau, however, overpowered him; and as the prophetic afflatus was upon the patriarch, he gave utterance to what was probably as pleasing to a man of Esau's character as the honors of primogeniture would have been" (CECG, 197). Esau comes in, but it is too late. He uses practically the same words that Isaac had used (cf. "that thy soul may bless me," vv. 19, 31): this fact shows how carefully Jacob (or Rebekah) had planned the deception: "he knew about what Esau would say when stepping into his father's presence." Pained perplexity stands out in Isaac's question, v. 33, "who then is he that hath taken venison"? etc. But by the time the question is fully uttered, the illusion is dispelled: Isaac knows who has perpetrated the deception. "Isaac knows it was Jacob. Isaac sees how God's providence checked him in his unwise and wicked enterprise. From this point onward there is no longer any unclearness as to what God wanted in reference to the two sons. Therefore the brief but conclusive, 'yea, blessed shall he be.' But his trembling was caused by seeing the hand of God in what had transpired" (EG, 753). "Jacob had no doubt perpetrated a fraud, at the instigation of his mother; and if Esau had been worthy in other respects, and above all if the blessing had been designed for him, its bestowment on another would have been either prevented or regarded as null and void. But Isaac now felt that, whatever was the misconduct of Jacob in interfering, and especially in employing unworthy means to accomplish his end, he himself was culpable in allowing carnal considerations to draw his preference to Esau, who was otherwise unworthy. He knew too that the paternal benediction flowed not from the bias of the parent, but from the Spirit of God guiding his will, and therefore when pronounced could not be revoked. Hence he was now convinced that it was the design of Providence that the spiritual blessing should fall on the line of Jacob"

(MG, 383). V. 33: "*and blessed shall he be*": "not that Isaac now acquiesces in the ruling of Providence, and *refuses* to withdraw the blessing; but that such an oracle once uttered is in its nature irrevocable" (ICCG, 372). (This is undoubtedly the meaning of Heb. 12:16, 17).

Vv. 34-38: "The grief of Esau is distressing to witness, especially as he had been comparatively blameless in this particular instance. But still it is to be remembered that his heart had not been open to the paramount importance of spiritual things. Isaac now perceives that Jacob has gained the blessing by deceit. Esau marks the propriety of his name, the wrestler who trips up the heel, and pleads pathetically for at least some blessing. His father enumerates what he has done for Jacob, and asks what more he can do for Esau, who then exclaims, *Hast thou but one blessing?*" Had Esau in the interim between his bartering the birthright for a mess of pottage, and this incident of the blessing, come to have a more adequate understanding of these institutions and privileges? We must doubt it. "Esau's conduct in this case does not impress us favorably. His unmanly tears are quite unworthy of him. His 'exceedingly loud and bitter outcry' is further evidence of lack of self-control. He who never aspired after higher things now wants this blessing as though his future hopes depended all and only on the paternal blessing. We cannot help but feel that a superstitious overvaluation of the blessing is involved. In fact, he now wants, as though it were his own, that which he had wilfully resigned under oath. The right to the blessing which Esau now desires was lost long ago. In fact, up to this point there was a double conspiracy afoot. Isaac and Esau, though not admitting it was so, were conspiring to deflect to Esau a blessing both knew he had forfeited, in fact, was never destined to have. But at the same time Rebekah and Jacob were consciously conspiring to obtain

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what God had destined for Jacob and what Jacob had also secured from Esau" (EG, 753).

What an emotional scene this was! How intensely dramatic! Old Isaac *trembled very exceedingly* (v. 33): was he not keenly conscious now of the *carnality* (his love of well-cooked venison) which had all along prompted his preference for Esau? Was he aware of Esau's bartering away of the birthright? Was he aware of the Divine prediction that "the elder should serve the younger"? If so, did He now realize that he was presuming to obstruct God's Eternal Purpose respecting Messiah? If so, no wonder that he trembled! As for Esau, he "cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry" (v. 34) and bawled out the words, "*Is he not rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birth-right; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing.*" ("Jacob" means "Supplanter," literally, "Overreacher"). What a clear case of what Freudians call *projection*: Isaac could not have taken his birthright, if he, Esau, had had any respect for it! Isaac's gain was the direct consequence of Esau's profanity. And what of Jacob in this incident of the blessing? He has slunk away from the scene entirely, having accomplished his deception. We cannot help thinking he was somewhere with his mother awaiting developments, but inwardly gratified that their plans had succeeded. "The purely literary aspects of this vivid account require little comment. Tension mounts constantly as Isaac, sightless and never altogether convinced by the evidence of his other senses, resorts to one test after another: his visitor sounds like Jacob, but says he is Esau, yet the hunt took much less time than expected; the skin feels like Esau's and the food tastes right; the lips betray nothing, but the clothes smell of the chase; so it has to be Esau after all! The reader is all but won over by the drama of Jacob's ordeal, when Esau's return restores the proper perspective. The scene between Isaac and Esau,

both so shaken and helpless, could scarcely be surpassed for pathos. Most poignant of all is the stark fact that the deed cannot be undone. For all the actors in this piece are but tools of fate which—purposeful though it must be—can itself be neither deciphered nor side-stepped by man” (ABG, 213). (See *infra* on the subject of Divine election).

The Blessing of Esau, vv. 39-40. “My brother has supplanted me twice,” cried Esau, “haven’t you any blessing left for me, father?” “Though there is truth in what Esau says, he does not do well to play the part of injured innocence. His birthright he sold right cheerfully, and was far more at fault in the selling of it than Jacob in the buying. The blessing, on the other hand, had been destined for Jacob by God long ago, and Esau knew it” (EG, 755). *But did Esau know this?* We are told by some that Rebekah would never have kept secret from Isaac the Divine oracle of 25:23. But can we be sure about this, considering the strong-willed woman that Rebekah was? However, the meaningful blessing having been bestowed on Jacob, there was no calling it back. “A blessing in the sense in which Esau wants it cannot be bestowed, for that would require the cancellation of the blessing just bestowed” (*i.e.*, on Jacob). “Poor Esau’s grief is pathetic, a startling case of seeking a good thing too late. The blessing of the father seems to be the one thing of the whole spiritual heritage that has impressed Esau. Unfortunately, it is not the chief thing” (EG, 755). “*So Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.*” So shall the lost, when they find it is everlastingly too late, cry for the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them and hide them “from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev. 6:15, 16).

V. 38: “*Is that the only blessing thou hast?*” cries Esau. He does not even imagine that the blessing can be revoked, but he still hopes that perhaps a second (inferior)

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blessing might be granted him. "Those tears of Esau, the sensuous, wild, impulsive man—almost like the cry of some trapped creature—are among the most pathetic in the Bible" (Davidson, *Hebrews*, 242, quoted ICCG, 373). His importunity elicits, says Skinner, what is virtually a curse, though put in terms similar to those of v. 29. Literally, it reads:

"Away from the fat places of the earth shall thy dwelling be;

And away from the dew of heaven above!"

"Here, after a noun of place, the preposition denotes distance or separation; for example, Prov. 20:3. The pastoral life has been distasteful to Esau, and so shall it be with his race. The land of Edom was accordingly a comparative wilderness, Mal. 1:3" (MG, 383). The "blessing" imported that Esau and his seed should inhabit Mt. Seir, a soil then only moderately fertile (cf. Gen. 36:1-8, Deut. 2:5). Seir was the rather rugged region extending southward from the Dead Sea, east of the valley of Arabah: "far from the fatness of the earth and dew of heaven from above" (Unger, UBD, 991, 992). The rest of Isaac's pronouncement was predictive, signifying that Esau's progeny should live much by war, violence, and rapine; should be subjected to the Hebrew yoke, but should at times cast it off. "And so it was; the historical relation of Edom to Israel assumed the form of a constant reiteration of servitude, revolt, and reconquest." After a long period of independence at first, the Edomites were defeated by Saul (1 Sam. 14:47) and subjugated by David (2 Sam. 8:14); and, in spite of an attempt at revolt under Solomon (1 Ki. 11:14ff.), they remained subject to the kingdom of Judah until the time of Joram, when they rebelled (2 Ki. 8:16ff.) They were subdued again by Amaziah (2 Ki. 14:7; 2 Chron. 25:11ff.), and remained in subjection under Uzziah and Jotham (2 Ki. 14:22, 2 Chron. 26:2). It was not until the reign of Ahaz that they shook the

yoke of Judah entirely off (2 Ki. 16:6, 2 Chron. 18:17), without Judah being ever able to reduce them again. At length, however, they were completely conquered by John Hyrcanus about B.C. 129, compelled to submit to circumcision, and incorporated in the Jewish state (Josephus, *Ant.* 13, 9, 1; 15, 7, 9). At a still later period, through Antipater and Herod, they established an Idumean dynasty over Judea, which lasted till the complete dissolution of the Jewish state. (See BCOTP, Keil and Delitzsch, 279).

Esau's Vindictiveness, vv. 41-45. Esau hated Jacob: and hate is a passion never satisfied until it kills. It is scarcely to be wondered at, however, that Esau resented Jacob's deceit and vowed revenge. Esau said in his heart, "*The days of mourning for my father is at hand*; then will I slay my brother Jacob." "The days of mourning for my father": a common Oriental expression for the death of a parent. This, we are told, was a period of seven days. "It very frequently happens in the East that brothers at variance wait for the death of their father to avenge amongst themselves their private quarrels" (CECG, 197). "He would put off his intended fratricide that he might not hurt his father's mind" (BCOTP, 280). Another view: "In this manner Esau hoped to recover both birth-right and blessing; but Isaac nevertheless lived about forty-three years after." "Esau was afraid to attempt any open violence during his father's life. The disease under which Isaac was laboring had brought on premature debility, and it appears to have greatly affected his sight. He must have in a great measure recovered from it, however, for he lived for forty years after Jacob's departure" (SIBG, 259). "He did not wish to grieve his father by taking revenge while he was alive" (SC, 156).

Rebekah to the Rescue. In some way, or by someone, Esau's threat was made known to Rebekah, and, as usual, she was prepared to meet the crisis. She advised (in reality, *ordered*) Jacob to protect himself from Esau's threatened

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vengeance by fleeing to her brother Laban in Haran, and remaining there "a few days," as she mildly put it, until his brother's wrath was subdued.

"Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?" This refers to the law of Goelism, by which the nearest of kin would be obliged to avenge the death of Jacob upon his brother" (CECG, 198). "The writer has in view the custom of blood-revenge (cf. 2 Sam. 14:7), though in the case supposed there would be no one to execute it" (ICCG, 374). (But would not Jacob's offspring be required to do this? (Cf. Gen. 4:14-15). "Killing Jacob would expose Esau to the death penalty, through blood vengeance or otherwise" (ABG, 210). "In order to obtain Isaac's consent to this plan, without hurting his feelings by telling him of Esau's murderous intentions, she spoke to him of her troubles on account of the Hittite wives of Esau, and the weariness of life that she should feel if Jacob also were to marry one of the daughters of the land, and so introduced the idea of sending Jacob to her relatives in Mesopotamia, with a view to marriage there" (BCOTP, 280).

The recapitulation of this incident by Keil-Deiltzsch is so thorough and so obviously accurate that we feel justified in including it at this point: "Thus the words of Isaac to his two sons were fulfilled—words which are justly said to have been spoken 'in faith concerning things to come' (Heb. 11:20). For the blessing was a prophecy, and that not merely in the case of Esau, but in that of Jacob also; although Isaac was deceived with regard to the person of the latter. Jacob remained blessed, therefore, because, according to the predetermination of God, the elder was to serve the younger; but the deceit by which his mother prompted him to secure the blessing was never approved. On the contrary, the sin was followed by immediate punishment. Rebekah was obliged to send her pet son into a foreign land, away from his father's house, and in an

utterly destitute condition. She did not see him for twenty years, even if she lived till his return, and possibly never saw him again. Jacob had to atone for his sin against both brother and father by a long and painful exile, in the midst of privation, anxiety, fraud, and want. Isaac was punished for retaining his preference for Esau, in opposition to the revealed will of Jehovah, by the success of Jacob's stratagem; and Esau for his contempt of the birthright, by the loss of the blessing of the first-born. In this way a higher hand prevailed above the acts of sinful men, bringing the counsel and will of Jehovah to eventual triumph, in opposition to human thought and will" (BCOTP, 297).

6. *The Problem of Divine Election.* We need recall here certain facts about Divine knowledge and election. We must start from the fact that man is predestined only to be free, that is, to have the power of choice. (In the final analysis, it is neither heredity nor environment nor both, but the *I*—the self, the person—who makes the choice. Hence, a man's choices, and the acts proceeding therefrom constitute God's foreknowledge, or to be specific, His *knowledge*. Therefore, the acts of the parents and the twins, in the story before us, were not the consequences of an arbitrary foreordination on God's part, nor of the influence of some such non-entity as "fate," "fortune," "destiny," and the like, but of the motivations, choices, and acts of the persons involved. Though *known* by Him, as He knows in a single thought, the entire space-time continuum, they were not necessarily foreordained. He simply allowed them to occur by not interfering to prevent their occurrence. (See Part Thirty-seven *supra*, under v. 23, of ch. 25, caption, "The Prophetic Communication"). To hold that God necessitates everything that man does, including even his acceptance or rejection of the redemption provided for him by Divine grace, is to make God responsible for everything that occurs, both good and evil.

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This is not only unscriptural: it is an insult to the Almighty. (Cf. Ezek. 18:32, John 5:40, 1 Tim. 2:4, Jas. 1:13, 2 Pet. 3:9). Although it may appear at first glance that the choice of Jacob over Esau was an arbitrary one, our human hindsight certainly supports God's "foresight" in making it. True, Jacob's character was not anything to brag about, especially in his earlier years, but after his experience at Peniel he seems to have been a changed man with a changed name, Israel (32:22-32); certainly it was of nobler quality all along than that of Esau, as proved by their different attitudes toward Divine institutions—rights and responsibilities—such as those of the birthright and the blessing (Exo. 13:11-16, Deut. 21:17). Hence the Divine election in this case was not arbitrary, but justly based on the Divine knowledge of the basic righteousness of Jacob by way of contrast with the sheer *secularism* ("profanity") of Esau.

Hurrian Parallels. We are especially indebted to Dr. Speiser for his information regarding Hurrian parallels of the Hebrew stories of the parents, the twins, and the transference of the birthright and the blessing. These Hurrian sources from Nuzi, we are told, "mirror social conditions and customs in the patriarchal center at Haran." Birthright, for instance, "in Hurrian society was often a matter of the father's discretion rather than chronological priority. Moreover, of all the paternal dispositions, the one that took the form of a deathbed declaration carried the greatest weight. One such recorded statement actually safeguards the rights of the youngest son against possible claims by his older brothers. Another is introduced by the formula, 'I have now grown old,' which leads up to an oral allocation of the testator's property, or, in other words, a deathbed 'blessing.'" (For further details, Dr. Speiser refers the student to his discussion in the *Journal of Biblical Literature and Exegesis*, 74 [1955,], 252f.).

Again: "Isaac's opening words in the present instance

reflect thus an old and authentic usage. The background is Hurrian, which accords with the fact that Haran, where the patriarchs had their roots, was old Hurrian territory. On the socio-legal level, therefore, the account is a correct measure of early relations between Hebrews and Hurrians. With Seir—a synonym of Esau—assigned in Deut. 2:12 to the Horites (even though not all of them can be equated with Hurrians), it would not be surprising if the same account should also echo remote historical rivalries between the same two groups. At any rate, tradition succeeded in preserving the accurate setting of this narrative precisely because the subject matter was deemed to be of great consequence. In essence, this matter was the continuity of the biblical process itself, a process traced through a line that did not always hold the upper hand. Legally, the older son was entitled to a double and preferential share of the inheritance, especially in Hurrian society. But since the status of the older son could be regulated by a father's pronouncement, irrespective of chronological precedent, and since the legacy in this instance had been established by divine covenant, the emphasis of tradition on the transfer of the birthright in a deathbed blessing—with Yahweh's approval (cf. vs. 7)—can readily be appreciated" (ABG, 212-213). Hurrian parallels of various details of the story of the relations between Jacob and Laban will be found in subsequent sections.

FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

An Unpleasant Picture of Family Life

All four of the participants in the domestic drama paid, in one way or another, for their sins of parental bias, outright deception, indifference to sacred institutions, disregard of family unity and welfare, mediocre fatherhood and overzealous mother-love. A family of four, all of whom were in the wrong. Note the following outline:

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1. The father's scheming, vv. 1-4. Isaac evidently was not near death, for he lived on for more than forty years. It may be assumed that he knew God's will (25:23); otherwise, it must be assumed that Rebekah could never have reported to him regarding this Divine pronouncement. (Of course this latter view is not outside the realm of possibility by any means). If Isaac knew what was God's will in the matter, he deliberately set about to thwart it. Esau probably also knew, in which case he showed himself more than ready to fall in with his father's scheme. In any case Isaac could hardly lay claim to any great measure of family control. He was without doubt a genuinely henpecked man.

2. The mother's counter-plot (vv. 5-17). Rebekah's aim was commendable, we might agree, but her methods were wrong. Jacob saw the risk involved (v. 12) but was overborne by his domineering mother.

3. The younger son's deception (vv. 18-29). The lies were terrible, one might well say, unpardonable. It was in response to these lies, that the father's benediction, with some misgiving, followed.

4. The elder son's humiliation (vv. 30-40). Sympathy for Esau cannot hide the fact of his "profanity." He had sold his birthright for "a mess of pottage." If he had, in the meantime, come to realize the true nature of the blessing, it was too late: he could not change that which, once given, was irrevocable. This we believe to be the meaning of Heb. 12:17.

5. The denouement (vv. 41-46). Esau's anger was to be expected: it was natural. However, because Isaac did not die, he could only vent his rage on Jacob. Rebekah, of course, took action immediately to thwart his threatened revenge; but with all her resourcefulness she could not foresee either that she might never meet Jacob again or that her brother Laban would prove to be as great a plotter as she had been.

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All in all, it was a family "mess." But it is also another case of the Bible's *realism*. The Bible is pre-eminently the Book of Life! It pictures life exactly as men and women live it in this world, never exaggerating their virtues, never ignoring their faults.

"The Result of the Deception. The blessing of a dying father was believed by Oriental peoples to exert an important influence over the life of his descendants. Probably Rebekah and Jacob feared that Jacob might thereby lose the advantage he had already gained by his bargain with Esau. The steps they took to deceive the aged patriarch were wholly discreditable from the standpoint of a modern conscience. Jacob and his mother did not attempt to justify their act. The guilty pair did not remain unpunished. A train of bitter consequences ensued. 1. Jacob's punishment was exile from the family home. 2. He had deprived himself at a stroke of everything on which he set great value. 3. It was the sort of retribution he needed. His scheming mother suffered too. Despite her masterfulness and whole-souled devotion, she never saw the face of her favorite son again" (HH, 40).

For Meditation: "Some very solemn and searching lessons for us all. (1) The end does *not* justify the means. (2) The results of sin are inevitable (all four suffered irreparably). (3) The will of God will be done in spite of man's effort to thwart it (Psa. 33:10; Prov. 16:9, 19:21)" (TPCC, 54). In addition to all this, there was the terrible threat hanging over the household (v. 45). "This is not a rhetorical question. By the laws of blood revenge, if Esau killed Jacob, the clan would in turn kill him. We have a parallel in the tragedy of the woman of Tekoa (2 Sam. 14:5-7)" (Cornfeld, AtD, 81). The prospect of a bloodbath that might ensue within the tribe was not an improbable one: hence Jacob's flight, at the command of his mother, to her distant kinsman in Haran. *Learn:* "1. That those who attempt to deceive others are

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not infrequently themselves deceived. 2. That those who set out on a sinful course are liable to sink deeper into sin than they expected. 3. That deception practised by a son against a father, at a mother's instigation, is a monstrous and unnatural display of wickedness. 4. That God can accomplish His own designs by means of man's crimes, without either relieving them of guilt or Himself being the author of sin. 5. That the blessing of God maketh rich and addeth no sorrow therewith. 6. That the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (PCG, 340); that is "without variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (Jas. 1:17) according to the demands of Absolute justice tempered with mercy. Finally, "The prediction of a nation's or a person's future does not interfere with the free operation of the human will" (*ibid.*, 343).

The Parents and the Twins: Characterizations

(1) "Rebekah and Jacob deceived Isaac in order to obtain the blessing. Esau, long before this, had sold the birthright (25:27-34) to his brother. God would undoubtedly have worked out His will for Jacob to obtain the blessing in the end without resort to fraud. This incident is a sad illustration of what happens when believers seek to promote the will of God by dishonest means. Jacob had to pay the price in long years of exile" (HSB, 45).

(2) "The ethics of the case should be scrutinized a bit more closely. That Jacob was in part at fault has not been denied. That Esau was far more at fault has been pointed out. This contrast is usually overlooked. Jacob has been criticized quite roundly, and the greater sinner, Esau, is pitied and represented as quite within his rights. That the whole is a most regrettable domestic tangle cannot be denied, and, as is usually the case in such tangles, every member involved bore his share of guilt. But if it be overlooked that Jacob's aspirations were high and good and in every sense commendable, and besides based on a sure promise of God, a distorted view of the case must result. They that insist on distorting the incident claim that the account practically indicates that Jacob was rewarded with a blessing for his treachery. The following facts should be held over against such a claim to show just retribution is visited on Jacob for his treachery: 1. Rebekah and Jacob apparently never saw one another again after the separation that grew out of this deceit—an experience painful for both; 2. Jacob, deceiver of his father, was more cruelly deceived by his own sons in the case of the sale of Joseph and the torn coat of many colors; 3. from having been a

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man of means and influence Jacob is demoted to a position of hard rigorous service for twenty years" (EG, 758).

(3) "It is quite common, in reviewing the present narrative, to place Rebekah and Jacob too much under the shadows of sin, in comparison with Isaac. Isaac's sin does not consist alone in his arbitrary determination to present Esau with the blessing of the theocratic birthright, although Rebekah received the divine sentence respecting her children before their birth, and which, no doubt, she had mentioned to him; and although Esau had manifested already, by his marriage with the daughters of Heth, his want of the theocratic faith, and by his bartering with Jacob, his carnal disposition, and his contempt of the birthright—thus viewed, indeed, his son admits of palliation through several excuses. The clear right of the first-born seemed to oppose itself to the dark oracle of God, Jacob's prudence to Esau's frank and generous disposition, the quiet shepherd-life of Jacob to Esau's stateliness and power, and on the other hand, Esau's misalliances to Jacob's continued celibacy. And although Isaac may have been too weak to enjoy the venison obtained for him by Esau, yet the true-hearted care of the son for his father's infirmity and age, is also of some importance. But the manner in which Isaac intends to bless Esau, places his offense in a clearer light. He intends to bless him solemnly in unbecoming secrecy, without the knowledge of Rebekah and Jacob, or of his house. The preparation of the venison is scarcely to be regarded as if he was to be inspired for the blessing by the eating of this 'dainty dish,' or of this token of filial affection. This preparation, at least, in its main point of view, is an excuse to gain time and place for the secret act. In this point of view, the act of Rebekah appears in a different light. It is a woman's shrewdness that crosses the shrewdly calculated project of Isaac. He is caught in a net of his own sinful prudence. A want of divine confidence may be recognized through all his actions. It is no real presentation of death that urges him now to bless Esau. But he now *anticipates* his closing hours and Jehovah's decision, because he wishes to put an end to his inward uncertainty which annoyed him. Just as Abraham anticipated the divine decision in his connection with Hagar, so Isaac, in his eager and hearty performance of an act belonging to his last days, while he lived yet many years. With this, therefore, is also connected the improper combination of the act of blessing with the meal, as well as the uneasy apprehension lest he should be interrupted in his plan (see ver. 18), and a suspicious and strained expectation which was not at first caused by the voice of Jacob. Rebekah, however, has so far the advantage of him that she, in her deception, has the divine assurance that Jacob was the heir, while Isaac, in his preceding secrecy, has, on his side, only human descent and his human reason, without any inward spiritual certainty. But Rebekah's sin consists in thinking that she must save the divine election of Jacob by means of human deception and a so-called white-lie. Isaac, at that critical moment, would have been far less able to pronounce the blessing of Abraham upon Esau, than afterward Balaam, standing far below him, could have cursed the people of Israel at the critical moment

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of its history. For the words of the spirit and of the promise are never left to human caprice. Rebekah, therefore, sinned against Isaac through a want of candor, just as Isaac before had sinned against Rebekah through a like deceit. The divine decree would also have been fulfilled without her assistance, if she had had the necessary measure of faith. Of course, when compared with Isaac's fatal error, Rebekah was right. Though she deceived him greatly, misled her favorite son, and alienated Esau from her, there was yet something saving in her action according to her intentions, even for Isaac himself and for both her sons. For to Esau the most comprehensive blessing might have become a curse. He was not fitted for it. Just as Rebekah thinks to oppose cunning to cunning in order to save the divine blessing through Isaac, and thus secure a heavenly right, so also Jacob secures a human right in buying of Esau the right of the firstborn. But now the tragic consequences of the first officious anticipation, which Isaac incurred, as well as that of the second, of which Rebekah becomes guilty, were soon to appear. The tragic consequences of the hasty conduct and the mutual deceptions in the family of Isaac: Esau threatens to become a fratricide, and this threat repeats itself in the conduct of Joseph's brothers, who also believed that they saw in Joseph a brother unjustly preferred, and came very near killing him. Jacob must become a fugitive for many a long year, and perhaps yield up to Esau the external inheritance for the most part or entirely. The patriarchal dignity is obscured; Rebekah is obliged to send her favorite son abroad, and perhaps never see him again. The bold expression, 'Upon me be thy curse,' may be regarded as having a bright side; for she, as protectress of Jacob's blessing always enjoys a share in his blessing. But the sinful element in it was the wrong application of her assurance of faith to the act of deception, which she herself undertook, and to which she persuaded Jacob; and for which she must atone, perhaps, by many a long year of melancholy solitude and through the joylessness which immediately spread itself over the family affairs of the household. With all this, however, Isaac was kept from a grave offence, and the true relation of things secured by the pretended necessity for her prevarication. Through this catastrophe Isaac came to a full understanding of the divine decree, Esau attained the fullest development of his peculiar characteristics, and Jacob was directed to his journey of faith, and to his marriage, without which the promise could not even be fulfilled" (Lange, CDHCG, 516).

(4) "How could Isaac have been so grossly deceived by Jacob and his mother? He was not only blind, but old, so that he could not distinguish with accuracy, either by the touch of his shrivelled hand or by the ear, now dull of hearing. It must be further remembered that Esau was from his birth a hairy person. He was now a man, full grown, and no doubt as rough and shaggy as any he-goat. Jacob was of the same age, and his whole history shows that he was eminently shrewd and cunning. He got that from his mother, who on this occasion plied all her arts to make the deception perfect. She fitted out Jacob with Esau's well-known clothes, strongly

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scented with such odors as he was accustomed to use. The ladies and dandies in ancient times delighted to make their 'raiment smell like the smell of a field which the Lord had blessed'; and at this day they scent their gala garments with such rich and powerful spicery that the very street along which they walk is perfumed. It is highly probable that Jacob, a plain man, given to cattle and husbandry, utterly eschewed these odoriferous vanities, and this would greatly aid in the deception. Poor old Isaac felt the garments, and smelled the still more distinguishing perfumes of Esau, and though the voice was Jacob's, yet he could not doubt that the person before him was—what he solemnly protested that he was—his firstborn. The extreme improbability of deception would make him less suspicious, and, so far as the hair and the perfume are concerned, I have seen many Arabs who might now play such a game with entire success. All this is easy and plain in comparison with the great fact that this treachery and perjury, under most aggravating accompaniments, should be in a sense ratified and prospered by the all-seeing God of justice. It is well to remember, however, that though the blessing, once solemnly bestowed, according to established custom in such cases, could not be recalled, yet, in the overruling providence of God, the guilty parties were made to eat the bitter fruit of their sin during their whole lives. In this matter they sowed to the wind and reaped the whirlwind. We set out on this line of remark by saying that in several of the known incidents in Isaac's history, few though they be, he does not appear to advantage. Even in this transaction, where he, now old, blind and helpless, was so cruelly betrayed by his wife and deceived by his son, he is unfortunately at fault in the main question. He was wrong and Rebekah was right on the real point of issue; and, what is more, Isaac's judgment in regard to the person most proper to be invested with the great office of transmitting the true faith and the true line of descent for the promised Messiah was determined by a pitiful relish for 'savory meat.' Alas, for poor human nature! There is none of it without dross; and mountains of mud must be washed to get one diamond as large as a pea" (Thomson, L.B. 561-562).

(5) In the case of Rebekah we have a case of "emotion" evilly used. One of Frederick W. Robertson's notable sermons was on the subject, "Isaac Blessing His Sons." In this, as he touched upon the words of Rebekah, *Upon me be thy curse, my son*, "he set forth unforgettably the truth that even the most passionate human devotion, if unprincipled, will not bless but destroy. In her ambition for Jacob, Rebekah stopped at nothing. If evil means seemed necessary, she would assume the consequences. Said Robertson: 'Here you see the idolatry of the woman: sacrificing her husband, her elder son, high principle, her own soul, for an idolized person. . . . Do not mistake. No one ever loved child, brother, sister, too much. It is not the intensity of affection, but its interference with truth and duty, that makes it idolatry. Rebekah loved her son more than truth, i.e., more than God. . . . The only true affection is that which is subordinate to a higher. . . . Compare, for instance, Rebekah's love for Jacob with that of Abraham for his son Isaac. Abraham was ready to

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sacrifice his son to duty. Rebekah sacrificed truth and duty to her son. Which loved a son most?—which was the nobler love? Though Rebekah was willing to take the consequences of the wrong entirely upon herself, she could not do it. They involved Jacob—as the punishment of the evil which Lady Macbeth prompted involved Macbeth. The sin of deception was not originally Jacob's, but when he acquiesced in his mother's suggestion, it became his too. So he went on to increasingly gross and deliberate falsehood until he became capable of the blasphemous lie of telling his father, Isaac, when the old man asked how he could so quickly have secured the venison which he, Jacob, was offering under the pretense that he was Esau, 'The Lord thy God brought it to me' (vs. 20). So the lesson of Jacob's relationship to Rebekah is summed up in Robertson's vivid words, 'Beware of that affection which cares for your happiness more than for your honor'" (IBG, 681-682).

"A character study of Rebekah is significant more in the questions it provokes than in the answers. The O.T. writers do not often draw a neat moral at the end of a description. They give the facts even though they may be inconsistent and confused, and leave us to interpret them as best we can. . . . The story of Rebekah had an idyllic beginning." [Note at this point the picture given us of Rebekah as a girl, ch. 24, as follows: "Her natural charm and winsomeness (vs. 16); her swift and kindly friendliness (vs. 18); the happy-heartedness which made her do not only what was asked of her but more (vs. 19); her quick and sure decisiveness (vs. 58); her ability to command a great devotion. Isaac loved her when he first saw her (vs. 67), and apparently he loved no other woman but Rebekah all his life. Here, in an age and in a society where polygamy was familiar, is *monogamous marriage*. So in the marriage service of the Book of Common Prayer through many generations there was the petition that 'as Isaac and Rebekah lived faithfully together, so these persons may surely perform the vow and covenant betwixt them made.'"] "But what followed was not idyllic. It was the uncomfortable realization of this that made the revisers of the American Book of Common Prayer omit in the 1920's the reference to the mutual faithfulness of Isaac and Rebekah which had been in the inherited book for centuries. That reference was put there originally because Isaac and Rebekah were the one notable pair among the patriarchs who were monogamous. But the fact that a man or woman has only one mate does not of itself make a marriage successful. Divorce is not the only thing that destroys a marriage; there may be a gradual divergence so wide and deep that the essential marriage is destroyed even though the shell of it remains. It takes more than staying together to keep a man and woman 'faithful.' To be faithful they must create and cherish mutual sympathies, mutual convictions, mutual aims. . . . The only road of faithfulness is when both are humbly and truly trying to walk God's way. Any preparation for marriage is hollow unless it is filled with that conviction. The divergence between Isaac and Rebekah came out of their different regard for their two sons. . . . For that divided favoritism perhaps both were to blame, but Rebekah more aggressively so than

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Isaac. Her love for Jacob was so fiercely jealous that it broke loose from any larger loyalty. As between her twin sons, she wanted Jacob to have the best of everything, no matter how he got it; and to that end she would not scruple at trickery and unfairness both toward her husband and her son Esau. There was something of the tigress in Rebekah, instinctively protecting the cub that by physical comparison was inferior. So she could come to the point of saying to Jacob, 'Upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice' (27:13). Thus the Rebekah at the well has become an altogether different woman; scheming for Jacob to steal the birthright, pushing both Esau and Isaac for the moment out of her regard, unscrupulous because one purpose only obsessed her. It was not that she wanted to hurt anybody, she might have said. It was just that she was so determined to do what she thought would help Jacob that she was blind to anything or anybody that might get hurt. And all the while what she was doing was in the name of love. A study in character here, and of the way in which an emotion essentially beautiful may become perverted. It is instinctive and right that a woman should love passionately. But the greatest love must always be subject to a greater loyalty: loyalty to truth, to honor, to the relationship of life to God. Rebekah forgot that, and she corrupted Jacob as she tried to cherish him. As it is the passion of her love that can make a woman wonderful, so it is the failure to keep that love purified by the light of God that can make love ruinous. Jezebel is pictured as one of the evil women of the Bible, but it may be that originally she was not deliberately evil. She loved Ahab, proudly, fiercely, but with blind disregard for everything except what Ahab wanted; and see what she did to Ahab. Consider Lady Macbeth; read the story of Steerforth and his mother in *David Copperfield*. In every congregation there is a woman who is repeating the story of Rebekah—a mother who secretly encourages her son in self-indulgence and extravagance, or presses her unworthy scheme in order that her daughter may be 'a social success.' She is expressing what she thinks is her devotion, but that does not make it the less demoralizing. What ought to be great qualities of heart can end in deadly hurtfulness if love is not purified and disciplined by principles that have come from God. Yet even out of the unlovely chapter of Rebekah's life there emerges something fine. Why did Rebekah prefer Jacob? Was it because of a woman's insight which can be more sensitive to unseen values than a man is likely to be? Isaac preferred Esau, the bluff and virile son, the full-blooded and physically more attractive man. But Jacob, in spite of limitations and glaring faults, had something which Esau did not have. In the Hebrew family, the birthright was at least in part a spiritual privilege. It meant that the holder of it would be a shaper of ideas and ideals. Esau, who lived mostly by the lusty dictates of the body, was indifferent to these: not so Jacob. He had a belief in spiritual destiny, dim and distorted at first, but nevertheless, so stubborn that ultimately it would prevail. Rebekah saw this, and she was determined to protect it. Thus the thought of Rebekah ends like an unsolved equation. She represents the

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woman's greatest contribution to the race, viz., the ability to recognize and to cherish those qualities in her child by which the future may be shaped. In that primitive family she advanced her purpose by the stratagems of a relentless shrewdness that laid all other loyalties aside. How can the relationship between husband and wife in this Christian Era be so developed that the insights of Rebekah may not have to stoop to dishonesty in order to be expressed?" (IBG, Exposition, 655, 667-669. The Exposition section, by Dr. Bowie, of this volume on Genesis is certainly outstanding and makes it worth having in every preacher's library—C.C.).

(6) "That the story before us poses a moral problem, among many others, was already clear in biblical times—although this point has been suppressed by many of the later moralizers. Both Hosea (12:4) and Jer. (9:3) allude to Jacob's treatment of Esau with manifest disapproval. What is more, the author himself, by dealing so sensitively with the hapless plight in which Isaac and Esau find themselves through no fault of their own (cf. especially vss. 33-38), demonstrates beyond any doubt that his personal sympathies are with the victims. It is, furthermore, a fact that Jacob himself did not think up the scheme; he acted, though not without remonstrance and uneasiness, under pressure from his strong-willed mother; and he had to pay for his misdeed with twenty years of exile. . . . The fate of individuals caught up in the mainstream of history will often seem incomprehensible; for history is but the unfolding of a divine master plan, many details of which must forever remain a mystery to mortals" (Speiser, ABG, 211). (Concerning Heb. 12:17, Milligan writes, correctly we think, as follows: "What is the meaning of this? Does the Apostle mean repentance on the part of Esau, or on the part of his father Isaac? . . . In either case the lesson taught is about the same. For whatever construction is put on the several words of this sentence, it must be obvious that the object of the Apostle is to remind his readers, that the mistake of Esau, once committed, was committed forever: that no possible change of his mind could in any way affect a change in the mind and purpose so obtained forgiveness, is I think possible; but not so with regard to his despised birthrights. These by one foolish and irreligious act had been irrecoverably lost" (*Commentary on Hebrews*, 356). of God. . . . That he may have afterward repented of his sins, and

(7) Finally, this excellent summation: "The *moral aspect* of the transaction is plain to those who are willing to see that the Bible represents the patriarchs as 'men compassed with infirmity,' favored by the grace of God, but not at all endowed with sinless perfection. It is just this, in fact, that makes their lives a moral lesson for us. Examples have occurred in the lives of Abraham and Isaac; but the whole career of Jacob is the history of a growing moral discipline. God is not honored by glossing over the patriarch's great faults of character, which are corrected by the discipline of severe suffering. We need not withhold indignant censure from Rebekah's cupidity on behalf of her favorite son—so like her family—and the mean deceit to which she tempts him. Nor is Isaac free from the blame of that foolish fondness, which, as is usual with moral

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weakness, gives occasion to crime in others. What, then, is the difference between them and Esau? Simply this—that they, in their hearts, honored the God whom he despised, though their piety was corrupted by their selfish passions. Jacob valued the blessing which he purchased wrongfully, and sought more wrongfully to secure. But Esau, whose conduct was equally unprincipled in desiring to receive the blessing which was no longer his, was rightly 'rejected, when he would have inherited the blessing' (Heb. 12:17). His selfish sorrow and resentment could not recall the choice he had made, or stand in the place of genuine repentance. 'He found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears,' and he is held forth as a great example of unavailing regret for spiritual blessings wantonly thrown away" (Smith-Fields, OTH, 95-96).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART THIRTY-NINE

1. Why should we accept these accounts of incidents in the lives of the patriarchs at face value? What do they prove concerning human character?
2. In patriarchal society how was the paternal *blessing* understood?
3. List the various kinds of acts of blessing mentioned in Scripture, and explain the meaning of each kind.
4. What elements were blended together in the final patriarchal blessing?
5. What special significance attached to the patriarchal blessings of Abraham and Isaac?
6. Do we find any evidence of magic in these blessings?
7. What caused Isaac to decide to bestow the blessing at once? How explain this, in view of the fact that he lived more than forty years longer?
8. How old was Isaac at this time? What are some of the rabbinical explanations of Isaac's infirmities, especially his failing eyesight?
9. What did Isaac wish to do for his eldest son, and why? What does the text indicate about Isaac's gourmet taste as a factor in his decision?
10. Is it likely that Isaac knew about the Divine oracle, 25:23, concerning the respective destinies of the twins? Give reasons for your answer.

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11. May we assume that Isaac knew about Esau's barter of the birthright "for a mess of pottage"? If so, on what grounds?
12. How did Rebekah learn of Isaac's conversation with Esau regarding the bestowal of the blessing on him?
13. Explain what the statement, "that my soul may bless thee before I die," means?
14. What opinion prevails generally regarding the efficacy of a dying utterance?
15. Explain Rebekah's stratagem in detail. To what extent, do you think, Jacob participated in it willingly?
16. What light does Rebekah's statement, "Upon me be thy curse, my son," throw upon her attitude and character. Are we not justified in calling this a form of blasphemy?
17. What shows that Jacob was more afraid of detection than of the duplicity? What light does this cast upon the distinction between morality and expediency?
18. What was the Divine oracle with respect to the separate destinies of the twins?
19. State the details of the scene between Isaac and Jacob. How is Isaac's lingering doubt finally dissipated? What caused him to be suspicious in the first place?
20. When Isaac expressed surprise at what he thought was *Esau's* unusually quick return with the cooked venison, what hypocritical explanation did Jacob make to reassure his father?
21. Give examples of situations in our time in which such hypocritical invocations of God's help are offered as explanation. Would not this be what the Freudians name *projection*?
22. Of how many outright lies did Jacob become guilty in his scene with his father?
23. What three kinds of kisses were permitted by the rabbis?

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24. How does the kiss (vv. 26, 27) remind us of the New Testament parallel (Matt. 26:49)?
25. How account for the perfumed raiment which Jacob donned on this occasion? How did this determine Isaac's decision?
26. What were the three parts of the paternal blessing? What significant spiritual development was implicit in this blessing??
27. How did Isaac become aware finally of the deception which had been perpetrated?
28. What were the emotional reactions of both Isaac and Esau when they learned the truth? What caused Isaac *to tremble very exceedingly*?
29. What was the long-term relation between this paternal blessing and our Christian faith?
30. What was the significance of Esau's cry, "Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?"
31. Can we say that Esau's reaction was a "manly" one? Or would you say that he acted like "a spoiled brat"?
32. Have we any reason for supposing that Esau had gained a deeper appreciation of the import of the blessing than he had manifested with reference to the birthright?
33. Explain the sheer *drama* that was present in this scene between Esau and his father.
34. Analyze the personal blessing now bestowed on Esau. Show how the details of this blessing were actualized in subsequent history. Who were the Edomites? The Idumeans?
35. What revenge did Esau threaten to wreak upon Jacob? What prevented his execution of this vengeance at once?
36. Show how Rebekah again came to Jacob's rescue. What did she tell him to do?
37. Explain her statement, "Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

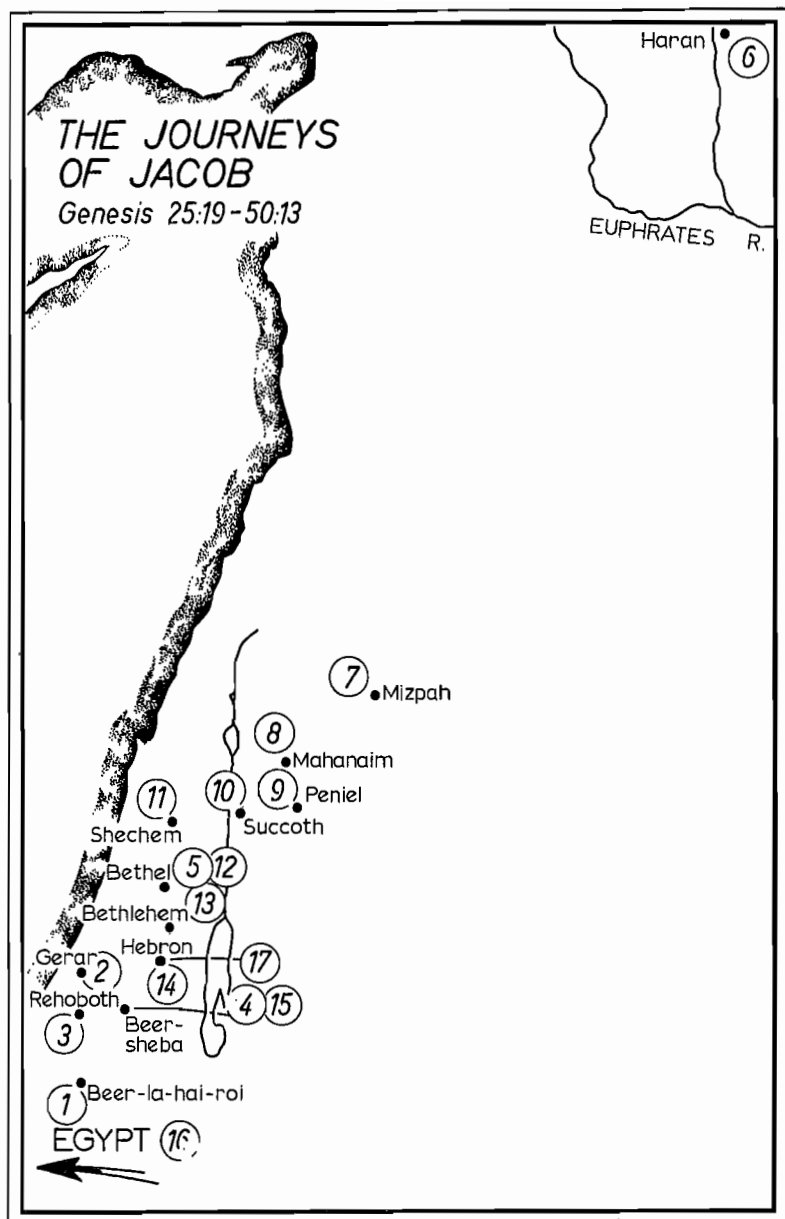
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38. What were the ultimate consequences of this event for Esau and for Jacob?
39. What punishment did each of the four principals suffer?
40. Were not the parents more responsible for what happened than the twins were? Explain.
41. Explain fully the problem of the Divine election of Jacob over Esau for inclusion in the Messianic genealogy.
42. On what grounds are we justified in concluding that Jacob was the more worthy of the two to be included in the Messianic Line?
43. What was Esau's besetting sin? Explain how this sin occurs today in the attitude of so many toward the ordinances of Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper.
44. Is not the professing church in our Era persistently guilty of disrespect for Divine institutions?
45. Explain the Hurrian parallels of the details of this Old Testament story. How account for these facts?
46. Explain how this story is truly "an unpleasant picture of family life."
47. Why is this designated another instance of Biblical realism?
48. What are some of the important lessons for us to derive from this story?
49. Explain how the schemes of the parents in no wise altered the actualization of God's Purposes.
50. Why do we say that Rebekah's part in this entire transaction was essentially a lack of faith? In what sense can the same be said of the other three principals?
51. Explain how that in Rebekah's case we have an account of a laudable emotion "evilily used."
52. What charges can we rightly bring against each of the four members of this *dramatis personae*?
53. What good can we say of each of them?
54. How is the fact to be explained that the marriage of

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Isaac and Rebekah, completely out of line with the common practice of the time, was a monogamous marriage? Does this mean that it was necessarily one of devoted love?

55. In what sense must deep personal love be devoted to higher values than personal satisfaction? What should these higher values be? In what sense can such deep personal love become ruinous?
56. Is there such a thing as "smother love"? Explain
57. Give Milligan's interpretation of Hebrews 12:17.
58. On what continuing values does monogamous marriage depend?
59. What elements stand out in the character of Jacob to give him the higher moral and spiritual status?
60. What elements stand out in Esau's character to justify God's rejection of him?



THE PATRIARCHAL PERIOD

LIFE AND JOURNEYS OF JACOB

1. *Beer-la-hai-roi*; Gen. 25:19-34
 - a. Birth of Jacob and Esau.
 - b. Birthright sold.
2. *Gerar*; 26:1-21
 - a. Accompanies parents.
3. *Rehoboth*; 26:22
 - a. With father here.
4. *Beersheba*; 26:23-28:9
 - a. (Jehovah's appearance to Isaac; The covenant with Abimelech)
 - b. (Esau's two wives)
 - c. Jacob obtains the blessing. 27:1-45.
 - d. Jacob sent away; 28:1-9.
5. *Bethel*; 28:10-22.
 - a. Jacob's dream.
6. *Haran*; 29:1-31:21
 - a. Jacob's dealings with Laban.
 - b. Jacob's wives and children.
7. *Mizpah*; 31:22-55
 - a. Final meeting and covenant of Laban and Jacob.
8. *Mahanaim*; 32:1-21
 - a. Meeting with the angels.
 - b. Preparations to meet Esau.
9. *Peniel*; 32:22-33:16
 - a. Wrestling with angel; 32:22-32.
 - b. Meeting with Esau 33:1-16.
10. *Succoth*; 33:17
 - a. House and booths built.
11. *Shechem*; 33:18 35:5
 - a. Purchase of ground; 33:18-20.
 - b. Sin of Shechem; 34:1-31.
 - c. Command to go to Bethel; 35:1-5.
12. *Bethel*; 35:6-15
 - a. Altar built.
 - b. Deborah dies.
 - c. The blessing of God.
13. *Bethlehem*; 35:16-20
 - a. Death of Rachel and birth of Benjamin.
14. *Hebron*; 35:21-45:28
 - a. Sin of Reuben; 35:21-22.
 - b. Death of Isaac;
 - c. Descendants of Esau; Ch. 36.
 - d. The story of Joseph; 37:1-45:28.
15. *Beersheba*; 46:1-7
 - a. God appears as Jacob goes to Egypt.
16. *Egypt*; 46:8-50:6
 - a. Jacob's family sojourns in Egypt.
17. *Hebron*; 50:7-13
 - a. Burial of Jacob.

PART FORTY

THE STORY OF JACOB: THE JOURNEY TO PADDAN-ARAM

(Genesis 27:46—28:22)

1. *The Biblical Account*

46 *And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me? 1 And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. 2 Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. 3 And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a company of peoples; 4 and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land of thy sojournings, which God gave unto Abraham. 5 And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Paddan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.*

6 *Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; 7 and that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Paddan-aram: 8 and Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; 9 and Esau went unto Ishmael, and took, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife.*

10 *And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. 11 And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and*

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he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. 12 And he dreamed; and, behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. 13 And, behold, Jehovah stood above it, and said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; 14 and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. 16 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not, 17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. 19 And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of the city was Luz at the first. 20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, 21 so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Jehovah will be my God, 22 then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

2. *Jacob's Blessing and Departure (27:45—28:5).*
We are told by the critics that we have here two accounts of Jacob's departure differentiated by dissimilar motiva-

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM 27:46—28:5

tions: In one version, the motive is fear of Esau's revenge; in the other, it is Rebecca's aversion to Hittite women and her determination that Jacob shall choose a wife from among her own Aramaean relatives. "In their eagerness to find material for separate documents, or evidence of duplicate accounts, the critics seem to be ever ready to sacrifice the force and beauty of the narratives with which they deal. They dissect them to the quick, rending them into feeble or incoherent fragments, or they pare them down by the assumption of doublets to the baldest forms of intelligible statement, and thus strip them of those affecting details, which lend them such a charm, because so true to nature. This involves the absurdity of assuming that two jejune or fragmentary accounts, pieced mechanically together, have produced narratives which are not only consistent and complete, but full of animation and dramatic power. An attempt is made to establish a difference between J and E on one hand, and P on the other, as to the reason why Jacob went to Paddan-Aram. According to the former (27:1-45), it is to flee from his brother, whom he has enraged by defrauding him of his father's blessing. According to the latter (26:34, 35; 28:1-9), that he may not marry among the Canaanites, as Esau had done, to the great grief of his parents, but obtain a wife from among his own kindred. P, we are told, knows of no hostility between the brothers. But all this is spoiled by the statement in 28:7, that 'Jacob obeyed his father *and his mother*, and was gone to Paddan-Aram.' His father sent him to get a wife (28:1-9), but his mother to escape Esau's fury (27:42-45); and there is no incompatibility between these two objects. In order to gain Isaac over to her plan without acquainting him with Esau's murderous designs, Rebekah simply urges her dissatisfaction with the wives of Esau, and her apprehension that Jacob might contract a similar marriage with someone of the daughters of the land. Isaac had one object

in mind, Rebekah another. There is nothing for the critics to do, therefore, but to pronounce the unwelcome words, 'and his mother,' an interpolation. In order to prove their point they must first adjust the text to suit it. But tinkering the text in a single passage will not relieve them in the present instance. The hostility of Esau is embedded in the entire narrative, and cannot be surrendered from it. Why did Jacob go alone and unattended in quest of a wife, without the retinue or the costly presents for his bride, befitting his rank and wealth? When Abraham desired a wife for Isaac he sent a princely embassy to woo Rebekah, and conduct her to her future home. Why was Jacob's suit so differently managed, although Isaac imitated Abraham in everything else? And why did Jacob remain away from his parents and his home, and from the land sacred as the gift of God, for so many long years till his twelve sons were born (35:26 P)? This is wholly unaccounted for except by the deadly hostility of Esau" (UBG, 330, 331). (It should be recalled that J stands for the Jahvistic Code, E for Elohist, and P for the Priestly. See my *Genesis*, I, pp. 47-70)

"In order to obtain Isaac's consent to the plan, without hurting his feelings by telling him of Esau's murderous intentions, she [Rebekah] spoke to him of her troubles on account of the Hittite wives of Esau, and the weariness of life that she should feel if Jacob also were to marry one of the daughters of the land, and so introduced the idea of sending Jacob to her relations in Mesopotamia, with a view to his marriage there" (BCOTP, 280). "The true state of Esau's spirit is shown by his resolve to kill his brother as soon as his father should die. To avert the danger, Rebekah sent away Jacob to her family at Haran. Isaac approved the plan, as securing a proper marriage for his son, to whom he repeated the blessing of Abraham, and sent him away to Paddan-aram (Gen. 32:10)" (OTH, 96). The first verse of ch. 28 so

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM 27:46—28:5

obviously follows the last verse of ch. 27 that we see no pertinent reason for assuming separate accounts of the motive for Jacob's departure.

Note also *the blessing* with which Isaac sent Jacob on his way, 28:1-4. "The Jehovah of the blessing is at the same time the God of universal nature, Elohim, who from his general beneficence will bestow 'the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine.' In taking leave of Jacob, Isaac pronounces upon him the blessing of Abraham (28:4); he is thus led to borrow the language of that signal revelation to Abraham when Jehovah made himself known as God Almighty (17:1), and gave him promises with a special emphasis, which are here repeated. Hence the El Shaddai (v. 3) and Elohim (v. 4)" (UBG, 332). "The blessing to Abraham was that he should teach man the knowledge of the true God which would become a blessing to him. Isaac now blessed Jacob that his seed might be worthy to give such teaching, in the merit of which they would possess the Promised Land" (SC, 157). Note the phrase, "company of peoples," v. 3. This would seem to point forward to the tribes that were to spring from the loins of Jacob. By the words of v. 4, "Isaac conveys the most important part of the patriarchal blessing, the part relative to the Messiah, which he had not quite ventured to bestow previously when he still thought he was dealing with Esau. Sobered by the failure of his attempt and made wiser, he freely gives what he fully understands to have been divinely destined for Jacob. 'The blessing of Abraham' is fully as much as was promised to him but no more. Since previously (27:27-29) Isaac also had not ventured to bestow the land of promise on the one who presumably was Esau, now he unmistakably bestows it on Jacob, that which is now a 'land of sojourning' where the patriarchs have as yet no permanent possession except a burial place. . . . God 'gave' this land to Abraham, of

course, only by promise but none the less actually" (EG, 767, 768).

Note well the aftermath of treachery in this case: Rebekah and Jacob never saw each other again. Jacob had lost a mother's love, a father's love, and a brother's love—all sacrificed to selfish ambition. He was almost like Cain—all alone in the world." We may be certain that our sins, sooner or later, "find us out" (Num. 32:23).

3. *Esau Takes Another Wife* (vv. 6-9). "Isaac blessed Jacob that the blessing which he had given him previously, viz., *God gave thee of the dew of heaven*, etc. (27:28) might be fulfilled in the land which God had promised to Abraham; but his blessing to Esau, *of the fat places of the earth shall be thy dwelling* (27:39), would be fulfilled in a different country" (SC, 157). Esau saw that Isaac did not want Jacob to have a Canaanite wife. "He assumed that he had lost the blessing because he had married a Canaanitish woman, since Isaac, when blessing Jacob, had impressed upon him not to do so. He consequently thought that by not marrying another of these women, he would win back his father's favor and possibly secure the revocation of Jacob's blessing. . . . Although he did not marry any more women of Canaan, he was not willing to send away those he already had, in spite of their unsuitability and wickedness" (SC, 158). "Desirous to humor his parents, and if possible to get the last will revoked, he became wise when too late (Matt. 25:10), and hoped, by gratifying his parents in one thing, to atone for all his former delinquencies. But he only made bad worse; and though he did not marry 'a wife of the daughters of Canaan,' he married into a family [that of Ishmael] which God had rejected; it showed a partial reformation, but no repentance, for he gave no proofs of abating his vindictive purposes against his brother, nor cherishing that pious spirit that would have gratified his father—he was like Micah: see Judg. 17:13, also ch. 36:1-5" (CECG, 198).

Cf. especially 26:34, 28:9, 36:1-5. How account for these apparent differences in the lists of Esau's wives? Some critics think that Esau had six wives; others, five; and still others, three. It will be noted that *all* the wives in the second list have names different from those in the first. Keil, Lange, *et al*, account for this by the fact that women at their marriage received new names. "On this hypothesis, Bashemath, daughter of Ishmael, is the same with Mahalath; Adah, daughter of Elon the Hittite is the same with Bashemath; and Aholibamah, daughter of Anah and (grand-) daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, is identical with Judith, daughter of Beerli the Hittite. Anah is also called 'Beerli' ('man of the springs'), from the fact he had found certain 'warm springs' in the wilderness [cf. 36:24]" (Haley, ADB, 336). "The account given of the parentage of these wives has seemed to many equally obscure and perplexing as that of their names. But all these difficulties admit to an easy and satisfactory solution. Thus, with regard to the number of Esau's wives, although it is not expressly said that he had three wives, the several passages in which they are enumerated comprise only three; and these, as shall be presently shown, the same three throughout. As to the names of the wives, it has been remarked, that while these, in Eastern countries, as elsewhere, are sometimes changed on account of some memorable circumstances in the course of life, women assume new names more frequently than men—they do so particularly on their marriage; and as in this genealogical record *all* the wives of Esau are distinguished by different names from those which they formerly bore, the change is to be traced partly to their entrance into the matrimonial relation, and partly to their settlement in a foreign land, where Esau himself assumed the permanent designation of Edom (36:8). The import of their names was founded probably on some conspicuous attribute of character or feature of personal appearance or habit, as Judith or Jehudith (the

praised one) was changed into Aholibamah (tent-height, *i.e.*, tall, stately); Bashemath, Hebrew, Basemath (fragrance, the perfumed one) into Adah (ornament, beauty, the adorned one); Mahalath (hard, the musical one) into Basemath (fragrance, perfume, the perfumed one). If Esau had obtained the name of Edom from his red hair, or the red pottage, his wives might as well have derived their new appellatives from such trivial circumstances as peculiarity of appearance and dress, or a love of strong-scented unguents. With regard to the names of their respective fathers, Elon the Hittite, and Ishmael stand in both lists; while Anah is not the mother and Beeri the father, of Aholibamah, as has been supposed by Ranke and others; but as has been demonstrated with great ingenuity by Hengstenberg, is identical with Beeri. Anah, being the proper name of the individual, is given in this genealogical record (36:2, 14, 24); while Beeri (man of springs), a surname properly applied to him by his contemporaries (see v. 24), was naturally preferred in the general narrative (26:34). There is another difficulty connected with the name of Anah. He is called (26:34) a Hittite, here (36:2) a Hivite, and (36:20) a Horite. But there is nothing contradictory in these statements. For in the historical relation he is styled, in a wide sense, a Hittite, a term which is frequently used as synonymous with Canaanite (Josh. 1:4, 1 Ki. 10:29, 2 Ki. 7:6); while in his tribal connection he was a Hivite, just as a man may be described in general history as a native of Great Britain, while specifically he is a Scotchman. The word Horite does not imply either a geographical or national distinction, but simply a dweller in caves; Zibeon, on emigrating to Mount Seir, having become a Troglodyte. These difficulties, then, which encompass the domestic history of Esau having been removed, a clear view of the names and parentage of Esau's wives may be exhibited in the following table:

<i>Ch. 26:34</i>	<i>Ch. 36:2, 3</i>	<i>Father</i>
Name at birth	Name after marriage	
Judith, or Jehudith	= Aholibamah	Daughter of Anah (Beeri), Hittite, Hivite, and Horite, and Granddaugh- ter of Zibeon, Hivite and Horite
Bashemath	= Adah	Daughter of Elon, Hittite
<i>ch. 28:9</i>		
Mahalath	= Bashemath	Daughter of Ishmael, and sister of Nebajoth

In this table, 'the daughter of Zibeon' is taken in connection, not with Anah (a man's name), but with Aholibamah; and consequently we must interpret 'daughter' in the wider sense it sometimes bears of granddaughter. It may be interesting to add, that Dr. Wilson (*Lands of the Bible*, Vol. I, p. 33) found that these names are still common in Idumea and among the Arabs. When conversing with the Fellahin, of Wady Musa, he says 'It is worthy of notice that the first name of a man which they mention to us as current among them was that of Esau; and that Matshabah, one of their female names, seems, by a bold anagram, not unusual in the formation of Arabic words from the Hebrew, to resemble Bashemath, wife of Esau. Aidah, too, one of the female names, is like that of Adah, another of Esau's wives' (Jamieson, CECG, 226, on ch. 36). "Esau's marriage was another attempt to regain the blessing, by trying to please his parents in Jacob's absence. But his choice showed he had no sense of spiritual realities. *He does not do exactly what God requires but something like it. But at heart he was unchanged*" (TPCG, 55). Esau belongs to the great army of substituters, like Cain, i.e., those who substitute their own way of doing things for God's way of doing things. For the opposite note the attitude of Jesus in regard to his own baptism (Matt. 3:13): to "fulfil all righteousness" is to do God's will *to the full*.

4. *Jacob's Dream-Vision at Bethel* (vv. 28:10-17):

The Dream "Ladder" and the Angels. Jacob "went out" from Beersheba (26:25) and set out toward Haran. Note the following differences of view: "His departure from his father's house was an ignominious flight; and for fear of being pursued or waylaid by his vindictive brother, he did not take the common road, but went by lonely and unfrequented paths, which increased the length and dangers of the journey, until, deeming himself at a secure distance, he seems to have gone on the great road northward along the central mountain-ridge of Canaan" (CECG, 199). "Was Jacob a fugitive? In a mild sense, Yes. But they let their imagination play too freely, who make him run forth in haste from home in continual fear of being overtaken and let him cover the entire distance from Beersheba to Bethel—about 70 miles as the crow flies over mountain roads—in one day. Esau had threatened to kill his brother only after the death of Isaac [27:41]. It may have been about the third day when Jacob arrived at this spot after traveling leisurely, for he had a long journey before him" (EG, 770). "The mention of the fact that he *went out* teaches that a righteous man's departure from a city leaves its mark. While he is in it, he is its splendor, lustre, and beauty. When he leaves, it all departs with him" (Rashi, SC, 164).

The Place, v. 11, literally, "he lighted upon the place," etc. "That is, the place mentioned elsewhere (cf. 22:4), mount Moriah (Rashi). The definite article denotes the place well known to travelers, viz., an inn (Sforno)" (SC, 164). "The definite article prefixed to 'place' shows that he had *purposely* chosen as his first night's resting-place the spot which had been distinguished by the encampment of Abraham shortly after his entrance into Canaan (12:8); or that, the gates of Luz being shut, he was undesignedly, on his part, compelled to rest for the night, which proved to be *'the place'* his grandfather had conse-

crated. By a forced march he had reached that place, about forty-eight miles from Beersheba, and had to spend the night in the open field. This, after all, is no great hardship; for a native, winding himself in the ample folds of his cloak, and selecting a smooth stone for a pillow, sleeps comfortably under the canopy of heaven. A warm climate, and an indifference to dirt and dew, easily reconcile an Oriental to such necessities" (CECG, 199). "The words, '*he hit (lighted) upon the place,*' indicate the apparently accidental, yet really divinely appointed choice of this place for his nightquarters; and the definite article points it out as having become well known through the revelation of God that ensued" (BCOTP, 281). *Was this a cult-place?* "We doubt it very much. Such a 'cult-place' would hardly have been a seemly place for Yahweh to reveal Himself; for perhaps without exception these places were set apart for the idols of the land. Yahweh has nothing in common with idols. Such a spot would be an abomination of Yahweh. . . . The article simply marks it as the place which was afterward to become famous. Jacob spends the night just there because that was all that was left for him, for 'the sun had gone down' and the night had fallen swiftly, as Oriental nights do. The hardy shepherd is not disturbed by the experience, for shepherds often spend the night thus and are observed to this day sleeping with a stone for a pillow" (EG, 771).

The Stone Pillow. "*One of the stones of the place,*" etc. The nature of the soil in this area, we are told, was "stony." Was the prophetic power embodied in one of these stones? Would not this be sheer magic? We see no reason for these rather fanciful notions. It seems that Jacob simply took of the stones present and made for himself a "head place." This is literally the meaning of the word used here. "Here *mera'ashtaw* does not actually mean 'pillow' but 'head place'—a proper distinction, for pillows are soft, 'head places' not necessarily so. They

who must find rational explanations for everything here conjecture about some stony ascent which Jacob saw in the rapidly descending dusk and which then afterward in the dream took the form of a ladder (even Edersheim). Dreams, especially those sent by the Almighty, require no such substructure. Not quite so harmless is the contention of those who import liberally of their own thoughts into the text and then secure a sequence about as follows: The stone used by Jacob is one of the pillars or sacred stones of the 'cult-place' (a pure invention). Jacob unwittingly takes it in the semi-darkness and prepares it for a head-rest. The charmed stone then superinduces a dream. On awakening, Jacob is afraid, because he realizes he has rashly used a sacred stone and quickly makes a vow to fend off possible evil consequences and to appease the angered Deity. Such interpretations transport the occurrence into the realm of superstition, magic, fetish, and animistic conceptions, debasing everything and especially the patriarch's conception of things" (EG, 771-772). Cf. Skinner: "*'He lighted upon the place,' i.e., the 'holy place' of Bethel (12:6), whose sanctity was revealed by what followed.—he took (at haphazard) one of the stones of the place which proved itself to be the abode of a deity by inspiring the dream which came to Joseph that night*" (ICCG, 376). We see no reason for "importing"—as Leupold puts it—pagan superstitions into the narratives of these ancient heroes of the faith. It is quite possible, of course, that some of these stones had once been a part of the altar set up by Abraham in the same vicinity (12:8, 13:2-4) although it is difficult to assume that Jacob had some way of identifying them as such. The commonsense view would seem to be that, as stated above, Jacob simply took some of the stones he found here and made of them for himself a "head place."

The Dream. "It was natural that in the unwonted circumstances he should dream. Bodily exhaustion, mental

excitement, the consciousness of his exposure to the banditti of the adjoining regions, and his need of the protection of Heaven, would direct the course of his dream into a certain channel. But his dream was an extraordinary—a supernatural one” (CECG, 199). “The connection between heaven and earth, and now especially between heaven and the place where the poor fugitive sleeps, is represented in three different forms, increasing in fulness and strength: the *ladder*, not too short, but resting firmly on the earth below and extending up to heaven; *the angels of God*, appearing in great numbers, passing up and down the ladder as the messengers of God; ascending as the invisible companions of the wanderer, to report about him, and as mediators of his prayers; descending as heavenly guardians and mediators of the blessing; finally *Jehovah himself* standing above the ladder, henceforth the covenant God of Jacob, just as he had hitherto been the covenant God of Abraham and Isaac” (CDHCG, 521). This for Jacob was the first of seven theophanies: cf. 31:3, 11-13; 32:1-2; 32:24-30; 35:1; 35:9-13; 46:1-4.

The Ladder. Many commentators seem to prefer the rendering, “stairway,” or “staircase,” rather than the image of a mountain-pile whose sides, indented in the rock, gave it the appearance of a ladder: “the rough stones of the mountain appearing to form themselves into a vast staircase: Bush, Stanley” (PCG, 349). (Some will argue that the pile of rock which served as Jacob’s pillow was a miniature copy of this image). Not so, writes Leupold: “Dreams are a legitimate mode of divine revelation. On this instance the ladder is the most notable external feature of the dream. The word *sullam*, used only here, is well established in its meaning, ‘ladder.’ If it reaches from earth to heaven, that does not necessitate anything grotesque; dreams seem to make the strangest things perfectly natural. Nor could a ladder sufficiently broad to allow angels to ascend and descend constitute an incongruity

in a dream. The surprise occasioned by the character of the dream is reflected by the threefold *binneh*—"behold": a ladder, angels, and Yahweh" (EG, 772). Speiser differs: "The traditional 'ladder' is such an old favorite that it is a pity to have to dislodge it. Yet it goes without saying that a picture of angels going up and down in a steady stream is hard to reconcile with an ordinary ladder. Etymologically, the term (stem, 'to heap up,' 'raise') suggests a ramp or a solid stairway. And archaeologically, the Mesopotamian ziggurats were equipped with flights of stairs leading up to the summit; a good illustration is the ziggurat of Ur (Third Dynasty). Only such a stairway can account for Jacob's later description of it as a 'gateway to heaven'" (ABG, 218). At any rate, "from Jacob's ladder we receive the first definite information that beyond Sheol, heaven is the home of man" (Lange, 523). "The ladder was a visible symbol of the real and uninterrupted fellowship (Cf. Heb. 1:14; Psalms 23; Psalm 139:7-10)

The Angels. "The ladder was a visible symbol of the real and uninterrupted fellowship between God in heaven and His people upon earth. The angels upon it carry up the wants of men to God, and bring down the assistance and protection of God to men. The ladder stood there upon the earth, just where Jacob was lying in solitude, poor, helpless, and forsaken by men. Above in heaven stood Jehovah, and explained in words the symbols which he saw" (BCOTP, 281). "In Jacob's dream Jehovah, the God of the chosen race (28:13, 16), in order to assure him that though temporarily exiled from his father's house he would not on that account be severed from the God of his father, as Ishmael had been when sent away from Abraham's household, and Lot when his connection with Abraham was finally cut off by his passing beyond the limit of the promised land. God was thenceforward Elohim to them all as to all who were aliens to

the chosen race. But Jacob was still under the guardianship of Jehovah, who would continue with him wherever he might go. The angels (v. 12), however, are not called 'angels of Jehovah,' which never occurs in the Pentateuch, but 'angels of Elohim,' as in 32:2 (E.V. ver. 1), who are thus distinguished from messengers of men—the Hebrew word for 'angel' properly meaning 'messenger.' This does not mark a distinction between the documents, as though J knew of but one angel, while E speaks of 'angels'; for J has 'angels' in the plural (19:1, 15). The place where Jehovah had thus revealed himself Jacob calls 'the house of God' and 'the gate of heaven,' God in contrast with man, as heaven with earth. It was a spot marked by a divine manifestation" (UBG, 340).

"This vision represented the peculiar care of God concerning Jacob and other saints, and the ministration of angels to them (2 Chron. 16:9, Eccl. 5:8, Psa. 135:6, Isa. 41:10, Acts 18:10, 2 Tim. 4:16-17; Psa. 34:7, 91:11; Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:14; Gen. 32:1-2). But chiefly this *ladder* typified Christ, as Mediator between God and man. He, in his manhood, is of the earth, a descendant of Jacob; and in his divine person is the Lord from heaven (Isa. 7:14, 9:6; John 1:14; Rom. 1:3, 4, 9:5; 1 Tim. 3:16): he is the only means of fellowship between God and men (John 14:6; Eph. 2:18, 3:12; 1 Tim. 2:5-6); and he directs and enjoys the ministration of angels (John 1:51; 1 Pet. 1:12, 1 Tim. 3:16)—in his conception (Luke 1:31, Matt. 1:20)—his birth (Luke 2:14, Heb. 1:6)—in his temptation (Matt. 4:11)—his agony (Luke 22:43)—his resurrection (Matt. 28:2, 5)—his ascension (Acts 1:10, 11; Psa. 47:5 68:17, 18; Dan. 7:10, 13)—and second coming (1 Thess. 4:16, 2 Thess. 1:7, Matt. 25:31)" (SIBG, 260).

The Divine Promise, vv. 13-15. V. 13—Yahweh stood by (marginal, 'beside') him "and announced Himself as one with the God of his fathers." V. 16—*the land whereon*

thou liest: "a description peculiarly appropriate to the solitary and homeless fugitive who had not where to lay his head." "Thus forlorn, amid the memorials of the covenant, he was visited by God in a dream, which showed him a flight of stairs leading up from earth to the gates of heaven, and trodden by angels, some descending on their errands as 'ministering spirits' upon earth, and others ascending to carry their reports to Him, whose 'face they ever watch' in dutiful service. This symbol of God's providence was crowned by a vision of Jehovah, and his voice added to the renewal of the covenant a special promise of protection" (OTH, 100). Yahweh reveals Himself first of all as *the Lord* (Gen. 2:4), *the Covenant God of Abraham and of Isaac*. "It is remarkable that Abraham is styled his father, that is, his actual grandfather, and covenant father" (MG, 387). Yahweh now "renews the promise of *the land*, of *the seed*, and of *the blessing* in that seed for the whole race of man. Westward, eastward, northward, and southward are they to break forth. This expression points to the world-wide universality of the kingdom of the seed of Abraham, when it shall become the fifth monarchy, that shall subdue all that went before, and endure forever. This transcends the destiny of the natural seed of Abraham. He then promises to Jacob personally to be with him, protect him, and bring him back in safety. This is the third announcement of the seed that blesses to the third in the line of descent: 12:2, 3; 22:18; 26:4" (MG, 387).

The *land*, given to Abraham (13:15) and to Isaac (26:3), and now to Jacob. The *seed* to be as the *dust* of the earth, promised to Abraham (13:16), and to Isaac, but under a different emblem ("as the *stars* of heaven," 26:4), and now, under the original emblem, to Jacob. The *seed*, moreover, to *break forth* toward all four "corners" of the earth, as promised to Abraham (13:14; cf. Deut. 3:27, 34:1-4), and now to Jacob (v. 14). Note

that a third emblem, designed likewise to point up the world-wide universality of the Kingdom of Christ (*i.e.*, the *Reign* of Messiah, Christ) is used in the divine promise to Abraham, viz., "the *sand* which is upon the seashore" (22:17; cf. 32:12). Note that the citizens of the Messiah's kingdom are citizens, not by virtue of having been born of the flesh of Abraham, but by virtue of having been *born again*, that is, of belonging to Abraham by virtue of manifesting the fullness of the obedience of faith (Gal. 3:26-29), the depth of faith which Abraham manifested when God *proved* him to himself, to his own people, and to all mankind throughout the stretch of time (Gen., ch. 22). (Cf. John 3:1-8, Tit. 3:5, Gal. 5:16-25, Rom. 5:1-2, etc.)

"Is the Lord blessing a cheat and prospering one who secured a blessing by craft? By no means. . . . Jacob is being strengthened in the faith and supported by liberal promises, because he was penitent over his sin and stood greatly in need of the assurance of divine grace. Besides, Jacob was deeply grieved at being called upon to sever the ties that bound him to house and home, and he was apprehensive of the future as well. The Lord meets him and grants him the support of His grace" (EG, 773).

Note again the elements of Yahweh's Promise: 1. The possession of the land on which he now was lying, practically an exile. 2. A progeny (seed) as numerous as "the dust of the earth." 3. Protection during the time of his absence from home, the protection in fact of God's personal presence: "I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land," that is, this very spot, this piece of ground, on which Jacob was lying, and experiencing the reiteration of the Abrahamic Promise. The language surely intimates here that Jacob's wanderings would be extensive; the ray of hope was in the promise that he would be divinely led back to this *Land* of Promise. The far-reaching element of the Promise

was that in his seed "all the families of the earth should be blessed" (v. 14). The Seed, as we know from New Testament fulfilment, was Messiah, Christ (Gal. 3:16). (Note that this was in substance a renewal of the Abrahamic Promise: cf. Gen. 12:37; 13:14-17, 15:18, 22:17-18, 24:7, 28:13-15).

5. *The Awakening*, vv. 16-17.

Jacob awoke from his dream with a sense of *dread*, of the *awesomeness* of God. He was afraid, and exclaimed, "*How dreadful is this place!*" "Surely Yahweh is in this place!" "The underlying feeling is not joy, but fear, because in ignorance he had treated the holy place as common ground . . . the place is no ordinary *baram*, but one superlatively holy, the most sacred spot on earth" (ICCG, 377). To this we reply that it was Jacob's vision that for him endowed the place with dreadfulness (holiness), not with unknown magical qualities which the *particular* spot engendered. "Jacob had felt himself severed from the gracious presence and the manifestation of Yahweh which he knew centered in his father's house. Jacob understood full well the omnipresence of God, but he knew, too, that it had not pleased God to manifest and reveal Himself everywhere as Yahweh. Now the patriarch receives specific assurance that God in His character as Yahweh was content to be with Jacob and keep and bless him for the covenant's sake. That Yahweh was going to do this much for him, that is what Jacob had not known. To understand the word rightly note that Jacob could not have said—for it would have involved an untruth—'Surely, *God* is in this place and I knew it not.' Of course he knew that. Any true believer's knowledge of God involves such elementary things as knowledge of His not being confined to one place. Such crude conceptions the patriarchs never had. To suppose that the account is trying to picture Jacob as on a lower level than Abraham in spiritual discernment is misunderstanding" (EG, 775). "Jacob does

not here learn the doctrine of the Divine omnipresence for the first time, but now discovers that the covenant God of Abraham revealed himself at other than consecrated places; or perhaps simply gives expression to his astonishment at finding that whereas he fancied himself alone, he was in reality in the company of God" (PCG, 350). "Not that the omnipresence of God was unknown to him, but that Jehovah in His condescending mercy should be near to him even here, far away from his father's house and from the places consecrated to His worship—it was this which he did not know or imagine. The revelation was intended not only to stamp the blessing, with which Isaac had dismissed him from his home, with the seal of divine approval, but also to impress upon Jacob's mind the fact, that although Jehovah would be near to protect and guide him even in a foreign land, the land of promise was the holy ground on which the God of his fathers would set up the covenant of His grace. On his departure from this land, he was to carry with him a sacred awe of the gracious presence of Jehovah there. To that end the Lord proved to him that He was near, in such a way that the place appeared 'dreadful,' inasmuch as the nearness of the holy God makes an alarming impression upon unholy man, and the consciousness of sin grows into the fear of death. But in spite of this alarm, the place was none other than 'the house of God and the gate of heaven,' *i.e.*, a place where God dwells, and a way that opened to Him in heaven" (BCOTP, 282). "Jacob does not think that Jehovah's revelation to him was confined to this place of Bethel. He does not interpret the sacredness of the place in a heathen way, as an external thing, but theocratically and symbolically. Through Jehovah's revelation, this place, which is viewed as a heathen waste, becomes to him a house of God, and therefore he consecrates it to a permanent sanctuary" (Lange, CDHCG, 525).

5. *The Memorial*, v. 18.

The Stone Head-Place Made a Pillar. "Jacob knew God's omnipresence, but he did not expect a special manifestation of the Lord in this place, far from the sanctuaries of his father. He is filled with solemn awe, when he finds himself in the house of God and at the gate of heaven. The pillar is a monument of the event. The pouring of oil upon it is an act of consecration to God who has there appeared to him, cf. Num. 7:1" (Murphy, MG, 387). Whether Jacob fell asleep again at the conclusion of the dream-vision, we do not know. In any case, he arose early in the morning, took the stone which he had used as a "head place" and set it up, it would seem, in a manner designed to make it stand out and hence to mark the precise spot where the dream had occurred: "hence a statue or monument, not as an object of worship, a sort of fetish, but as a memorial of the vision" (PCG, 350). (Cf. 31:45, 35:14; Josh. 4:9, 20; Josh. 24:26; 1 Sam. 7:12).

The Oil of Consecration was an integral part of this ritual. "The worship of sacred stones (Baetylia), afterward prevalent among the Greeks, Romans, Hindoos, Arabs, and Germans, though by some regarded as one of the primeval forms of worship among the Hebrews, was expressly interdicted by the law of Moses (cf. Exo. 23:24, 34:13; Lev. 26:1; Deut. 12:3, 16:22). It was probably a heathen imitation of the rite here recorded, though by some authorities the Baetylian worship is said to have been connected chiefly with meteoric stones which were supposed to have descended from some divinity, as, e.g., the stone in Delphi sacred to Apollo; that in Emesa, on the Orontes, consecrated to the sun; the angular rock at Pessinus in Phrygia worshipped as hallowed by Cybele; the black stone in the Kaaba at Mecca believed to have been brought from heaven by the angel Gabriel. That the present narrative was a late invention 'called into existence by a desire' on

the part of the priests and prophets of Yahweh 'to proclaim the high antiquity of the sanctuary at Bethel, and to make the sacred stone harmless,' is *pure assumption*. The circumstance that the usage here mentioned is nowhere else in Scripture countenanced (except in ch. 35:14, with reference to the same pillar) forms a sufficient pledge of the high antiquity of the narrative" (PCG, 351). "Although this act of Jacob is the first instance of stone consecration on record, it was evidently a familiar and established practice in the time of the patriarchs. But the unction of stones was ere long abused and perverted even by the Hebrews themselves to idolatry. . . . This superstition of consecrated stones was both very ancient and very extensive, from the Graeco-Phoenician *Bantulia*, or Boetylia, the monolithic temples of Egypt and Hindostan, the *lithoi liparoi* of the Greeks, the 'lapides informes' of the Romans, the pyramids and obelisks of others, the cairns and cromlechs of Northern Europe, and the caaba of Arabia. That black stone of Mecca is described as 'an irregular oval, about seven inches in diameter, with an undulated surface, composed of about a dozen smaller stones of different sizes and shapes, well joined together with a small quality of cement, and perfectly smooth' " (CECG, 200). Let it be emphasized here that there is no indication that Jacob regarded this stone pillar as a fetish: "the idea of a fetish stone simply does not enter into this case. . . . Koenig has successfully refuted such claims by pointing out that Jacob says, 'How awe-inspiring is this *place*—not 'this stone' " (EG, 778). What happened here was simply the natural thing, as an expression of the profound reverence that filled Jacob's soul after such an experience: anyone in our day might react in precisely the same manner under the same or similar circumstances. The mere setting up of the stone might well have been just a future memorial to mark the spot: this practice, we are told, is still common in the East, in memory of a religious experience and vow.

Having set the stone up, Jacob *poured oil on the top of it*. "Oil is so much used in the east for food and for bodily refreshment that a supply of it invariably forms an important part of a traveler's viaticum. From its excellent material properties, it came to be used as a symbol for spiritual influences, and, still later, as a means for setting apart or consecrating anything to God" (CECG, 200). "The stone marks the place of God's presence. It becomes a *beth El*, a 'house of God,' and is anointed with oil as a formal act of worship. Practices of this kind were common in the Canaanite cult and in the Semitic world in general but were subsequently condemned by Law and Prophets, see Exo. 23:24. Even in this passage a more spiritual conception goes with the idea of a divine dwelling on earth: Bethel is the 'gate of heaven,' God's true home, cf. 1 Ki. 8:27" (JB, 49). "We must distinguish here between the stone for a pillar, as a memorial of divine help, as Joshua and Samuel erected pillars (31:45, 35:14; Josh. 4:9, 20; Josh. 24:26; 1 Sam. 7:12), and the anointing of the stone with oil, which consecrated it to Jehovah's sanctuary, Exo. 20:30" (Lange, CDHCG, 522).

The oil mentioned in Scripture was from the olive-tree. The olive-berry is the most frequently mentioned source of oil in the Bible. The many olive-plantations in Palestine made olive-oil one of the most important and most lucrative products of the country. It was an article of extensive and profitable trade with the Tyrians (Ezek. 27:17, cf. 1 Ki. 5:11); and presents of the best grades of olive-oil were deemed suitable for kings. In fact, no other kind of oil is distinctly mentioned in Scripture, except in one instance (Esth. 2:12, here it was oil of myrrh); and the different grades of oil referred to appear to have been only different kinds of olive-oil. Oil was used for many different purposes among the ancient Israelites and their neighbors. Special mention is made of it in the inventories of royal property and revenue (1 Sam. 10:1, 16:1, 13;

1 Ki. 1:39, 17:16; 2 Ki. 4:2, 6; 9:1, 3; 1 Chron. 27:29; 2 Chron. 11:11, 32:28; Prov. 21:20). A supply of oil was always kept in the temple (Josephus, *Wars*, v. 13, 6), and an oil "treasure" was included in the stores of the Jewish kings (2 Ki. 20:13; cf. 2 Chron. 32:28). Oil of Tekoa was considered the very best. Trade in oil was carried on also between Egypt and Palestine (Ezra 3:7; Isa. 30:6, 57:9; Ezek. 27:17, Hos. 12:1).

Oil was used for *food* (Jer. 31:12, 41:8; Ezek. 16:13, 27:17; Luke 16:6ff.), and its abundance was a mark of prosperity (Joel 2:19). It was used for *cosmetic* purposes (Deut. 28:40; 2 Sam. 12:20, 14:2; Ruth 3:3). The bodies of the dead were anointed with oil by the Greeks and Romans, and apparently by the Jews (Mark 14:8, Luke 23:56). Oil was in common use for *medicinal* purposes (Isa. 1:6, Mark 6:13, Luke 10:34, Jas. 5:14). It was used to produce *light* in homes (Matt. 25:1-8, Luke 12:35). It was used for *ritualistic* purposes (Lev. 2:1-2, 5:11; Num. 5:15): the use of oil in sacrifices was indicative of joy or gladness; the absence of it denoted sorrow or humiliation (Isa. 61:3, Joel 2:19, Psa. 45:7, Rev. 6:6). *Tithes of oil* were prescribed (Deut. 12:17, 2 Chron. 31:5; Neh. 10:37, 39; 13:12; Ezek. 45:14).

The first instance in Scripture of the use of oil for strictly religious purposes is in the account under study here, that of Jacob's anointing of the stone which he had used as a "head place" on his way to Paddan-Aram (28:18, 35:14). This evidently was designed to be a formal consecration of the stone, and indeed of the whole place in which the Divine visitation occurred. Under the Mosaic Law persons and things set apart for sacred purposes were anointed with what was designated "the holy anointing oil" (Exo. 30:22-33). This anointing with oil was the symbol of the conferring of the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit by which certain persons were especially qualified for the respective ministries ("offices") to which they

were divinely commissioned. This was true especially in the ritual of formal induction of prophets, priests and kings into their respective services. (With respect to *priests*, see Exo. 28:36-41, 30:30-33, 40:13-16; Lev. 8:10-12, 30; 16:32; with respect to *kings*, 1 Sam. 9:16-17, 10:1, 15:1, 17-23; 1 Sam. 16:3, 11-13; 2 Sam. 2:4, 7; 5:13, 17; 12:7, 23:1-2; Psalms 89: 20; 1 Ki. 1:39; 2 Chron. 6:42; 1 Ki. 19:15, 16; 2 Ki. 9:1-13; with respect to *prophets*, 1 Ki. 19:16, 19, etc.). The allusions to each of the three great kings of Israel—Saul, David, and Solomon, respectively—as Yahweh's Anointed are too numerous to be listed here (e.g., 1 Sam. 24:6, 10; 2 Sam. 23:1, Psalm 89:20, etc.). Jesus of Nazareth, the Only Begotten, was God's Anointed in a special and universal sense: hence He is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16). The title Messiah (in Hebrew), Christos (in Greek), or Christ (in English) means "The Anointed One." To accept Jesus as the Christ is to accept Him as one's *prophet*, to whom one goes for divine truth, as one's *priest* who intercedes for His people at the throne of heaven, and as one's King—the Absolute Monarch of His Kingdom which includes all the redeemed of earth (John 14:6, 8:31-32, 6:68, 6:63; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:11-28, 9:23-28, 4:14-16; Acts 2:36; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 Cor. 15:20-28; 1 Tim. 4:17; Rev. 19:11-16; Heb. 1:6-8; Psalm 2, etc.). To accept Jesus as Christ, then, is to accept Him as God's Anointed. Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, we are told, was "anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38). When did this Divine anointing—marking His formal induction into His threefold office of Prophet, Priest and King occur? Obviously, it occurred after His baptism in the Jordan River, when the Holy Spirit "descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him" (Luke 3:21-22; Matt. 3:16-17) and the voice of the Father, at the same moment, avouched His Sonship (cf. John 1:29-34). In a special sense this conferring of the gifts and

graces of the Spirit upon the Son was the great Antitype of the symbolism of the holy anointing oil as used in Old Testament times for the formal induction of prophets, priests and kings into their respective ministries (Luke 11:20; Matt. 12:28; John 6:63, 3:34; cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12).

7. *The Naming of the Place*, v. 19.

"*Jacob called the name of that place, Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at first.*" "It is not easy to discover whether Beth-el is identical with Luz, or they were two distinct places. Some passages seem to countenance the former view (35:6, Judg. 1:23), others the latter (12:8, 13:3; Josh. 16:2, 18:13). The probability is that they were in close contiguity, and were in time merged into one" (CECG, 200). "Originally the Canaanitish town was called Luz, or 'almond tree,' a name it continued to bear until the conquest (Judges 1:23). From the circumstances recorded here in the narrative, Jacob called the spot where he slept (in the vicinity of Luz) Bethel—the designation afterward extending to the town (35:6). Until the conquest both titles appear to have been used—Luz by the Canaanites, Bethel by the Israelites. When the conquest was completed the Hebrew name was substituted for the Hittite, the sole survivor of the captured city building another Luz in another part of the country (*vide* Judg. 1:26)" (PCG, 351). "*Luz*, probably meaning 'almond tree,' was renamed by Jacob *Bethel*, meaning 'house of God,' and became a holy place to the children of Israel. It was located on land which later was granted to the tribe of Benjamin and was about twelve miles north of Jerusalem. The sacred place was defiled when Jeroboam erected a golden calf (1 Ki. 12:28-33), therefore God decreed the destruction of the altar (1 Ki. 13:1-5, 2 Ki. 23:15-17, Amos 3:14, 15)" (HSB, 47). "Jacob then gave the place the name of *Bethel*, *i.e.*, House of God, whereas the town had been called Luz before. The antithesis shows that Jacob gave the name, not to the place

where the pillar was set up, but to the town, in the neighborhood of which he had received the divine revelation. He renewed it on his return from Mesopotamia (35:15). This is confirmed by ch. 48:3, where Jacob, like the historian in ch. 35:6, speaks of Luz as the place of this revelation. There is nothing at variance with this in Josh. 16:2, 18:13; for it is not Bethel as a city, but the mountains of Bethel, that are here distinguished from Luz" (BCOTP, 282). "Beth-el, *house of God*. A town about twelve miles North of Jerusalem, originally Luz (Gen. 28:19). It was here that Abraham encamped (Gen. 12:8, 13:3), and the district is still pronounced as suitable for pasturage. It received the name of Beth-el, 'house of God' because of its nearness to or being the very place where Jacob dreamed (28:10-22). Beth-el was assigned to the Benjamites, but they appear to have been either unable to take it or careless about doing so, as we find it taken by the children of Joseph" (UBD, 139). (Cf. Judg. 1:22-26, 20:26-28; 1 Sam. 7:16; 1 Ki. 12:28-33; 2 Ki. 23:15-20; Ezra 2:28; Neh. 11:31. Excavations at Bethel, conducted by Albright and Kelso reveal house walls from the time of the Judges; its occupation is thought to have begun about 2250 B.C.). "Fleeing the vengeance of Esau, Jacob passed the night at Bethel about twelve miles north of Jerusalem on the road to Shechem. There he received the divine promise of a safe return to the land of his birth. The vision of the heavenly ladder reminded Jacob that the God of his fathers would not forsake him in his journeys. Bethel later became an important shrine. Golden calves were placed there by Jeroboam I to dissuade his people from going to the Temple at Jerusalem" (BBA, 60). The problem of a twofold naming, as, for example, the naming of Bethel by Jacob at one time (28:19) and again at a later time (35:15) poses no serious problem. "At the first time Jacob made a vow that, if God would bless and keep him till his return, the pillar which he had set up

should be 'God's house.' Upon his return, in view of the abundant blessings which he had received, he performed his vow, changing the ideal to an actual Bethel, and thus encompassing and confirming the original name" (Haley, ADB, 410). "To the rationalistic objection that 'identical names of places are not imposed twice,' we may reply, in general, that it is in 'full accordance with the genius of the Oriental languages and the literary tastes of the people' to suppose that a name may be *renewed*; in other words, that a *new meaning and significance may be attached to an old name*. This fact sweeps away a host of objections urged against this and similar cases" (*ibid.*, 410). The place-name *Bethel* must have been known as far back as Abraham's time: as Murphy put it, "Abraham also worshipped God here, and met with the name already existing (see 12:8, 13:3, 25:30)." Or indeed the place may have been known as Luz in earlier times, this having been the Canaanite name, and somehow the two names became associated in the later historical accounts. (For examples, *i.e.*, of twofold naming, cf. Gen. 14:14, Deut. 34:1, Josh. 19:47, Judg. 18:29, with reference to Laish (or Leshem) and Dan; also Num. 32:41, Deut. 3:4, 14, Judg. 10:3-4, with reference to Havoth-jair. Note also the name *Beer-sheba*: in Gen. 21:31, we read that Abraham gave this name to the place where he entered into a covenant with Abimelech; in 26:33, however, we read that Isaac called the place *Shiba*; but from 26:15, 18, we find that all the wells dug by Abraham in this region had been filled with earth by the Philistines, but that Isaac re-opened them and *called them by the old familiar names*. This certainly is a satisfactory explanation of the problem.)

Speiser seems to conclude properly in these statements: "The link with Bethel carries its own symbolism as well. The theophany made Jacob realize that this was an abode of the Deity, hence the new name replaced the older Luz, as this aetiology sees it. Actually, Bethel was an old center

(cf. 12:8, 13:3), which managed to retain its religious influence until late in the seventh century, when the site was destroyed by Josiah (2 Ki. 23:15). The etymology seeks to fix the locale of Jacob's spiritual experience, but does not otherwise circumscribe its significance" (ABG, 220). Skinner, following the critical line, writes: "From John. 16:2 and 18:13 it appears that Luz was really distinct from Bethel, but was overshadowed by the more famous sanctuary in the neighborhood" (ICCG, 378). Note well Green's appraisal of the "sanctuary" notion: The sacred writer, he says, "makes no reference whatever to the idolatrous sanctuary subsequently established at Bethel; least of all is he giving an account of its origin. There is no discrepancy in different patriarchs successively visiting the same place and building altars there. These descriptions of patriarchal worship are not legends to gain credit for the sanctuary; but the superstition of later ages founded sanctuaries in venerated spots, where the patriarchs had worshipped, and where God had revealed himself to them" (UBG, 343). Bethel was assigned to the Benjamites, but they appear to have been either unable to take it or careless about doing so, as we find it taken by the children of Joseph, Judg. 1:22-26). Later Old Testament history makes it clear that Jeroboam I did establish idolatrous sanctuaries both at Bethel and Dan (1 Ki. 12:28-33), and that King Josiah later destroyed the "high places" that Jeroboam had instituted; specific mention is made of the destruction of the idolatrous altar at Bethel, (cf. 2 Ki. 23:15-20). As stated above, however, Lange suggests that "through Jehovah's revelation, this place, which is viewed as a heathen waste, becomes to Jacob a house of God, and therefore he consecrates it as a permanent sanctuary" (Lange, CDHCG, 523).

8. *The Vow*, vv. 20-22.

V. 20—"A vow is a solemn promise made to God, by which we bind ourselves more strictly to necessary duty,

or what indifferent things are calculated to promote it (Psa. 76:11, 119, 106; Isa. 19:21, 44:4-5, 45:23; 2 Cor. 8:5; Deut. 5:2-3; 29:1, 12, 13; Josh. 24:25; 2 Ki. 11:17; 2 Chron. 29:10, 34:31-34; Ezra 10:3; Neh. 9:10; Acts 18:18, 21:23-24), and that either in thankfulness for some mercy received (Jonah 1:16), or for obtaining some special benefit (Num. 21:1, 2; Judges 11:30; 2 Sam. 1:11; Prov. 31:2)" (SIBG, 260). "This vow has often been presented in a light injurious to the character of Jacob, as indicating that his mind was so wholly engrossed with his present state and necessities that he felt no interest in the temporal blessings guaranteed to his posterity, or in the spiritual good which, through their medium, would be conveyed in remote ages to the world at large; and that, so far from having exalted views of the providential government of God, he confined his thoughts exclusively to his personal affairs and his immediate protection, as well as suspended his devotedness to the Divine service on condition of God's pledges being redeemed. But it should be borne in mind that it was *in consequence* of the vision, and of the promises made to him during the night, in the most unexpected manner, by the Divine Being, that he vowed his vow the next morning—a view indicative of his profound feelings of gratitude, as well as of reverence, and intended to be simply responsive to the terms in which the grace of his heavenly Benefactor and Guardian was tendered. Nay, so far is he from betraying a selfish and worldly spirit, the moderation of his desires is remarkable; and the vow, when placed in a just light, will be seen to evince the simplicity and piety of Jacob's mind. Our translators have given rise to the mistaken impressions that so generally prevail in regard to Jacob's vow, by the insertion of the word 'then' in v. 21. But the apodosis properly begins in the verse following— 'then shall this stone,' etc. (It should be noted that the versification is clarified in the ARV). The words of Jacob are not to be considered

as implying a doubt, far less as stating the condition or terms on which he would dedicate himself to God. Let 'if' be changed into 'since,' and the language will appear a proper expression of Jacob's faith—an evidence of his having truly embraced the promise. And the vow as recorded should stand thus: 'If (since) God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; and if (since) the Lord shall be my God, *then* this stone which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house,' where I shall erect an altar and worship Him" (Jamieson, CECG, 201). Note that the conditions correspond with the Divine promise; that is, they are not really "conditions" at all, but a reiteration of the elements of the promise: (1) the presence of God, (2) Divine protection, (3) a safe return to his father's house, which naturally includes the provision of food and raiment. "*If God will be with me.* This is not the condition on which Jacob will accept God in a mercenary spirit. It is merely the echo and the thankful acknowledgement of the divine assurance, 'I am with thee,' which was given immediately before. It is the response of the son to the assurance of the father: 'Wilt thou indeed be with me? Thou shalt be my God'" (Murphy, MG, 388). V. 21a—"owned and worshipped by me and my family, as the author of our whole happiness, and as our valuable and everlasting portion" (SIBG, 260; cf. Exo. 15:2, Psa. 118:27-29). It should be noted again that Jacob said, "How awe-inspiring is this *place*"—not this *stone* v. 17. Indeed, this stone, said Jacob in reply, "shall be God's house," that is, "a monument of the presence of God among His people, and a symbol of the indwelling of his Spirit in their hearts" (MG, 388). "In enumerating protection, food, clothing and safe return Jacob is not displaying a mind ignorant of higher values but merely unfolding the potentialities of God's promise (v. 15), 'I will

keep thee and bring thee again,' etc. When he said, 'If Yahweh will be God to me,' he is paraphrasing the promise (v. 15): 'I am with thee.' Consequently, in all this Jacob is not betraying a cheap, mercenary spirit, bargaining with God for food and drink and saying, 'If I get these, then Yahweh shall be my God.' That would be about the cheapest case of arrogant bargaining with God recorded anywhere. . . . The Lord was his God. Jacob was not an unconverted man still debating whether or not to be on the Lord's side and here making an advantageous bargain out of the case. They who postpone his conversion to a time twenty years later at the river Jabbok completely misunderstand Jacob. Not only does the construction of the Hebrew allow for our interpretation, it even suggests it. The 'if' clauses of the protasis all run along after the same pattern as converted perfects—future: 'if he will,' etc., 'if Yahweh will be, or prove Himself, God to me.' Then to make the beginning of the apodosis prominent comes a new construction: noun first, then adjective clause, then verb" (Leupold, EG, 780). (Vv. 20, 21 form the protasis and v. 22 the apodosis). By the phrase, "house of God," evidently Jacob does not indicate a temple but a sacred spot, a sanctuary, which he proposes to establish and perpetuate. Just how Jacob carried out his vow is reported in 35:1-7: here, we are told, he built an altar to Yahweh on this spot, this *place* (v. 17). Nothing is reported in ch. 35 about the tithe, "perhaps because that is presupposed as the condition upon which the maintenance of the sanctuary depended. The silence of the Scriptures on this latter point by no means indicates that it was neglected" (EG, 781).

The second part of Jacob's vow was that of the *tithe*: "Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (v. 22). Some authorities tell us that "the case of Jacob affords another proof that the practice of voluntary tithing was known and observed antecedent to the

time of Moses." Still and all, it is interesting to note that in Jacob's vow we have only the second Scripture reference to the voluntary tithe. The first reference occurs in Gen. 14:20, where we are told that Abraham paid the King-priest Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils (goods) he brought back from his victory over the invading kings from the East. (Incidentally, the fact that this is one of the only two references to the tithe in the book of Genesis, enhances the mystery of the identity of this King-Priest, does it not?) "The number 'ten' being the one that concludes the prime numbers, expresses the idea of completion, of some whole thing. Almost all nations, in paying tithes of all their income, and frequently, indeed, as a sacred revenue, thus wished to testify that their whole property belonged to God, and thus to have a sanctified use and enjoyment of what was left. The idea of Jacob's ladder, of the protecting hosts of angels, of the house of God and its sublime terrors, of the gate of heaven, of the symbolical significance of the oil, of the vow, and of the tithes—all these constitute a blessing of this consecrated night of Jacob's life" (Lange, CDHCG, 523). "The appropriation of this proportion of income or produce for pious or charitable purposes seems to have been a primitive practice, and hence Jacob vowed to give a tenth of whatever gains he might acquire through the blessing of Providence (ch. 14:20). It was continued under the Mosaic economy, with this difference, that what had been in patriarchal times a free-will offering, was made a kind of tax, a regular impost for supporting the consecrated tribe of Levi" (Jamieson, CECG, 201). "*I will surely give the tenth unto Thee. In the form of sacrifices*" (SC, 167). "With regard to the fulfilment of this vow, we learn from chap. 35:7 that Jacob built an altar, and probably also dedicated the tenth to God, *i.e.*, offered it to Jehovah; or, as some have supposed, applied it partly to the erection and preservation of the altar, and partly to

burnt and thank-offerings combined with sacrificial meals, according to the analogy of Deut. 14:28, 29 (cf. chap. 31:54, 46:1)" (BCOTP, 283). "*A tenth I will surely give unto thee.* The honored guest is treated as one of the family. Ten is the whole: a tenth is a share of the whole. The Lord of all receives one share as an acknowledgment of his sovereign right to all. Here it is represented as the full share given to the king who condescends to dwell with his subjects. Thus Jacob opens his heart, his home, and his treasure to God. These are the simple elements of a theocracy, a national establishment of the true religion. The spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, has begun to reign to Jacob. As the Father is prominently manifested in regenerate Abraham, and the Son in Isaac, so also is the Spirit in Jacob" (Murphy, MG, 388). (For the involuntary—legal—tithes required under the Mosaic economy, see the following: Lev. 27:30ff.; Num. 18:21-28; Deut. 12:5-18, 14:22-27, 28-29; 26:12-14; 2 Chron. 31:5, 12, 19; Neh. 12:44; Amos 4:4; Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42, 18:12; Heb. 7:5-8, etc. (See also especially *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, UBD, under "tithe," p. 1103).

9. Summarizations

1. With respect to *Jacob's pillar*: "The custom of the sacred pillar ('matzeba') is one of the central foundations of the patriarchal beliefs, and many of them have been discovered. They are usually small rectangles, flat and thin, more like small and humble grave-stones of today. They appear to have been erected chiefly to commemorate a theophany, a vow or sacred covenant rite, or even an ancestor or important official. The recent excavations at Hazor and other ancient sites have produced sacred slabs of this sort" (Cornfeld, AtD, 82). It should be noted, of course, *that these sacred pillars are not to be interpreted as fetishes (i.e., as having magical powers), but as memorials. It is important that we keep this fact in mind.* (Cf. the tendency to corrupt the significance of the Lord's

Supper in this way by the—shall I say, magical?—dogma of transubstantiation).

2. With respect to *Jacob's vow*, note the following clarifying comment in vv. 20-22: "Jacob here was not expressing doubt as to whether God would keep His promise of verses 13-15; he used the particle *if* in the sense of 'on the basis of the fact that' (cf. Rom. 8:31: *If God is for us*). Nor was he necessarily making a bargain with God, as if he would bribe Him to keep His word. He was simply specifying in the form of a vow the particular expression he would give to his gratitude for God's surprising and wholly undeserved favor. This became a customary type of thanksgiving in Israelite practice and was often solemnized by a votive offering" (HSB, 47).

3. With respect to the *dream-vision*: "The dream-vision is a comprehensive summary of the history of the Old Covenant. As Jacob is now at the starting-point of his independent development, Jehovah now stands above the ladder, appears in the beginning of his descent, and since the end of the ladder is by Jacob, it is clear that Jehovah descends to him, the ancestor and representative of the chosen people. But the whole history of the Old Covenant is nothing else than, on the one side, the history of the successive descending of God, to the incarnation in the seed of Jacob, and on the other, the successive steps of progress in Jacob and his seed towards the preparation to receive the personal fulness of the divine nature into itself. The vision reaches its fulfilment and goal in the sinking of the personal fulness of God into the helpless and weak human nature in the incarnation of Christ" (Gosman, CDHCG, 522).

4. *On Jacob's response to the Divine Promise*. "If God is to me Jehovah, then Jehovah shall be to me God. If the Lord of the angels and the world proves himself to me a covenant God, then will I glorify in my covenant God, the Lord of the whole world. There is clear evidence

that Jacob was now a child of God. He takes God to be his God in covenant, with whom he will live. He goes out in reliance upon the divine promise, and yields himself to the divine control, rendering to God the homage of a loving and grateful heart. But what a progress there is between Bethel and Peniel. Grace reigns within him, but not without a conflict. The powers and tendencies of evil are still at work. He yields too readily to their urgent solicitation. Still, grace and the principles of a renewed man, gain a stronger hold, and become more and more controlling. Under the loving but faithful discipline of God, he is gaining in his faith, until, in the great crisis of his life, Mahanaim and Peniel, and the new revelation then given to him, it receives a large and sudden increase. He is thenceforth trusting, serene, and established, strengthened and settled, and passes into the quiet life of the triumphant believer" (Gosman, *ibid.*, 523).

5. With respect to *Jacob's character*, most commentators hold that the experience at Bethel was the turning-point in his religious life. "Hear the surprise in Jacob's cry as he awakened from his sleep. . . . What less likely place and time—so it had seemed to him—could there be for God to manifest himself? He had come to one of the bleakest and most forbidding spots a man could have chanced upon. It was no pleasant meadow, no green oasis, no sheltered valley. It was a hilltop of barren rock; and its barrenness seemed to represent at that moment Jacob's claim on life. He was a fugitive, and he was afraid. His mother had told him to go off for "a few days," and then she would send and bring him home. But Jacob may have had a better idea of the truth: that it would be no 'few days' but a long time of punishing exile before he could ever dare to return. There was good reason to feel that he was alone with emptiness. When he had lain down to sleep, he was a long way off from the place of his clever and successful schemes. There was

nothing to measure his own little soul against except the silent and dreadful immensities he saw from the height of Bethel: the empty earth, the sky, the stars. Yet the strange fact was that there existed in Jacob's soul something to which God could speak. Unprepossessing though he was, he was capable of response to more than the things of flesh and sense. He had not despised or ignored his inheritance. He knew that it was faith in God that had given dignity to Abraham and Isaac, and he had a hunger—even if mixed with baseness—to get his own life into touch with God. When such a man is confronted in his solitariness with the sublimity of the hills and the awful mystery of the marching stars, he may be capable of great conceptions which begin to take shape in his subconscious. In his dreams he sees not only nature, but the gates of heaven. Yet how many there are who fall short of Jacob in this—men in whom solitariness produces nothing, who will fall asleep but will not dream, who when they are forced to be alone are either bored or frightened. Out of the aloneness they dread they get nothing, because they have not kept the seed of religion that in their hour of need and crisis might have quickened their souls" (IB, 690).

"He made a solemn vow upon this occasion, v. 20-22. When God ratifies his promises to us, it is proper for us to repeat our promises to him. Now in this vow, observe, 1. Jacob's faith. God had said (v. 15), *I am with thee, and will keep thee*. Jacob takes hold of this, and infers, 'I depend upon it.' 2. Jacob's modesty and great moderation in his desires. He will cheerfully content himself with bread to eat, and raiment to put on. Nature is content with a little, and grace with less. 3. Jacob's piety, and his regard to God, which appear here (1) in what he desired, that God would be with him, and keep him (2) In what he designed. His resolution is: (1) In general, to cleave to the Lord, as his God in covenant,

Then shall the Lord be my God. (2) In particular, that he would perform some special acts of devotion, in token of his gratitude. *First*, 'This pillar shall keep possession here till I come back in peace, and then an altar shall be erected here to the honor of God.' *Secondly*, 'The house of God shall not be unfurnished, nor his altar without a sacrifice: *Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee*, to be spent either upon God's altars or upon his poor,' both which are his receivers in the world" (M. Henry, CWB, 49).

With reference to Jacob's spiritual condition at Bethel, "the other side of the coin," so to speak, is presented by the well-known commentator on the Pentateuch, C. H. Mackintosh, as follows: "Now this vision of Jacob's is a very blessed disclosure of divine grace to Israel. We have been led to see something of Jacob's real character, something, too, of his real condition; both were evidently such as to show that it should either be divine grace for him, or nothing. By birth he had no claim; nor yet by character. Esau might have put forward some claim on both these grounds (*i.e.*, provided God's prerogatives were set aside), but Jacob had no claim whatsoever; and hence, while Esau could only stand upon the exclusion of God's prerogative, Jacob could only stand upon the introduction and establishment thereof. Jacob was such a sinner, and so utterly divested of all claim, both by birth and by practice, that he had nothing whatever to rest upon save God's purpose of pure, free, and sovereign grace. Hence, in the revelation which the Lord makes to His chosen servant in the passage just quoted, it is a simple record or prediction of what He Himself would yet do. *I am . . . I will give . . . I will keep . . . I will bring . . . I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* It was all Himself. There is no condition whatever—no *if* or *but*; for when *grace* acts, there can be no such thing. Where there is an *if*, it cannot possibly

be grace. Not that God cannot put man into a position of responsibility, in which He must needs address him with an 'if.' We know He can; but Jacob asleep on a pillow of stone was not in a position of responsibility, but of the deepest helplessness and need; and therefore he was in a position to receive a revelation of the fullest, richest, and most unconditional grace. Now, we cannot but own the blessedness of being in such a condition that we have nothing to rest upon save God Himself; and, moreover, that it is in the most perfect establishment of God's own character and prerogative that we obtain all our true joy and blessing. According to this principle, it would be an irreparable loss to us to have any ground of our own to stand upon; for in that case, God should address us on the ground of responsibility, and failure then would be inevitable. Jacob was so bad, that none but God Himself could do for him" (C.H.M., NG, 284-285). Again: "We . . . shall now close our meditations upon this chapter with a brief notice of *Jacob's bargain with God*, so truly characteristic of him, and so demonstrative of the truth of the statement with respect to the shallowness of his knowledge of the divine character. *And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God, and this stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.* Observe, *If God will be with me.* Now the Lord had just said, emphatically, *I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land, etc.* And yet poor Jacob's heart cannot get beyond an "if," nor in its thoughts of God's goodness, can it rise higher than *bread to eat and raiment to put on.* Such were the thoughts of one who had just seen the magnificent vision of the ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with

the Lord standing above, and promising an innumerable seed and an everlasting possession. Jacob was evidently unable to enter into the reality and fullness of God's thoughts. He measured God by himself, and thus utterly failed to apprehend Him. In short, Jacob had not yet really got to the end of himself; and hence he had not really begun with God" (C.H.M., *ibid.*, 287-288). (May I explain again here that God's election of Jacob was not arbitrary, but the consequence of His foreknowledge of the basic superiority of Jacob's character over that of Esau: a fact certainly borne out by what they did in the later years of their lives and by the acts of their respective progenies. (For a study of the Scriptures, Rom. 9:12-13, Mal. 1:2-3, 2 Sam. 8:14, Gen. 32:3, Gen., ch. 36, Num. 20:14-21, Isa. 34:5, see my *Genesis*, Vol. II pp. 241-243). God's grace is indeed extended to man fully and freely, but the application of its benefits is *conditional* on man's acceptance. One may try to give his friend a thousand dollars, but the gift is of no value unless and until it is accepted (cf. John 3:16-17, 5:40, 14:15; Matt. 7:24-27, etc.).

FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

The Holiness of God

Text: Gen. 28:16-17. Note that Jacob on awakening from his dream-vision "was afraid," that is, *shaken*, literally *terrified* (ABG, 218), and exclaimed "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Someone has said: "Where God's word is found, there is a house of God; there heaven stands open."

In Scripture there is one Person—and only one Person—who is ever addressed as *Holy Father*: that Person is God Himself, and God is so addressed by the Son of God in the latter's highpriestly prayer (John 17:11). More-

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over, Jesus Himself forbids our addressing any other being as "father," that is, in a spiritual sense (Matt. 23:1-12, esp. v. 9). Likewise, God alone is spoken of in Scripture as *reverend* (Psa. 111:9, cf. Heb. 12:28-29). In view of these positive Scripture statements, how can men have the presumption to arrogate these sacred titles to themselves, not only just *reverend*, but also *very reverend*, *most reverend*, etc., *ad nauseam*. Note that Jesus, the Only Begotten, is also addressed as the Holy One of God (by evil spirits, *i.e.*, fallen angels, Mark 1:24; by Simon Peter, John 6:69; cf. Acts 3:14, 4:27, 7:52). It should be noted, too, that God's dwelling-place is the *Holy City* (Rev. 3:12, 11:2, 21:2, 22:19), *per facio* the *New Jerusalem* (Gal. 4:2, Rev. 21:10, Heb. 11:10, 12:22). It is the presence of God that makes heaven to be heaven; it is the absence of God that makes hell to be hell (Rev. 21:1-7, 21:8, 20:11-15, 22:1-5, 6:16-17, etc.).

The word "holiness" comes from the Greek *holos*, meaning "all," "the whole," "entire," etc. Holiness is *wholeness*, *completeness*, hence *perfection* (*per facio*, to make or to do completely, thoroughly). The perfections of God, commonly known as His attributes, constitute His holiness (Matt. 5:48). (Cf. 1 Pet. 1:16, Lev. 11:44, 19:2, 20:7).

The *attributes* of God—Perfections of the Divine Nature—may be classified as *ontological*, that is, inherent in His Being, and *moral*, *i.e.*, inherent in His relationships with moral creatures. In the former category, we say that God is eternal, unchangeable, omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. In the latter category, we say that God is infinitely holy, just and good; infinitely true and faithful; infinitely merciful and long-suffering. (For a discussion of these attributes see my *Survey Course in Christian Doctrine*, Vol. I, College Press, Joplin, Missouri.)

It is the *holiness* of God, we are told, that is the subject-matter of the heavenly hymnody before the Throne

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of the Almighty (Isa. 6:3). This is the burden of the heavenly anthem which is sung unceasingly around the Throne, in which the redeemed of earth will be privileged to join, in the new heavens and new earth (2 Pet. 3:13, 1 Thess. 5:23, Rev. 4:8). When we stand before God in that great Day the one outstanding characteristic of His nature that will be apparent to all His intelligent creatures will surely be His *holiness*. Is not His end in creating us in His image the building of a holy redeemed race fit to commune with Him in loving intimacy throughout the ceaseless aeons of eternity? Hence His admonition to us, "Be ye yourselves also holy," etc. (1 Pet. 1:15, 16). It is because men cannot grasp the import of the holiness of God that they get such ridiculously distorted concepts of His dealings with His creation. *Holiness is the foundation of all the Divine Perfections*. We shall examine here some of the more significant aspects of this Divine Holiness.

1. The Holiness of God includes His *truthfulness*. He always speaks the truth. He would never deceive us. When He speaks, He speaks the truth; what He tells us that He will do, that He will do: we can depend on it. (Matt. 24:35, Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33, 16:31; Rom. 10:6-10, 2 Tim. 2:18-19, etc.). The foundation of God standeth sure, *i.e.*, for ever. His word is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword," etc. (Heb. 4:12). (May I offer this personal testimony: the more I delve into the cults and philosophies of men, the more I am convinced that God's Word is to be found in the Bible, and the more confirmed I become in my conviction that what is found in the Bible is true, even if we as human beings cannot understand fully the meaning of it. After all, as Sam Jones used to say, "You cannot pour the ocean into a teacup." In the Scripture God speaks to men, and what He speaks is true—we can depend on it. And the reason why multitudes are staggering in blindness and carelessness today is the fact that they do not *know*—or will not accept

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—what God is telling them in His Book. Their humanism, materialism, naturalism, agnosticism, etc., leave them utterly blind to the truth. They do not know God's Word—they do not try to know it—they do not even want to know it. They are the blind leading the blind—and their end can be only "the pit" (Matt. 15:14—C.C.).

2. The Holiness of God includes His *righteousness*. What He tells us to do is *right*; what He tells us not to do is *wrong* (Gal. 5:16-25). Why do we have so many varying notions of right and wrong? The answer is simple: Because men follow what *they* think instead of what God has *said*. God loves righteousness, but He hates iniquity (Psa. 45:7, Heb. 1:9). It has been rightly said that "human character is worthless in proportion as the abhorrence of sin is lacking in it." *The most evident sign of the moral flabbiness of our age is the manner in which we condone—wink at—sin. It was Herbert Spencer who said over a century ago that good nature with Americans has become a crime.* Dr. Arnold, Head Master of Rugby once said, "I am never sure of a boy who only loves the good. I never feel that he is safe until I see that he abhors evil." Lecky says, in his great book, *Democracy and Liberty*, "There is one thing worse than corruption, and that is acquiescence in corruption." Dr. Will Durant has said: "The nation that will not resist anarchy is doomed to destruction." To be incapable of moral indignation against wrong is to have no real love for the right. The only revenge that is permissible to Christians is the revenge that pursues and exterminates sin. Likewise, this is the only vengeance known to God. (We must remember that *vindication* is not vengeance).

3. The Holiness of God includes His *faithfulness*. That is, He faithfully executes His judgments and fulfils His promises. (2 Tim. 2:13, 1 Cor. 10:13, Deut. 32:4, Isa. 40:8, 1 John 1:9, Matt. 24:35, 2 Pet. 1:4, Heb. 2:1-4, 2 Pet. 3:1-13).

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4. The Holiness of God includes His *love* (and in turn His *mercy* and His *longsuffering*). By His *mercy*, we mean that He is ever willing and anxious to pardon all who are truly penitent. (Ezek. 33:11, Psa. 145:9, Luke 1:78, 2 Cor. 1:3, Eph. 2:4, Tit. 3:5, John 3:16, 1 John 4:7-21). In the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), Jesus tells us that the father "ran" to meet his penitent boy returning home "and fell on his neck and kissed him": is not this really the story of the Forgiving Father? Note, too, that the father was "moved with compassion" (v. 20). Robert Browning writes: "God! Thou art love! I build my faith on that." Lowell: 'Tis heaven alone that is given away; 'tis only God may be had for the asking." Annie Johnston Flint: "Out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth and giveth—and giveth again." By God's *longsuffering* we mean that He gives the sinner a long time for repentance, even to the limit at which love must give way to justice. I Pet. 3:20—the longsuffering of God gave the antediluvian world one hundred and twenty years of grace (Gen. 6:3); cf. 2 Pet. 3:9. It is said that an atheist conversing on occasion with Joseph Parker, the distinguished British minister, exclaimed, "If there is a God, I give Him three minutes to prove it by striking me dead." To which Joseph Parker replied with great sorrow in his voice, "Do you suppose that you can exhaust the mercy of God in three minutes?" Consider God's long-suffering patience toward the Children of Israel, despite their numerous and repeated backslidings. Think of the awful wickedness spread abroad over our earth today—yet God waits, for those who may come to repentance. God's mercy will follow you to the grave, my sinner friend, but it cannot consistently follow you farther. This life is *probationary*; in the next world, God's love must give way to His justice. No such thing as *post-mortem* repentance or salvation is taught in Scripture: as a matter

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of fact, the idea is completely rejected in the narrative of the Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16:19-31).

Note what God says to us through His prophet Ezekiel (Ez. 33:11). Note the Divine exhortation, "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Is not this a wonderful revealing of the great Heart of our God? God wants us to repent, to turn to Him; he yearns for our turning to Him; and when we give Him our hearts, He delights in being merciful to us. Did you ever have the experience of your child turning away from you and probably getting into trouble? then to have him come back in penitence and tears, with an open confession, "I have done wrong"? Do you not gladly help him in every way you can? You do for him what he cannot do for himself. That is what God does for us—He does for us what we cannot do for ourselves: He who owns the world and all that is therein, comes down to buy us back, to redeem us. He rushes out the road to meet us and to throw His arms around us, if we will only come in penitence and confession. "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases" through the blood of Him who died on the Cross to redeem us. He provided this covering of grace for our sins. He leads us back into His house and bestows on us the gifts of His divine Fatherhood. We can never merit salvation and eternal life; we can only accept these as Gifts (John 3:16). Dante tells us in his *Divine Comedy* (one of the greatest of all the epic poems) that the motto over the doorway to Hell is this: *Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.* The Bible tells us that above the gate to Heaven is the inscription: *The Gift of God.*

Yes, it is God's Love that causes Him to be a *jealous* God. "I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God," etc. (Exo. 20:1-6). We must not overlook the fact that jealousy is naturally an emotion that attaches to true love. The person who can remain complacent when he sees the object of his affection being led away by another who is un-

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worthy, by one who seeks only his own selfish ends, certainly cannot have any measure of true love to begin with. To be jealous is to be pained, to be hurt, to be heart-broken, on seeing the one loved being led astray into what can only turn out to be a life of misery. I would not "give a plugged nickel" (pardon the slang!) for any kind of affection that does not have in it this element of jealousy. What does this famous passage in Exodus mean? It means this: "I Jehovah thy God have a heart filled with affection for you, my people. But I am hurt, I am heartbroken, when I see you bestowing your affections upon the false gods before whom you bow down in idolatry. And when you do spurn my affection, when you turn a deaf ear to my wooings, I will see to it that your sins will find you out, that the consequences of your unfaithfulness will pursue you and yours from generation to generation, if perchance, knowing this, you may be brought to your senses and to return to me and to my love for you." This Exodus passage is the first statement in literature of the *law of heredity, the law of the consequences of sin*. (The law of guilt is to be found in Ezek. 18:19-24).

Yes, the holiness of God includes His jealousy. (Cf. the Apostle's jealousy with respect to the Bride of Christ, 2 Cor. 11:2). This was the terrible lesson that Hosea learned from his own experience: namely, that he he was heartbroken by the unfaithfulness of his wife Gomer, so God was indescribably heartbroken (in such a measure as man could never be) by the unfaithfulness of His people Israel; that as he, Hosea, would go down into the marketplace and buy back his prostitute wife (redeem her) for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer and a half of barley, so God in the person of His Only Begotten would come down into the marketplace of the world, and by the shedding of His own precious blood, buy back all those who would accept the gift of redemption (John 3:16,

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Lev. 17:11, John 1:29, Acts 20:28, 1 Pet. 1:18-21, Rev. 12:10-12, 22:14). It was through his own personal experience that the prophet Hosea reached a concept of God's immeasurable love that is not surpassed anywhere in Scripture, not even in the New Testament.

5. The Holiness of God includes His *absolute justice*. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne" (Psa. 97:2). God could not be holy and not be just. God could not be holy and fail to punish sin. God could not be holy and accept a sinner in his sins, for this would be putting a premium on sin, this would be rewarding sin. And because sin is transgression of divine law (lawlessness, 1 John 3:4), God could not be holy without demanding an adequate atonement (the word means "covering"). Hence "for the joy that was set before him" (Heb. 12:2), the Eternal Logos as the Only Begotten Son of God provided this atonement, this Covering of Grace, so that God would be vindicated from the false charges brought against Him by Satan and his rebel host, and hence could be just and at the same time a justifier of all who come to Him by the obedience of faith in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:19-26). Because the One who died on the Cross was *not just a man* (in which case this would have been only a martyrdom), but the incarnate *God-Man* (John 1:1-14; Matt. 22:42, 1:23; Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 3:16; John 17:5; Matt. 16:16-19; 1 Pet. 2:21-24 etc.), whose vicarious sacrifice was, therefore, *The Atonement* (Heb. 9:23-28). God did for man what man could never do for himself. As W. Robertson Smith writes, (LRS, 62): "To reconcile the forgiving goodness of God with His absolute justice, is one of the highest problems of spiritual religion, which in Christianity is solved by the doctrine of the atonement. It is important to realize that in heathenism this problem never arose in the form in which the New Testament deals with it, not because the gods of the heathen were not conceived as good and

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gracious, but *because they were not absolutely just*" (—italics mine, C.C.). The God of the Bible is just, absolutely just: under His sovereignty "every transgression and obedience will receive a just recompense of reward" (Heb. 2:1-3); in the finality of things the Great Judge—Christ Himself—"will render unto every man according to his deeds" (Matt. 16:27). Multitudes seem to cherish the fantasy that final Judgment will be a kind of military inspection in which the Judge will pass down the line as we number off individually as in the army, and consign each of us to his proper destiny. No so. The Acting Sovereign of the universe knows the moral standing of every person at any and every moment of this life. Hence the final Judgment will not be the *ascertainment* of the moral character of each human being; it will be, rather, the *revelation* of the absolute justice of God "who will render to every man according to his works" (Rom. 2:4-11). "A man who afterward became a Methodist preacher was converted in Whitefield's time by a vision of the judgment, in which he saw all men gathered before the throne and each one coming up to the book of God's law, tearing open his heart before it 'as one would tear open the bosom of his shirt,' comparing his heart with the things written in the book, and, according as they agreed or disagreed with that standard, either passing triumphant to the company of the blest, or going with howling to the company of the damned. No word was spoken; the Judge sat silent; the judgment was one of self-revelation and self-condemnation" (Strong, ST, p. 1026). Cf. Luke 16:25, Heb. 10:27; Matt. 25:31-46, John 5:26-29, Acts 17:30-31, Luke 11:29-32; Rev. 20:11-15, 2 Pet. 2:1-10; etc.) The saints will appear in the Judgment clad in the fine linen of righteousness (Rev. 19:8, 14), their sins having been covered by the blood of Christ, forgiven and forgotten, put away from them forever; and clothed also in glory and honor and immortality, the habiliments of eternal

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redemption (Heb. 9:11-12). In their manifestation, the greatness of God's love, mercy, and salvation will be fully disclosed to all intelligent creatures. The wicked will be presented in the judgment as they really are; even their secret sins will be made manifest to the whole intelligent creation. For the first time, it seems, they will realize the enormity of their rebelliousness (as will also the evil angels) and their complete loss of God and heaven will impel them spontaneously to resort to weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, *i.e.*, that of utter *remorse* and *despair*, not of *hate*. Thus will be consummated the complete vindication of God against all His enemies, angelic and human, which is, in itself, the primary design of the Last Judgment. This final demonstration will be sufficient to prove to all intelligences that Satan's charges against God have been from the beginning false and malicious (John 8:44, Luke 10:18, 2 Cor. 4:4, Eph. 3:8-12, 1 Pet. 5:8, 2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6-7, 1 Cor. 6:2-3, Rev. 20:9-15, Rev. 22:10-15). The greatness of this Consummation of God's Cosmic Plan will be determined, not by the *number* fully redeemed in spirit and soul and body, but by the ineffable glory of the salvation there to be revealed in its fulness (Rom. 8:18-23, 1 Thess. 5:23, 2 Cor. 5:1-10, 1 Cor. 15:35-58, etc.). In a word, it can be rightly said that *God's absolute justice is His holiness*, for the simple reason that ever attribute of God must be under the primacy of His justice.

6. Last, but not least by any means, the Holiness of God must include His *awesomeness*. But what is awesomeness? It is defined in the dictionary—and properly—as meaning “causing, or expressive of, awe or terror.” There are multiplied thousands of persons on our earth today who look upon God as a kind of glorified bellhop, waiting and ready at any time to pander to their slightest requests and idiosyncracies. And when and if He does not do this, they resort to orgies of self-pity. *This is not the God of the*

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Bible—let this fact be understood at once! Manifold numbers of human beings carry the notion of God's love to such an extent as to believe that all men will be saved ultimately, that is, let us say, if there is a God in their thinking). This is contrary to human experience itself. Only that person who has cultivated understanding of poetry can appreciate poetry; only that person who has cultivated understanding of music can truly appreciate music. And it is equally true that *only those persons who understand and cultivate the Spiritual life can expect—and hope—to enjoy ultimate union with God*. "Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people," we often are told. And this is not just a cliché—it is sober fact. In the very nature of the case—psychologically as well as theologically speaking—a wicked man would be utterly out of place in heaven. Only those who bring forth the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25) can, in the very nature of the case, be prepared to share the Beatific Vision (Rev. 21:1-5, 1 John 3:1-3). I can't think of anyone who would be more miserable than the Devil would be if he could get past the pearly gate for a split second. Evil is always uncomfortable, even miserable, in the presence of good.

The awesomeness of God. This was one of the lessons, if not actually *the* most important lesson, that Jacob learned from his experience at Bethel. When he awakened from his dream-vision, "he was afraid," we are told: literally, according to Dr. Speiser, he was *terrified*. Was not this to be expected. "No man hath seen God at any time," that is, in the fulness of His being: no man could look upon God with the eye of flesh and live, because our God is "a devouring fire, a jealous God" (1 John 1:18, Deut. 4:24). (Cf. the appearance of Yahweh in the time of Moses, on the occasion of the giving of the Law, Exo. 19:7-25, 20:18-26). For the impenitent, the negligent, the profane, "there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sin,

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but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:27). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). The Apostle tells us that "unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil" (Rom. 2:8-9). The wheat and the tares must be allowed to grow up together, because only Omniscience, who looketh upon the thoughts and intents of the heart, can justly separate them; hence it will not be until the great Judgment that the wheat will be gathered into the granary, and the chaff will be burned up with unquenchable fire (Heb. 4:12-13; Matt. 13:24-30; 2 Thess. 1:7-10). Note the numerous references to hell as the abode of the lost in "the lake of fire and brimstone," etc. (Isa. 33:14, Psa. 11:5-7, Matt. 3:12, 5:29-30, 7:19, 25:41-46; Luke 3:17, John 15:6, 2 Pet. 3:7, Jude 7; Rev. 14:9-11, 19:20, 20:11-15, 21:8, etc.). There are many who will say that this language is all "figurative." Perhaps so—it could be, of course. But to say that all these references to hell are in figurative language is to accentuate the problem; for a figure must be a figure of *something*, and if the Bible descriptions of hell are merely figurative, I shudder to contemplate what the reality might be. For, whatever else we take with us into the next order of being, it is evident—from both Scripture and science—that we take memory (cf. Luke 16:25; studies in psychic research now verify the fact that the subconscious in man is the seat of perfect memory). It may turn out, then, that *memory* is the worm that never dies and *conscience* (if not at peace with God) the fire that is never quenched (Mark 9:43-48, Heb. 10:27). (We must remember, in this connection, that when God forgives, He forgets; undoubtedly we may expect this to be one of the ineffable aspects of eternal redemption; cf. Psa. 103:12). On the other hand,

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one cannot even begin to comprehend—or even to imagine—the mental anguish which the unredeemed will suffer on fully realizing the enormity of their loss in being separated from God and all good forever (Rev. 6:16-17, 9:6; Matt. 8:12, 13:42, 50; 22:13, 24:51, 25:30; Luke 13:28; cf. Reb. 18:15-20). (In this connection, it should be noted especially that the word which Jesus used to designate hell was not *Hades* [the underworld, or probably the grave], but *Gebenna*, the name derived from the Valley of Hinnom outside the city of Jerusalem, the place where Molech, Chemosh, and Tammuz (Ammonite, Moabite, and Syrian deities, respectively) were worshipped (cf. 1 Ki. 11:7, 2 Chron. 28:3, 33:6; Ezek. 8:14, Jer. 7:30-34, Num. 21:29). Its sinister history caused its defilement by Josiah (2 Ki. 23:6, 10). It became the place where the refuse of the city, dead animals, and the bodies of criminals were burned; and hence was regarded as a fit symbol of the destruction of wicked souls. It is especially significant that Jesus used this name several times in his Sermon on the Mount.)

Undoubtedly the *dreadfulness* of God is a fact of His being, and an aspect of His holiness. Recognition of it would seem to be an aspect of the attitude of worship. Indeed the Preacher tells us that to “fear God and keep his commandments” is “the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13). Our God is to be *feared* in the sense that His awesomeness is to be felt at all times. All power is of God, and surely the forces that are unleashed as man discovers more and more about the physical power that is inherent in the submicroscopic world, should cause all of us to stand in awe of His righteous indignation that occasions His use of moral power (authority) to punish sin. Let it never be forgotten that *God bates sin*, and that this hatred is the source of the divine wrath which, in all justice and holiness, must inevitably be visited upon the wicked and impenitent.

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Rudolph Otto, in his remarkable book, *The Idea of the Holy*, develops the thesis that "religious dread" is essential to recognition of God's holiness and hence to genuine Christian worship. "Of modern language," he writes, "English has the words 'awe,' 'aweful,' which in their deeper and most special sense approximate closely to our meaning. The phrase, 'he stood aghast,' is also suggestive in this connexion." The unique character of religious awe, he holds, is qualitatively distinct from all 'natural' feelings. Quoting again: "Not only is the saying of Luther, that the natural man cannot fear God perfectly, correct from the standpoint of psychology, but we ought to go further and add that the natural man is quite unable even to shudder (*grauen*) or feel horror in the real sense of the word. For 'shuddering' is something more than 'natural,' ordinary fear. It implies that the mysterious is already beginning to loom before the mind, to touch the feelings. It implies the first application of a category of valuation which has no place in the everyday natural world of ordinary experience, and is possible only to a being in whom has been awakened a mental predisposition, unique in kind and different in a definite way from any 'natural' faculty. And this newly-revealed capacity, even in the crude and violent manifestations which are all it at first evinces, bears witness to a completely new function of experience and standard of valuation, belonging only to the spirit of man." This "numinous awe," Otto goes on to say, appears first as characteristic of primitives in the form of 'daemonic' dread. "Even when the worship of 'daemons' has long since reached the higher level of worship of 'gods,' these gods still retain as 'numina' something of the 'ghost' in the impress they make on the feelings of the worshipper, viz., the peculiar quality of the 'uncanny' and 'awful,' which survives with the quality of exaltedness and sublimity or is symbolized by means of it. And this element, softened though it is, does not dis-

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appear even on the highest level of all, where the worship of God is at its purest. Its disappearance would be indeed an essential loss. The 'shudder' reappears in a form ennobled beyond measure where the soul, held speechless, trembles inwardly to the furthest fibre of its being. It invades the mind mightily in Christian worship with the words: 'Holy holy, holy'; it breaks forth from the hymn of Tersteegen:

God Himself is present:
Heart, be stilled before Him:
Prostrate inwardly adore Him.

The 'shudder' has here lost its crazy and bewildering note, but not the ineffable something that holds the mind. It has become a mystical awe, and sets free as its accompaniment, reflected in self-consciousness, that 'creature-feeling' that has already been described as the feeling of personal nothingness and abasement before the awe-inspiring object directly experienced."

Otto cites as an example of the case in point the references in Scripture to the Wrath of Yahweh. The notion that this 'Wrath' is mere caprice and wilful passion, he points out, would have been emphatically rejected by the spiritually-minded men of the Old Covenant, "for to them the Wrath of God, so far from being a diminution of His Godhead, appears as a natural expression of it, an element of 'holiness' itself, and quite an indispensable one. And in this they are entirely right." Closely related to the Wrath of Yahweh, according to this author, is the Jealousy of Yahweh. "The state of mind denoted by the phrase 'being jealous *for* Yahweh' is also a numinous state of mind, in which features of the 'tremendum' pass over into the man who has experience of it." For characteristic aspects of what Otto calls the *Mysterium Tremendum*, the following are listed: the sense of Majesty (Overpower-

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ingness), the sense of *urgency* (energy), the sense of the "Wholly Other," the sense of Fascination, *i.e.*, of the numinous object. The numinous consciousness, Otto tells us, is innate; it cannot be taught; it can only be awakened. Is not all this inherent in the oft-repeated descriptive phrase, in Scripture, "The *Living God*"? (See IH, pp. 12:24: cf. also the book by Miguel de Unamuno, *The Agony of Christianity*.)

In strict harmony with this experience of *dreadfulness* in the presence of Yahweh was Jacob's experience at Bethel (as Otto points out). Gen. 28:17, Jacob says here, on awaking from his dream-vision, "How dreadful is this place: this is none other than the house of Elohim!" "This verse is very instructive for the psychology of religion. . . . The first sentence gives plainly the mental impression itself in all its immediacy, before reflection has permeated it, and before the meaning-content of the feeling itself has become clear or explicit. It connotes solely the *primal numinous awe*, which has been undoubtedly sufficient in itself in many cases to mark out 'holy' or 'sacred' places, and make of them spots of awful veneration, centres of a cult admitting a certain development. There is no need, that is, for the experient to pass on to resolve his mere impression of the eerie and awful into the idea of a 'numen', a divine power, dwelling in the 'aweful' place, still less need the *numen* become a *nomen*, a named power, or the 'nomen' become something more than a mere pronoun. Worship is possible without this further explicative process. But Jacob's second statement gives this process of explication and interpretation; it is no longer simply an expression of the actual experience." The words used by Jacob undoubtedly connote a sense of "eeriness" or "uncanniness." Cf. Moses at the Burning Bush (Exo. 3:5-7), Isaiah's Vision of Jehovah of Hosts (Isa. 6:1-5), Daniel's Vision of the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:9ff.), John's Vision of the Living One

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(Rev. 1:12-18), etc. Surely the awesomeness of our God is a realistic aspect of the very Mystery of all mysteries—the Mystery of Being! Surely the *dreadfulness* of God is a phase of His holiness, and the awareness of it a vital aspect of Christian worship! For our Christ, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, in His eternal being (John 17:5), dwells with the Heavenly Father, “in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen” (1 Tim. 6:15-16).

Lessons from Jacob's ladder

Gen. 28:10-15; cf. John 1:51

The writer of Hebrews tells us that God spoke “by divers portions and in divers manners” to holy men of old (1:1). He came down and talked personally with Adam in the primeval Garden. He conversed in some manner with Noah and the ark was built. He talked with Abraham on different occasions, and also with Isaac and Jacob. He revealed His will to Moses at the Burning Bush, and to the entire assembly of Israel from the summit of Sinai. Indeed prophecy (revelation) never came by man, but only as holy men of old spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).

We are quite familiar with the story of God's speaking to Jacob in the dream-vision which the latter experienced at Bethel: the vision of a ladder stretched from heaven to earth and angels ascending and descending upon it. This vision had wondrous significance to Jacob, of course, but in its antitypical aspect it has even more far-reaching significance for Christians. Our Lord Himself reveals fully the spiritual meaning of Jacob's vision in terms we can all understand (John 1:51).

We are familiar with the circumstances which led up to this scene at Bethel. Jacob was in flight, we might truly say, to Paddan-aram, the home of his uncle Laban, to

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avoid the vengeance threatened by his brother Esau. On the way to Mesopotamia the event occurred as recorded in the lesson context. Physically exhausted, Jacob lay down to sleep, and then to dream. The earth was his bed, the canopy of heaven his coverlet, and a stone his only pillow. Then came the vision of the celestial ladder and its angelic host, and the voice of Yahweh repeating the Promise He had made previously to Abraham and then to Isaac. Said Jacob on awaking from his dream, "This is none other than the house of God" (Bethel)! Explaining this vision in the sense suggested by our Lord Himself, what lessons do we derive from the story? What truths did Jacob's Ladder typify or suggest with reference to Christ?

1. *It typified the Person of the Savior.* (1) the top of the ladder "reached to heaven." So Christ is the spiritual Ladder who connects heaven and earth. He came from heaven and entered into human flesh, in order to purchase redemption for us. Those 'scholars' who would discredit the Virgin Birth would do well first to explain away the doctrine of His pre-existence. (Cf. John 17:4-5, 1:1-14, 8:58; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:10, 2:9-18; Phil. 2:5-11, and many other Scriptures which either assert positively, or clearly intimate, that the Son has existed with the Father from eternity and was indeed the executive Agent in the Creation, cf. Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, etc.). (2) In the beginning man transgressed the law of God, the sovereign law of the creation because it is the expression of the Sovereign Will. Absolute Justice demanded satisfaction, vindication of the Sovereign Will, else the law would have been rendered void and the Divine government discredited in the sight of all intelligent beings. There was nothing that earth had to offer, nothing within man himself, that could provide atonement (covering) for the transgression of the divine law. Hence, it became necessary for Heaven to offer its costliest Gift, in order that the majesty of the law be sustained and God's law adequately demonstrated to re-

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bellious angels and men. This offering was made: God gave His Only Begotten as the Sacrificial Lamb (John 1:29, 3:16), and "for the joy that was set before Him" the Son gave His life (Heb. 12:1-2), and the Holy Spirit has revealed the Word (cf. Col. 1:13-23, Rom. 3:25, Eph. 3:8-12, 1 Cor. 2:9-13, Heb. 10:19-22, etc.). Hence it was, that the bottom of the ladder which Jacob saw rested on the ground. Our Lord took upon Himself, not the nature of angels, but the nature of the seed of Abraham. He became Immanuel, *God with us*. (Heb. 2:14-16, Isa. 9:6, 1 Tim. 3:16, Rom. 8:3, Matt. 1:23). He was not just a son, but *the* Son, of the living God (Matt. 16:16). He was God in human flesh (John 14:9), yet while in the flesh He was subject to the frailties and temptations to which all men are subject (Matt. 4:2, 8:24; Luke 2:52; John 4:6-7, 11:35). In the strength of perfect manhood He conquered sin in the flesh, and being made perfect through suffering, He was qualified to lead many sons into glory (Heb. 2:9-10). It is on the basis of His human nature that he is given the title, "Son of man." It is on the basis of His human nature that He has qualified Himself to be our great High Priest (Heb. 2:17-18, 5:8-10, 9:24-28). John 3:13; this should read, freely translated: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man whose abode is heaven" (cf. John 1:18, 17:5). His eternal abode is heaven; while on earth, He was temporarily out of that abode, to which He has returned as our Prophet, Priest, and King (Acts 2:36, Eph. 1:20-23), the Lord's Anointed, (Matt. 3:16, 16:16, John 20:30-31, Acts 2:29-36, 10:38-43, etc.) The matchless humanity of Christ is one of the irrefutable evidences of His deity.

2. *It typified the mediatorial work of Christ.* The ladder reached from heaven to earth, thus forming a bond of union. An integral phase of Christ's incarnate life was that of reconciliation; His ministry was the ministry

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of reconciliation (Eph. 2:11-22, 2 Cor. 5:17-21). The essence of true religion is *reconciliation*, as signified by the etymology of the word, *religo*, *religare*, which means "to bind back." Christianity is the true religion in the sense that it is the authoritarian Faith, revealing to us the only One who can bind us anew to God. God gave the world to man, and man mortgaged it—and himself—to the devil (Gen. 1:27-31, 3:6-8; Rom. 7:14). Rebellion entered man's heart and separated him from his Creator. The Only Begotten (John 3:16) came to earth to offer Himself as a propitiation for sin (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2, 4:10). He came, both to satisfy the demands of Absolute Justice and so to vindicate God, and to demonstrate God's love for man in such a way as to overcome the rebellion in man's heart and woo him back to the Heavenly Father (John 3:16; 1 John 4:11, 10; Rom. 2:4). He came to heal the schism which sin had caused, to repair the ruin which Satan had incurred, and to remove the misery which iniquity had entailed (1 Cor. 15:20-28, Heb. 2:14-15).

He is our Mediator to-day, our High Priest "after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:20). There is no other name (authority) by which it is possible for us to be saved (Acts 4:12). There is no way of approach to God but through Him (John 14:6). We are no longer to pray directly to God, as did the Jew; we must address our prayers to the Father *in the name of Christ* (John 14:13-15). How, then, sinner friend, do you expect to come to the Father unless you have accepted Christ? How can you consistently ask God to answer your prayers until you have been inducted into Christ (Gal. 3:27)? I warn you solemnly that, as long as you are out of Christ, you are without a Mediator at God's right hand (1 Tim. 2:5). The Mediatorship of Christ is one of the blessings of adoption, and with it comes the privilege of prayer and personal communion with God (Rom. 8:12-17). It is indeed doubtful that anyone has the right to call God "Father"

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who has not been adopted into the family of God (Eph. 2:19-22). I realize that this statement is contrary to public opinion—but we must speak where the Bible speaks and as the Bible speaks.

A priest is one who acts as mediator between God and man: in Scripture, all Christians are said to be priests unto God (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Isa. 61:6, Rev. 1:6), thus qualified to offer up the incense of devoted hearts (1 Thess. 5:16-17, Rom. 12:1-2), through the Mediatorship of their great High Priest. In the old Tabernacle and Temple service, the high priest went once each year, on the Day of Atonement, into the Holy of Holies, with an offering of blood for himself and his people. Jesus, our High Priest, does not have to enter heaven once each year, but has entered into the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies)—heaven itself—into the tabernacle not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, *once for all*, and there, *again once for all time*, He offered His most precious blood and His perfect body as the supreme sacrifice for the sin of the world (John 1:29, 19:36; 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 2:21-25; Heb., ch. 9). There He is to-day at God's right hand (the seat of authority) acting as our Mediator (Heb. 1:1-4, 8:1-13), the Mediator of a better Covenant (Heb. 8:6-13). Satan may appear before the gates of heaven to accuse the people of God (Rev. 12:10; cf. Job 1:11, 2:5; Zech. 3:1; Luke 22:31; 1 Pet. 5:8), but our High Priest is there, at the Father's right hand, to defend them (Eph. 1:20-22). All Christians are priests unto God (1 Pet. 2:5, Rev. 5:10); Jesus is their High Priest after the order of Melchizedek (*i.e.*, a Priest-King, Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 6:20, 8:11-25; cf. Ps. 110:4), and the antitype of Jacob's dream-ladder in which heaven and earth were seen to be united *i.e.*, reconciled.

3. *It suggests that Christ is the only Way back to the Father.* There was but one Ladder in the dream; so there is but one way back to reconciliation with God. In

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Christ, God is well-pleased, and only those who are *in Christ* can be well-pleasing unto God (Col. 1:19-20, Gal. 3:27, Heb. 11:6). All offerings of obedience, prayer, and sacrifice must be in the name of Christ (Col. 3:17). We are baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 2:38); we meet for the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day *in memoriam* of His death on the Cross (Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 10:16-17, 11:23-30; Acts 2:42, 20:2). There is no propitiation available in you yourself, my sinner friend, in your home, in your lodge, in your school, or in humanity in general. (*Propitiation* is that which vindicates Divine Justice and effects reconciliation between God and man). You must come to God by the obedience of faith in Christ Jesus, humbly imploring the Heavenly Father for forgiveness and pardon, crying as did the publican of old, (Luke 18:13, 15:16-24), "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

4. *It portrays the accessibility of Christ to the sinner.* John 3:17—God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world (*i.e.*, all accountable beings)? Why not? Because the world is under divine condemnation, and has been since sin entered in, and separated man from God. The unredeemed world is under the curse of sin (Gal. 3:10, Rev. 22:3). When a person arrives at an accountable age, he is in the "kingdom of this world" (John 18:36, Rom. 12:2, 1 Cor. 1:20, 2 Cor. 4:4, Rev. 11:15, 12:10); he stands without hope either in this world or in the world to come, until he accepts and obeys the Son of God as both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36, Rom. 10:9-10). He must be "regenerated," "born again," "adopted," "transplanted" out of "the power of darkness" into "the kingdom of the Son," etc. (Col. 1:13, John 3:1-8, Tit. 3:5, Rom. 8:12-17). These are eternal truths which "the wisdom of this world," in our day as always, chooses to ignore or completely reject, in its attempt to deify man (in the name of "humanism," "naturalism," etc, and other such terms as only very learned (?) men could conjure

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up, cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25). Man today has no awareness, comparatively speaking of his own insignificance and guilt. The grace of God has little or no place in the twentieth-century "edition" of the "wisdom of this world."

Jacob, on his way to Paddan-aram, was weary and footsore when he arrived at "Bethel," heavily laden with the consciousness of his own wrongdoing, and burdened with the knowledge of his brother's estrangement and threatened vengeance. He was a pilgrim in a strange land. But the foot of this wonderful dream-ladder rested on the ground, *right at his side*. No matter if a stone were his pillow, the Ladder to heaven rested near him "on the earth," the angels of God were walking up and down on it, and Yahweh Himself was talking to him. Herein we see the *nearness* of Christ to us. We are all sinners, saved by grace, if saved at all (Eph. 2:8). We could hardly have any hope of heaven without this divine Mediator who knows our frailties and can sympathetically plead our case at the Bar of Absolute Justice. This writer is frank to say that the hope of eternal life which I cherish in my "heart of hearts," rests solely upon the offices of the divine-human Redeemer, the Anointed of God, who "emptied himself" (Phil. 2:5-11, Heb. 2:9-18), who stooped down to assume my insignificant state in the totality of being, who brought, and is continually bringing, the mercy and longsuffering of God within reach of every perishing sinner, including the forgiveness of His saints even after they have become redeemed (1 John 1:8-10: these words, it must be noted, were written to Christians).

5. *Jacob's Ladder points up the office and work of angels both in Creation and in Redemption.* Jacob saw the heavenly host ascending and descending on the Ladder. Note what Jesus said, in this connection, John 1:51. We have largely lost sight of the Biblical doctrine of angels. Angels constituted the citizenship of heaven before the worlds were created (Luke 10:18). It was the premun-

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dane rebellion of certain angels, led by the archangel Lucifer, which brought about the mass of evil with which earth has been afflicted since the seduction of man (Ezek. 28:12-17, Isa. 14:12-15, John 8:44, 2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6). Angels have existed from eternity in great numbers and with a celestial organization (1 Ki. 22:19, Psa. 68:17, Dan. 7:10, Matt. 26:53, Luke 2:13-14; Rev. 5:11, 12:7-8, etc.). In fact we are told that the worlds were arranged, and peopled by human creatures capable of redemption and immortalization, in order that the Absolute Justice of God and the fiendishness of Satan may ultimately be demonstrated to both angels and men (Eph. 3:10, 6:12). If, in the Day of Vindication, just one soul of the human family stands fully redeemed in spirit and soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23), God will be gloriously vindicated of all the false charges Satan brought against Him and the creation itself will be proved to be an indescribable triumph (Isa. 45:5-7, 46:8-11; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 19:1-10, 11-16; Rev. 20:11-15, etc.). It would seem that the justice and love of God could be demonstrated only in a world of lost sinners: that is a great mystery, of course. The simple fact is, however, that the price which man must pay for his freedom—for his being man, one might truly say—is the possibility of evil.

Angels are supernatural ethereal beings. They constitute a special creation, without sex distinctions, prior to man and superior to him in powers, endowed with superhuman knowledge, but lacking omniscience, thus filling the gap between Deity and humanity in the scale of intelligences. (Psa. 8:4-5, Mark 12:18-25, Acts 23:9, Heb. 12:22-24). In Hebrews 12:22-23, we note the distinction between "innumerable hosts of angels" and "the spirits of just men made perfect": this and other Scripture passages show us that angels are not "disembodied spirits" in fact there is no such teaching in Scripture; even the redeemed of earth will be endowed with "spiritual" bodies in the

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next life (1 Cor. 15:42-54, 2 Cor. 5:1-4). Angelic superhuman power, however, is limited in some respects (Mark 13:32).

Angels have always played a prominent role in the execution of God's eternal purpose for His creation. We meet them executing judgment on the Cities of the Plain (Gen. 19). We meet them frequently in the stories of the journeyings of the patriarchs (Gen. 16:7, ch. 18, 22:11, 24:7). We meet them on Sinai's mount communicating the law to Moses (Gal. 3:19). We meet them directing the battles of the Children of Israel on different occasions (Judg. 6:12, 2 Sam. 24:16, 2 Ki. 19:35, etc.). We hear them singing above the storied hills of old Judea on the night Christ was born (Luke 2:13-15). We meet them on the mount of temptation (Matt. 4:11), at the open sepulchre (Matt. 28:2), and on the Mount of Olives when our Lord ascended to heaven (Acts 9:1-11). We meet them comforting the saints, leading sinners to the light, delivering the apostles from prison (Acts 5:19, 8:26, 10:3, 12:7, etc.). And we are told that every little child has its guardian angel always before the throne of God (Matt. 18:10).

Angels were walking up and down the Ladder which Jacob saw. That ladder typified Christ. In all ages, redemption has been offered man through Christ, the Lord's anointed: before the Cross prospectively, since the Cross retrospectively; and in all ages, angels have been walking up and down this ladder of redemption which connects heaven and earth. Note that Jesus *said* they are ascending and descending upon the Son of man, John 1:51. The work of angels has always been that of ministering to those who inherit salvation (Heb. 1:13-14). And even in our day, as always, angels are said to rejoice every time one sinner repents and names the name of Christ (Luke 15:7). No wonder, then, that the angels, as ministering spirits, have always been vitally interested in the unfolding

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of the cosmic drama of redemption (1 Pet. 1:10-12, 1:4; Acts 26:18; Col. 1:12, etc.).

6. *Jacob's Ladder signifies the truth that Jesus exalts His faithful people to their final heavenly state*, clothed in glory and honor and immortality, and hence conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29-30), their minds united with the Mind of God in knowledge and their wills united with the will of God in love (1 Cor. 13:12-13, 1 John 3:2).

The top of Joseph's Ladder reached to heaven—a striking metaphor of what Christ will do for His saints. Man, in the beginning, was *natural*; when sin entered his heart and separated him from God, he became *unnatural*; by grace, through faith, he can become *prenatural* (a better term for redeemed man than *supernatural*). Progression in the Spiritual Life is from the Kingdom of Nature through the kingdom of Grace into the Kingdom of Glory (John 3:1-8, 2 Pet. 3:18, 1 Cor. 15:42-54, 2 Pet. 1:10-11). Heaven is truly a prepared place for a prepared people. Jesus is now engaged in the great work of bringing "many sons into glory" (Heb. 2:10). Immortality is one of the promises (rewards) of the Spiritual Life (Rom. 2:7, 8:11; Phil. 3:20-21; 2 Cor. 5:1-5, etc.). (*Immortality*—"incorruption"—is, of course, a term that has reference to the redemption of the *body*, cf. Rom. 8:23). The Christian life is constant growth (2 Pet. 1:5-11). In the end, we may stand before the Throne, redeemed in spirit and soul and body, if we continue steadfastly in the love and service of Him who bought us with His own precious blood (Acts 20:28, Phil. 3:20-21, 1 Cor. 15:51-58, 1 Thess. 4:14-18, 1 John 3:2). Our ultimate destiny, as God's saints, is the "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 3:5, 12, 21; 5:9-10).

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"Heaven is not reached at a single bound:
We build the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
And mount to the summit round by round."

That Ladder is Christ; and the rounds are these: faith, courage, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love" (2 Pet. 1:5-8). In the bliss of ultimate union with God, faith will become reality, hope will be lost in fruition, and love will be all-fulfilling (1 Cor. 13:13).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART FORTY

1. How reconcile the motive which is said to have prompted Rebekah with that which is said to have prompted Isaac to send Jacob away from home?
2. To what place did they send him and why did they send him there?
3. State the details of the blessing which Isaac pronounced on Jacob. Why is this designated "the blessing of Abraham"?
4. What prompted Esau to take another wife? Who was she, and from what parentage? Why was she chosen?
5. How many wives did Esau have? What is suggested by their names? What further demonstration of Esau's "profanity" was demonstrated by his marriages?
6. One commentator writes that Esau "did not do exactly what God required but only something like it." What reasons are given for this criticism?
7. Can Jacob be regarded as a fugitive? Explain your answer.
8. What does the term, "the place," that is, where Jacob rested, probably signify?
9. What reasons can we give for not regarding this as a "cult-place"?

GENESIS

10. What function did the stone pillow serve on which Jacob rested his head?
11. Is there any reason that we should look upon this as a "charmed" stone?
12. Would not such an interpretation be "importing" superstition into this story?
13. What is the commonsense interpretation of this use of a stone for a "head place"?
14. What did Jacob see in his dream-vision?
15. What physical conditions probably directed the course of Jacob's dream?
16. What dream-image does the word "ladder" suggest?
17. What spiritual truths are indicated by the ladder and by the angels ascending and descending on it?
18. In what way was the ladder a type of Messiah?
19. Where in the New Testament do we find this truth stated?
20. Whom did Jacob find standing by him?
21. What three general promises were renewed by Yahweh at this time?
22. What was the renewed promise with respect to Jacob's seed?
23. What did Yahweh promise with regard to Jacob personally?
24. Recapitulate all the elements of the Divine Promise. Explain how it was a renewal of the Abrahamic Promise.
25. What was Jacob's emotion on awakening from his dream?
26. What is indicated by his exclamation, "How dreadful is this place!"
27. What is indicated by his outcry, "Surely Yahweh is in this place, and I knew it not"?
28. What is indicated by his two statements, "This is none other than the house of Elohim, and this is the gate of heaven"?

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

29. Does the alleged "dreadfulness" of the place necessarily suggest any magical significance?
30. What does the word suggest as to the being of the Deity?
31. What did Jacob do with the stone head-place when he awakened?
32. Did Jacob design that this pillar be an object of worship or simply a memorial of his experience there? Give reasons for your answer.
33. What do we know about the worship of "sacred stones" among the ancient pagans?
34. What significance is there in the fact that Jacob exclaimed, "How dreadful is this *place!*" rather than this *stone*?
35. What was Jacob's purpose in pouring oil on the stone-pillar?
36. What, according to Lange, is the distinction between using the stone for a pillar and anointing the stone-pillar with oil?
37. For what various purposes was oil used among ancient peoples? From what tree did the oil come?
38. What did the anointing with oil signify generally as a religious act?
39. What did the use of the "holy anointing oil" in Old Testament times signify?
40. When and where was it used for the first time for this purpose?
41. What three classes of leaders were formally inducted into their respective offices by the ritual of the "holy anointing oil"?
42. What did this ritual point forward to with respect to the title, *Christ*. What does this title signify?
43. Why do we say that *Christ* is an authoritarian title, and not a mystical one?
44. What name did Jacob give to this place? What does the name signify?

GENESIS

45. How is the use of the related names, Luz and Bethel, to be explained?
46. Give instances for a twofold meaning of a place-name. How is this to be accounted for?
47. How does Dr. Speiser explain the problem of Luz and Bethel?
48. What is Dr. Skinner's view of the problem?
49. What is Green's appraisal of the "sanctuary" notion?
50. How is Bethel associated with the name of Abraham, with the children of Joseph, and with the acts, respectively, of Jeroboam and Josiah?
51. How does Lange account for the meaning of the name *Bethel*?
52. What is a *vow* as the term is used in Scripture. Give examples.
53. What were the two parts of Jacob's vow in this case?
54. How does Murphy explain the "if" in each of Jacob's statements?
55. How does Jamieson explain it?
56. How does Leupold interpret it?
57. What are the only two instances of the voluntary tithe prior to the time of Moses?
58. What numerological import was attached to the number *ten* in ancient times?
59. What legal (involuntary) tithes were required under the Mosaic economy?
60. What does Cornfeld tell us about the sacred pillar in patriarchal belief and practice?
61. What is the commonsense view of the purpose of Jacob's pillar?
62. Explain how Jacob's dream-vision is "a comprehensive summary of the history of the Old Covenant."
63. What reasons are offered for the view that Jacob's experience at Bethel was the turning-point in his life spiritually?
64. What reason does "C.H.M." give for his view that