

**Shift Notes – Week Three – day 1**  
**Notes prepared by the Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh**

This week we are looking at the account of Jacob meeting Rachel at a well in Haran and staying with Laban, Rebekah's brother. Genesis 29: 1-20.

The readings for day one explain what is meant by Jacob's arrival at the well:

AC 3761 In the supreme sense it is shown how the Lord elevated His natural even to the Divine, according to order, by ascending from external truth through the degrees to internal good; and in the representative sense, how the Lord makes new the natural of man when He regenerates him, according to a similar order.

What is this "order?" What are "the degrees" from external truth" to "internal good" through which we must ascend? Let us look back to an earlier teaching that applies here: Preparatory states are so important.

AC 2636 [2] It is known that a man cannot be regenerated until adult age, because he then for the first time has the full exercise of reason and judgment, and thus can receive good and truth from the Lord. Before he comes into this state he is being prepared by the Lord by such things being insinuated into him as may serve him as ground for receiving the seeds of good and truth; which are the many states of innocence and charity, and also the knowledges of good and truth, and the thoughts derived from them. This preparation is going on for some years before his regeneration commences.... All those things with which a man is endowed by the Lord before regeneration, and by means of which he is regenerated, are called remains,,,,

AC 3762: 2. Truths that relate to charity toward the neighbor and to love to the Lord, must be learned before it is possible for a man to be regenerated; and must also be acknowledged and believed; and insofar as they are acknowledged, believed, and ingrafted in the life, so far the man is regenerated....

AC 3768: 2 The natural man can indeed know, and also perceive, what good and truth are, but only natural and civic good and truth; but spiritual good and truth he cannot know, because this must come from revelation.... (A plug for NC ed.)

Concerning the stone on the well's mouth which signifies that the Word is closed.

AC 3769. The Word is said to be closed when it is understood solely as to the sense of the letter, and when all that is in this sense is taken for doctrine. And it is still more closed when those things are acknowledged as doctrinal things which favor the cupidities of the love of self and of the world

The collateral good represented by Laban, that is, a kind of Gentile good filled with fallacies, is important for the development of genuine good. When Jacob inquires about

Laban, asking “Hath he peace?” something deeper is meant. It’s about the good which is represented by Laban. The question is: “Is not this good from the Lord’s kingdom?” (AC 3780). The Writings elaborate on this:

AC 3778: [3] With this good the case is that first of all it serves man as a means of procuring for himself spiritual good, for it is external corporeal, and is grounded in external appearances which in themselves are fallacies of the senses. In childhood man acknowledges nothing else as truth and good, and although he is taught what internal good and truth are, still he has no other idea concerning them than a corporeal one; and because such is the first idea, therefore such good and truth are the first means by which interior truths and goods are introduced. This is the arcanum which is here represented by Jacob and Laban.

Jacob expresses surprise that the droves of sheep have been gathered to the well so early but the shepherds tell him they cannot remove the stone from the well to water the flocks until they all are gathered together. Perhaps it was physically too heavy to move, but there is an underlying reason explained in the following passage:

AC 3786 [2] [When] the church is being set up again--the doctrinal things of good and truth must be collected into a one, for it is on these that it is built.

When it speaks here of “the church being set up again,” it could mean when a new church is being established on earth. It could also mean when the church is being renewed in an individual. Whatever the case may be, the point is that the doctrinal basis for it comes from the Lord and not from our rational intelligence.

Moreover doctrinal things have a connection with and mutual respect to each other, and therefore unless they are first collected into a one, there will be a defect, and that which is lacking must be supplied by man's rational; and how blind and illusory this is in spiritual and Divine things, when its conclusions are from itself, has been abundantly shown above. For this reason there has been given to the church the Word, which contains all the doctrinal things of good and truth... That the doctrinal things of good and truth which belong to the church must needs first be together in a man before he is regenerated has been shown above. [Perhaps in AC 3768: 2-3] This then is what is signified in the internal sense by "Behold as yet the day is great, it is not time for the cattle to be gathered together."

### Shift Notes – Week Three – day 2 Gen. 29: 9-13

Rachel arrives at the well with her sheep. Jacob opens the well for her. Kisses Rachel. The love story begins:

AC 3793 ...in all things of man and of universal nature in general and particular there must be the marriage of good and truth. Without this marriage nothing is produced--all production and all effect being therefrom. This marriage of good and truth, however, does not exist in man's natural when he is born, because man alone is not born into Divine order; he does indeed possess the good of innocence and of charity, which in his earliest infancy flows in from the Lord, but there is no truth with which this good may be coupled. As he advances in years, this good which in infancy had been insinuated into him by the Lord is drawn in toward the interiors, and is there kept by the Lord, in order that it may temper the states of life which he afterwards puts on. This is the reason why without the good of his infancy and first childhood man would be worse and more fierce than any wild beast. When this good of infancy is being drawn in, evil comes in its place and enters into man's natural, and with this evil falsity couples itself, and there takes place in the man the conjunction, and as it were the marriage, of evil and falsity. In order therefore that man may be saved, he must be regenerated, and evil must be removed, and good from the Lord insinuated, and according to the good which he receives, truth is insinuated into him, for the purpose of effecting the coupling, or as it were the marriage, of good and truth.

[2] These are the things represented by Jacob, and by his two wives, Rachel and Leah. Jacob therefore now puts on the representation of the good of the natural, and Rachel the representation of truth; but as all the conjunction of truth with good is wrought by means of affection, it is the affection of truth to be coupled with good that is represented by Rachel. ....

As we progress into adult life, the Lord introduces us to a spiritual Rachel, an affection of truth. Through the beauty of this affection, we can be led to see truths from the Word that are to “marry” the good of our life and regenerate it.

What is meant by Jacob rolling away the stone at the well’s mouth?

3798. This signifies that the Lord from natural good uncovered the Word as to things interior....

They who are in the love of good can see that which is of this love, consequently the truths that are in the Word, and this in accordance with the amount and the quality of their love of good; for in this case light or intelligence flows in from heaven, that is, through heaven from the Lord. For this reason it is that as before said no one can see and acknowledge the interiors of the Word unless he is in good as to life.

### Shift Notes – Week Three – day 3

Excerpts from a sermon by Peter Buss, Sr. (*New Church Life* 1985 pp. 3-7)

We don't know what kind of man Jacob truly was, but we do know that when he met **Rachel** he found a beauty which took him out of himself and made him work for others. Before that moment at the well in Haran he was a self-centered, grasping young man. He had bargained with his brother Esau for Esau's birthright. He had joined with his mother in cheating Esau out of the blessing which was rightfully his, and had lied to his father to do it. Now he was exiled, forced to flee from his brother's wrath.

He came to the well of Haran, and the shepherds were there, but there was a great stone on the mouth of the well. Normally they waited until all the flocks had arrived and then rolled the stone aside to water the animals. But when Jacob saw **Rachel** the shepherdess, who was beautiful in form and in appearance, his heart was most deeply moved. Apparently single-handed he rolled the rock aside, and watered her nock for her, and kissed her and wept for joy.

**Rachel**, the beautiful young woman who kept her father's sheep in Haran, represents a quality hidden deep in the heart of every person on earth. It is a feeling most precious, always to be loved and treasured, because unless we are married to it we will not know the true joy of heaven. Everyone here has that spiritual **Rachel**. The Writings call it the affection of interior truth. It is the love of those truths which teach us how to love the Lord and to love the neighbor.

As we start a new school year in the Academy of the New Church we are like Jacob coming to the well of Haran. For that well represents the Word. We are here because we believe the Lord will teach us. ...

It is this that brings us to the Word, to search for meaning in life. But at first the Word is closed just as there was a great stone on the mouth of the well. If you take a book of the Word and read it you might not get an immediate idea of how to live a worthwhile, caring life. You might complain that much of what it teaches is hard to understand, and not terribly relevant to your life. You might not find its message very beautiful or stirring. Why? Because before the spiritual **Rachel** comes, the stone remains on the mouth of the well. The Word does not reveal its life-giving waters to us.

But something is going to happen to each one of us, this year and in the years to come. The Lord is going to stir us with an affection, a deep-seated love for the truth, and it will inspire us with the strength to open the Word and find meaning in it. Remember when **Rachel** the shepherdess came with the flock Jacob got up, all by himself, and rolled the rock aside so that he could water her flock. It was her presence that gave him the strength and the Inspiration.

It is a picture of a strong man removing obstructions to what his beloved wants to do, and serving her--doing what she would want to be done. It is a picture of a beautiful woman inspiring a man to serve her instead of himself and to find such happiness in doing it that he wept for joy.

That kind of joy comes when you find in yourself the affection of interior truth. The Writings tell us that this whole story is about how a person comes to understand that the Word teaches nothing except how to love the Lord and to love the neighbor. **Rachel** represents the affection for the truths which do this. When you feel that affection, a love is born which uplifts and excites you.

### Shift Notes – Week Three – day 4

Jacob stays in the house of Laban and works seven years for Rachel. This account raises the question of “reward” and its place in our life.

Jacob’s reward for working seven years was to be his marriage to Rachel. So Laban said: Shouldst thou therefore serve me for nought? Tell me, what shall be thy reward? (Gen. 29: 15)

AC 3816 "Reward" is occasionally mentioned in the Word, and in the internal sense signifies nothing else than a means of conjunction. The reason is that the angels are utterly unwilling to hear anything about a reward, as being on account of anything in them; nay, they are utterly averse to the idea of reward for any good or good action; for they know that with everyone that which is his own is nothing but evil, and that therefore whatever they do from their own would be attended with that which is contrary to reward; and that all good is from the Lord, and flows in, and this solely from mercy; thus that that is not from themselves for which they would think of reward. In fact good itself becomes not good when reward for it is thought of, for then a selfish end instantly adjoins itself. . . . The affection of good (that is, love to the Lord and love toward the neighbor) has bliss and happiness within it; these being within the affection and love itself. To do anything from affection and its bliss and to do it at the same time for the sake of reward, are things diametrically opposed to each other.

AC 3816 [2] Nevertheless reward is of service as a means of conjunction with those who have not yet been initiated; for they who are not as yet initiated in good and its affections (that is, who are not yet fully regenerated) cannot do otherwise than think about reward, because the good which they do, they do not from the affection of good, but from the affection of bliss and happiness for the sake of self; and at the same time from the fear of hell. But when a man is being regenerated, this is inverted and becomes the affection of good, and then he no longer looks to reward.

Rachel has an older sister, Leah. Both signify an affection of truth—Rachel an interior and Leah an exterior affection. More will be said about this later as the story progresses. Here Leah’s representation in contrast with Rachel’s representation is introduced briefly:

3819. The name of the elder was Leah. That this signifies the affection of external truth with its quality; and that the name of the younger was Rachel signifies the affection of internal truth with its quality, is evident from the representation of Leah, as being the affection of external truth; and of Rachel, as being the affection of internal truth (see n. 3793);

Leah is called the "elder" because external truth is first learned, and Rachel is called the "younger" because internal truth is learned afterwards,

### Shift Notes – Week Three – day 5

The *Shift* program uses day 5 to look back at some similarities between the meeting of Isaac and Rebekah with the meeting of Jacob and Rachel. You may have noticed these.

Take time to read the account of finding a wife for Isaac as recorded in Gen. 24. What are some similarities to the account of Jacob finding Rachel? Some differences? Write two or three examples below so we can talk about them.

Remember that we have come into this story in the middle. The development of Jacob follows after the accounts of the earlier patriarchs, Abram and Isaac. The lives of these earlier patriarchs signify development of more interior parts of the human mind. These come first. Someone in the group asked why we didn't start there. Perhaps we should have. At least we have this opportunity to look back. The comparison is enlightening.

AC 3077. That Rebekah represents the truth Divine that was to be conjoined with the Divine good of the rational, is evident from the several things contained in this chapter in the internal sense, and also from the fact that Isaac represents the Lord's Divine rational (n. 1893, 2066, 2083, 2630); thus **Rebekah**, who became wife to **Isaac**, represents that in the rational which was conjoined as a wife to a husband; and it may be seen that this is Divine truth. For in the same way Abraham represented the Divine good itself, and Sarah his wife the Divine truth itself conjoined with the Divine good (n. 1468, 1901, 2063, 2065, 2904); and it is the same with **Isaac** and **Rebekah**, but in the Lord's Divine Human, namely, in His rational. In general, by a husband in the Word is signified good, and by a wife its truth (n. 1468, 2517). Moreover the essence of all marriage also (that is, conjugal love) is from the Divine marriage of good and truth, and of truth and good, in the Lord (n. 2508, 2618, 2728, 2729, 2803).

AC 3074. A summary description is here given of the process in which truth appears by means of memory-knowledges, and is elevated from them out of the natural man into the rational, and becomes rational truth (in the Lord, Divine); namely, that this is effected by the influx of the Divine love into the Human, from which comes the affection of truth in which is innocence. By virtue of such an influx, the memory-knowledges in the natural man were enlightened, and the truths made their appearance that were to be elevated into the rational and there conjoined with the good of the Divine love.