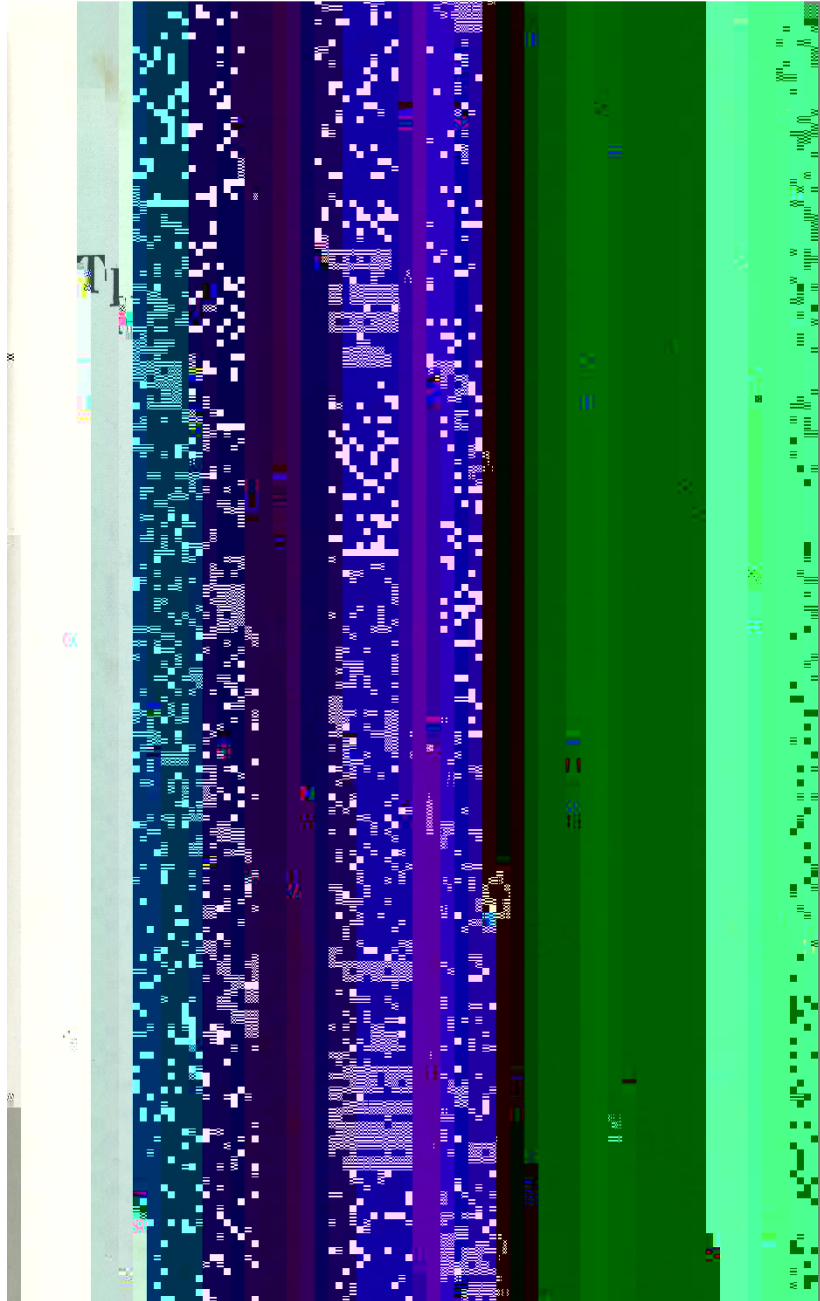


Samuel Rolles Driver:
His Impact on the Reformed View of the Patriarch Jacob and the Meaning of his Name

Modern theologians agree that over the centuries various religious groups have had different attitudes to the personal name of the Patriarch Jacob and his character. This note is intended to briefly depict how, over the centuries, different groups of people have looked at the biblical Jacob. In addition, the note aims to show that the academic Samuel Rolles Driver (1846

writings contributed to cementing K H 5 H I R U P H G L Q W H U S U H W D W L R Q R I W K H G H U L



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[was] a new translation of the Bible published in Geneva by a colony of Protestant scholars in exile from England who worked under the general direction of Miles Coverdale and John Knox and under the influence of John Calvin.¹⁷ Therefore, significantly influenced by Calvin and his innovative theology, the Geneva Bible is the very first known English translation of the Bible which claimed that the name Jacob means deceiver. The rationale of this interpretation was established on Esau's statement: "Was he not justly called Jacob, for he hath deceived me these two times?" (Genesis 27:36).¹⁸ But impartial readers will immediately notice a note next to the verse 36 that interprets the biblical text: "In Gen. 25, he was called Jacob because he held his brother by the heel, as though he would overthrow him: and therefore he is here called an over thrower, or deceiver."

During the seventeenth century, the Reformed exegesis gained more followers and had more influence on the clergy and parishioners of local congregations who remained under the sway of Calvin's interpretation. As a result, in a relatively short period of time, the negative opinion of the Patriarch Jacob was cultivated by another Reformed theologian, Matthew Henry (1662

W K D W U H D V R Q ' U L Y H U F O D L P H G W K D W J - H [F S R O E D M E Q D P K H U R G D I C
just before.7 K H Y Heb. means properly follow at the heel

Moreover, Driver also suggested that the Hebrew adjective (an) that describes the Patriarch Jacob as a perfect-man should not be interpreted literally but allegorically (Genesis 25:27). Heb. perfect usually (e.g. Job i. 1; Ps. xxxvii. 37) in a moral sense, such as would hardly be applicable to the crafty Jacob. The scholar also specified why it was the calligrapher investigated by his ambitious and designing mother, Jacob deceived his father Isaac, and wrests from his brother [Esau] K L V I D W K Driver goes further. He elegantly states that the Patriarch Jacob acted this way because truthfulness was not observed by the normal Israelite with the strictness demanded by Christian standards.

Significantly, Driver was a member of the Old Testament Revision Committee of the English Revised Version of the Bible (1876). As an influential member of this working group, Driver was able to fully impart his ideas into the next most prominent edition of the Holy Bible, the English Revised Version of the Bible. It can be said, therefore, that the ERV was the Bible which thereby removed the favorable image of the Patriarch Jacob and overshadowed the meaning of his name.

The ERV was published at a time when of the Bible