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Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10

Read 7, 8, and 9 for a theology of the Holy Spirit.

Read 10 for an introduction to the enneagram of personality types as a religious method for exploring the fall into personality identification.

Jacob's Dream

Seeing the Soul as a Ramp from Here to Eternity

A Christian Inquiry into Spirit Realization

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Introduction: Jacob's Dream

The stories of Jacob are among the most intriguing and beloved stories of the Bible. They are stories that were written and rewritten. Some elements may be older than 1000 BCE. Other elements may be as young as 500 BCE. The charm of these stories is that Jacob is a very ordinary figure who struggles with all the mundane issues of sibling rivalry, survival, marriage, work, intrigue and counter-intrigue, cheating and being cheated, enmity and reconciliation, fear and courage, and more.

The overall Jacob narrative is enriched and made meaningful by Jacob's two life-changing encounters with "Divine Reality." The second of these encounters takes place when Jacob – as a mature man with two wives, many children, and considerable wealth – is faced with meeting his estranged brother, Esau, and 400 men with him. This is the story of the all-night wrestling match with the nameless angel who forces Jacob to confess his name, Jacob, after which he is given a new name, Israel.

The first divine encounter takes place when Jacob is a very young man, perhaps 18, leaving home for the first time. With help from his mother, Rebecca, he is fleeing for his life from his father, Isaac, and his brother, Esau, whom he has profoundly angered. He is traveling alone, with only what he can carry, toward the home of his uncle, Laban. The first night out he lays down to sleep on the ground with a rock for a pillow. He dreams about a ladder or staircase (ramp might be a better translation) extending from the place where he is sleeping all the way up to heaven. And angels are moving up and down this ramp.

This dream has a profound effect on Jacob. My interpretation is that Jacob sees his own soul – sees that the soul of every human being is a ramp from here to Eternity with angels moving up and down upon it. In this book I am going to say what I mean by "soul," by "Eternity," by "angels," by "angels moving down," and by "angels moving up." I am going to deal with the fact that Jacob was dreaming in the imagery of the ancient two-story metaphor with earth below and heaven above. I am going to explain why we don't have to dream in two-story, up-and-down imagery anymore, and how some fresh religious metaphors can point to the same experiences.

Most important of all, I am going to explore why seeing one's true soul in such a dream or vision might be a life-changing experience that could change an anxious young man facing an unfamiliar future into a person of confidence who grapples with a conniving uncle, works 14 years to win the woman of his desire, wrestles until blessed by an unknown angelic presence, reconciles with an estranged brother, and becomes a Spirit ancestor of descendants as numerous as the grains of sand on the sea shore.