

REAL PRESENCE

eats not "seemingly" but "with keen dispatch / Of real hunger" (5.434-36) and explains that angelkind and humankind are close kin, made "of one first matter all" (5.471). Raphael, a bard himself, is an appropriate choice for the blind poet much concerned with marriage, with the relationship of heaven and earth, and with the process of purging "with sovraign eyesalve that intellectual ray which God hath planted in us" (*Of Reformation Touching Church Discipline in England* [1641], 37).

Raphael receives brief mention from Smart (*Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, 24), Keats ("Addressed to the Same" [i.e., Haydon], 8), Melville (*Moby-Dick*, pref. to the preliminary Extracts), and Yeats (*Unicorn*, act 1). James Bridie's modern stage version of Tobit, *Tobias and the Angel*, went through thirty-eight printings between 1931 and 1961. Raphael figures, also, in the contemporary fantasy trilogy by R. A. MacAvoy, *Damiano*, *Damiano's Lute*, and *Rafael*.

See also ANGEL; ASMODEUS; TOBIT AND TOBIAS.

Bibliography. Hoenig, S. B. "Raphael." *IDB* 4.12; Rosenblatt, J. "Celestial Entertainment in Eden: Book V of *Paradise Lost*." *HTR* 62 (1969), 411-27; Sherry, B. "Milton's Raphael and the Legend of Tobias." *JEGP* 78 (1979), 227-40; Swaim, K. M. *Before and After the Fall: Contrasting Modes in "Paradise Lost"* (1986). DIANE MCCOLLEY

REAL PRESENCE See EUCHARIST; TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

REBEKAH Daughter of Bethuel of Paddan-aram (Gen. 22:23) and sister of Laban (Gen. 24:29), Rebekah is principally noteworthy as the wife of Isaac (Gen. 24:1-67) and mother of Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25:21-26). Rebekah aided the younger son in obtaining Isaac's paternal blessing by deception (Gen. 27:1-45). She is mentioned by Paul (Rom. 9:10), along with Sarah, as one through whom God chose to fulfill the promise to Abraham. St. Clement (*Paedagogus*) and St. Ambrose (*De Abraham*) comment on her being adorned for marriage, not as a sign that brides should obtain material wealth, but that in her holy marriage she is adorned with heavenly virtues. As a bride adorned she is a figure of Holy Church, Isaac being a type of Christ. Rabanus Maurus likewise glosses Rebekah as "*sancta Ecclesia*" and comments extensively on her patience and virtue (PL 107.569-91). Her watering of the camels and Isaac's servant with her pitcher represents Ecclesia's dispensing of wisdom. In directing Isaac's blessing to Jacob she is a figure of the Holy Spirit guiding God the Father; Jacob represents humankind in the care of Ecclesia, while Esau is humankind in service to the devil (*Comm. in Genesim*, 3.4.13). In Albertano's *Liber Consolationis* Rebekah appears with Esther, Abigail, and Judith as an exemplary

REBEKAH

for *sapientia*, Sarah for *longaevitas et fidelitas*, and Rachel for *amabilitas*.

On the matter of the deception of Isaac by Jacob when coached by Rebekah, biblical commentators from early times through the 16th cent. tended to sanction Rebekah's conduct. For St. John Chrysostom, her act was praiseworthy because Rebekah did it "in obedience to the divine oracle" of 25:23. For Ambrose, "the mystery overweighed the tie of affection" in the mind of the pious mother; in "consecrating Jacob to be the firstborn" she was making a sacrifice which she knew would separate him from herself. St. John Cassian, who classifies the deception with Rahab's "lie" in reporting to the spies and Hushai's tricking of Absalom, says that Jacob received "gains of blessing and righteousness because he was not afraid to acquiesce in his mother's instigation" since the saints have sometimes with a right purpose used dissimulation as an allowable remedy for a deadly disease ("On Making Promises"). Cassian implies that the disease in Isaac's case was his shortsighted preference for a hunter's food. St. Augustine, however, argues that the deception was "not a lie," a view approved and repeated by St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theol.* 2-2.110.3): "Jacob's assertion that he was Esau, Isaac's firstborn, was spoken in a mystical sense because, to wit, the latter's birthright was due to him by right: and he made use of this mode of speech being moved by the spirit of prophecy, in order to signify a mystery." Aquinas insists that "it is not a lie to do or say a thing figuratively."

Modern commentators are less sympathetic with the "figurative" approach. The phrase "stolen blessing" is often used. The annotator of *The Oxford Annotated Bible*, RSV (1962) gives Gen. 27 the headline "Jacob cheats Esau" and points to the "outright lying" in v. 20. Similarly, D. F. Payne (in *The New Layman's Bible Commentary* [1979]) writes: "Jacob's deceit was perhaps less blameworthy than his mother's, but he compounded a direct lie (v. 19) with the near-blasphemous 'The Lord your God helped me to find it'" (154). J. S. Ackerman, although observing that "Jacob is here acting to retain the birthright which had been forfeited to him," feels sympathy for "the two broken men who have been duped by a cruel ploy." Bruce Vawter, C.M., terms Rebekah a "possessive unscrupulous mother" and declares that "nothing can excuse the means" used by Jacob (*A Path Through Genesis* [1956], 194, 196). A particularly outspoken detractor of Rebekah is W. R. Bowie (*The Interpreter's Bible* [1952]), who argues: "Her love for Jacob was so fiercely jealous that it broke loose from any larger loyalty. . . . Blind to anything or anybody that might get hurt . . . she corrupted Jacob as she tried to cherish him" (1.668).

Popular tradition reflects a similarly mixed response to Rebekah's character and role in the OT. Because of her deception and willfulness, her name becomes synony-

as a sign that she is God's instrument. Chaucer puns on "rebekke: shrew" and "rebekke: God's instrument" in his *Friar's Tale*. In *The Clerk's Tale* he develops an elaborate analogue to Rebekah in the character of Griselde, who patiently serves water from the well, becomes her lord's bride, and is adorned in her translation to a higher office. Analogies are sometimes drawn between Rebekah's serving at the well and the account in John 4 of the Woman of Samaria serving Jesus at the well of Jacob (Augustine, in his Homilies on the Gospel of John, suggests that Christ becomes her sixth husband, the perfect spiritual marriage after the sensual first five). Chaucer draws upon this conflation when he makes his "rebekke" Wife of Bath compare herself and her five husbands to the Woman of Samaria (though in her perceptions she is quite the opposite), then contrasts her to the Rebekah-like Griselde in *The Clerk's Tale*.

In the fragmentary play of Isaac in the Towneley cycle Rebekah appears as a wise counselor to Isaac, urging him to send Jacob to "Mesopotamea" that he might marry appropriately rather than take a heathen bride as Esau did. She is given the play's last words as she solicitously urges her departing son to "send me glad tythyngis." Rebekah enjoys an even more prominent role in the comic interlude *Jacob and Esau* (ca. 1557), where she argues (in asides) with Isaac, piously and cleverly convinces Jacob of his duty in stealing the birthright, then blunts Esau's anger after Jacob has duped him. The Prologue notes Paul's citation of Rebekah, as well as the Genesis account, as demonstration that God chooses whom he will.

In medieval art Rebekah is usually depicted as the exemplary bride at the well, serving the camels of Isaac's slave, as the crafty servant of God hiding in the background while Jacob obtains the blessing, or as the bride of Christ (Ecclesia) holding her pitcher or adorned with bracelets and earrings.

After the medieval period Rebekah virtually disappears as a reference or subject in English literature. She enjoys an attractive role in Henry Vaughan's "Isaac's Marriage" (ca. 1650), a poem in *Silex Scintillans* based on Gen. 24:63, where Isaac, at eventide, awaits the arrival of his bride — that "lovely object of thy thought," chaste, with virginal blushes and fears, bearing her pitcher, "O sweet, divine simplicity." But no mention of her is made in Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, or the metaphysical poets of the 17th cent. She is given one line in Dryden's "To my Honour'd Kinsman, John Driden," where Driden, a second son, is likened to "Rebecca's Heir" (43). She is mentioned in Pope's paraphrase of Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*, in a list of virtuous women based on Albertano, but credit for the reference there goes to Chaucer.

Matthew Arnold mentions her in "The Future," where her innocence is contrasted with the evils of industrial society —

Now reads in her bosom as clear
As Rebekah read, when she sate
At eve by the palm-shaded well?
Who guards in her breast
As deep, as pellucid a spring
Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?

But in the 19th cent. she mainly contributes a name, perhaps with erotic overtones, as in Coleridge's "Black ey'd Rebecca," the epitome of woman's wiles in "The Wills of the Wisp," and especially in Scott's *Ivanhoe*, with its beautiful Jewess heroine, burlesqued by Thackeray in *Rebecca and Rowena*. (She also appears as Pendennis's mare, in Thackeray's novel *Pendennis*, so named after the hero's favorite heroine in fiction!) Elsewhere Thackeray uses a pun which may reflect earlier literary associations of Rebekah and rebekke when his Becky Sharp assumes a more stylish name, Madame Rebecque, in *Vanity Fair*. Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*, from which Hitchcock made his haunting movie, derives its dark, romantic shades from Scott and the Gothic novel tradition.

See also ESAU; ISAAC; JACOB.

RUSSELL A. PECK

RECHABITES The Rechabites were a pietistic group of Israelites, perhaps originally Kenite converts who joined Israel during the wilderness wanderings (1 Chron. 2:55; cf. Num. 10:29-32), and may have been, as their name suggests (*rakab* = "rider" or "charioteer"), horsemen. Jehonadab the Rechabite assisted Jehu in destroying King Ahab's Baal altars (2 Kings 10:15-23). In Jer. 35:2-18 the Rechabites are said to have remained faithful to vows to abstain from alcohol and not to own permanent dwellings. This covenantal obedience earned them Jeremiah's praise and his assurance that though Israel's disobedience would lead to exile, the Rechabites' fidelity would obtain future honors. Neh. 3:14 lists one Malchiah, the "son of Rechab," as a prominent returnee engaged in the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

The Rechabites' abstinence from alcohol is chief among their attributes for Dryden, in whose *Absalom and Achitophel* the scurrilous Shimei is spartan: "No Rechabite more shund the fumes of Wine" (617). Seventeenth-cent. Protestant commentators (e.g., Matthew Poole) are evidently uncomfortable with the apparent commendation of total abstinence, a position not popular even among Puritans. Matthew Henry (1728) engages a careful accommodation of the Jeremiah text, recommending moderation (*Comm. on the Whole Bible*, 4.628-29). In Matthew Prior's *The Wandering Pilgrim* abstinence is a condition of lamentable penury: "A Rechabite poor Will must live / And drink of Adam's ale." Theobald, in Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, reflects a later 19th-cent. emphasis on abstinence as a positive virtue in normative Christian life. He is fascinated with the tale of an "Eastern traveler" who claimed to have "come upon a hardy, sober, industrious little Christian community — all of them in