

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*

GENESIS

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 Bashe-math; 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>cb. 26:34</i> | <i>cb. 36:2, 3</i> | <i>Father</i> |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Name at birth Judith, or Jehudith | = Name after marriage = Aholibamah | Daughter of Anah (Beer), Hittite, Hivite, and Horite, and Granddaughter of Zibeon, Hivite and Horite |
| Bashemath | = Adah | Daughter of Elon, Hittite |
| <i>cb. 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 bit (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 *hinneh*—"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; Psa. 23; Psa. 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;

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM 28:18

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; Psa. 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, Psa. 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. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16; Heb. 1:6-8; Psa. 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,

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM 28:20-22

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-

GENESIS

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

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

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

GENESIS

—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).

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

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 longsuffering 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

GENESIS

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-

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

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,

GENESIS

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

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

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

GENESIS

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*

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

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,

GENESIS

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,

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

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.

GENESIS

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-

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

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-

GENESIS

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

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

(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

GENESIS

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-

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

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

GENESIS

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"

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

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. Psa. 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

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

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

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-

GENESIS

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

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

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

GENESIS

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).

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

“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

JACOB: TO PADDAN-ARAM

Jacob, by his vow, was trying to "bargain" with God? What is your conclusion in regard to the motive back of this vow?

65. What reason have we for saying that Jacob's election to the Messianic Line was not arbitrary on God's part?
66. What is the derivation of the word "holiness"?
67. What do we mean by the attributes of God?
68. Where is the only Scripture in which the title "Holy Father" occurs, and to whom does it refer?
69. What does Jesus have to say about calling any man "father" in a spiritual sense? Where is His statement found in Scripture?
70. What are some of the titles which churchmen have arrogated to themselves for the purpose of clothing themselves with priestly and doctoral dignity?
71. What attributes does the Holiness of God include?
72. Why do we say that Absolute Justice is the over-all attribute of God to which even His love is subordinated? How does the doctrine of the Atonement prove this to be true?
73. Explain Otto's teaching with respect to the *dreadfulness* of God. What Scripture passages support this view?
74. Why do we say that in God absolute justice and holiness are practically identical?
75. What are the religious lessons to be learned from the story of Jacob's ladder?
76. What truths does this story reveal to us regarding the life and ministry of Christ?