

*Exposition of the Ninth Chapter
of the
Epistle to the Romans*

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Excerpt

"Jacob and Esau"

We come now to consider the statement that was made to Rebecca: *The greater shall serve the lesser*. It is quoted from Genesis xxv. 23. In the preceding verses of the ancient record, the twenty-first and twenty-second, we read: *And Isaac entreated Jahveh for his wife, because she was barren: and Jahveh was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled within her; and she said, If it be so, wherefore am I? (Wherefore is this the case that I am? The expression is one of despondency or of complaint.) And she went to inquire of Jahveh. And Jahveh said to her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other; and the greater shall serve the lesser.* There had been some "man of God" within her reach, perhaps kindred in spirit to such an eminent individual as Melchizedek. Jahveh could be consulted through him. The consultation took place, and the consequence was that an oracle was delivered to the anxious mother, having for its concluding clause the words, *the greater shall serve the lesser*.

Let it be noted, first of all, that the words which the apostle quotes from the oracle are introduced in the original Greek by the demonstrative ὅτι. It is untranslatable, unless we turn the reported words into the indirect form of address, and thus transform *shall serve* into *should serve*. *It was said to her, that the greater "should serve" the lesser.* It is better however in translating into English to merge the demonstrative and preserve the future verb *shall serve*.

Then let it be noted that the words quoted are a prediction.

Let it be further noted that the prediction of the relation of the *greater to the lesser* has no reference whatever to the persons Jacob and Esau. The mind of the seer who spoke for God to Rebecca looked far ahead of the infants concerning whom inquiry was made. He does not speak of them at all, whether considered in their infancy or in their subsequent maturity. He makes not the slightest reference to their personal peculiarities and future fortunes. But as they were to be founders of peoples, it is of these peoples only that the

oracle takes notice. Of them only does it make any assertion or mention. It begins thus: "Two nations are in thy womb." It proceeds thus: Two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels." It then advances thus: "And the one people shall be stronger than the other people." And after this comes the statement which the apostle quotes, "And the greater shall serve the lesser." There is thus no reference in any part of the oracle to the persons Jacob and Esau, considered as persons.

It follows, that it is unfortunate for scientific exegesis that, in the statement quoted by the apostle, the words *greater* and *lesser* should be replaced in so many versions by the chronological words *elder* and *younger*. For, first, it is awkward to make the chronological distinction of *elder* and *younger* in reference to peoples so truly simultaneous in ethnological origin, that they sprang from twin-patriarchs. We might speak with freedom of the elder or younger of the twins; but we cannot without the greatest awkwardness speak of the *elder* and *younger* of the nations referred to. And so, if we think and speak at all along the line of the statement of the oracle, we must think and speak, not of the patriarchs Jacob and Esau, but of the nations of the Israelites and Edomites, who descended from the patriarchs.

Then, secondly, the chronological words *elder* and *younger* are by no means the most natural rendering of the terms employed by the apostle, and by him borrowed from the Septuagint translator. The word *μείζων*, for instance, which we have translated *greater*, just means *greater*. It is the case indeed that the elder in a family of two children is generally, for a considerable number of years, the greater. And thus the relative sizes of the two children are for a time proportional measures of their ages. Of two brothers the older is "the big brother." We hence find that both in Greek and Hebrew the common word for *great* or *greater* -- *μέγας*, *μείζων*, and *בְּרִא* -- is occasionally employed as equivalent to the word *elder*. See for instance Genesis xxvii. 1, in which we read that Isaac "called to him Esau his *great* son." So reads the Hebrew. In the Septuagint the expression runs thus: "Isaac called Esau *his elder son* (τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν πρεσβύτερον).

In Genesis xxix. 16, again, we read, "And Laban had two daughters; the name of *the great one* was Leah, and the name of *the little one* was Rachel." In the Septuagint the verse runs thus: "And Laban had two daughters: the name of *the larger* (τῆς μείζονι) was Leah, and the name of *the younger* (τῆς νεωτέρᾳ) was Rachel." Manifestly in this passage the word *μείζων* is used chronologically as equivalent to *πρεσβύτερος*, *elder*. All this must be conceded. Yet it nevertheless remains true, that the radical import of *μείζων* is *greater*, not *elder*; and if, in the passage before us, it should by any translator be rendered *elder* instead of *greater*, then there should be forthcoming some good reasons, or, at all events, some one good reason, for the freedom of the rendering.

There is all the greater need for the adduction of such reasons or reason, inasmuch as the word in question, so far as its New Testament usage is concerned, occurs in other forty-four passages, and in not one of them has it ever been, or can it ever be, translated *elder*. In one of the passages (Jas. iv. 6) it is translated *more*, "*more grace*"; and in all the other instances of its occurrence it is rendered either *greater* or *greatest*. Such moreover would be the preferable rendering in James. There would need then to be some imperious reason or reasons for rendering the word *elder* in Romans ix. 12, inasmuch as, in order to obtain such a version, we have to sweep aside the otherwise invariable usage of the word throughout the New Testament.

There is imbedded in the original oracle, as it stands in Genesis, a parallel clause, to which some attention should be paid, although it has not been adduced by the apostle. The entire oracle runs thus: "Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels; and *the one people shall be stronger than the other people, or shall outstrip* (ὕπερέξει) *the other people; and the greater shall serve the lesser.*" The word *greater* thus gathers up what is implied in the expression *shall be stronger* or *shall surpass* or *outstrip*; and hence the evidence seems irrefragable that we should hold to the ordinary and radical import of the term in question, and render the oracular words thus, *the greater shall serve the lesser*, and not thus, *the elder shall serve the younger*.

This conclusion is fortified when we take into account that the word in Hebrew which is rendered *μείζων* in the Septuagint version, but *elder* in our public English translation, is

בָּרַךְ, which occurs in the Old Testament Scriptures more than five hundred times in all. That is certainly a sufficient amplitude of field to admit of very various renderings. But yet in not one instance of the word's occurrence, with the single exception of Genesis xxv. 23, is it ever translated *elder*. It is very frequently rendered *great*, frequently *many*, and sometimes *mighty*.

There is still one other fountain of evidence from which we may draw water. Esau is represented as Isaac's favourite twin, on whom he intended to confer his principal blessing. (See Gen. xxv. 28; xxvii. 1-4, 18-41.) For such preference we may cease to wonder when we take into consideration the simple statements of the text in reference to the simple tastes of the patriarch. But we could never account for it on any principle of simplicity, or on any other principle creditable to the patriarch, if we shall suppose that the oracle made it plain, that the pre-eminence was divinely intended to be put past the elder and made sure to the younger. We cannot account for Isaac's strong predilection except on the assumption that the oracle left it entirely indeterminate which of the patriarch's twins was to be the father of the messianic seed, and to which of the two was to be assigned the first link in that genealogy that was to issue in the *greater* and *stronger* people, who yet were to occupy, in relation to the other people, a position of subordination and servitude.

If, contrariwise, we should assume that the oracle made known to Rebecca and Isaac which of the two children was to be blessed with the messianic prerogative; and if in particular we shall still further assume, with the great sixteenth century theologians, both supralapsarian and sublapsarian, such as Calvin, Beza, John Knox, S. Rutherford, Perkins, William Twisse,--great eagles all, who soared for ever toward absolute unconditionalism in Divine decrees,--if with these theologians we shall assume that the oracular words quoted by the apostle were quoted just because they represent the reality of unconditional election to eternal life, in the one case, and equally unconditional reprobation to eternal death, in the other, as taking effect in the persons of the twins: then it is utterly inconceivable how Isaac, on the one hand, could set himself in antagonism to God's revealed decrees, and how Rebecca, on the other, could have had heart and hardness enough to nurse the little reprobate that was laid upon her lap.

We *must*, it would appear, come to the conclusion that it was not said to Rebecca, *the "elder" shall serve the "younger."* It was said, *the "greater" shall serve the "lesser";* and it was left entirely indeterminate which of the two peoples was to be the greater and stronger, and which was to be the lesser and weaker.

One conclusion from the whole case is incontrovertible: pure patriarchal descent did not suffice to insure the enjoyment of high messianic prerogative. Here were twins, the children of Rebecca by her husband, the patriarch Isaac; and their respective descendants were to be separated into distinct peoples, and the distinct peoples were by no means to be on an equality in respect of messianic and theocratic privileges. "One was taken, and the other was left." They were "made to differ." Full responsibility indeed was left intact on either line. Light sufficient, and opportunities sufficient, were secured to both peoples. The gospel was for all, and, in one way or another, uttered forth its voice to all. The gospel is "preached to every creature under heaven."¹

But the high peculiar prerogatives consisting of and connected with the birth and personal ministry of the Messiah were necessarily restricted to only one of the peoples. And hence the demonstration was complete that pure patriarchal descent was not sufficient to insure the enjoyment, within the inner court of God's grace, of the highest spiritual prerogatives. How could it, when it was not even sufficient to secure for both the Edomites and the Israelites the enjoyment of the various outward prerogatives which are to be found in the outer court of the Divine favour?

Meyer, while perceiving that the oracle quoted by the apostle should be rendered, "The *greater* shall serve the *lesser*," and not "the *elder* shall serve the *younger*," and while admitting that the reference, so far as Genesis is concerned, is, not to two individuals, but to two nations, yet strangely supposes that, so far as Romans is concerned, the apostle has in view, not the two nations, but only the two individuals; and he caps this supposition with another, that the words *greater* and *lesser* have reference to the size of the respective twins when born, Esau being the *larger* and Jacob the *smaller* child. Such suppositions

1 See Col. i. 23, and consider John Goodwin's *Pagan's Debt and Dowry*. (See Appendix III.)

are purely conjectural, in the *first* place. And, in the *second* place, they embarrass the interpretation of the expression "shall serve"; for, as a matter of fact, Esau as an individual never served Jacob. And then, in the *third* place, they render the predilection of Isaac unaccountable.

The Edomites--one of the two peoples that were seminally in Rebecca's womb--grew rapidly into might and greatness, even in Esau's lifetime; and for a considerable period afterwards they outstripped the Israelites in national development. In bulk and force and military equipment they shot far ahead. When the Israelites were on their journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land, Moses sent envoys from Kadesh to the king of Edom, saying fraternally, "Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that has befallen us. . . . Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country. We will not pass through the fields or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's highway, we will not turn to the right hand or to the left, until we have passed thy borders. *And Edom said to him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword.*" Moses re-urged his touching fraternal appeal; but in vain. Edom's army was "mobilised," and he came out against his brother Israel "with much people and with a strong hand: . . . therefore Israel turned away from him." (Num. xx. 14-21.) Edom was thus *greater* and *stronger* than Israel.

But, later on, Saul fought against the Edomites, and "vexed" them. (1 Sam. xiv. 47.) And David at length conquered them, and reduced them to a tributary condition. "He put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, *and all they of Edom became David's servants.*" (2 Sam. viii. 14.) The tables were thus turned. Israel had at length become *greater* and *stronger*: and the people that had formerly been greater and stronger were made to "serve" the people that [had] been lesser and weaker.

In the midst of the feuds however that harassed and fettered the subdivided tribes of Israel, the Edomites "revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves: so Joram went over to Zair, and all the chariots with him: and he rose by night, and smote the Edomites who compassed him about, and the captains of the chariots: and the people fled to their tents." (2 Kings viii. 20, 21.) Their effort to regain their national independence failed. Their state of "servitude" remained. "Yet," adds the annalist, "Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day." (2 Kings viii. 22.) But not with permanent success. Amaziah re-subjugated them. "He slew of Edom in the Valley of Salt ten thousand, and took Selah (or Petra) by war." (2 Kings xiv. 7; 2 Chron. xxv. 11, 12.) But they rallied yet again, and "smote Judah, and carried away captives" (2 Chron. xxviii. 17); until finally John Hyrcanus completely broke, and for ever, the back of their national independence, slaying many and causing the remainder to be circumcised, and to merge their nationality in the people that had once been *lesser* and *weaker*. (JOSEPHUS: *Antiq.* xiii. 9, 1.)

The struggles of the two peoples were in some miniature mode and degree prefigured in the peculiar experiences of Rebecca ere the children were born. Struggles seem to be

portended. And the people who at first were greater and stronger became at last the servants of the people who were smaller and weaker.

When we expand the specific expression "serve" into some such generic idea as is represented by the word *inferior*, then we see that all along from the respective incorporations of the two nationalities to the final mergence of the *greater* nation in the *lesser*, there was pure patriarchal descent, and yet no theocratic and messianic prerogative on the part of the children of Esau. This was demonstration that to lean upon pure patriarchal descent for the highest theocratic and messianic privileges was to lean on an utterly broken arm. Therein was manifested the infatuation of the apostle's countrymen.

Ver. 13. *As it stands written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.*²

The quoted apophthegm occurs in the book of Malachi i. 2, 3. It is an apophthegm which seemed to the apostle to run parallel with the oracle that had been addressed to Rebecca. It is parallel; but it is more explicit than the oracle. The oracle does not indicate which of the two peoples was to be the greater and which the lesser. But the prophet's apophthegm lifts the veil of uncertainty, and shows most unmistakably which of the two peoples was in actual inferiority to the other, so far as privilege was concerned. The two utterances therefore, while characterised by noteworthy variations, are in full accord with each other; and thus there was good reason for introducing the apophthegm after the manner of making a phraseological equation, *as it stands written*.

As in the case of the oracle, there is no reference in the apophthegm to the man Jacob and the man Esau. The words *Jacob* and *Esau* are used patronymically to denote the respective peoples that derived their origin from the twin patriarchs. Such patronymical application of the two proper names is quite in accordance with the usage of the prophetic Scriptures. Thus, for example, we read that "Balaam took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, *curse me Jacob*, and come, *defy Israel*. . . . Who can count *the dust of Jacob*, and the number of the fourth part of *Israel*? . . . Surely there is no enchantment against *Jacob*, neither is there any divination against *Israel*; according to this time it shall be said of *Jacob* and of *Israel*, What hath God wrought! Behold, *the people* shall rise up as a great lion, and lift himself up as a young lion. . . . How goodly are thy tents, *O Jacob*, and thy tabernacles, *O Israel!*" (Num. xxiii. 7, 10, 23, 24; xxiv. 5.) These instances of the patronymical use of the name *Jacob* are but specimens of a very common occurrence.

And so with the word *Esau* or *Edom*. It too, in its lesser sphere of reference, is frequently used to denote, not the man, but the people who were descended from him; as for instance in Jeremiah xlix. 10: "I have made *Esau* bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours,

² Our inquiry here must be "cautelous, and slow of foot, lest we run violently into error."--HUMPHREY SYDENHAM: *Jacob and Esau, Election and Reprobation, Opened and Discovered*, p. 5. (1627.)

and he is not." It is admittedly not the man *Esau* who is here referred to; it is the people descended from the man.

So is it in the passage of Malachi that is quoted in Romans ix. 13. It would not be an appropriate quotation on the part of the apostle, were it not the case that the reference is to *the people Esau*, as distinguished from the patriarchal man. For the apophthegm is adduced in corroboration of the oracle that goes immediately before. And in that oracle, as by the aid of a succession of lights, the reference is most emphatically to two *nations* or *peoples*, one the greater and stronger, and the other the lesser and weaker.

And then when we turn from the context of the quotation in Romans ix. 12 to the context of the original apophthegm in Malachi i. 2, 3, we find that the reference is still incontrovertibly to the two peoples as distinguished from the two patriarchs. The prophet's words run thus: "The burden of the word of the Lord to *Israel* by Malachi,"--to *Israel*, mark; not to *the man Israel* or *Jacob*, but to *the people who sprang from the man*, the people who were living in the time of the prophet:--"I have loved you, saith the Lord."

The Lord desired to evoke the gratitude of the people by impressing upon them the conviction that they had been the objects of very distinguishing favour. He had, through a long series of dispensations, "loved" them--seeking to woo their attachment and devotion. He sought it, still more for their sakes than for His own. He was utterly unselfish in His desires; but He knew that His gracious presence was far more essential to *them* than was their reverential and loyal presence to *Him*. He could do without them; but how could they do without Him? "Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us?" They lost sight of the blessings they enjoyed, or at least of the Divine blessing that was in the heart of the advantages they enjoyed; and they were "unthankful." They brooded over their personal trials and national reverses, and failed, or ceased, to trace in their condition the operation of the great beneficent Hand. They said to God, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?"

The Lord answered their petulant question in argumentative manner, thus: "(Is) not Esau Jacob's brother?" In our national English version, as in the Septuagint and Vulgate, the supplemented substantive verb is given in the past tense: "(Was) not Esau Jacob's brother?" That however is a mistaken supplement, and unhappily diverts the thought from the patronymical to the patriarchal Esau and Jacob. The contents of verses 3, 4, and 5, as well as the exigences of the context in Romans, make it evident that the reference, and the exclusive reference, is to the patronymical Esau and Jacob. Hence we should, with Luther, supply the substantive verb *is*, and not *was*: "(Is) not Esau Jacob's brother?" "Supply *is*," says Grotius. The meaning is, he adds, "Do not the Edomites and the Israelites alike derive their origin from Abraham and Isaac?"

The people Esau or Edom was thus brother to the people Jacob. The two peoples, in consequence of the uterine relation of the patriarchs from whose loins they respectively sprang, were "brothers." So Obadiah represents them. Looking into the future he says: "Thy mighty men, O Teman" (one of the cities of Edom), "shall be dismayed, to the end

that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter. For thy *violence against thy 'brother' Jacob*, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever." The people Esau had been shamelessly devoid of sympathy for their brother Jacob in the day of the Babylonian invasions. The prophet proceeds: "In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive the forces of Jacob, and foreigners entered into his gate, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them." Esau was far indeed from acting a brother's part to his brother Jacob in the time of those invasions that terminated so humiliatingly in Jacob's captivity.

Amos makes use of the same fraternal relationship to expose the aggravated criminality of Esau: "Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Edom and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; (1) *because he did pursue his 'brother' with the sword*, (2) and did cast off all pity, (3) and his anger did tear perpetually, (4) and he kept his wrath for ever."

In the light of these passages from Obadiah and Amos, we see clearly the meaning of the words in Malachi, "*Is not Esau Jacob's 'brother'?*" saith the Lord." The question could only be answered in the affirmative. But the prophet, assuming that the intimate relationship of the two peoples was too incontrovertible to require formal affirmation, proceeds to say, giving human voice to the self-consciousness of God, "Yet I have loved Jacob, and I have hated Esau."

Note the perfect tenses. They convey the idea that the *love* and *hatred* specified were carried down in thought till the time of the affirmation of the two contrary poles of treatment. Slightly varying the standpoint of representation, we might render the verbs, after the manner of the Septuagint translator, aoristically: "*I loved Jacob, and Esau I hated*,"--thus pointing backward to some indeterminate time when the twofold mode of treatment was meted out to the two peoples. The apostle adopts the Septuagint translation, "Jacob I loved, and Esau I hated"; so that, when expounding Romans, we are to conceive of the Divine eye looking through the eyes of the prophet, and fixing its gaze upon some historical fact of desolation--not determinately specified,--which had swept with "the besom of destruction" the land of Idumæa. The desolation had been so complete, that it was in truth the beginning of a very bitter end, when, as already stated, the victorious army of the Macabbæan John Hyrcanus compelled the miserable remnant of the people to merge their nationality in that of the Hebrews, and thus to submit to their effacement from the map of the nations of the world. (JOSEPHUS: *Antiq.* xiii. 9, 1.)

Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. Sebastian Münster, the illustrious Hebraist, thus remarks on the expression: "This was said by God, that He might show that He had conferred far greater benefits upon the people of Israel than upon the Edomites or other nations; and yet, so ungrateful were those Israelites, that they did not acknowledge the indulgence of their Father and the grace of their Lord."

The expression, *I loved Jacob, or Israel*, brings into view such treatment of the Hebrews

as might have been expected on the part of God, considered as a Master and a Father. (See Mal. i. 6.) Masters in general will be disposed to do more in behalf of their own servants than for others in the same sphere of life who are not related to them by the bond of kindly ministry. A father in like manner will in general be ready to do for the benefit of his son more than he would feel himself inclined or obliged to do in behalf of others in corresponding circumstances, but yet not his children. Israel was God's servant. Israel was God's son. God had peculiar regard to that people. He was peculiarly beneficent toward them. He favoured them. He "loved" them. Such is the bright side of the picture. Let us turn round to the side of the dark shadow.

But I hated Esau, or Edom. The expression is an intentional phraseological foil, placed as it is and where it is for the purpose of lending, by means of its lurid background of representation, intensity of lustre to the preceding affirmation. It was not intended to teach that God was malevolent to Edom. Still less was it meant to convey the idea of unconditional reprobation to a doom of inconceivably dreadful and everlasting misery. The phrase, along with the antithetic expression, has no reference at all to the final doom or spiritual destiny of individuals. If it had, we should be constrained to have hard thoughts of the prophet, or perhaps of the infinite Being who inspired him; as also to maintain, that when it is said of the Hebrew people, "Jacob I loved," there was the assurance, in relation to the Jews, of their unconditional election to everlasting bliss. But such election, if conceived of as involving, as its ethical effect, sanctification, could not be reconciled with the fire of condemnatory criticism that is volleyed forth from multitudes of criminatory utterances throughout the body of the prophecy.

What then is meant by the expression, *Esau I hated*? Some light is thrown upon the strong verb by such passages as these: "No man can serve two masters; for either he will *hate* the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other." (Matt. vi. 24.) "If any man come to Me, and *hate* not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." (Luke xiv. 26.) "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that *hateth* his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." (John xii. 25.) In these statements there is certainly no intention of conveying an idea of malice by means of the strong word. The language is intentionally intense. There is in it, just as in the Saviour's remark regarding the camel and the eye of a needle, something of bold hyperbolism. Such hyperbolisms are common, and rife indeed, both in the language of literature and in the language of everyday life. They give piquancy to speech, and are relished by "all the world."

So when it is said, *but Esau I hated*, the idea is comparative, not absolute; and there is really more in the representation than in the reality, just because a phraseological foil was wanted. The idea is, that in the treatment accorded to the Edomites there was the conspicuous absence of all those elements of mercy, favour, and forgiveness, which distinguished the Divine treatment of the Hebrews and vindicated the expression, *Jacob I loved*. Taking the diversity of treatment into account, the Edomites might be said to be *hated*. They might be, they were, they are thus represented; for in truth there was now

no room for national forgiveness to Edom. The cup of their iniquity they had themselves filled to the brim, and it was now time that they should be compelled to drain to its dregs the cup of merited retribution.

It was otherwise with Jacob in the days of the prophet. God, although greatly provoked, had not dealt with that people according to their desert. In wrath deserved He had remembered mercy. Through the influence of Ezra and Nehemiah over the mighty kings of Babylon, many families were permitted and encouraged to return to the desolated city. The streets were restored. The walls were rebuilt. The temple was reconstructed, and an appreciable amount of prosperity once more rolled over the dilapidated city and the devastated land. "God loved Jacob"; for, with all the waywardness and faithlessness of the peculiar people, they were still, in virtue of their messianic destination, like a peculiar treasure to God. They were the casket that contained the heavenly jewel; and for the jewel's sake the casket was carefully kept and sedulously guarded. "God loved Jacob."

It was otherwise with Edom. Like many surrounding peoples, they had a time of merciful visitation. Their local habitation had many advantages; they were blessed in "the fatness of the earth," and by "the dew of heaven from above." Beyond most other peoples, they were sheltered within the muniton of rocks; and had they been willing to be good, they might have had a constant flow and flood of security and prosperity. But they became high-minded, aggressive, selfish, morally rank to heaven with rottenness, and were involved at last in the overflow of the Babylonian devastation. They were swept into captivity, and their country turned into a wilderness. "Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith Jehovah of hosts, They may build, but I will throw down; and all that pass by shall call them, *The land of wickedness*, and *The people against whom Jehovah hath indignation for ever*." The prophet continues, addressing Jacob, "And your eyes shall see all this, and ye shall say, Jehovah will be magnified from within the border of Israel."

We have additional evidence in these statements of the prophet's reference to the peoples *Jacob and Esau*, as distinguished from the individual persons. Edom saith, "We are impoverished," "we will return," "they shall build," "the *people* against whom Jehovah hath indignation for ever." "Ye shall say, The Lord will be magnified from within the border of Israel."

It is astonishing that, in the face of such accumulated evidence, Meyer can yet say, "Just like Paul, the prophet himself intends by Jacob and Esau, not the two nations Israel and Edom, but *the persons of the two brothers*." "Paul," says Fritzsche, "in quoting the words of Malachi, takes no account of the contextual statement. All that he means is this: that Jacob, before his birth, was embraced in the love of God, and that Esau, before he saw the light of day, was the object of the Divine hate." "It is," says Philippi, "the individuals Jacob and Esau who are meant by the prophet as well as by the apostle." "The aoristic verbs *loved* and *hated* refer, in Paul's conception, to the time before the birth of the twin-brothers."

Others, who cannot shut their eyes to the fact that the peoples are expressly designated, contend or assume that the individuals are meant, with the peoples included, or that the peoples are meant with the individuals included. "The prophet speaks," says Tholuck, "of the patriarch fathers and the peoples as a unity." "The passage," says Hodge, "relates to the descendants of Jacob and Esau, and to the individuals themselves. The favour shown to the posterity of the one, and withheld from that of the other, being founded on the distinction originally made between the two brothers."

But such an amalgamation of references is entirely at variance with the representations both of the prophet and of the apostle. Baumgarten-Crusius correctly says, "The reference is to the descendants, not to the patriarch-sires." The apostle's argument is irrefragable. Pure patriarchal descent on the part of the Israelites was utterly insufficient to insure to them those highest messianic blessings which are everlasting; for it was utterly insufficient, on the part of the Edomites, to secure to them those lower and temporary prerogatives, which were conferred on the Hebrews till the fulness of the time.

Pages 70-94 from the section on verses 10-13 of *Exposition of the Ninth Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans* by James Morison (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1888). **Note:** The text has not been modified, except that long paragraphs have been divided.