

Notes from Kurt Ho. Asplundh
Shift – setting the stage

When we study the account of Jacob in the book of Genesis, we should remember that we are coming in after the story has already begun. Genesis presents a series of three Patriarchs, starting with Abram (or Abraham), then Isaac, finally, Jacob. The Heavenly Doctrine teaches that each of these figures represents a distinct aspect of the Lord.

AC 1404. Abram, who is first treated of, represents in general the Lord, and specifically the celestial man; Isaac, who is afterwards treated of, in like manner represents in general the Lord, and specifically the spiritual man; Jacob also in general represents the Lord, and specifically the natural man.

Since we are born “in the image of God,” we have similar aspects.

AC 1940. [I]n everyone there is an internal man, a rational man which is intermediate, and an external man.... It is the internal man that is his inmost from which he is man, and by which he is distinguished from brute animals, which have not such an inmost; and it is as it were the door or entrance for the Lord, that is, for what is celestial and spiritual from the Lord, into man. What is going on there cannot be comprehended by the man, because it is above all his rational, from which he thinks. That rational which appears as man's own is subject to this inmost, or to this internal man, and into this rational through the internal man there inflow from the Lord the heavenly things of love and of faith, and through this rational they inflow into the memory-knowledges that are in the external man; but the things that inflow are received in accordance with the state of each person.

[3] Now unless the rational submits itself to the Lord's goods and truths, it either suffocates, or rejects, or perverts the things that flow in; and this is still more the case when they flow into the sensuous knowledges of the memory. This is what is meant by seed falling on a highway, or upon a rocky place, or among thorns, as the Lord teaches (Matt. 13:3-7; Mark 4:3-7; Luke 8:5-7). But when the rational submits itself and believes the Lord, that is, His Word, the rational is then like good ground or earth, into which the seed falls and bears much fruit.

AC 1944. It is to be known concerning the rational man in general that it is said to receive life.... For the rational is the medium that unites the internal man with the external, and thereby perceives from the Lord what is going on in the external man, and reduces the external man to obedience, nay, elevates it from the corporeal and earthly things in which it immerses itself, and causes the man to be man, and to look to heaven to which he belongs by birth; and not, as do brute animals, solely to the earth in which he is merely a sojourner, still less to hell. These are the offices of the rational, and therefore a man cannot be said to have

any rational unless he is such that he can think in this manner; and whether the rational is coming into existence is known from his life in his use or function.

We will see, as we consider the life of Jacob that there is a conflict between the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah Esau and Jacob. This follows an earlier pattern in the Word of conflict between Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac or, more accurately, between Hagar and Sarah, the mothers of these boys.

We need to be aware also that there is a duality of good and truth at each level of Divine and human life. This is signified by the duality of heart and lungs in our body and of will and understanding in our mind. The real story in all of this is the relationship of the good and truth at each level—are they in conflict, at odds, or are they conjoined? This is the difference we want to notice.

As an introduction to the Jacob and Esau narrative, I want to review some highlights of what is perhaps the more familiar story of Ishmael and Isaac. This is the story of the regeneration of the "rational." First, see what is said about Ishmael and the rational truth he represents:

AC 1949. He shall be a wild-ass [onager] man. That this signifies rational truth.. it signifies man's rational; not however the rational in its whole complex, but only rational truth. The rational consists of good and truth, that is, of things belonging to charity and of things belonging to faith, and it is rational truth that is signified by the "wild-ass." This then is what is represented by Ishmael, and is what is described in this verse.... The man whose rational is of such a character that he is solely in truth-even though it be the truth of faith-and who is not at the same time in the good of charity, is altogether of such a character. He is a morose man, will bear nothing, is against all, regards everybody as being in falsity, is ready to rebuke, to chastise, and to punish; has no pity, and does not apply or adapt himself to others and study to bend their minds; for he looks at everything from truth, and at nothing from good. Hence it is that Ishmael was driven out, and afterwards dwelt in the wilderness,

AC 1950. It was stated above that by Abram is represented the Lord's internal man, or what is the same, His Divine celestial and spiritual; by Isaac the Lord's interior man, or His Divine rational; and by Jacob the Lord's exterior man, or His Divine natural. The words before us treat of the rational as it would be if not united to the internal, that is, to the Divine celestial and spiritual. Because this rational had its nature from the life of affection of memory-knowledges, that is, from Hagar the Egyptian, Sarai's handmaid, and because this life pertained to the external man, which had an hereditary nature from the Lord's mother that was to be fought against and expelled, therefore the rational is here described such as it would be if devoid of rational good. But after the Lord had humbled, that is, had afflicted and subjugated that hereditary nature by means of the combats of temptations and by victories, and had vivified His rational itself with Divine good, it then became "Isaac," that is, it is represented by Isaac; Ishmael, together with

Hagar his mother, being cast out of the house.

[2] All the genuine rational consists of good and truth, that is, of the celestial and the spiritual. Good, or the celestial, is its very soul or life; truth, or the spiritual, is what receives its life from this. Without life from celestial good, the rational is such as is here described, that is, it fights against all, and all fight against it. Rational good never fights, however it is assailed; because it is mild and gentle, patient and yielding; for its character is that of love and mercy. Yet although it does not fight, it conquers all, nor does it ever think about combat, or glory on account of victory; and this because it is Divine, and is safe of itself. For no evil can attack good; it cannot even continue to exist in the sphere where good is, for when this merely approaches, evil withdraws and falls back of itself; for evil is infernal, and good is heavenly. Very similar is the case with the celestial spiritual, that is, with truth from a celestial origin, or with truth which is from good, for this truth is truth that is formed by good, so that it may be called the form of good.

[3] But truth separated from good, which is here represented by Ishmael and is described in this verse, is altogether different, being like a wild-ass, and fighting against all, and all against it.... Such a life is a life of truth without good, yea, a life of faith without charity, and therefore when a man is being regenerated, this is indeed effected by means of the truth of faith, but still at the same time by means of a life of charity, which the Lord insinuates in accordance with the increments of the truth of faith.

AC 1953. The rational can by no means look into itself, still less explore its own quality: there must be something more internal that does this; and therefore when a man is able to do it-that is, perceive anything false in his rational, or any truth that shines there, and especially if he is able to perceive anything that is battling and overcoming-he may know that his ability to do this comes from the Lord's influx through the internal man. The Lord's interior man, spoken of above (n. 1926) and meant here, was that which had been conjoined with His internal man, which was Jehovah, and was therefore far above that rational. From that interior man, as in celestial light, He saw and perceived of what quality the rational would become if it were in truth alone, and not in good.

AC 1964. As in this chapter the subject treated of is man's rational, and as there is described the quality of the rational when constituted solely of truths, and also when of goods and of truths derived from goods, be it known that the rational cannot possibly be conceived and born, that is, formed, apart from knowledges [scientifica et cognitiones] but these knowledges must have use as their end, and when they have use, they have life as their end, for all life belongs to uses, because it belongs to ends, and therefore unless knowledges are learned for the sake of a life of uses, they are of no moment, because of no use.

. But when these knowledges have use as their end, they receive life from uses, yet life of such a quality as is that of the uses. They who learn knowledges in order that they may be perfected in the faith of love-for true and real faith is love to the Lord and toward the neighbor-are in the use of all uses, and receive spiritual and celestial life from the Lord....