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THE
BOOK OF RUTH.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN, WITH ADDITIONS.

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THE BOOK OF RUTH.

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. *Contents and Aim.*

THE little Book of Ruth, the exposition of which usually follows that of the Book of Judges, consists of only eighty-five verses: but these inclose a garden of roses, as fragrant and full of mystic calyxes, as those which the modern traveller still finds blooming and twining about the solitary ruins of Israel and Moab, this side the Jordan and beyond. The significance and beauty of the brief narrative cannot be highly enough estimated, whether regard be had to the thought which fills it, the historical value which marks it, or the pure and charming form in which it is set forth. It will be necessary rightly to seize its fundamental idea, in order to treat to advantage the other historical questions which present themselves with reference to the time of its composition and place in the canon of the Old Covenant.

An ancient Israelitish family of Bethlehem fell into misery. They had left their native country in a time of distress, in order to save themselves from participating in it. But in the stranger's land, in Moab, a harder fate alights upon them. Death carries off father and sons; the mother remains behind, childless and widowed. True, she has daughters-in-law; but these are without offspring, and — Moabitesses, aliens, not without fault chosen to be wives of her sons. Naomi's situation is as bad as it can be. In Moab she cannot remain; sorrowfully she returns to Bethlehem. Her house is desolated; upon herself, rests the hand of God. But in the midst of despair, a consolation arises for her. Ruth, her Moabitish daughter-in-law, remains with her, — no dissuasion of her mother-in-law restrains her. She gives up everything, native land and paternal home, yea, even the hope of better fortunes, continues faithful to her love for Naomi, and goes with her to her God and her people, — but in tears, poverty, and bereavement.

Naomi arrives at Bethlehem, but no one helps, no one comforts her. Ruth alone becomes her support, — she labors, she begs for her. Her piety, however, does not remain unknown. The kindnesses done to these women by Boaz, on whose fields Ruth had been gleaning, originated solely in the man's admiration of the pious love of Ruth, although it is true that he was a kinsman of Naomi. Ruth the noble man blesses, because she has taken refuge under the wings of God in Israel. She reinstates her mother-in-law in the good-will of her relatives. She overcomes the prejudices of Israel against the stranger. The rights of an Israelitish wife fall to her lot. But it is only on account of her love and purity that the blessing of Boaz fulfills itself. For her mother's sake she enters once more on a hard and difficult road. But thereby the sorrow of Naomi is at last lifted away. Boaz fulfills to Ruth the law of Israel, and marries her. From the Moabitess springs the son, of whom David, the king of Israel, who rose from among the flocks of Bethlehem to be a hero and a prophet, is the celebrated grandson.

With good reason the book is not called "Naomi," or "Boaz," or "the Descent of David," but "Ruth." For she is the central point of the whole narrative. Her love is the groundwork of the history it relates. That she became the ancestress of David was only the reward of her virtue. The idea to be set forth, and which gives such great significance to the little book, is, the power of love, as conquering all national contrarieties, hostilities, and prejudices.

It is not a story of romantic love between man and woman, but of the reverential love of a widow for the mother of her deceased husband. The love portrayed in the character of Ruth is of the purest, most unselfish, most extraordinary kind. It is for the sake of this love. to

indicate its nature, that the strength which leaves father and mother, and accepts the God of Israel, is delineated. For Naomi can be thus loved of Ruth only because the latter has some intuitive perception of the higher life of the God of Israel in her mother-in-law.

The Jewish narrative, therefore, does not only, with unselfish uprightness, set forth the overpowering depth of affection of a Moabitess; it teaches also that such love is valid before God, without respect of race, that through it Ruth is more deeply implanted into the kingdom of the true Israel than are natural children — consequently the women say to Naomi, that Ruth is better for her than seven sons — and that the blessing of God was poured out in superabundant measure on Ruth, although a foreigner, because she had confessed the God of Israel in love and from love.

The narrative displays no hatred toward foreigners, gives no prominence to the keen discriminations of the Mosaic law against them, notwithstanding that they form the background of the story; does not blame the really well-disposed Orpah, although she turns back; has not a word of reprehension for the anonymous relative who refuses to marry Ruth; but in contrast to these facts, it causes the brightness of the blessing that lights on Ruth to become known. Orpah is forgotten, the name of the superstitious kinsman unknown, but Ruth — is the grandmother of David.

The Book was not written for the glorification of the king; for how, according to human views, could he be flattered by such a descent! But the fact of David's descent from Ruth, demonstrates and glorifies the praise of such as act as she did. It is a book of praise of true love and virtue; a book of reconciliation for those alien nations who betake themselves under the wings of the living God. In Boaz and Ruth, Israel and the Gentiles are, as it were, personified. In order to come under the wings of Israel, nothing is needed but the love and faith of Ruth. From these, and not from legal descent according to the flesh, do the might and glory of the kingdom of God proceed. The Book, it is often said, with its contents, stands at the portal of the history of David; according to its spirit, it stands, like the Psalms, at the gates of the Gospel. And this not only on account of the genealogy of Christ in the latter, which carries us back to David and Boaz, but because of the spirit which informs the doctrine of our Book, that the greatest king of Israel sprang from the reconciliation of Israel and the Gentiles, from the marriage of Boaz and Ruth in the confession of **Jehovah**.

§ 2. *Time of Composition.*

It is precisely the free and loving spirit with which Ruth is depicted, the Moabitess set forth as the ancestress of David for the instruction and joy of the reader, that enables us, on somewhat closer inspection, to determine, with considerable definiteness, the time in which alone the book can have been written. It is to be observed that the Books of Samuel say nothing of the descent of David from Ruth. Without the little book now under consideration, this fact would be entirely unknown to us. For the Book of Chronicles also, although it names Boaz as the ancestor of David in such a way that it were easy to believe that use was made of the last verses of Ruth, passes over the name of Ruth in utter silence.

That our Book cannot have been written after Solomon, is evident from 1 Kgs. xi. 1, where the king is blamed for having taken many foreign wives of Moab, Ammon, Edom, Zidon, and Heth, "nations concerning which Jehovah said to the sons of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you." It is not for the honor of Rehoboam that the historian relates that his mother was Naamah, an Ammonitess (1 Kgs. xiv. 21). Nor is it without design that the (second) Book of Chronicles, ch. xxiv. 26 (the passage is wanting in Kings) informs us that the mother of one of the murderers of King Joash was a Moabitess, of the other an Ammonitess. Ezra says (ch. x. 10): "Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives;" and the names of those who were to separate from their wives were noted down. Nehemiah (ch. xiii. 1 ff.) went so far as to execute strictly the law that "no Ammonite or Moabite should come into the congregation of God forever." These negative data are sufficient of themselves to refute the opinion that the book written in praise of a Moabitess who did enter into the congregation of God, was perhaps composed in the times after Solomon, or during the exile, or when the spirit of Ezra or Nehemiah was in the ascendant. It is especially clear that it cannot have been written in the Exile, for in that situation Israel maintained the sharpest separation between itself and the Gentiles¹ (cf. Esth.

¹ The Mishna (*Jebomoth*, ii. 5) decided that a Levirate marriage cannot be demanded by a brother-in-law, if he be the son of a slave woman or of a foreigner.

lii. 8). The Book, moreover, exhibits a homelike, peaceful coloring inconsistent with that time of expatriation and distress. It cannot even be assigned to the reign of Solomon; for in that case the genealogy at the close would hardly have failed to add: "And David begat Solomon."

But there are not wanting positive grounds which make it highly probable that the Book originated in the time of David, and while he occupied the throne, — circumstances which add their own instruction to that of the Book. It must indeed be admitted that our information concerning the great revolution brought about in Israel by the achievements, spirit, and reign of David, is very meagre and fragmentary. But it is also true that too little attention has been paid to the fact that the new occupant of the throne at Jerusalem was not merely a hero, but a creative genius, whom singular sufferings and experiences had thoroughly tried, and in whom the full heart of Israel beat powerfully and grandly, although he appears not without the human coloring of his age. From the very opening of his public career in the combat with Goliath, and ever after, he displays, as no one else did, the enthusiastic strength of faith and the immovable religious convictions of a true Israelite; and yet it was he, driven into exile through Saul's distrust, who more than any other hero or prince, before or after, came into peculiar contact with alien nations. It was doubtless due, in part at least, to the recollection that his great-grandmother was a Moabitess, that he went to the king of Moab and said, "Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth and be with you, till I know what God will do to me" (1 Sam. xxii. 3). Accordingly, he causes his father and mother to emigrate to the same country whither Elimelech and his family had gone. And they remained in Moab until David was master of Jerusalem. So also, at a later time, he remembers that the king of Ammon had formerly shown him kindness (2 Sam. x. 2). While he was hiding in the cave of Adullam, all sorts of wild and warlike people collected about him, of whom he formed his band of heroes and afterwards his body-guard. Their names Kerethi and Pelethi (2 Sam. viii. 18, etc.) sufficiently indicate their foreign origin. He abode a long time in the Philistine city of Gath (1 Sam. xxvii.); and there bands of brave men attached themselves so entirely to him, that they continued faithful to him even in his last great distress, brought upon him by Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 18). But everywhere he bore aloft the banner of his God and people. Whoever followed him, entered not merely into his personal interests, but also into those of Israel (cf. 1 Sam. xxvi. 10, etc.). Through the glory and heroism of his history, aided by the preparatory influence of Saul's achievements, the heathen, who till then continued to reside among Israel, were undoubtedly for the most part amalgamated with Israel, so that the intellectual preponderance of Israel, reinforced by military superiority, suppressed idolatry and extended the acknowledgment of Jehovah.

We are reminded here especially of Uriah, who fell a victim to David's unlawful passions. This man, a hero and distinguished personage in Israel, was a Hittite or descendant of Heth (2 Sam. xi. 3). From his widow, that is, from an Israelitish woman once married to a Hittite, sprang king Solomon, just as David descended from a Moabitish woman, the widow of an Israelite. Nor is Uriah the only foreigner among David's distinguished warriors; the list includes also an Ammonite named Zelek (2 Sam. xxiii. 37). It is remarkable, also, that David deposits the ark of God in the house of a Gittite, that is, a man who originated in Gath, a city of the Philistines. He was called Obed Edom, thus bearing the same name with David's grandfather, the son of Ruth.¹ His surname Edom also betrays his alien origin. The ark of God was three months in his dwelling, and God blessed him and his house.

Yet more noteworthy is the fact that in the saddest hours of David's life, when his favorite son, Absalom, and the chief men of Israel fell away from him, only such as had turned from among alien nations to Israel and its God remained true to him. He himself had the same experience which Naomi had with Ruth; they who loved him dared everything for him and with him. An Ammonite supplies him with provisions in his flight (2 Sam. xvii. 27). Especially prominent is Hushai the Archite,² the companion of David, who in the hour of distress adheres to him, and renders him most important service at the court of Absalom, in

¹ In the Levirate marriage of Ruth the symbolism of the shoe was employed. Obed Edom was the son of such a marriage. It is precisely with reference to Edom that the figurative expression: "I cast my shoe upon it," twice occurs in the Psalms (lx. and cviii.). The Book of Chronicles first calls Obed Edom a Levite. Errors, however, such as those into which expositors fell concerning Kenaz (cf. Com. on Judges, ch. i. 16), must here also be avoided.

² Of Arke, in Phœnicia. Cf. Movers, *Phœnizier*, II. i. 115.

thwarting the intrigues of the apostate Ahithophel (2 Sam. xv. 32 ff.). Touching is the fidelity of Ittai, the man of Gath. The king says to him (2 Sam. xv. 19 ff.): "Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king, for thou art a stranger. If thou art banished, go to thy native place.¹ Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may; return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee!" David, the fleeing king, who in his old age must leave his capital, speaks like Naomi. The answer of Ittai shows that he, like Ruth, has turned to the God of Israel: "As Jehovah liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be." Never again, in the history of the ancient Israel, do such relations come to view. Under their influence, and therefore during the reign of David, the composition of a book which commemorates the truth and love of a Gentile, was perfectly natural. It is a signature of the spirit, more active in Israel than at any other time, which recognized faith in God as the kernel of the kingdom of God, and saw that not only natural, but also spiritual Israelites could become its children. It must not be overlooked that it is especially in the Psalms that the relations of the Gentiles to the kingdom of God are unfolded. Take as specimens of many similar passages, these two: "Thou makest me the head of the nations; a people that I knew not, serves me" (Ps. xviii. 43).² "All the families of the nations shall bow down before thee; for the kingdom is Jehovah's, and he rules among the nations" (Ps. xxii. 27, 28).³

To point out definitely the years of David's reign during which the Book was written, will hardly be possible. But it is not improbable that it was done when he stood on the summit of his glory and enjoyed peace on all sides. At that time, a contemplative view of the king's history, in which so many men of alien origin had distinguished themselves by wonderful fidelity, gave rise to our Book. It may be assumed that its narrative concerning David's excellent ancestress influenced the bearing of the king's faithful Gentile subjects, as manifested in the catastrophe of Absalom. It is a genuine historical characteristic of the reign of David, that it, and not the Psalter merely, is Messianic. It is informed by the idea of universality bounded only by the acknowledgment of Jehovah. It brought about closer connections between Israel and the Gentiles, which continued to exist in the reign of Solomon. The fall of this king, toward the close of his reign, consists in the very fact that he no longer subjected these connections to the domination of the God of Israel, but suffered his own faith and morals to be overcome by heathen influences. Solomon would not have been to blame for taking wives of Moab and Ammon, if these, like Ruth, had confessed Jehovah; his fall consisted in his taking heathen wives, who withdrew him from the pure service of God. The Messianic idea was distorted, consequently obliterated and for a long time lost, and only restored by the vision of the prophets.

Nothing of importance can be urged against assigning the origin of our Book to this period, almost the only time in which it can have been written. The arguments which Bertheau, after Ewald and other earlier critics, founds on linguistic peculiarities, are not at all conclusive, and are sufficiently met by Keil's counter-remarks (*Einleit.* § 137). The more unusual expressions are due to the peculiarities of the matter, and are also to be met with elsewhere. The narrative exhibits life in its popular aspect, and probably makes use of popular forms of speech which to us seem Chaldaizing. This very circumstance attests the antiquity of the Book. A book of similar character, written in the Exile, would no longer possess the manifold idioms peculiar to original forms and views of life. Considering the small number of literary productions that have come down to us from the several earlier centuries of Hebrew history, and our ignorance of the places of their composition and the dialect of their writers, it is manifest that any attempts to fix the time in which any work was written by means of a few grammatical peculiarities alone, must always be exceedingly problematical. In the present case, however, the contents of the Book itself contradict the conclusion to which such a method of argumentation has led. For these speak decidedly against an exile, and in favor of a Palestinian origin, in a peaceful, and indeed a definitely limited period. Critics have paid only too little continuous attention to these contents, and hence were led to overestimate sundry externalities of the Book.

¹ [This is Dr. Cassel's own rendering of the difficult words **וְנָשַׁבְתָּ אֶלְתֵּיךָ לְמִקְוֵיךָ**. — Tr.]

² This Psalm, at least, is admitted by Olshausen also to be Davidic. *Psalmen*, p. 98.

³ The history of this Psalm might alone testify to a higher antiquity than modern criticism will allow it. *Delitzsch* **■** *(Die Psalmen*, p. 194): "It is a Davidic Psalm, of the time during which its author was persecuted by Saul."

§ 3. *Position in the Canon.*

The position which Jewish tradition assigned to our Book in the Canon, may likewise be due to the spirit of its contents. The Septuagint, it is true, attached it closely to the Book of Judges, as if it were but an appendix of that work,¹ and was followed therein by Josephus and the Christian Fathers who were for the most part dependent on that version. Possibly, the desire to make the number of books equal to the number of letters in the alphabet may have contributed to this result; for even in later times the supposed coincidence was invested with symbolical significance. Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, and Canticles could not be so directly attached to another book, there being none specially devoted to the history of Solomon, while Ruth and Lamentations could readily be joined to other writings. But it cannot have been for liturgical purposes merely, that the Canon of the Palestinian Jews, as appears from the Talmud, corroborated by manuscripts and traditions, considers Ruth as well as Lamentations as a separate work, and never unites it with Judges. If the little work be viewed simply as a genealogical narrative introductory to the history of David, then, indeed, its proper place is between Judges and the Books of Samuel. But since this is not its true character, since it sets forth a higher idea, of which the birth of David is but the crown and confirmation, an independent position was rightly assigned to it. The Messianic doctrine contained in it invested it with greater importance. Now, from the fact that the Jews continued the Book in this separate and independent position, although they saw that the followers of Christ viewed him as the descendant of Ruth, it may be inferred that in the Palestinian canon Ruth held, even before the birth of our Lord, the same position as at present. It harmonizes well with this, that from primitive times the Book was read during the Feast of Weeks. For this cannot have been done simply because a harvest scene occurs in it.² The practice must rather be connected with a belief that Ruth prefigures the entrance of the heathen into the kingdom of God, and with the idea that the Feast of Weeks was a celebration of the giving of the law on Sinai, which law, as the Midrash explains, was given to *all nations*, only it was not accepted by them. The Feast of Weeks, we know, corresponded to the Christian Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was poured out, according to the words of Joel, on all flesh, and the Gospel was preached to all the world.

Undoubtedly, however, the Book of Ruth offers an interesting parallel to that of Judges. While the latter exhibits the military history of Israel, the former introduces us to the peaceful private life of the people. We hear no trumpet-blasts or pæans of triumph, only the rustling of the sickles among the grain stalks salutes our ears. We find ourselves transported into the rural family life of Israel. Not the warrior or king, but the farmer and householder find their prototypes here.³ The little book relates a narrative of social village life, and within its brief compass exhibits the profoundest sorrow, the noblest love, and all the attractiveness of an Israelitish life of faith. Naomi and Boaz are not painted in the same colors as Deborah and Gideon. But the love of Ruth and Orpah can only have grown up in the household of *Nouvi*. Israel's fathers and husbands must have so lived as to enchain even after their death the hearts of foreign and childless widows. With what nobility and moral beauty the faithful in Israel were adorned, is seen in Boaz. The whole picture is surmounted by a calm, clear sky. The reader finds himself now in the open field, now on the road, and anon among the assembly of citizens at the gate. The unadorned narrative shows such art in grouping, preserves such moderation, causes the finest lessons to shine through so gently, and withal displays such great vivacity, that the æsthetics of the little work alone yield an important testimony to its origin. It can have arisen only under surroundings such as those it describes. It breathes an air of freedom and peace wholly inconsistent with the unrest

¹ [Subjoined it without a separate title. The Jewish canon places it in the third class of O. T. books, the *Kethubim* or *Hagiographa*. Its place in this class is variable: the Talmud and some MSS. give it the first, but most MSS. the fifth place. Cf. Wright, *Book of Ruth*, introd. § xi. 4. — Tr.]

² The reasons for this usage given by Raschl and others, are, in their final consequences, undoubtedly tantamount to the proclamation of the kingdom of God among the nations. Cf. Heidenheim, *Machscher Schébneth*, 1811, p. 106, note.

³ [WORSWORTH (contrasting the Book of Ruth with that of Judges): The Book of Ruth is like some beautiful landscape of Claude, with its soft mellow hues of quiet eventide, and the peaceful expanse of its calm lake, placed side by side with some stern picture of Salvator Rosa, exhibiting the shock of armies and the storm of war; and receiving more beauty from the *chiaro-oscuro* of the contrast. Or, if we may adopt another comparison, derived from classical literature, the Book of Ruth, coming next after the Book of Judges [which he regards as its proper place], is like a transition from the dark, terrific scenes of a tragedy of Æschylus, to the fresh and beautiful landscapes of some pastoral idyl of Theocritus, transporting us to the rural Thalyssia, or harvest-home, under the shade of elms and poplars, on the banks of the *Ilalis* (*Idyl* vii. 1, 8), or to the flowery meadows and sheepwalks on those of the *Arethusa* or *Anapus* (*Idyl* i. 68 117 vii 151, — Tr.)

and servitude of the Exile. Indeed, one is tempted to believe that the author must have lived in Bethlehem itself. He loves to indicate, with untutored art, the peculiarities of speech which obtain among his *dramatis personæ*. He makes his rustics talk in rustic fashion,¹ while yet, when Boaz speaks on elevated subjects, the language rises to the level of the theme.

§ 4. *Time of the History.*

The time in which the occurrences themselves took place, can hardly be more closely determined. Boaz was the great-grandfather of David. For it is not to be supposed that between Boaz and Obed, or Obed and Jesse, other names have fallen out. A wider remove of Ruth from David contradicts the thought and doctrine of the Book. The view that Boaz may have been a contemporary of Gideon² is without anything to support it. The Book suggests not a hint of war; and although it speaks of famine in the land, there is not the least indication that it was a result of hostile devastations. Much rather does ch. i. 6 (cf. the Comment.) suggest elemental causes. The ancient opinion, found in Josephus, which places the occurrences of our Book in the time of Eli, has certainly much greater probability in its favor, since the later years of Boaz and the life of Obed may be conceived as running parallel with the life of Eli, and that of Samuel with Jesse. It is also remarked below that an attitude of mutual hostility between Israel and the Philistines, may explain why Elimelech emigrated to Moab.

Some expositors (Ewald, Bertheau) have found that the author of our Book maintains a specially "learned hearing," because in ch. iv. he gives information concerning certain old customs, and have inferred from it that he must have written at a late period. But he has only done, in the simplest manner, what it is the duty of every narrator to do, namely, explain and give information on points in need of it. He gives a picture of popular life; in which he no more excuses himself from drawing the pursuit of the humble gleaner than the transactions at the gate of the city. Perhaps nothing testifies more clearly for the antiquity of the Book than ch. iv. The Mosaic law speaks of the pulling off of the shoe only in the particular case in which a widow, being refused marriage by her deceased husband's brother, is authorized to subject the offender to this action as a sign of disgrace. But this was only a special application of a more general symbolical idea connected with the shoe, and explanatory of its earlier use in transactions of exchange and redemption generally.³ Now, it was just because the Mosaic law prescribed the use of the shoe only in the case just mentioned, that it ceased to be used on other occasions. Consequently, it was precisely during the better observance of the law under Samuel, Saul, and David, that its use as the general symbol of transfer of rights or property had become obsolete. That which takes place at the gate of Bethlehem is no such transaction as is described in Deut. xxv. 7 ff. The unknown kinsman does not regard it as such. It has reference solely to the redemption of the landed property. Nor is Ruth present. Had the Book been written in the Exile, when the letter of the law had become impressed upon the people, an explanation of this absence would not have been wanting, just as Josephus conceives it necessary to add, quite in opposition to the narrative, that Ruth having been sent for by Boaz, the whole levirate process was performed according to legal prescription. In our author's time the recollection of the usages he describes, was

¹ A fact which clearly manifests itself in the so-called Chaldaisms. Compare, for instance, the conversation of Naomi with her daughters, ch. i., that of Boaz with Ruth, ch. ii., etc. Cf. Keil, *Einführung*, § 137, note 2.

² [Among later writers who favor this opinion, Hengstenberg may be mentioned, who urges that if the famine had resulted from bad harvests, it must also have extended to the neighboring land of Moab, and points out how well the ten years' sojourn in Moab agrees with the seven years' oppression by the Midianites, for "some years must necessarily have elapsed till the land could recover from its effects, and again present that flourishing state of cultivation in which Naomi found it on her return" (*Dissert. on Pent.*, ii. 92, note, Ryland's translation). Bertheau (*Com.* p. 234) replies that the time of Gideon is inconsistent with the genealogy of ch. iv. 21, 22, which affords the only certain data for determining the question. He places the history in the latter part of the time of the Judges, or somewhere in the earlier part of the Philistine domination over Israel. Keil in his *Einführung*, § 137, note 1 (2d edit., 1859) agrees with Bertheau, and fixes on the time shortly before Eli; but in his commentary (publ. 1863) adopts the view of Hengstenberg, and although he thinks it not impossible that the genealogy is incomplete, so that Obed may have been the grandfather of Jesse, yet endeavors to show that even on the supposition that it is complete, Obed may have been born in the last years of Gideon. But he appears to forget that the continuatio of the famine with the Midianitic devastations requires Obed to be born, not in the last, but in the earlier years of Gideon; for the impression left by the narrative is that the union of Ruth with Boaz took place not very long after the return from Moab (cf. ch. i. 22 b). Now, supposing that the emigration occurred in the fifth year of the Midianite oppression, the return, ten years afterwards, would fall in the 8th year of Gideon. But from say the 10th year of Gideon to the birth of David is according to Keil's own reckoning, a period of 127 years, somewhat too long to be spanned by means of one intervening birth. According to Dr. Cassel's chronology (cf. *Introd. to Judges*, § 4) the interval would be thirty years longer.—*Th.*]

³ Cf. the Commentary on chs. iii. and iv.

fresh; the usages themselves having disappeared but a few generations before. Nor is this notice of obsolete customs peculiar to the Book of Ruth. Other O. T. books make similar explanations. Thus, the author of the Books of Samuel observes that "formerly" prophets were called "seers" (1 Sam. ix. 9); and the author of the Book of Judges frequently gives the earlier names of cities of which he has occasion to speak.

§ 5. *Translations and Commentaries.*

The translation of our Book in the Septuagint bears a verbal character. The relation of Josephus (*Ant.* v. 9) evinces his efforts to bring the statements of the Biblical accounts into harmony with the prescription of the law as observed in his time, and not to allow the virtues of Israel to be too much eclipsed by those of foreigners. The Chaldee translation, the Targum, being intended for the public instruction of the people, follows the same course yet more decidedly. It carries back into the ancient times of Ruth a good deal of later apprehension and exposition. Its interpolations may be found collected, for the most part, in the Midrash *Ruth Rabba*,¹ which, on its part, has chiefly drawn from the Gemara of Jerusalem and older Midrashim. The Babylonian Talmud gives expositions of detached passages of Ruth: *Berachoth*, 7; *Sabbat*, 113; *Jebamoth*, 47; *Nasir*, 23; *Babakama*, 30; *Bababathra*, 91; *Sanhedrin*, 19. There is another collection of Rabbinical interpretations in *Julkut Simeoni*, tom. ii. ed. Venez. n. 596 ff.

Interesting philological explanations on the Chaldee version of the Targum are given in the rare book: *Perush hamiloth*, Krakau, 1540-44. The most important commentaries of mediæval Jewish scholars, are those of Raschi and Ibn Esra. The commentary of Solomon ben Melech was published by Joh. Ben. Carpsov, in the *Collegium Rabbincum Biblicum in librum Ruth*, Lips. 1703, and republished by Reland.

The earlier Christian theology accorded little special treatment to the Book of Ruth. Casiodorus (*De Divinis Lectionibus*, cap. 1) says: "Ancient expositions I have nowhere been able to find. I have however persuaded the pious presbyter Bellator to write explanations, and he has said much in praise of this woman and others in two books." But of the work of this Bellator nothing is known, cf. Serarius, p. 680, ch. 8. In later ages, the expositors, older and more recent, of the Book of Judges, are also to be consulted on Ruth. Most prominent among these are the commentaries of RUPERT V. DEUTZ, SANCTIUS, Serarius, Grotius, Clericus, Rosenmüller, Maurer, Bertheau, and Keil.²

For special treatment of the Book of Ruth, the following are to be named: Christ. Aug. Heumann, *Poecile*, tom. i. 180, and ii. 383; J. W. Weinrich, *Hist. und theol. Betrachtungen gelehrter Dinge*, p. 237, etc.; Joh. Jac. Rambach, *Note liberiores in libellum Ruthæ ex. rec. J. H. Michaelis in liberior. adnot. in Hagiographos*, tom. ii. Halæ, 1720. The *Collegium* of Carpsov has already been mentioned.

The Book was translated [into German] and explained by Dereser, Frankfort, 1806, and by von Riegler, Würzburg, 1812. Compare Umbreit on the spirit and design of the Book, in the *Studien und Kritiken*, 1834, ii. In 1856 appeared: Metzger, *Liber Ruth ex hebr. in lat. versus perpetuæque interpret. illustr.* Tüb. 4.

Useful especially for teachers of Hebrew is: *The Book of Ruth in Hebrew, with a critically revised Text, various Readings, including a new collation of twenty-eight Hebrew MSS., and a grammatical and critical Commentary: to which is appended the Chaldee Targum, etc.*, by Charles H. H. Wright, M. A., British Chaplain at Dresden. Leipzig, 1864.

[Wordsworth's Commentary mentioned in the Introduction to Judges contains notes on Ruth also. *A Comment on Ruth*, by Thomas Fuller, D. D., London, 1868 (originally published in 1654), is a homiletical production, abounding in striking thoughts quaintly expressed. It only extends, however, to the end of ch. ii. *The Rich Kinsman, or History of Ruth*, by S. H. Tyng, D. D., N. Y.—Tr.]

§ 6. *Homiletical Introduction.*³

The Book of Ruth is one of the smallest in the O. T., but abounds in material for homiletical instruction. It was admitted into the canon of Holy Scriptures not merely on

¹ Cf. Zunz, *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge*, p. 265.

² Cf. also Wolff, *Bibliotheca Hebraea*, ii. 78; iv. 18.

³ [Here, as in Judges, the author appended his "Homiletical Hints" in a body at the close of the Commentary. For the sake of convenience as well as uniformity, they have here also been distributed and placed in immediate connection

account of its ultimate aim and issue, but also for the instructiveness of the narrative in itself. The O. T. points everywhere through *history* to completion, even as Christ himself says: I am the *Way* and the *Truth*, the *Alpha* and *Omega*.

The Book of Ruth does not preach by means of mighty deeds of war inspired by faith, like those of Gideon and Samson, but by acts of love, which demand no less strength of soul. God can be praised not only with timbrels and trumpets, but also in quietness and silence. There is a heroism of faith in the family, at the sick-bed, and in grief for those we love, which is not inferior to that of Barak. Jephthah found it easier to triumph over Ammon than to subdue his sorrow on account of his daughter. It is often easier to die for the faith, than in the midst of men to live for it.

The Book tells of no prophetic woman like Deborah. But it tells of women whose hearts were capable of pure love, and such love is always prophetic. The fires which rouse a nation to enthusiasm glowed in Deborah; but in the women of our book burned the gentle flames of the household hearth, which distress and desertion cannot quench. The Book of Judges tells of a prophetess who was strong as a man; the Book of Ruth of a man who was tender as a woman.

No psalms lift up their lofty strains in the Book of Ruth. The scene of its history is not laid in the temple where the harp of God resounds, — its central figure is neither king nor poet. But the whole Psalter was born of suffering and love in God, like as David, the psalmist, descended from Ruth. A people must first have families in whom God is manifested forth by love and truth, before inspired singers can rise up from it to tune their harps with power. By the side of Sarah and Rebecca stands the retiring woman, who as Dante says (*Parad.* xxxii. 11), was

"Ancestress of the singer, who for dole
Of the misdeed said, *Miserere mei.*"

Our Book contains no stern denunciations nor sorrowing lamentations over Israel, its people, princes, and priests; but deeply impressive, penetrating to the heart, is the instance it gives of suffering, love, and victory. It proposes not, like Daniel, to unveil the destinies of nations and the world; but at its close appears the Son of David into whose Godhood all history empties as the rivers into the ocean. No miracles occur in it like that of the three men in the fiery oven; but it tells of three believing ones, who in the glowing heat of suffering and temptation, were found strong and true.

with the sections of the text out of which they grow. The opening paragraphs, as applying to the whole Book, are here inserted. The "Hints" proper are arranged by Dr. Cassel under heads which, being suggestive in themselves, are here subjoined: I. Naomi the Beloved. II. Ruth the Loving: 1. The confessor of the true religion; 2. The woman of action; 3. The difficult suit. III. Boaz the Well-doer: 1. The lauded proprietor; 2. The professor of religion; 3. The man of action; 4. The blessing. — **Tr.**]

THE BOOK OF RUTH.

CHAPTER FIRST.

VERSES 1-6.

Distress in a Foreign Land.

- 1 Now [And] it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled [judged], that there was a famine in the land. And a certain [omit: certain] man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country [territories¹] of Moab, he, and his wife, and 2 his two sons. And the name of the man *was* Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi [Noomi],² and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country [territories] of Moab, and con- 3 tinued [lit. were, i. e., abode] there. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she 4 was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab [Moabitish wives]; the name of the one *was* Orpah, and the name of the other 5 Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; ³ and the woman was left [behind]⁴ of her two sons and her husband. 6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return [and returned] from the country [territories] of Moab: for she had heard in the country [territory] of Moab how [omit: how] that the Lord [Jehovah] had visited his people in giving [to give] them bread.

TEXTUAL AND GRAMMATICAL.

[1 Ver. 1. — Prop. fields, plains. The form שְׂדֵי is variously explained. Bertheau regards it as another mode of writing שָׂדֶה, which occurs in ver. 6 of this chapter, and in ch. iv. 3, and according to Wright is in many MSS. found here also. The original ך of nouns derived from שָׂדֶה stems frequently reappears before suffixes (Ges. Gr. 93, 9, Rem.), and Berth. thinks that the same change is occasioned by the close connection of the word with the following genitive (cf. Ges. 89, 1). Ewald also takes שְׂדֵי to be singular, but derives it from the ancient form שְׂדֵי, the construct of which might be שְׂדֵי after the analogy of הַי const. הַי, הַי const. הַי, etc. But שְׂדֵי is not found in Ruth, unless it be in the disguise of the construct, while שְׂדֶה occurs not less than nine times. Better, therefore, with Gesenius, Fürst, and others, take שְׂדֵי as plural construct of שְׂדֶה. Kêil proposes to make שְׂדֵי plural const. of שְׂדֵי pl. שְׂדֵים (which however is not found anywhere); for what reason does not appear, unless it be that the plural of שְׂדֶה is usually feminine, whereas שְׂדֵי is masc. But such irregularities are not uncommon; see Green Gr. 200, c. The interchange of the singular and plural is readily accounted for from the meaning of the word, which, according to the more or less definite conception in the mind of the writer at the moment, may represent the territory as one great field or as made up of many smaller fields. — Tr.]

[2 Ver. 2. — נְעֻמִי: Noomi, as the name should be written. Sept. Νομι; Vulg. Noemi. — Tr.]

[3 Ver. 5. — Better: "Then died they two also, Mahlon and Chilion." — Tr.]

[4 Ver. 5 — וְהָיָה לָהּ: not, "was left from, i. e. was bereaved of," as Wright (with the Vulgate) interprets, — on the ground that the לָהּ changes the simple meaning of the verb as found in ver. 3. לָהּ has its proper partitive meaning, and points out the whole of which Naomi is now the only part left, cf. Deut. iii. 11; Neh. i. 2, 3. The enumeration of the whole is so far incomplete that it does not expressly include Naomi herself. In ver. 3 the verb is used without לָהּ because there is there no direct reference to the whole, but only the statement that at the death of her husband, she and her sons were left behind. — Tr.]

EXEGETICAL AND DOCTRINAL.

Ver. 1. And it came to pass in the days when the judges judged. Nothing more defi-

nite is hereby expressed than that the occurrence about to be related took place in the time when there was yet no king in Israel. In those days there was no governor armed with imperative

authority, who could help and discipline the whole people. Everybody did what he would, and helped himself in whatever way he thought best. Part of the tribe of Dan forsook the land in a body, because they were no longer pleased with it, and had no mind to overcome the remaining enemies; and Elimelech, an individual citizen, abandoned his home when the times became bad.

There was a famine in the land. No rain fell, and the crops did not prosper. Notwithstanding good and diligent cultivation, with which that at present observed in those parts is not to be compared, no harvests were reaped from those extensive grain-bearing plains which in good years produce abundant supplies.¹ In such seasons of scarcity, southern Palestine naturally resorted to importations from Egypt, as the history of Joseph has already shown. The increased prices, however, necessarily resulting from a failure of the home crops, pressed with two-fold weight on the less affluent among the people. And if, by hostilities on the part of the Philistines, or for any other reason, they were also cut off from the granaries of Egypt, nothing remained but to look for supplies to eastern countries. Even ancient Rome suffered famine whenever its connections with Egypt were interrupted, an occurrence which sometimes, as under Vespasian (Tacit. iii. 48, 5), involved serious political consequences.

The famine extended to the most fertile parts of the land, for it visited Bethlehem. The very name, "House of Bread," bespeaks a good and fertile district. Even yet, notwithstanding poor cultivation, its soil is fruitful in olives, pomegranates, almonds, figs, and grapes (Ritter, xvi. 287 [Gage's transl. iii. 341]). The region was "remarkably well watered in comparison with other parts of Palestine."² On this account, the name Ephrath, applied to Bethlehem and the country around it, is perhaps to be explained as referring to the fruitfulness insured by its waters.³

And a man went. The man left Bethlehem with his family in the time of famine, in order, during its continuance, to sojourn in the fertile territories of Moab, on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, whither the calamity did not extend. For this the Jewish expositors rightly blame him. He left his neighbors and relatives in distress, in order to live in the land of the enemy; forsook his home, in order to reside as a stranger in Moab. If what he did was right, all Bethlehem should have done the same! The case stood very different, when Abraham for a like reason went to Egypt (Gen. xii. 10); for Abraham went with all his house, left no one behind, and was everywhere a stranger. But Isaac is already forbidden from adopting the same method of relief (Gen. xxvi. 2), and Jacob removes to Egypt, not on account of the famine, but because his lost Joseph has been found again. But this man undertakes, by his own strength and in selfish segregation from his fellows, to change the orderings of divine providence. The famine was ordained as a chastening discipline; but instead of repenting, he seeks to evade it by

going to a foreign land. Whether this can be done, the ensuing narrative is about to show.

Ver. 2. And the name of the man was Elimelech. His family was of importance in the tribe of Judah (cf. chaps. ii. and iii.), well known in Bethlehem (ch. i. 19 ff.; iv. 1 ff.), and by no means poor (ch. i. 21). The names of its members may be held to testify to the same effect. In accordance with the spirit of Israelitish life, they may be supposed to reflect those obvious peculiarities which popular discernment remarked in the persons of those who bore them. The man is named Elimelech, "my God is King." All names compounded with "melech," king, with which we are acquainted, Abimelech, Ahimelech, etc., are borne by distinguished persons. Now, it was precisely in contest with a king of Moab, Eglon, that Israel had experienced that God is king; and yet, here an Elimelech withdraws himself from the favor of God in order to live in Moab! His wife's name was Naomi, "the lovely, gracious one." The name unquestionably corresponded to the character. Whoever is loved as she was, and that by daughters-in-law, is most certainly worthy of love. As to the names of the sons, Mahlon and Chilion, the derivations which make them signify "sickly" and "pining," suggested perhaps by their subsequent fate, are undoubtedly erroneous. For, surely, they bore them already when in Bethlehem, after leaving which they continued in life over ten years in Moab. It is much more likely that by these names, bestowed at birth, the parents expressed the feeling that these sons were their "joy" and "ornament." Mahlon (properly Machlon) may then be derived from מַחֲלוֹן, *machol*, "circle-dance," Greek *choros*. Comp. 1 Kgs. iv. 31, where Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, are called sons of Machol; and in Greek, *Choregis* or *Chorokles*, from *choros*. In like manner, Chilion⁴ (or rather Kilion), may, like כַּלִּיּוֹן, *kallah*, a bride, be referred to כַּלָּה, to crown. The name would thus signify *coronatus*, just as *kallah* (bride) signifies a *coronata*. It is particularly stated that they are "Ephrathites" of Bethlehem-judah. Ephrath was the ancient name of Bethlehem and the region around it. Accordingly, Ephrathites are *natives* of the city, persons properly belonging to the tribe of Judah, not mere residents in Bethlehem from other tribes (cf. Judg. xvii. 7).⁵ So David also, by a use of the word in obvious accord with this passage, is spoken of as the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem-judah (1 Sam. xvii. 12); and the prophet, when he announces Him who in the future is to come out of Bethlehem, expressly speaks of Bethlehem-Ephrath (Micah v. 1). For the same reason, the full name Bethlehem-judah is constantly used, in order to prevent any confusion with Bethlehem in Zebulun (Josh. xix. 15; cf. Com. on Judg. xii. 8), and also to make it impossible to think of Ephrathites of the tribe of Ephraim.

Vers. 3-5. And Elimelech died. Probably not long after his arrival in Moab. This appears

¹ Ritter (*Erdkunde*, xiii. 458) states, on the authority of Burkhardt, that in Nejd, in Arabia, similar famines recur at intervals of from ten to fifteen years.

² Which even Benjamin of Tudela (Asher's edit. p. 40) particularly notices.

³ פְּרָתָה, אֶפְרַתָּה, from פָּרָה, to bear, sc. fruit, cf. פָּרָה, Phrath, in its Greek form Euphrates, an אֶפְרַתָּה, it were.

⁴ Sept. Χελαίων, Josephus Χελλίων. The magnificence of the namea might rather seem to contrast with the unhappy issue. For Elimelech Josephus puts Abimelech, probably also in consequence of some allegorical exposition.

⁵ Some of the older Jewish teachers not inappropriately render "Ephratim" by ἐγενέστατοι, high-born, or *Ialaitini* (*Ruth Rabba*, 29. etc.).

not only from the connecting "and": "they came to Moab, were there, and Elimelech died" (cf. the Com. on Judg. i. 1), but may also be inferred from the circumstance that the sons did not marry while he was yet living.

The death of the father is the beginning of the sad catastrophe; but notwithstanding its occurrence the sons are unwilling to return. On the contrary, they proceed, in violation of the Mosaic law, to take Moabitish wives (cf. Com. on Judg. iii. 6 f.). That such marriages fall within the prohibition of Deut. vii. 3 is not to be doubted. The restrictions of that passage apply to all who serve false gods, and the idolatry of Ammon and Moab is as strongly abominated as any other. That Moab and Ammon are not expressly named in the passage, is owing to the fact that it speaks with reference to the country on this side of the Jordan. In other passages, the worship and fellowship of Moab are rejected in the same way as those of the other nations (cf. Judg. x. 6). The question is not what name a people bears, but what its religion and worship are. No doubt, however, the old Jewish expositors are right when they maintain that the law which forbids the entrance of an Ammonite or Moabite into the congregation of Jehovah, even to the tenth generation (Deut. xxiii. 3), does not bear on the case of Ruth. For this can apply only to men, who from their sex are enabled to act independently, not to women, who are selected and taken. A woman founded no family in Israel, but was taken into one. For that reason, also, there is no connection whatever between this law and that in Deut. vii. 2 ff. Israel was forbidden to take wives for their sons from among the neighboring nations, not because these entered into the congregation or founded strange families, but because marriage is a covenant, and involves the danger of becoming mixed up with idolatry.

Inapplicable, likewise, to the present case is the passage in Deut. xxi. 10 ff., adduced by Le Clerc in defense of Naomi's sons. Doubtless, the fact that a woman was a captive taken in war gave marriage with her an altogether different character. In that case all the presuppositions which underlie the enactment in Deut. vii. were wanting. The woman, moreover, must first bewail her kindred as dead, before she is allowed to be married. But Ruth and Orpah were not captives. Marriage with them was in all respects such as Deut. vii. provided against. Nor does the narrative seek to hide the sin of the young men.¹ It is precisely, as we shall see, the most striking beauty of the thought of our Book, that the wrong which has been done is overcome, and turned into a stepping-stone to a great end. The Midrash makes a daughter of king Eglon out of Ruth. Her heart at least is noble and royal as any king's daughter could be, and her exterior was doubtless such as to correspond with it.

The name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. The designation of girls by names borrowed from pleasing animals or

¹ The Targum justly brings it into full relief. [It paraphrases: "and they transgressed the command of the Lord, and took foreign wives from among the daughters of Moab."] The answers of Le Clerc are misunderstandings, which have been repeated down to Bertheau. Rambach's excuses for the brothers are already offered by older Roman Catholic expositors. "But," says one of these (cf. Serarius, p. 690), "why make excuses for them? for Scripture does in no way represent them as holy men."

² רָחֵל is usually regarded as a contraction either of

flowers is common to all nations. The conjecture that Orpah, or Orpha, as the LXX. pronounce it, like Ophra, signifies a hind, is therefore undoubtably in accordance with Moabitish usage. A comparison might apparently be made with *cerva*, Celtic *carv* (cf. Benfey, ii. 174). The name of Ruth would gain in interest, if the derivation which I propose, were approved. Singularly enough the name of the rose is not mentioned in the Scriptures, although this flower to this day adorns the ruins of the holy land with wondrous beauty. The Mishna and Talmud speak of it under its Greek name, *ρόδον* (cf. my *Rose und Nachtigall*, p. 19). Now it seems to me that in

רָחֵל we have the ancient form of the word *ρόδον*, *rosa*, undoubtedly derived from the redness of the flower, *ῥουφός*, *rutilus*, Sanskrit *rudh-ira*, Gothic *rauds* (Benfey, ii. 125). That even the so-called Semitic and classical languages have many words and roots in common, especially such as denote common objects, as colors, animals, plants, is manifest from numerous instances, as e. g. *ἄλφος*, *albus*, לָבָן. At all events, the thought of Ruth as the Moabitish Rose is in itself, apart from the philological probability, too attractive to refrain from giving expression to the conjecture.²

And they dwell there about ten years. The selection of such maidens as the sequel shows Ruth and Orpah to be, and the peaceful relations which must have existed between all parties concerned, may perhaps be allowed to reduce the offense of Naomi's sons against the marriage law to its mildest form. But the distance at which they keep themselves from their native land and people when these are in distress, in order to find happiness and rest for themselves elsewhere, does not prove productive of blessings. The lot that befalls them is very sad. The father, who feared lest he should not be able to live at home, had scarcely reached the strangers' land before he died. The sons founded their houses in Moab, and Moab became their grave. They were probably determined not to return home before the famine was over; and when it was over, they themselves were no more. The father had emigrated in order to have more and to secure his family; and now his widow had neither husband, nor sons, nor property. Mahlon and Chilion had died childless; "joy" and "ornament" had given way to mourning and the signs of bereavement — Naomi stood alone in a foreign land. Then she arose with her daughters-in-law.

Ver. 6. For Jehovah had visited his people to give them bread. Believing Israel sees the government of God in everything. Everything comes from Him and is designed to discipline and instruct mankind. In Deut. xxviii. 47, 48, it is written that in case Israel shall apostatize from God and cease to serve Him, it shall serve its enemies, and that in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and want. That the famine which had at this time befallen Bethlehem was the consequence of one of those military tyrannies which, as the Book

רָחֵל; vision, appearance, or better, of רָחֵל female friend. The explanation of עֵרְפָה as *hind*, rests on the supposition that it is the same with עֵרְפָה, the two middle letters being transposed. Gesenius derives it from the Arabic 'Orphan, a mane; cf. the Heb. עֵרְפָה, neck. "It may, however, be more suitable," says Wright, "as the name of a female, to regard it as identical with the Arabic 'Orphan in the sense of liberality." — Tr.]

of Judges relates, chastised the people, there is not the least indication. But a chastisement it certainly was, even though this is not asserted. And doubtless, the people, as it usually did under such circumstances, turned with penitence and prayer to its God. Then the years of famine came to an end. God remembered his people. It is a judgment of God when He allows men to go their own ways and help themselves in their necessities and sufferings (cf. the *ὑπερίδωρ*, Acts, xvii. 30); but in his mercy He remembers them, as he remembered Israel in Egypt (Ex. ii. 24). The word *רָחַם* here used, occurs repeatedly for such a return of divine remembrance. God remembered (*רָחַם*) Sarah, silently mourning over her childlessness (Gen. xxi. 1). After Moses had performed wonders before Israel in Egypt, the people believed, and when they heard that God had observed (*רָחַם*) the sufferings of the people, and had looked upon their affliction, they bowed down and worshipped (Ex. iv. 31).

From the turn of the language that God "remembered" to "give bread" to his people, more particularly to Bethlehem, the "House of Bread," it may properly be inferred that the famine was not the result of war, but of drought.

NOTE ON BETHLEHEM AND THE GRAVE OF RACHEL. "No one," says Robinson (*Bibl. Res.* i. 471), has ever doubted, I believe, that the present Beit Lahm, 'House of Flesh,' of the Arabs, is identical with the ancient Bethlechem, 'House of Bread,' of the Jews. The present distance of two hours from Jerusalem corresponds very exactly to the six Roman miles of antiquity." Schubert justly calls it the most attractive and significant of all the world's birthplaces.

This Bethlehem, where Rachel died, where Boaz married Ruth, where David was born, and Jesus Christ entered the world, is to-day, as Ritter remarks, a little city or village "hardly worthy of mention on its own account, having scarcely a single noteworthy characteristic, except the unchanging carpet of green, and the beautiful sky from which once the glory of the Lord shone round about the shepherds."

Bethlehem lies two short hours south of Jerusalem, on two moderate-sized hills, on whose northern and eastern declivities the dwelling-houses of the place are built. It is bounded on the south by the Wady et Taamirah. During the reign of the emperor Justinian it flourished greatly for a season, which, however, did not prove long. Its present inhabitants are mostly Christians. They are a strong and energetic race. During the Middle Ages, warlike feuds seem to have given the place a better title to be called Bethlachem, House of War, than Bethlehem.

Toward the west, there is a succession of irregular hills and valleys as far as the chapel over Rachel's sepulchre. The Jews considered this as an especially sacred spot.¹ The monument is described by Benjamin of Tudela, who visited Palestine somewhere between A. D. 1160 and 1173, as consisting of "eleven stones, according to the number of the sons of Jacob, with a cupola resting

on four pillars over them; and all passing Jews write their names on the stones of the monument" (ed. Asher, p. 40). The Jewish traveller Petachia (circa A. D. 1175-80), writes as follows: "Eleven stones lie on the grave of Rachel, according to the eleven tribes, for Benjamin was only born as his mother died. The stones are of marble; and the stone of Jacob, also marble, covers all the others, and is very large, so that it requires many persons to move it." This induces the author to add the following legend: "The monks who live a mile away, once took the stone from the grave, and deposited it by their church; but the next morning they saw it again at the grave as before" (ed. Carmoly, p. 97).

The author of *Jichus ha Abot* gives a description of the cupola as it was in his time (cf. Hottinger, *Cippi Hebraici*, p. 33, Carmoly, *Itinéraires*, etc., p. 436). The Arabian traveller Edrisi (about A. D. 1150; ed. Jaubert, i. 345) and another anonymous writer (*Fundgruben des Orients*, ii. 135; Carmoly, p. 457) also speak of it.

Buckingham's description (A. D. 1816) is as follows: "We entered it on the south side by an aperture through which it was difficult to crawl, as it has no doorway, and found on the inside a square mass of masonry in the centre, built up from the floor nearly to the roof, and of such a size as to leave barely a narrow passage for walking around it. It is plastered with white stucco on the outer surface, and is sufficiently large and high to enclose within it any ancient pillar that might have been found on the grave of Rachel. Around the interior face of the walls is an arched recess on each side, and over every part of the stucco are written and engraved a profusion of names, in Hebrew, Arabic, and Roman characters." (Cf. *Palestine*, i. 336.)

HOMILETICAL AND PRACTICAL?

"A man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in Moab." Because there is famine at home, the family of Elimelech migrate to a foreign country. They alone think that the distress cannot be borne. Instead of crying to God and trusting in Him, along with their brethren, in Bethlehem, they proceed to an enemy's land, where heathen worship false gods. Their emigration testifies to a decrease in their faith. Here it is not, as in the case of Abraham, Go to a land that I will show thee; but it must rather be said, They went to a land that God had rejected. The result was such as might have been expected. God did not bless their departure, and therefore their entrance brought no joy. They sought to avoid one affliction, and fell into a heavier. The men escaped famine, but death overtook them. They had not trusted God's love at home, and so his judgments smote them abroad.

Results like these should also be contemplated by many who undertake to emigrate in our days. Not many go as Abraham went to Canaan, or as Jacob went to Egypt; the majority follow in the steps of Elimelech.

Continue in thy land, and support thyself honestly. "To many" — says a book called *Sabbatliche Erinnerungen*, — "it may be a necessity to leave their native land, for the relations of life are

¹ [They do still. Dr. Hackett, who visited the tomb in 1852, says: "The Jews, as would be expected, regard the spot with peculiar interest. One of them filled a bag with earth collected near the tomb, and gave it to one of my travelling companions to bring home with him to this country, as a present to a brother of the Jew residing here."]

See *Scripture Illustrations*, Boston, 1855, p. 102, where a small engraving of the present exterior of the sepulchre is also given — Tr.]

² [Compare the Introduction, Sect. 6, for some general Homiletical Hints on the whole Book. — Tr.]

manifold and often strange; but most of those who in these days seize the pilgrim-staff, are not driven by distress. It is not hunger after bread, or want of work that urges them, but hunger after gain, and the want of life in God." 1

STARKE: Dearth and famine are a great plague, and we have good reason to pray with reference to them, "Good Lord, deliver us!"

It is true, indeed, that Elimelech emigrated to a heathen land, where the living God was not acknowledged, while emigrants of the present day go for the most part to lands where churches are already in existence. But, on the other hand, Elimelech, notwithstanding his unbelieving flight, became after all no Moabite. The emigrant's grand concern should be not to have the spirit of a Moabite when he leaves his native land. Many have ended much more sadly than Elimelech, and have left no name behind. Elimelech's kindred was yet visited with blessings, because the faithful, believing spirit of an Israelitish woman, Naomi, worked in his household.

STARKE: Husband and wife should continue true to each other, in love and in sorrow, in good and evil days.

"And the name of his wife was Naomi." Naomi means, "pleasant, lovely." As her name, so her character. Her name was the mirror of her nature. And truly, names ought not to be borne in vain. {FULLER: Names are given to men and women, not only to distinguish them from each other, but also, — 1. To stir them up to verify the meanings and significations of their names. "Wherefore let every Obadiah strive to be a "servant of God," every Nathaniel to be "a gift of God," Onesimus to be "profitable," every Roger "quiet and peaceable" (!) Robert "famous for counsel" (!), and William "a help and defense" to many. 2. To incite them to imitate the virtues of those worthy persons who formerly have been bearers and owners of their names. Let all Abrahams be faithful, Isaacs quiet, Jacobs painful, Josephs chaste; every Lewis, pious; Edward, confessor of the true faith; William, conqueror over his own corruptions. Let them also carefully avoid those sins for which the bearers of the names stand branded to posterity. Let every Jonah beware of frowardness, Thomas of distrustfulness, etc. If there be two of our names, one exceedingly good, the other notoriously evil, let us decline the vices of the one, and practice the virtues of the other. Let every Judas not follow Judas Iscariot, who betrayed our Saviour,

1 [Without questioning the correctness of the foregoing remarks, it may nevertheless serve a good purpose to call attention to the following sentences from Dr. Thos. Fuller (1654), which read to-day suggest the great need of that caution in "application" which they also exemplify: "Now if any do demand of me my opinion concerning our brethren which of late left this kingdom to advance a plantation in New England; surely I think, as St. Paul said concerning virgins he had received no commandment from the Lord; so I cannot find any just warrant to encourage men to undertake this removal; but think rather the counsel

but Judas the brother of James, the writer of the General Epistle; each Demetrius not follow him in the Acts who made silver shrines for Diana, but Demetrius, 3 John, ver. 12, who had "a good report of all men;" every Ignatius not imitate Ignatius Loyola, the lame father of blind obedience, but Ignatius, the worthy martyr in the primitive church. And if it should chance, through the indiscretion of parents and godfathers, that a bad name should be imposed on any, O let not "folly" be "with" them, because Nabal is their name. . . . In the days of Queen Elizabeth, there was a royal ship called "The Revenge," which, having maintained a long fight against a fleet of Spaniards (wherein eight hundred great shot were discharged against her), was at last fain to yield; but no sooner were her men gone out of her, and two hundred fresh Spaniards come into her, but she suddenly sunk them and herself; and so "The Revenge" was revenged. Shall lifeless pieces of wood answer the names which men impose upon them, and shall not reasonable souls do the same? — Tr.]

{BP. HALL: Betwixt the reign of the judges, Israel was plagued with tyranny; and while some of them reigned, with famine. Seldom did that rebellious people want somewhat to humble them. One rod is not enough for a stubborn child.

FULLER: The prodigal child complained, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and I die for hunger!" So here we see that the uncircumcized Moabites, God's slaves and vassals, had plenty of store, whilst Israel, God's children (but his prodigal children, which by their sins had displeased their Heavenly Father), were pinched with penury.

THE SAME: Let us not abuse strangers, and make a prey of them, but rather let us be courteous unto them, lest the barbarians condemn us, who so courteously entreated St. Paul, with his shipwrecked companions, and the Moabites in my text, who suffered Elimelech, when he came into the land, to continue there.

THE SAME: "And Elimelech died." I have seldom seen a tree thrive that hath been transplanted when it was old.

THE SAME: "And she was left, and her two sons." Here we see how mercifully God dealt with Naomi, in that He quenched not all the sparks of her comfort at once, but though He took away the stock, He left her the stems. Indeed, afterwards He took them away also; but first He provided her with a gracious daughter-in-law. — Tr.]

best that king Joash prescribed to Amaziah, 'Tarry at home.' Yet as for those that are already gone, far be it from us to conceive them to be such to whom we may not say, 'God speed,' as it is in 2 John verse 10; but let us pity them, and pray for them; for sure they have no need of our mocks, which I am afraid have too much of their own miseries. I conclude therefore of the two Englands, what our Saviour saith of the two wines, Luke v 39: 'No man having tasted of the old presently desireth the new for he saith, The old is better.' — Tr.]

VERSES 7-18.

Faithfulness until Death.

- 7 Wherefore [And] she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her ;¹ and they [already] went on the way to return unto the
 8 land of Judah. And Naomi said [Then said Naomi] unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord [Jehovah] deal kindly with you.²
 9 as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord [Jehovah] grant you that ye may find³ rest [a resting-place], each *of you* in the house of her husband. Then
 10 she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her,
 11 Surely⁴ we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again [Return], my daughters: why will ye go with me? *are* there yet *any more* sons in
 12 my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again [Return], my daughters, *go your way* [omit: your way]: for I am too old to have [to belong (again) to] an husband. If [Even if] I should say,⁵ I have hope, *if* I should have [should belong
 13 to] an husband also to-night, and should also bear sons; would ye [then]⁶ tarry for them [omit: for them] till they were grown? would ye stay for them [would you then shut yourselves up] from having husbands [in order⁷ (after all) not to belong to a husband]? nay, my daughters: for it grieveth me much for your sakes [it is much more bitter to me than to you],⁸ that [since] the hand of the Lord [Jehovah]
 14 is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again.⁹ And
 15 Orpah kissed her mother-in-law [and turned back]; but Ruth clave unto her. And she [Naomi] said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her
 16 gods [God]:¹⁰ return thou [also] after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Entreat [Urge] me not to leave thee, *or* [and] to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest [abidest], I will lodge
 17 [abide]: thy people *shall be* [is] my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord [Jehovah] do so to me, and
 18 more also, *if*¹¹ *ought* but death part thee and me. When [And when] she saw that he was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto [ceased to dissuade] her.

TEXTUAL AND GRAMMATICAL.

[1 Ver. 7. — From this verse, and the preceding (cf. also ver. 10), it appears plain, as Bertheau remarks, that not only Naomi, but also both her daughters-in-law, set out with the intention of going to Judah. It may be true that *Naomi*, determined from the start that they must not carry out this intention, "looked upon them as only bearing her company for a while before parting" (Dr. Cassel, below); but it seems at least as likely that in the struggle between duty and inclination, she did not finally reach this conclusion until the moment that she attempted to give it effect. The לְשׁוֹבָה is of course strictly applicable only to Naomi. — Tr.]

[2 Ver. 8. — יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם חֵסֶד: lit. Jehovah do kindness with you. On the form יַעֲשֶׂה as operative, cf. Ges. 127, 3, b. Although the shortened form יַעֲשֶׂה is more usual, its substitution by the Keri is unnecessary.

In עִמָּכֶם the suffix is masc., although referring to women, cf. also עֲשִׂיחֶם in the next member of the clause. Similar departures from strict grammatical propriety occur in vers. 9, 11, 13, 19, 22, ch. iv. 11. Gesenius regards them as originally colloquial inaccuracies, which afterwards passed into books, § 121, 6, Reon. 1. All but two (vers. 19, 22) of those in our Book are actually found in conversations.

[3 Ver. 9 — וַיִּשְׁכַּחְתֶּם, imperat. *scriptio defect.* for וַיִּשְׁכַּחְתֶּם. On the construction, cf. Ges 130, 1. The imperat. is only a stronger jussive, hence easily connected with it. — Tr.]

[4 Ver. 10. — כִּי: Dr. Cassel first supplies: "We will not turn back," and then reads כִּי by *denn*, "for," cf. Ges. Lex. s. v. כִּי, B. 3, b. In that case, however (after the implied negation), *sondern*, "but," would be better than "for." But it is best taken like *et* in N. T. before words directly quoted, cf. *Lex.* l. c. B. 1, b. Keil's remark, that "כִּי before words in direct discourse serves to strengthen, being almost equal to an assurance," is certainly not true in all cases, cf. 1 Sam. x. 19; 1 Kgs. xi. 22. — Tr.]

[5 Ver. 12 — כִּי אֲמַרְתִּי: כִּי is causal, and introduces another but closely connected reason (the first, also introduced by כִּי, being given in the preceding clause) why they should return, cf. Isa. vi. 5; Pa. xxii. 12. In English we should represent this כִּי — כִּי by "for—and." הַיְיָהוּי, אֲמַרְתִּי, and הַלְדָּתִי, are all conditional perfects

with the conditional particle omitted, as in Ps. lix. 33; ciii. 16; Amos iii. 8, etc. Cf. Ew. 357 b. In English we might imitate the sentence thus: "For (let us suppose) I say, I have hope; I have a husband; I have children; will you," etc.]

[6 Ver. 13. — הֵלֵךְ is the fem. suffix הֵן, used as a neuter (cf. Ges. 107, 3), with prep. לְ and the interrogative הֵ: "under these circumstances," or briefly "then," as inserted in the text after Dr. Cassel. The word in this sense is not unusual in Chaldee, cf. Dan. ii. 6, 9, 24; Ezr. v. 12. In Hebrew it is found again at Job xxx. 24. As it occurs here in the colloquy of Naomi with her daughters, it is probably to be regarded as a word current in the language of daily life. See Keil, *Introd. to O. T.* § 137, 2. The rendering of the E. V. (after Sept., Vulg., etc.), "for them," is very improbable, both on account of the position of the word, the emphasis being clearly on "wait," and also because of its fem. suffix. — Tr.]

[7 Ver. 13. — לְבַלְהֵי, lit. "to not," Dr. Cassel, *um*. לְבַלְהֵי expresses negative design, as לְמַעַן positive. The necessary result is here represented as designed, cf. the use of *iva*, Win. 53, 10, 6. — Tr.]

[8 Ver. 13. — כִּי־מַרְגִּי מְאֹד מִכֶּבֶד: Dr. Cassel interprets rather than renders: "for I am much worse off than you, since against me," etc. Substantially the same rendering is given by Keil, De Wette, Wright, Wordsworth, etc. "So Sept., which has *ὅτι ἐπὶ ὑμᾶς, not ἐπὶ ἐμὸν*, and so Syr. and Arabic" (Wordsworth). Bertheau, like E. V. takes מִכֶּבֶד = on your account, for your sake. The objection that this would require עַל־יְכֶם instead of מִכֶּבֶד (cf. 2 Sam. i. 26), does not hold, cf. Prov. v. 13; Eccles. ii. 10, etc. But the other rendering yields a better sense מַר may be adjective, noun, or verb, viz. 3 sing. perf. of מָרַר, used impersonally. — Tr.]

[9 Ver. 14. — עוֹד: Dr. Cassel — "exceedingly." But there is no good reason to change the English "again," referring to ver. 9. — Ta.]

[10 Ver. 15. — אֱלֹהֵיהֶן: Sept. and Vulg. render by the plural, "gods." Luther has the sing., and so Dr. Cassel. The reference is apparently to the national deity — "her people and her god" — namely, Chemosh (Num. xxi. 29); hence, the sing. is to be preferred. It seems almost superfluous to observe that Naomi's words do not necessarily contain any recognition of the Moabitish deity, or indicate (as Wright suggests) that "she was possibly led astray by the false idea that Jehovah was only the God of Israel." Was Jephthah, then, similarly led astray (cf. Judg. xi. 24, 27)? — Tr.]

[11 Ver. 17. — כִּי is not "if" (אם, 1 Sam. iii. 17, etc.), but "that," cf. 1 Sam. xiv. 44; 1 Kgs. ii. 23. גִּשְׁפֵיבְהֵי, "I swear," or some such expression, is understood, cf. Gen. xxii. 16. The E. V. might be corrected by leaving כִּי untranslated, and rendering: "only death shall part thee and me." The Hebrew, instead of invoking a definite judgment or calamity on himself, in case he breaks his oath, simply says כֹּרַח, which with the addition "and more too," is perhaps more awful to the imagination because it is not definite. — On the article with "death," cf. Ges. 109, Rem. t. c. — Ta.]

EXEGETICAL AND DOCTRINAL.

Ver. 7. **And she went forth out of the place.** The place is not named, nor is it necessary. The Israelitish family had after all not become naturalized in it. No one asks Naomi to stay. No one accompanies her, save her two daughters-in-law, the youthful widows of her too early faded sons.

And they already went on the way. Until then Naomi had looked on her daughters-in-law as only bearing her company for a while before parting. But being now far from their place of residence, on the highway from Moab to Judah, she stops, and bids them return.

Ver. 8. **Jehovah deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me.** A scene now begins of unequalled tenderness and amiableness. We get a look into a family-life that may serve as a model for all. It is an honor to the deceased sons, Mahlon and Chilion, that they made such a selection of wives; but they must also have been worthy of the enduring love they awakened, notwithstanding that there were no children to strengthen the bonds of affection. The attachment of the Moabitish women, Ruth and Orpah, to their new family, must be grounded in psychological facts, with a knowledge of which exegesis cannot dispense. The Moabitish women had entered into an Israelitish house, and had breathed the beneficent atmosphere of a family of Judah. Marriage and family life form the real mirror of religious belief and worship. Hence, the apostle, in his sublime manner, arranges the relations of husband and wife by referring to the love of Christ for his church (Ephes. v. 22 ff.). Ancient Israel,

therefore, distinguished itself from the inhabitants of Canaan, not merely by the name of its God, but by its life at home in the family, by faithfulness and love to wife and child. Purity and morality in marriage were the necessary results of faith in the only, living God, as much as a life of unchaste and sensual pleasures belonged to the abominations of idolatry among the Ammonites and Moabites. Among the worst sins into which Israel fell in the desert, was the whoredom with the daughters of Moab in the service of Baal-Peor (Num. xxv.); by executing summary and terrible punishment on which, Phinehas the priest won for himself an enduring blessing. The Mosaic law does not contain special and extended instructions as to the treatment of wife and child. But the command, "thou shalt not commit adultery," stands among the Sinaitic Ten as the reflection of that other which says, "thou shalt have no other gods." An affectionate, moral family life had become an Israelitish characteristic through the influence of the Israelitish faith, as is evident already in patriarchal times from the instances of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. But it showed itself still more brightly in Israel as a nation, living by the side of other tribes in Canaan, since monogamy had become its natural and prevailing practice. Every profounder apprehension of domestic relations, brought about by man's consciousness of God, affects the wife especially. She experiences most deeply the beneficence of a life sanctified by the law of God. Her happiness and her love, indissolubly connected, depend upon the moral education of the man she follows. Ruth and Orpah felt the impression of the higher moral-

ity which, in contrast with the Moabitish home, pervaded every Israelitish household. It is not necessary to conceive of Mahlon and Chilion as men of eminence in this respect; but they held fast to their family traditions, according to which their wife occupied a position of tenderness, protected by love and solicitude. They did not act in entire accordance with the law when they married Moabitish wives; but neither did they unite with them in the idolatry of Baal-Peor. Although they may not have been specially pious and god-fearing men, their national mode of home and married life nevertheless contrasted with that of Moab, and all the more strongly because they lived in the midst of Moab. Both the young women, acquainted with the fate of Moabitish marriages, felt themselves gratefully attracted to the Israelitish house into which they entered. They had not accepted the law and the God of Israel; but they requested the kind and tender treatment they received with equally self-sacrificing love. That Naomi can acknowledge this, after having observed them through ten years of married life, what a picture of peace and happiness does it suggest! The women had not only heard the religion of Jehovah confessed in Moab (cf. the expression: *Jehovah deal kindly with you, etc.*), but they had seen the expression of it in the life. What they have done and are yet ready to do, is the consequence thereof. For national divisions, we here see, are overcome rather by the preaching of the life than by the verbal proclamation of doctrine.

Naomi praises not only the love which Ruth and Orpah have manifested toward their husbands, but also that which they have shown towards herself, the mother-in-law. And this is yet more noteworthy. Ancients and moderns unite in complaints of the unhappy relations between daughters and mothers-in-law. Plutarch, treating of the duties of married persons, relates that in Leptis, in Africa, it was customary for the bride on the day after the wedding to send to the bridegroom's mother to ask for a pot, which the latter refuses, pretending that she has none, in order that the young wife may speedily become acquainted with the stepmotherly disposition of her mother-in-law, and be less easily provoked when subsequently more serious troubles arise.¹ In Terence (*Hecyra*, ii. 1, 4), Laches laments "that all mothers-in-law have ever hated their daughters-in-law" (*uno animo omnes socrus oderunt nurus*).² Juvenal, in his satire against women (vi. 231), says, in a rather coarse way, that matrimonial peace is inconceivable so long as the mother-in-law lives (*desperanda salva concordia socru*). Old German popular sayings faithfully reproduce the ancient maxims: "*Die Swiger ne weiss, dass sie Swur geuesen*" (the mother-in-law has forgotten that she was ever a daughter-in-law);³ "*Die beste Swigar ist die, auf deren Rock die Gänse weiden*" (the best mother-in-law is one on whose gown the geese feed, i. e. who is dead).

The family life of Naomi with her daughters-in-law affords no trace whatever of such sad experiences. They mutually love each other—both during the lives of the husbands and after their decease,—although they belong to different tribes. The praise for this naturally belongs largely to

the mother, whose kind and genial soul evidently answered to her beautiful name. Thus much may also be gathered from her further conversation with her daughters. But the unhappy relations between daughter and mother-in-law, elsewhere usual, must in general have been unknown in Israel. Otherwise the prophet could not represent it as a sign of the extremest social ruin that, as the son against the father, and the daughter against the mother, so the daughter-in-law rises up against the mother-in-law (Mic. vii. 6); a passage to which Christ alludes when he speaks of the effects to be brought about in social life by his gospel (Matt. x. 35).

Vers. 9, 10. **Jehovah grant you that you may find a safe place.** If he be truly worthy of love who amid his own sorrow still thinks of the welfare of others, then, surely, Naomi is worthy of love. She has been called upon to part with all that was dear to her, with husband and children. She stands quite alone in her advanced age. But even yet all partings are not over. She thinks that now also she must no longer allow herself to be accompanied by Orpah and Ruth. Both the daughters-in-law are yet young; should she take them with her into her uncertain lot! She has not the presumption to forget their future in thoughts about her own; nor the vanity to think that the widows of her sons should not marry again. The position of a single woman in antiquity was an unhappy one. It was altogether customary for youthful widows to marry again. Only a husband's house is the true asylum for a woman. There she finds protection, safety, and honor. That is the idea of the *menuchah*, the rest, which Naomi wishes that Jehovah may give each of them in the house of another husband. It is impossible to imagine a more beautiful expression of the end of marriage to a woman. The possession of a *menuchah*, an asylum of honor and freedom, is the highest happiness; the want of it, a terrible misfortune. Among other evils, Israel is told that in the event of disobedience it shall have no *menuchah* (Deut. xxviii. 65).⁴ The holy land, if it be possessed in faith, is, as it were, the earthly house to which Israel has come, like a wife to the house of her husband. "Hitherto," says Moses, Deut. xii. 9, "you have not yet come unto the *menuchah* which Jehovah your God gives you." The desert had no place of rest, properly speaking: it was only the way, not the goal. Solomon was the first who could praise God for the complete gift of *menuchah* to his people (1 Kgs. viii. 56). It is true, Israel's highest *menuchah* is God, Jehovah himself and his redemption. He is the true goal of life. Says the prophet (Isa. xi. 10): "And it shall come to pass in that day: the Root of Jesse—to him shall the nations repair, and his *menuchah* is glory." And, hence, Christ also says, Matth. xi. 29: "Learn of me, that I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest (*ἀνάπαυσις, menuchah*) for your souls."

Such a *menuchah* Orpah and Ruth had enjoyed in the homes of their husbands; and they are, as it were, vocationless, if they find not another. It was in the natural course of ancient social life that they should marry again among the people to whom they belonged. Naomi thinks it wrong for

duabus in una domo, parique fortuna, nullum certamen nulla contentio est."

¹ Similar ideas are treated of in his peculiar way, by Abraham a Sautca Clara, in *Judas, der Erzschelm*, v. p. 15

² Pliny, in his *Panegy. Trajani*, cap. 84, says; "quo quidem admirabilius existimandum est, quod mulieribus

⁴ [The word in the passage referred to is *manoach*, which, however, differs only in form, cf. ch. iii. 1.—Ta.]

her to take them away from that people. Turn back, she says; may the blessing of the God of Israel be with you even in the midst of Moab! May He grant you rest in the house of a new husband! And she kisses them, as the signal of parting (cf. ver. 14),—but a loud weeping arises. Naomi finds it hard to be obliged to leave these last dear friends whom she has become accustomed to regard as daughters. Orpah and Ruth are unwilling to turn back, unwilling to let the loved Naomi proceed alone on her solitary way through life. "We go with thee," they say, "to thy people."

Vers. 11-13. And Naomi said: Have I then yet sons in my womb? It is by means of two considerations that Naomi seeks to persuade her daughters-in-law to return: first, she holds out to them the prospect of new family connections in Moab; and, secondly, she shows them that all hope of renewed married happiness is ended if they go with her. The surprising delicacy with which this is done, is such as to show clearly how truly a religious love educates and refines. The ultimate cause of the grief occasioned by the necessity of impending separation, lies after all solely in the fact that Ruth and Orpah are Moabitesses. Naomi could not bear to tell them that if they, as daughters of Moab, went with her to Israel, they would find themselves in a less hospitable situation than they had hitherto enjoyed. She is too tender to remind these good children of the fact that Israel does not sanction connections with Moab. On this account, she had already suggested (ver. 8), with special emphasis, that they should return to Moab, each to her *mother's* house, thus putting the natural Moabitish mother over against herself, the Israelitish mother-in-law. She would thereby intimate to them, as delicately and indirectly as possible, that they could hope for nothing in Israel except what she herself could give; that they could enter into her house, indeed, but not into Israel's national life. Naomi's speech in vers. 12, 13, is a climactic utterance of grief,¹ which often says so many really unnecessary things, in order to conceal others which it dares not say. Orpah and Ruth are themselves aware of all that Naomi says to them in these verses. In wishing to go with her, they cannot possibly have a thought of building hopes on sons yet to be born to Naomi by another marriage. But—and this is what Naomi would make them feel—any other hope than this vain one, they as Moabitish women could not have in Israel. If I myself—she gives them to understand—could yet have sons, I would take you with me. My home would then be your home too. To me you are dear as daughters-in-law, whether in

¹ The climax of grief shows itself in the climax of impossibilities adduced to show that she can have no other sons for Ruth and Orpah. In the first place she says, I am too old; but if I were not, I have no husband. But even if I had a husband, and brought forth children this very night, two of them, and they sons, would you wait till they were grown up, and shut yourselves in until they were marriageable: The word לִשְׁתֵּן , here used in the sense of shutting one's self in, does not occur again in Scripture, and receives its explanation only from its use in this sense in the later Hebrew. This meaning, however, is evidently very ancient. It is connected with לָשֵׁן , garden, the *παράδεισος*, which was closed in, hedged in. Ruth and Orpah would have had to look upon themselves as brides of the supposed sons of Naomi, and must therefore have been shut in. With this the explanation of the word לִשְׁתֵּן itself stands connected. *Kallah* means bride and daughter-in-law (as newly-married wife), in the same way as the Greek

Israel or in Moab, but other prospect have you none. Here where everything turns on love, the fulfiller of every law, Naomi does not think of the legal provisions with respect to levirate marriages; but she heaps up the improbabilities against her being able to furnish husbands to her daughters-in-law in Israel, in order in this veiled manner to indicate that this was nevertheless the only possible ground of hope for them in Israel.

For I am worse off than you are. It is very painful for Naomi to let them go, for she is entirely alone. But she cannot answer it to take them with her, seeing she can offer them no new home. Undoubtedly, she is in a worse situation than that of the young women. For them there is yet a possible future among their people. Naomi has buried her happiness in a distant grave. For her there is no future. The last of those dear to her, she herself must tear away from her heart. "Jehovah's hand," she says, "went forth against me." She is soon to experience that his mercy is not yet exhausted.

Ver. 14. But Ruth clave unto her. Orpah suffers herself to be persuaded, and goes; but Ruth remains, and will not leave her. The result of Naomi's tears is, that Orpah takes leave of her, and that Ruth clings to her only the more closely. The hopelessness of the future, on which the mother had dilated, leads Orpah back to Moab, but suffers Ruth to go with her to Israel. All that Naomi had said, her solitariness, poverty, sorrow, only served to attach her more firmly. Orpah too was attached and well disposed; but still, with eyes of love, although she had them, she yet saw herself, while Ruth saw only the beloved one. It might be said with a certain degree of truth, that the same cause induced Orpah to go and Ruth to remain, the fact, namely, that Naomi had no longer either son or husband. The one wished to become a wife again, the other to remain a daughter. Few among the natural children of men are as kind and good as Orpah; but a love like that of Ruth has scarcely entered the thoughts of poets. Antigone dies for love of her brother; but the life which awaited Ruth was more painful than death. Alcestis sacrifices herself for her husband, and Sigrune (in the *Parzival* of Wolfram v. Eschenbach) persistently continues in a solitary cell, with the corpse of her lover whom she had driven into battle, until she dies; but Ruth goes to a foreign land and chooses poverty, not for a husband or a lover, but for the mother of him who long since was torn away from her. She refuses to leave her for the very reason that she is poor, old, and childless. Naomi, having lost her sons, shall not on

νυμφή (cf. Matt. x. 35, as also the rendering of the LXX. and the German *Brant*, Grimm, *Wörterb.* ii. 332). The Greek *νυμφή* explains itself from the Latin *nubere*, to cover, to veil. The bride already covered herself, like the wife, withdrew herself from the eyes of men, and was shut up. The goddesses themselves were originally called *νυμφαί* probably because they were conceived of as rendered invisible by the nature-covering of tree and fountain. The use of *συννυμφος*, for sister-in-law, by the LXX. in ver. 15, is peculiar, and doubtless intended to mean "the other, second the sister-daughter-in-law," rather than "sister-in-law." In classic authors it does not occur; for in *συννυμφόκομος* the *σύν* refers to *κόμος*. The Hebrew bride derives her name from the garland with which it was customary to crown both bride and bridegroom (cf. Mader, *de Coronis*, Helms. 1662, p. 35, etc.). The symbolism of the word contains profound poetical ideas. It represents a shutting in it is true; but by flowers,—a shutting up unto perfection and coronation.

that account lose her daughters also. Rather than leave her to suffer alone, Ruth will starve with, or beg for her. Here is love for the dead and the living, surpassing that of Alcestis and Sigune. That Ruth does for her mother-in-law, what as the highest filial love the poet invents for Antigone, when he represents her as not leaving her blind father, is in actual life almost unexampled. Nor would it be easy to find an instance of a deeper conflict than that which love had to sustain on this occasion. The foundation of it was laid when Elimelech left his people in order not to share their woes. It was rendered inevitable, when, against the law of Israel, his sons took wives of the daughters of Moab. It broke out when the men died. Their love for their Israelitish husbands had made the women strangers in their native land; and the love of Naomi for her Moabitish daughters made her doubly childless in Israel. Nationality, laws, and custom, were about to separate mother- and daughters-in-law. But as love had united them, so also love alone has power to solve the conflict, but only such a love as Ruth's. Orpah escapes the struggle by returning to Moab; Ruth ends it by going with Naomi.

Ver. 15. **Thy sister-in-law returned home to her people and to her God.** In these remarkable words lies the key to the understanding of vers. 11-13. Her daughters had said to her (ver. 10), "We will go with thee to *thy people*." It grieves Naomi to be obliged to tell them, with all possible tenderness, that in the sense in which they mean it, this is altogether impossible. It was necessary to intimate to them that a deeper than merely national distinction compels their present parting: that what her sons had done in Moab, was not customary in Israel; that her personal love for them was indeed so great, that she would gladly give them other sons, if she had them, but that the *people* of Israel was separated from all other nations by the **GOD** of Israel. Orpah understood this. Strong as her affection for Naomi was, her natural desire for another resting-place in a husband's house was yet stronger; and as she could not hope for this in Israel, she took leave and went back. For the same reason, Naomi now speaks more plainly to Ruth: thy sister-in-law returned home to her people and to *her God*. It is not that we belong to different nations, but that we worship different Gods, that separates us here at the gates of Israel.

Vers. 16, 17. **And Ruth said, Thy people is my people, and thy God my God.** Naomi's house, her character and life, have won for her the love of her daughters-in-law. Ruth cleaves to her and will not leave her, although poverty and misery await her. For love to her she proposes to give up not only home and family, but also all the heart-joys that might there yet be hers. She cleaves to her thus, although she is of Israel. Naomi and her house have made Israel also appear lovely in the eyes of Ruth. Who would not wish to go to a people whose sole known representatives were so amiable as Naomi and her family! In Moab, the young women had not been made aware that one cannot be united to Israel without acknowledging Israel's God, for they had entered the marriage relation with sons of Israel without entering into covenant with their God. Now, however, they learn, from Naomi's intimations, that that which Mahlon and Chilion had done, was against the custom of Israel. The discovery instantly manifests itself in different effects on Orpah and Ruth. Orpah is repelled, because she thinks

only of the bridal she might lose. Ruth is attracted for if that which distinguishes this people which she already loves be its God, then she loves that God also. In Naomi she loves both people and God. Ruth's love is true love: it cleaves to Naomi not for advantages, but on account of her virtues and amiability. Ruth desires to be one with her for life. She will not let her be alone, wherever she may be. What Naomi has, she also will have, her people and her God. And this she expresses at once, so clearly and decidedly, that in ver. 17 she swears by Jehovah, the God of Israel. The Jewish expositors, after the example of the Targum, suppose a dialogue to have taken place in which Naomi has first explained to Ruth the difficulties connected with faith in the God of Israel. All this, however, should be considered merely as a didactic anticipation of her subsequent experiences. In our narrative, the confession of Ruth, "thy God is my God," is the highest stage of that devotion which she yields to Naomi for life. She has vowed that nothing shall separate her love from its object; for whatever could separate it, would make it imperfect. But since the God of Israel is the true ground of all the love which she felt for her Israelitish friends, it follows that her confession of Him is the keystone of her vow. It is at the same time the true solution of the conflict into which persons who mutually loved each other had fallen. It rectifies the error committed by her husband when he took the Moabitish woman notwithstanding her relation to the idol of Moab. The unity of the spirit has been attained, which not only shows true love, but even in memory reconciles what was amiss in the past. For Naomi's grief was so great, not only because she had lost her sons, but also because the daughters-in-law which she had must be given up, and she be left alone. And as love enforced the separation, so love also became the cord drawing to a yet closer union. If Naomi believed herself fallen out of the favor of God on Moab's account, she could derive comfort from Ruth who for her sake entered into the people of God.

Ver. 18. **And when she saw that she was firmly resolved.** Older expositors have imagined that Naomi's efforts to persuade her daughters-in-law to return homeward, were not altogether seriously meant. She only wished to test them. They take this view in order to free Naomi from the reproach of being too little anxious to introduce her daughters into Israel and the true faith (Rambach: *Querunt hic Interpretes an recte fecerit Noomia*, etc.)¹ But this whole exposition is a dogmatic anachronism. Naomi could entertain no thoughts of missionary work as understood in modern times, and for that she is not to be reproached. The great love on which the blessing of the whole narrative rests, shows itself precisely in this, that Naomi and her daughters-in-law were persons of different nationality and religion. This contrast — which a marriage of ten years has only affectionately covered up — it is, that also engenders the conflict of separation. During more than ten years the marriage of Naomi's sons to Moabitesses was and continued to be wrong in principle, although, in the happy issue of their choice, its unlawfulness was lost sight of. What she had not done then in the spring-tide of their happiness, Naomi could not think of doing now. Her generous love shows itself now rather in dissuading her daughters-in-law

¹ "Sed alii tenent Hebraei pariter ac Christiani interpretes Noomiam a reatu liberant, et non serio sed tentando animo id egisse statuunt." — Rambach, p. 743.

from going with her to Israel. For they surely would have gone along, if their deceased husbands, instead of remaining in Moab, had returned to Israel. But their death had in reality dissolved every external bond with Naomi. No doubt, Naomi now feels the grief which the unlawful actions of her husband and sons have entailed. Had her daughters-in-law been of Israel, there would naturally be no necessity of her returning solitary and forsaken. She feels that "the hand of Jehovah is against her." How indelicate would it be now, say how unbecoming the sacredness of the relations involved, if Naomi, at this moment, when she is herself poor, and with no prospect in the future, were to propose to her daughters-in-law to leave not merely the land but also the god of Moab, that thus they might accompany her. If she had ever wished, at this moment she would scarcely dare, to do it. It is one of the symptoms of the conflict, that she could *not* do it. The appearance of self interest would have cast a blot on the purity of their mutual love. Naomi might now feel or believe what she had never before thought of, — she could *do* nothing but dissuade. Anything else would have rudely destroyed the grace and elevation of the whole beautiful scene. The great difference between Orpah and Ruth shows itself in the very fact that the one yields to the dissuasion, the other withstands. Ruth had the tenderly sensitive heart to understand that Naomi must dissuade; and to all Naomi's unuttered reasons for feeling obliged to dissuade, she answers with her vow. Naomi dissuades on the ground that she is poor, — "where thou abidest, I will abide," is the answer; that she is about to live among another people, — "thy people is my people;" that she worships another God, — "thy God is my God;" that she has no husband for her, — "only death shall part me from thee." Under no other circumstances could the conflict have found an end so beautiful. Naomi must dissuade in order that Ruth might freely, under no pressure but that of her own love, accept Israel's God and people. Only after this is done, and she holds firmly to her decision, does Naomi consent and "cease to dissuade her."

NOTE TO VERSE 8: "*Jehovah deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me.*" The love which unites husband and wife in marriage, reconciles the contrasts inherent in difference of nationality, makes peace, gives a good conscience, and leaves a blessed memory. Christian families, too, will do well to look upon the good understanding existing between Naomi and her daughters-in-law as an example to be followed. It originated in the right love of the wives for their husbands, and of the mother for her sons. A right love rejoices in the happiness of its objects, even though derived through others. The jealousy of mothers toward their children-in-law, and of wives toward their husbands' parents does not spring from love.

A pleasing instance of right relations with a mother-in-law comes to light in the gospel history. Jesus enters into the house of Peter, whose mother-in-law lies sick of a fever. Request is immediately made in her behalf, and He, always full of love ready to flow forth in miracles wherever He sees love, heals her (Matth. viii. 14 ff. and paral.). The term *πενθερά*, used in this account by the gospels, is also employed by the Sept. with reference to Naomi.

Origen has a remarkable passage, thoroughly worthy of his noble spirit (cf. on Job, *Lib.* i.):

"Blessed is Ruth who so clings to her aged mother-in-law that she would not leave her until death. For this reason, Scripture indeed has justly extolled her; but God has benefited her forever. But He will judge, and in the resurrection condemn, all those wicked and ungodly daughters-in-law who deal out abuse and wrong to their parents-in-law, unmindful of the fact that they gave life and sustenance to their husbands. . . . If, therefore, thou lovest thy husband, O wife, then love them also who gave him being, and thus brought up a son for themselves and a husband for thee. Seek not to divide the son from his father or mother! Seek not to bring the son to despise or father or mother, lest thou fall into the condemnation of the Lord in the day of awful inquest and judgment."

But these excellent words never found the right echo. Even Jerome says: *prope modum naturale est, ut uirum socium et socrum oderit uirum.* And yet it never was the case where Christian virtue was actually alive.

Monica, the mother of Augustine, had to endure not a little from her mother-in-law. The latter supported Monica's disobedient maid-servants against their mistress. She allowed them to bring her all sorts of evil reports about her. Her daughter-in-law she daily chided and provoked. But Monica met her with such complaisant love, quiet obedience, and amiable patience, as to conquer the irritable mother-in-law, so that she became, and continued to be to the last, the friend and protectress of her daughter-in-law. No wonder that from such a heart there sprang the faith and spirit of a man like Augustine (cf. Barthel, *Monica*, p. 31).

Not only the history, but also the traditions and the poetry, of the Middle Ages, frequently depict the sufferings of daughters-in-law, inflicted on them by the mothers of their husbands. As part of the "swan-legends" of the lower Rhine, we have the peculiar story of Matabruna, the bad wife of the king of Lillefort, who persecuted and tormented her pious and believing daughter-in-law Beatrix, until at last the latter, by God's help, came off victorious (cf. Wolf, *Niederländische Sagen*, p. 175; also my treatise on the *Schwan*, p. 24).

Hermann Boerhaave's step-mother having died, the universally celebrated physician wrote as follows: "All the skill with which God has endowed me I applied, and spent whole half-nights in considering her disease, in order to prolong her life, — but all in vain. . . . But I weep too, as often as the thought occurs to me that now I shall have no more opportunity to show her my love, veneration, and gratitude; and I should be altogether inconsolable, if, since my coming of age, I had been even once guilty of disrespect or ingratitude toward her."

It may hence be seen how deeply-groined in the nature of things it is, that in German [and if in German, then in English too. — Tr.] *glauben* [to believe] and *lieben* [to love] are really of the same root. In Gothic, *liubs* means, "dear, beloved"; *luban*, "to be beloved." With this, the likewise Gothic *laubjan, galaubjan*, "to believe," is connected. In the version of Ulflas, even *επις*, hope, is at Rom. xv. 13 translated by *lubains*. And in truth: Faith, Love, Hope, these three are one; but the greatest of them is Love.

HOMILETICAL AND PRACTICAL.

"*Jehovah deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me.*" Naomi's husband

was dead. Her sons had married Moabitesses, and had died childless. Usually, and sometimes even in "believing" families, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are not on the best of terms. But Naomi, although in Moab, enjoyed such love in the house of her sons, that her daughters-in-law did not leave her, but went with her, and that Ruth, for her sake, left native land, parents, and property. She won love because she was Naomi, "pleasant." She cherished no vanity, sought no strife, and did not wish to rule; hence she had peace and love.

STARKE: "Piety, wherever found, has the power to win the hearts of people. It is able to diffuse joy even among those who do not believe."

Naomi was pleasant and pious. She illustrated the saying of the apostle Peter (1 Epis. iii. 1): "that, if any obey not the word, they may also without the word be won by the conversation of the wives." By her conduct she preached the God of Israel, "in a meek and quiet spirit," in the midst of Moab; and hence the love which she won redounded to the praise of Israel, and became a silent preaching of the truth to unbelievers.

STARKE: "As long as the Church is called Naomi, there is no lack of adherents; but when she appears as Mara, and is signed with the cross of Christ, many go back."

"And Ruth said, Thy people is my people, and thy God my God." Ruth is a prophecy, than which none could be more beautiful and engaging, of the entrance of the heathen world into the kingdom of God. She comes forth out of Moab, an idolatrous people, full of wantonness and sin, and is herself so tender and pure. In a land where dissolute sensuality formed one of the elements of idol worship, a woman appears, as wife and daughter, chaste as the rose of spring, and unsurpassed in these relations by any other character in Holy Writ. Without living in Israel, she is first elevated, then won, by the life of Israel, as displayed in a foreign land. Amid surrounding enmity and jealousy toward Israel, she is capable of being formed and attracted through love.

It is an undeniable fact that women have at all times entered more deeply than men into the higher moral spirit of the fellowship with God mediated by Christ. Women, especially, feel that marriage is a divinely instituted and sacred union. Their hearts teach them to know the value of the great treasure and consolation which faith in the living God gives to them especially. Ruth's confession of God and his people originated in the home of her married life. It sprang from the love with which she was permitted to embrace Israelites. It was because in these persons she loved the confessors of Jehovah, that her feelings had a moral power which never decays.

An ancient church teacher says: "Had she not been inspired, she had not said what she said, or done what she did. For what is she chiefly praised? For her love to the people of Israel or her innocence, for her obedience or her faith? For her love to the people of Israel. For had she desired marriage only as a means of pleasure, she would rather have sought to obtain one of the young men. But as she sought not sensual gratification, out the satisfaction of conscience, she chose a holy family rather than youthful age."

How great a lesson is here for the church considered in its missionary character! The conduct

of one Israelitish woman in a foreign land, was able to call forth a love and a confession of God, like that of Ruth. How imperative, then, the duty of Christians at home, and how easy of execution, to win Jews and other unbelievers. For love is the fountain of faith. It is written, Thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart. The Jews must learn to love Christ in the Christian, and the Christian in Christ. Love removes all prejudices, divisions, and sad remembrances. Ruth loves a woman, and is thereby led to the God whom that woman confesses. Must not men love, if they would be loved? Only love opens the fountain of faith, but faith sanctifies and confirms love.

PASCAL: "The heart has reasons which the reason does not comprehend. This is seen in a thousand things. It is the heart that feels God, not the reason. Hence, that is the more perfect faith which feels God in the heart."

Ruth is not only the type of a convert, but also a teacher of those who seek to convert others. For she shows that converts are made, not by words, but by the life, not by disputations, but by love, not by the legerdemain of a sentimental sermon, but by the faithful discharge of the duties of life. She teaches also by what she gives up,—people, home, parents, customs,—and all from love. She has had a taste of an Israelitish heart and household. Whoever has tasted Christ, can never again live without him,—can never leave him who loves all, suffered for all, weeps with all, and redeems all. If Jews and heathen taste him, this is effected, not through external institutions, through dead works, but through prayer, which fills the lives of Christians with its sweetness. To the fanatical, the disputations, the canting, the selfish, the avaricious,—and also to the characterless and slavish,—who would say: thy people is my people, thy God is my God?

"Where thou abidest, I will abide; where thou diest, I will die." Ruth is not only enrolled among the feminine worthies of Israel, with Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel, but heathenism itself throughout its vast extent cannot show a single woman who is her equal in love. For hers is a love outliving the grave, and sustained by no fleshly relationship, for when her husband was dead no living person, mutually dear, existed to connect her with Naomi. Neither self-interest, nor hope, nor vanity, mix themselves up with this love. It is a purely moral and spiritual love, of which no other instance is on record. It is in fact the love of those whom God by his mercy has won for himself, and who love God in their brethren. It is the evangelical love of the Apostles, who loved Greeks and Franks, Persians and Scythians, as their own flesh and blood. Such love as this followed the steps of our Lord, and tarried where he was. Confession, martyrdom, prayer, and every brotherly thought or deed, spring from the love of the converted heart. The more heartily the soul cries out to Christ himself, Thy people is my people, and thy God my God, the more fervently burns this love.

ZINZENDORF: I speak because I believe; I love, because many sins are forgiven me.

SAILER: Lead men through love to love. For love cultivates and preserves the true and the good by doctrine, life, prayer, watchfulness, and by a thousand other inventions of its inexhaustible genius.

VERSES 19-22.

Sorrow and Repentance.

- 19 So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved¹ about them and they said,²
- 20 *Is this Naomi?* And she said unto them. Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me [hath inflicted bitter sorrow upon me].
- 21 I went out full, and the Lord [Jehovah] hath brought me home again empty: why *then* call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord [Jehovah] hath testified against me, and the
- 22 Almighty hath afflicted me? So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, which returned out of the country [territories] of Moab:³ and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley-harvest.

TEXTUAL AND GRAMMATICAL.

[1 Ver. 19. — הָיָה נiph. imperf. of הָיָה, cf. Ges. 67, Rem. 5; 22, 1. So Ges., Berth., Ewald, etc. Keil, Fürst, etc., consider it Niph. imperf. of הָיָה, — Tr.]

[2 Ver. 19. — הַיְהוּדִים: fem. plural (cf. צְלִיחִין, etc. in ver. 20). Not exactly, *dieebantque mulieres*, as the Vulg. has it: the population of the city are the subject of the verb, but in a matter of this kind women would naturally be so prominent as to lead the narrator insensibly to use the feminine. Perhaps Naomi arrived at an hour of the day when the labors of the field left none but women in the city. — Tr.]

[3 Ver. 22 — הַיְשֻׁבָּה מִיְּמֵי מוֹאָב: Dr. Cassel translates the whole clause thus: "And so Naomi was returned home, and Ruth, the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, [who accompanied her] *after* [or *on*, cf. the Com. below] *her departure* from the fields of Moab." This rendering, is, of course, intentionally free, and is designed to indicate that what seems an unnecessary remark, really adds to the sense, namely, that Ruth was the (only) one that came to Naomi, that came with her from Moab. But this seems rather forced. As the same expression occurs, at ch. iv. 3, in connection with Naomi, it may be supposed that it became customary to speak of Naomi and Ruth as "the returned from Moab," or as we should say, popularly, "the returned Moabites." In that case, it would be best (with Berth.) to take הַיְשֻׁבָּה (accented in the text as 3d fem. perf., with the art. as relative, cf. Ges. 103, 2d paragr.), as the fem. participle. The epithet would be applied to Ruth by virtue of her connection with Naomi, cf. ver. 7. — Tr.]

EXEGETICAL AND DOCTRINAL.

Ver. 19. **So they two went.** Naomi said nothing more. She ceased to dissuade. She allowed Ruth to go with her, and the latter was as good as her words. She actually accompanied her mother-in-law; and so it came to pass, that Naomi did not return home alone, that is to say, entirely forsaken and helpless.

The whole city was moved about them. Naomi's return was an uncommon occurrence. The city, and especially the women, were thrown into a peaceable uproar. Everybody ran, told the news, and wondered. For more than ten years had passed since she had left Bethlehem. Then there had doubtless been talk enough, as Naomi went away with her husband, in far different and better circumstances. It may be taken for granted that even then her character had awakened sympathy and affection in Bethlehem. Her husband, we know, belonged to a prominent family of the city. All this renders it natural that the news that Naomi had returned to Bethlehem, poor and sorrowful, spread like wildfire, and created what to her was an unpleasant sensation.¹ "Is that Naomi!" is the universal exclamation.

Ver. 20. **Call me not Naomi, call me Mara.** Undoubtedly, the general astonishment over such a return, gave rise to many reflections which a woman especially would feel deeply. Not merely the external comparison of "then" and "now," but also the motives of the former departure are

brought to mind. Then, Naomi's life and circumstances corresponded with the amiable and joyous name she bore. Now, she were better named Mara, the bitter, sorrowful one. It is evident that names were still preserved with conscious reference to their meaning. Naomi manifestly intends, by these and the following words, to inform the inhabitants of Bethlehem of her fortunes. I am no longer the old Naomi; for what of happiness I possessed, I have lost. I have no more anything that is pleasant about me: my life, like a salty, bitter spring, is without flavor or relish.

For the Almighty (Shaddai) hath inflicted bitter sorrow upon me. Why *Shaddai*? The use of this divine surname must here also be connected with its pregnant, proper signification. The explanation which must necessarily be given to it, is not consistent with its derivation from שָׁדַד, which always appears in a bad sense. What this explanation is, will become apparent when the passages are considered in which the name is first, and with emphasis, employed. We select, therefore, those of Genesis, in which book the name *Shaddai* occurs more frequently than in any other except Job, and always as designative of the gracious, fertile God, by whom the propagation of mankind is guaranteed. Thus, it is assumed by God in Gen. xvii. 1 ff. where he says to Abram, "I make thee exceedingly fruitful, — to a father of a multitude of nations," etc. So likewise, it occurs Gen. xxviii. 3: "El Shaddai will bless thee and

¹ The Mishnah makes the scene still more dramatic by its explanation, that the concourse of the inhabitants was

occasioned by the fact that the first wife of Boaz had that very day been carried to her grave (cf. *Ruth Rabba*, 31, d).

make thee fruitful." Gen. xxxv. 11: "I am El Shaddai, be fruitful, and multiply." Gen. xlviii. 3: "El Shaddai appeared unto me—and said, Behold, I make thee fruitful and multiply thee." Gen. xlix. 25: "Shaddai shall bless thee—with blessings of the breasts (שָׂדַי) and of the womb." For the same reason it is used at Gen. xliii. 14, where the fate of the children of Jacob is in question. This gracious God, the source of fruitfulness and life, gives his blessing to his chosen saints, but from sinners, and from those whom He tries, He takes away what to others He gives. Hence the frequent use of the name in Job, who is chastened in his children, cf. chap. viii. 3: "Will Shaddai pervert justice? If thy children sinned against Him, He gave them over into the hand of their transgressors." And in this sense Naomi also uses the name Shaddai, in speaking of her misery. For the death of her husband and her sons has rendered her family desolate and unfruitful. The word must therefore unquestionably be referred to a root שָׂדַי, still in use in Arabic, in the sense "to water, to fertilize." For that all fertility comes from water, by which aridity is removed and thirst assuaged, is a deeply rooted conception, especially in oriental antiquity. Numerous mythical pictures of heathenism represent their heroes as conquering drought and unfruitfulness by liberating the rain and the streams. The name of the Indian god Indra is derived from *Ind = und*, to flow, and is therefore equivalent to "the rain-giver," who frees the clouds so that they can dispense their showers (cf. E. Meier, *Ind. Liederb.*, p. 147 f.). The true Rain-giver, the dispenser and increaser of fertility, of the earth and among beasts and men, is the living, personal God, as Shaddai. The root שָׂדַי must also explain שָׂדַי, *mamma*, properly the fountain of rain and blessings for man and beast, as Gellius (xii. 1) calls it, *fontem sanctissimum corporis*, and the bringer up of the human race. Hence we are enabled to recognize the wide-spread philological root to which *shadah*, to water, *shad* (Aram *tad*), *mamma*, belong; for it is connected with the Sanskrit *dhe*, Greek *θησαι*, Gothic *dad-dim* (Old German, *tutta*, etc., cf. Benfey, *Gr. Gram.* ii. 270), in all which forms the idea of giving drink, sucking, is present. From the Greek word, the name of the goddess Thetis is derived, as "Nurse of the Human Race" (cf. Weleker, *Gr. Mythol.*, i. 618). That Artemis of Ephesus was represented as a *multimamma*, is known not only from antique sculptures, but also from the writings of the church fathers; cf. the words of Jerome (in *Proem Ep. Pauli ad Ephes.*): *omnium bestiarum et viventium esse nutricem mediuntur*. Naomi was rightly named when, with a flourishing family, she went to Moab—but now Shaddai, who gave the blessing, has taken it away.

Ver. 21. I went out full, and Jehovah hath brought me home again empty. Full of family happiness, of joy in her sons, and of hope of a cheerful old age surrounded by children and children's children; but empty now of all these, without possessions and without hope. A penitent feeling pervades her lamentation. I went away

notwithstanding my fullness, and because I went full, do I return empty. For this reason she says, "I went away, and Jehovah has brought me home again." I went because it was my will to go, not God's; now, God's judgment has sent me back. With that one word she gives vent to her sorrow that in those times of famine she forsook her people, although she herself was happy. What an evil thing it is to follow one's own will, when that will is not directed by the commandments of God! Man goes, but God brings home. But beside this penitential feeling, there is another feature indicative of Naomi's beautiful character, which must not be overlooked. She says, I went, me hath God afflicted; not, We went—my husband took me with him,—after all, I only followed as in duty bound. She utters not a breath of accusation against Elimelech or of excuse for herself. Properly speaking, the fault did lay with her husband and sons. They were the originators of the undertaking that ended so disastrously; but of this she has no memory. She neither accuses, nor yet does she commiserate and bewail them. Of the evils which they experienced, she does not speak. I went, and me has God brought home again, empty and bereft of husband and child. Therefore, she repeats, call me not Naomi! That name, when she hears it, suggests the entire contrast between what she was and what she now is.

For Jehovah hath testified against me, יְהוָה בִּי עָקָה. The internal connection with the preceding thoughts confirms the correctness of the Masoretic pointing. The reading of the LXX., "he humbled me," was justly departed from, for it is only a paraphrase of the sense.¹ That which Bertheau considers to be the difficulty of the passage, that it makes God to testify against a person, while elsewhere only men bear testimony, is precisely the special thought of Naomi: "I went," she says, "and God has testified that this going was a sin. Through the issue of my emigration God has testified that its inception was not rooted in Him, but in ourselves." It is a peculiarity of piety that it ascribes the issue of all the affairs of life to God. "Was it right or not, that I (namely, Elimelech and she) went away to Moab?" Men might be in doubt about it. But the end, she says, bears witness against us, who followed our own inclinations. God testified against her, for "Shaddai hath afflicted me." In other words, in that God, as Shaddai, made sorrow my portion, He testified against me. The two clauses, יְהוָה בִּי עָקָה, and שָׂדַי הִכְעִילֵי, are not so much parallel as mutually explanatory. In the loss of my children and family, says Naomi, I perceive that He "declares me guilty," as the Targum also excellently renders בִּי עָקָה. At the same time, the meaning of Shaddai comes here again clearly to view. For it is He who inflicts sorrow upon her, only in that her children are taken from her. That which God, as Shaddai, the giver of fruitfulness, did to her when he caused her sons to wither away, proves that God testifies against her. הִכְעִילֵי is here used just as it is in Josh. xxiv. 20:

This general idea, he thinks, is then determined by what follows, so as to mean: "Jehovah has worked against me." On בִּי עָקָה, in the sense, to testify against, cf. Ex. xx 16; 2 Sam. i. 16; Is. iii. 9; etc. Bertheau's objection seems to be sufficiently met above.—Ta.]

1 [And, therefore, hardly to be called a "reading." That the LXX. read בִּי עָקָה, as some have thought, is hardly possible, as that word could not be suitably construed with בִּי. For the same reason Bertheau takes בִּי עָקָה in the sense "to bestow labor on anything," cf. Eccles. i. 13.

"If ye forsake Jehovah—he will do you hurt (הִרְעָה לָכֶם) and utterly destroy you."

Ver. 22. So Naomi returned and Ruth with her. The curiosity of the inhabitants of Bethlehem is satisfied; they have also heard the history of Ruth; but with this their sympathy has likewise come to an end. Naomi was poor and God-forsaken,—at least according to the pious and penitential feeling of the good woman herself. How natural, that in her native place, too, she should stand alone. But Ruth was with her. She had continued firm on the road, and she remained faithful in Bethlehem. Since there also no one assisted her mother-in-law, she continued to be her only stay and the sole sharer of her lot. Her presence is once more expressly indicated: "and Ruth, the Moabitess, with her, on her departure from the fields of Moab." No one was with her but Ruth,—who made the journey from Moab with her, in order to take care of her mother-in-law. What had become of Naomi, if Ruth, like Orpah, had forsaken her! She had sunk into poverty and humiliation more bitter than death. It is true, she too, with her husband, had left Israel in times of distress. But for this she could not be held responsible, although her generous spirit accused herself and no one else. On the other hand, she had been sufficiently punished, and had confessed her guilt. But in Bethlehem poor Naomi was made to feel that she now bore the name of Mara. Only Ruth had respect to neither before nor after. She reflected on neither happy nor sorrowful days. As she had loved in prosperity, so she remained true in adversity. Naomi, in her native place and among kindred, in Israel, had been alone and in want, had not the stranger, the widow of her son, accompanied her from her distant land. While such love was hers, Naomi was not yet wholly miserable; for God has respect to such fidelity.

And they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley-harvest. Consequently, in the beginning of the harvest season in general. This statement is made in order to intimate that the help of God did not tarry long. The harvest itself afforded the opportunity to prepare consolation and reward for both women in their highest need.

HOMILETICAL AND PRACTICAL.

"Call me not Naomi, but Mara." Naomi does not conceal her condition when she reaches her native place. Usually, the natural man, even as a beggar, still desires to shine. She has lost everything; and what she had gained, the companionship of Ruth, is not yet able to console her. Her very love fills her with anxiety for this daughter. Recollections are very bitter, and the future is full of care. It is, however, only because she is empty of all joys, that she wishes to be called Mara. But it was made evident even in her misery that whatever she had lost, she had found the grace of God;

for then too she was not only named, but truly was, Naomi. Nor will one who in sorrow does not cease to be lovely, retain the name of Mara. Pope Gregory the Great, when praised (by Leander) replied: "Call me not Naomi, *i. e.* beautiful, but call me Mara, since I am full of bitter grief. For I am no more the same person you knew; outwardly I have advanced, inwardly I have fallen. And I fear to be among those of whom it is said: Thou castedst them down when they were lifted up. For when one is lifted up, he is cast down; he advances in honors and falls in morals."

THOMAS A KEMPIS: "It is good at times to be in distress; for it reminds us that we are in exile."

BENGL: "If God have loved thee, thou canst have had no lack of trouble."

"For Shaddai hath afflicted me." Naomi did not go to Moab of her own accord, for she followed her husband. Her stay also in the strange land was prolonged only because her sons had married there. After their death, although poor and empty, she returned home again, albeit she had but little to hope for. And yet in the judgment she perceives only her own guilt. Her loving heart takes all God's judgments on itself. The more she loved, the more ready she was to repent. Being a Naomi, she did not accuse those she loved. The sign of true love is unselfishness, which ascribes ills to self, blessings to others. As long as she was in misery, she took the anger of God upon herself; but as soon as she perceived the favor of God, she praised Him as the God who showed kindness to the living and the dead.

[FULLER: "And all the city was moved," etc. See here, Naomi was formerly a woman of good quality and fashion, of good rank and repute: otherwise her return in poverty had not been so generally taken notice of. Shrubs may be grubbed to the ground, and none miss them; but every one marks the felling of a cedar. Grovelling cottages may be evened to the earth, and none observe them; but every traveller takes notice of the fall of a steeple. Let this comfort those to whom God hath given small possessions. Should He visit them with poverty, and take from them that little they have, yet their grief and shame would be the less: they should not have so many fingers pointed at them, so many eyes staring on them, so many words spoken of them; they might lurk in obscurity: it must be a Naomi, a person of eminency and estate, whose poverty must move a whole city.—THE SAME: "Seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me." Who then is able to hold out suit with God in the court of heaven? For God himself is both judge and witness, and also the executor and inflicter of punishments.

BP. HALL: Ten years have turned Naomi into Mara. What assurance is there of these earthly things whereof one hour may strip us? What man can say of the years to come, thus will I be! —Tr.]

CHAPTER SECOND.

VERSE 1.

The Relative.

1 AND Naomi had [in Bethlehem] a kinsman [lit. acquaintance,] of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth [a valiant hero], of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.

EXEGETICAL AND DOCTRINAL.

Before relating the wonderful deliverance through a kin-man, by which faithfulness and love are rewarded, the writer first informs us briefly of the existence of the person who is chosen to effect this deliverance. Hitherto the acting persons have been only women, both of them loving and excellent; now, the portrait of a man is drawn, who is the model of an Israelite, as family-head and as landlord, in war and in peace.

Naomi had a kinsman. The expression for this is **מִיָּדָע**. In our texts, it is true, it is pointed **מִיָּדָע**, with **בוֹדָע**, as Keri, in the margin. But **מִיָּדָע** occurs only once more (Prov. vii. 4), and there also we must probably read **מִיָּדָע**. The reading **מִיָּדָע** was preferred by the Masora only on account of the fem. **מִיָּדָעַת**, which occurs at ch. iii. 2. The participle **מִיָּדָע** is of more frequent occurrence, cf. Ps. lv. 14. Hitherto, Naomi could say, as does the Psalmist (lxxxviii. 9): "Thou hast put my kinsmen (**מִיָּדָעַי**) far from me." Compare also ver. 19 of the same psalm, where it stands in parallelism with **אֹהֲבִי**, lover, and **רֵעִי**, companion. She has likewise experienced what is written Ps. xxxi. 12, cf. Job xix. 14. Literally, to be sure, the word means only an "acquaintance;" but it expresses more than we mean by that term. The man was not a very near relative, but one "known" to the family, as belonging to it. It was an acquaintance valid within the family lines; hence the word signifies as much as *familiaris*. It is used in a noteworthy connection at 2 Kgs. x. 11, where Jehu slays all the great men, the **מִיָּדָעִים**, and the priests of Ahab, — *i. e.* everybody that adhered to him, whether from family connection or interest. The Latin *notus* may occasionally approximate to the idea of the Hebrew term even more closely than the Greek *γνώσιμος*: not so much, however, in Cambr. lxxxix. 4 (*si tria notorum basia repererit*), as in Liv. iii. 44, where, with reference to the violence done to Virginia, is said: *notos gratia (patris et sponsi), turbam indignitas rei virgini couiliat*.

The fact is emphasized that Boaz was only a **מִיָּדָע**. This not only explains a certain remote-

ness of Naomi from him, but it makes the piety, which notwithstanding the distance (manifest also from ch. iii. 12) of the relationship, performs what the narrative goes on to relate, more conspicuously great than it would appear if, according to an unfounded conjecture of Jewish expositors, he were held to be the son of Elimelech's brother.

A valiant hero. These words are applied to Boaz in no other sense than to Gideon (Judg. vi. 12), Jephthah (xi. 1), and others, and have no reference to his wealth and property. He was a strong and able man in Israel, in war and in peace. Probably he had distinguished himself in conflicts of Israel against enemies, perhaps against Moab. The ancestor of David is, as the Midrash (*Ruth* 31, d) remarks, rightly thus described. His name, Boaz (**בֹּאֵז**), is to be explained by reference to the name of one of the pillars erected by Solomon, and called Boaz, while the other was named Jachin (cf. my *Gold. Thron Salomo's*, p. 45). It is not a compound of **בָּא**, but a contraction of **בְּרִיָּא**, "son of strength, of enduring vigor." The signification *alacritas* (Ges., Keil, etc.), would hardly be applicable to the pillar.

HOMILETICAL AND PRACTICAL.

The same characteristic is ascribed to Boaz as to Gideon, and to David. But concerning his warlike deeds nothing is related. In Israel, however, there was no valor, properly so called, except such as sprang from the acknowledgment of the living God. The word is not applied to wild battle-rage, but to moral strength, which valiantly repels distress and dishonor, as Abraham drew the sword for his country against foreign oppressors. Boaz was a hero in war through his virtue in peace. And this virtue comes so clearly to view in the Book of Ruth, that the narrator could justly add: he was a brave man. For morally brave he shows himself in every relation: 1. as landlord; 2. as confessor of God; 3. as man of action; and hence he receives the reward both of him who dispenses blessings and of him who receives them.

[FULLER: "This first verse presents us with two remarkable things: 1. Poor Naomi was allied to powerful Boaz. 2. Boaz was both a powerful man and a godly man." — Tr.]

VERSES 2-17.

The Reward of Faithfulness begins.

2 And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn¹ after *him* in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her,
 3 Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a [the] part of the field² *belonging* unto Boaz,
 4 who *was* of the kindred [family] of Elimelech. And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord [Jehovah] *be* with you: and they
 5 answered him, The Lord [Jehovah] bless thee. Then said Boaz [And Boaz said]
 6 unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel *is* this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It *is* the³ Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country [territories] of Moab: And she said, I pray you [thee], let me glean and [I will] gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now,
 8 that⁴ she tarried a little in the house. Then said Boaz [And Boaz said] unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from
 9 hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: *Let* thine eyes *be* on the field that they do reap, and go thou [fearlessly] after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch [molest] thee? and when thou art athirst,⁵ go unto the vessels,
 10 and drink of *that* which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge [friendly notice] of me, seeing I *am* a stranger?
 11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in law since the death of thine husband: and *how* thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come
 12 unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord [Jehovah] recompense thy work, and a full [complete] reward be given thee of the Lord [Jehovah]
 13 God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust [seek refuge]. Then she said, Let me find favour⁶ in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto [to the heart of] thine handmaid, though
 14 I be not like unto one of thy handmaidens. And Boaz said unto her, At meal-time⁷ come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched *corn*, and she did eat, and was
 15 sufficed [satisfied], and left [over]. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among [between] the sheaves,
 16 and reproach her not: And let fall [pull out]⁸ also *some* of [from] the handfulls [bundles] of purpose for her, and leave *them* [it], that she may glean *them* [it], and
 17 rebuke her not. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.

TEXTUAL AND GRAMMATICAL.

[1 Ver. 2. — וְגִלְתִּי בְּשֵׂבִלֵיהֶם: lit. "and glean, among the ears." The construction is exactly parallel to that in ver. 7: *i. e.* גִּלְתִּי בְּשֵׂבִלֵיהֶם is used absolutely, without an accus., as frequently in our Book and elsewhere. The idea is, Let me gather (sc. some ears) among those that are left lying in the field by the harvesters. — Tr.]

[2 Ver. 3. — חֵלקֵת הַשָּׂדֶה: "the field-portion," *i. e.* that part of the grain-fields about Bethlehem that belonged to Boaz. "Though gardens and vineyards are usually surrounded by a stone wall or hedge of prickly pear, the grain fields, on the contrary, though they belong to different proprietors, are not separated by any inclosure from each other. The boundary between them is indicated by heaps of small stones, or sometimes by single upright stones placed at intervals of a rod or more from each other" (Hackett, *Illust. of Scripture*, p. 167). In גִּתְּךָ מִתְּהַר, lit. "her hap happened," מִתְּהַר is the subject of גִּתְּךָ, cf. Eccles. ii. 14. חֵלקֵת הַשָּׂדֶה is the accus. of place, cf. Ges. 118, 1. — Tr.]

[3 Ver. 6. — Or: "She is a Moabitish maiden, who came back with Naomi from," etc. This supposes that הַשָּׂבִי אִשׁ, as the accentuation makes it, and against which nothing is to be said here, the third fem. perfect, cf. the note on ch. i. 22. Thus taken, the answer does not assume that Boaz is acquainted with the return of Naomi. The E. V. may, however, be justified by taking הַשָּׂבִי אִשׁ as a participle, cf. Ges. 111, 2, a. — Tr.]

[4 Ver. 7. — וְיָ is joined by Dr. Cassel to וְעַד-הַיּוֹם], es adv. of time (so also Gesenius and Fürst, cf. *Lexica* . v.): "and until now her resting (cf. below) in the house was little." But this unnecessarily disturbs the accentuation. Better translate: "this her sitting in the house (הַבַּיִתָּה, accus. of place) is but for a little" (מְעַט, adv. of accus. of time). וְיָ שְׁכַבְתָּהּ is an Aramaizing of the more regular Hebrew הָיְתָה הַיּוֹם שְׁכַבְתָּהּ, cf. Ew. 293, b, and the *Lexica*, s. v. וְיָ.—On הַיּוֹם, in the preceding clause, see Ges. 126, 6. Ruth says: Pray, permit me to glean, and and (in consequence of this permission) I will gather, etc. — Tr.]

[5 Ver. 9. — מִמֶּנּוּ, from מִמָּנָה, but inflected as if from a form מִמֶּנּוּ, cf. Ges. 75, Rem. 21, c. On the use of the word as perfect, cf. on ch. i. 12. On the perfects וְהִלְכְתָּי and וְשָׁרִיתִי, Ges. 126, Rem. 1; and on the imperf. וְשָׁרְבוּ, Ges. 127, 4, b. מִמֶּנּוּ is rendered "out of which" by Bertheau and Keil (because water-drawing was ordinarily done by women?); but in that case the more natural position of וְשָׁרִיתִי would be after הַיּוֹעֲרִים, thus: and out of what the young men draw (drink), drink thou (too). — Ta.]

[6 Ver. 13. — מִמֶּנּוּ: optative. "To take it as present indicat.: I find favor, as is done by Le Clerc and Bertheau, is not in accordance with the modesty of humility which Ruth manifests in the following words" (Keil). Nor is the word expressive of a permanent state or condition, which would justify the imperfect indicative, as is the case with the וְהָיְתָה of the next clause, cf. Ges. 127, 2. — Ta.]

[7 Ver. 14. — According to the accentuation of the Masorites, these words belong to the preceding clause: "And Boaz said to her at the time of eating, Come hither," etc. גָּשְׁי, from גָּשָׁה, so anomalous form for גָּשְׁי, as גָּשָׁה for גָּשָׁה, Josh. iii. 9; 1 Sam. xiv. 38. The second accent, merca, is here, as in other instances (Gen. xxviii. 2; Num. xvii. 23, etc.) used instead of metheg. — לָהּ without mappik as in Num. xxxii. 42; Zech. v. 11. — Ta.]

8 Ver. 16. — שָׁלַח-הָאֵלֶּיךָ. The use of שָׁלַח in the sense "to draw out" is only a return to the original meaning of the word. It is the same word as συλάω, which also originally meant to draw out, for it was from the drawing off or stripping of their armor from the slain that it obtained the signification "to make booty, to plunder." [On the use of the infin. const. for the absol. see Ges. 131, 4, Rem. 2. — Ta.]

EXEGETICAL AND DOCTRINAL.

Ver. 2. **And Ruth, the Moabitea, said to Naomi.** Naomi was manifestly in need. No one seemed to help her, nor had she the heart to ask. It is but too clear now that her lot would have been a dismal one, if at her return Ruth had not faithfully clung to her. But this young woman's fidelity shows itself now also. As the barley-harvest is in progress, she offers to go to the field and ask for permission to glean. It was no easy offer. Ruth was probably ignorant of those provisions of the Israelitish law according to which the gleanings of the harvest-field and even a forgotten sheaf were to be left to the poor and the stranger, the widow and the orphan (cf. Lev. xxiii. 22; Deut. xxiv. 19). At least, she did not seem to expect the observance of such a custom; for she hoped to obtain permission to glean from the possible kindness of some proprietor. But at best, what a miserable task for the once happy and prosperous widow! Possibly to see herself treated as a beggar, harshly addressed or even personally maltreated by rude reapers! to pass the day in heat and distress, in order at evening, hungry and weary, to bring home a little barley! For this then she had left paternal house and land, in order in deepest misery to be perchance yet also abused as a foreigner! But the love she cherishes, makes everything easy to her. It not only gives utterance to good words, but it carries them into practice. She forgets everything, in order now to remember her filial duty to Naomi. And Naomi accepts her offer.

Go, my daughter. Until now, she has only silently endured every expression of Ruth's self-sacrifice. She had indeed ceased to dissuade her from going with her, but she had also refrained from encouraging her. Ruth might even now, after having reached Bethlehem, experienced the poverty of her mother-in-law, and tasted the sense of strangeness in Israel, have returned to Moab. But the meekness with which, instead of this,

she asks permission to encounter toil and misery for her, overcomes in Naomi too every ulterior consideration. Such a request could no longer be silently accepted; nor could it be refused. Naomi permits her to glean in the harvest-field. Nor was it an easy thing for the mother to give this consent. The remarkable characters of both women come here also nobly to view. Ruth, who has given up everything, is humble as a dutiful child, and asks for permission to give up more. Naomi, who in her highest need would accept nothing from Ruth, in order not to involve her in the same distress, — who retains her maternal authority in circumstances of want in which people generally would deem this impossible, — has no other reward for Ruth's self-sacrificing disposition than that she is ready to accept its efforts for herself.

Ver. 3. **And she lighted providentially on the field of Boaz.** More literally: "And her lot met her on the field of Boaz." (וַיִּקְרָא, fut. apoc.

from וַיִּקְרָא, *occurrere*.) Ruth, as a stranger in Bethlehem, knew neither persons nor properties. She might have chanced on fields of strange and unfriendly owners. Providence so ordered it, that without knowing it, she entered the field of one who was of the family of Elimelech, and therefore also a distant relative of her deceased husband.

Ver. 4 ff. **And behold Boaz came from Bethlehem.** A finer picture of rural harvest-scenes is nowhere extant. We hear, as it were, the rustling of the reapers' sickles.¹ Behind them are the women, binding the cut grain (ver. 8). The overseer's presence promotes industry and order (ver. 5). In case of thirst, there stand the water-vessels at no great distance. The fields surround the country-house with its various outbuildings, where the weary may find a moment's rest and refreshment

¹ Cf. HOMER, *I.* xviii. 550. in the description of the shield of Achilles: "On it he also graven a field thaxk with grain and there with sharp sickles reapers plied their task."

At meal-time, the laborers are supplied (as at the present day, cf. Rob. ii. 50), with roasted grain¹ and bread.² The latter they dip in a refreshing drink, consisting of vinegar and water, with perhaps some oil mixed in it.³

But rural life has not in itself that paradisaic happiness which Virgil contrasts so enthusiastically with the luxuriant and slavish life of Rome. It may perhaps be true that a country population is more patient of labor and more readily contented with small means (" *patiens operum exiguoque adsueta juventus*," — *Georg.* ii. 472); but it is only when a pious and godfearing spirit rules in the hearts of proprietor and dependents that it is good to live amid the quiet scenes and rewardful toil of the country. Only then, too, is the poet's word applicable: "the chaste dwelling preserves virtue" (*casta pudicitiam servat domus*).

An example of such a country life meets us here in the good times of Israel. Boaz himself, when the day has considerably advanced, comes to look after his people in the field. His greeting is, "Jehovah be with you!" Their answer, "Jehovah bless thee!" Nor is this, in his mouth, merely a customary form: the reality of his piety is manifest from his life and works. Hence, also, as the master, so the servant. The overseer knows the benignity of his master, and imitates it. This appears as soon as Boaz comes and notices the strange maiden. That he does this at once, is only a new feature in the rural picture. On the fields of Boaz, the poor were not hindered in their legal privilege of gleanings. But the proprietor knows not only his work-people, but the needy also. Ruth he had never yet seen. It may be supposed also that her modest and reserved bearing served at once to mark her. She who had so long been mistress herself, had not the look of those who have grown bold in beggary. Such a one as she was must have sufficiently manifested her superiority over the female servants by the natural charm and grace of her presence, even though she dressed in the same style and engaged in similar toil. She could not fail to surprise Boaz, as he surveyed his people and their labor. He turns to his overseer with the natural inquiry, "Whose is this damsel?" It was in accordance with national custom to ask, not, "Who is this damsel?" — for that was of comparatively little importance, — but, "Whence is she? how comes she here? to what estate does she belong? With the overseer's answer begins the beautiful delineation of the two principal persons of the narrative in their first

¹ [The following remarks on parched corn are from Dr. Thomson's *The Land and the Book* (ii. 510): "It is made thus: a quantity of the best ears, not too ripe, are plucked with the stalks attached. These are tied into small parcels, a blazing fire is kindled with dry grass and thorn bushes, and the corn-heads are held in it until the chaff is mostly burned off. The grain is thus sufficiently roasted to be eaten, and it is a favorite article all over the country. When travelling in harvest-time, my muleteers have very often thus prepared parched corn in the evenings after the tent has been pitched. Nor is the gathering of these green ears for parching ever regarded as stealing. After it has been roasted, it is rubbed out in the hand and eaten as there is occasion." — Tr.]

² Which they probably consumed under the shade of beautiful trees, as in Goethe's picture (*Herm. u. Dorothea*): "It (a tree of which he is speaking) was visible far and wide: under it the reapers were accustomed to enjoy their noonday meal."

³ In describing his servitude in Egypt, M. Heberer says (Rosenmüller, *Morgenland*, iii. 68): "It is truly incredible how the oisruit, eaten with vinegar and oil, strengthens the

meeting. The overseer knew Ruth; and it was not necessary to tell Boaz much about her, since the return of Naomi had been much talked of. But it is honorable to him that he at once recommends her by praising her diligence. Since morning she had not ceased to glean, — had scarcely rested a little in the house.⁴ This praise of her diligence included praise of the propriety and reserve of her demeanor. She was very unlike other gleaners. Those were apt to chatter and do many other things beside that for which they came.

Ver. 8. And Boaz said to Ruth, Go not to glean in another field. The interest of Boaz, who had already heard of the Moabitess, especially as Naomi was at least something more to him than an entire stranger, — a fact either unknown to the overseer, or which, like a good and sagacious servant, he discreetly passed over, — could not but increase by reason of the praise bestowed on Ruth. He therefore went to her, to speak with her personally. In the case of another maiden of whom he had heard similar good reports, he would have given a few favorable directions concerning her to his overseer. But here he was met by various peculiar considerations. Was it Naomi, the widow of a relative of his, who was forced to lay claim to the widow's rights in the harvest-fields of Israel, or was it the Moabitess, who, for having attached herself with all her heart to Israel, now commanded the favor of the Israelite? Both these thoughts are at work in the noble mind of Boaz. He recognizes the existence of a certain relationship, the benefit of which is due to Ruth. It is not a common maid-servant who stands before him. Had he been actuated by the spirit of modern sentimentality, he would probably have been ashamed of her. He would have offered her a piece of money, and sent her away, that it might not become known that this Moabitish beggar is his relative! He would at all events not have allowed her to go on gleaning! But according to the ancient delicate and religious view, he cannot act thus. Nothing has been asked of him; consequently, he has no right to wound the self-respect of others. The privilege of gleanings belongs of right to the widow and the stranger. It is not well that she needs it; but needing it, he cannot hinder her from using it. Even while he admits her relationship, he can only support her in this right, and enlarge its advantages. And this is what he does. Ruth had modestly gleaned at a distance from the reapers and binders.⁵ He calls her nearer, and says: "Go not to glean in another field." In

weary and exhausted system and restores its powers." The drink of the Roman soldiers, called *pasca*, consisted of water and vinegar. Hadrian, to encourage his troops, used it himself (Spartian. *Vit. Hadr.* ch. x). Of a different nature is the food which in Virgil (*Ed.* ii. 10) is prepared for the reapers (*rapido ferris messoribus astu*) and others, with garlic and thyme. Some other learned observations see in Serarius, *Quæst.* xxiv. p. 738.

⁴ שְׁבִיתָהּ הַבַּיִת. The allusion can only be to a field-building, since otherwise her sitting in it could not be known to the laborers. And as the "sitting" forms a contrast with her laboring, it must be taken in the sense of "resting." In the Sept. rendering *ἐν ἀγρῷ, ἀγρός* stands for a building in the field, *villa, castra in agro*.

⁵ There is a difference when, according to ver. 7, she gleaned near the sheaves, after the reapers, אַחֲרֵי הַקְּצִירִים בְּעֵמְרֵים, and when, in ver. 15, she is allowed to glean "between the sheaves," בֵּין הַעֲמֻרִים, among the reapers

these words he acknowledges the first degree of the interest to which his relationship binds him. Both for her sake — for would she everywhere have such favorable opportunities to glean as he gave her? — and also for his own! That which is a benefit to her, is also seemly with respect to himself as related to her, in order that Elimelech's daughter-in-law may not wander from field to field like one utterly helpless.

Nor go from hence, but keep here, with my maidens. He has called her to him where he stands, near the reapers. Only on this supposition are these words intelligible. Immediately behind the reapers, came the maidens who bound the grain. The gleaner who was allowed to approach nearest the latter, had the best opportunity. Ruth had hitherto kept back, which perhaps allowed others to anticipate her and take away the best. Boaz bids her come close up to the binders, and to stay there.¹ He allows her to glean indeed, but he makes her glean more productive.

Ver. 9. **Keep thine eyes on the field that they reap, and go after them, etc.** He takes care not only to provide her an abundant gleanings, but also to ensure the safety of her person. He is not dealing with a gleaner of the common class. Close by the reapers is no doubt a good place for finding ears, but it involves also the possibility of rude treatment. Her appearance may have been such as would not unlikely provoke the coarse jests with which such peasant laborers were perhaps in the habit of assailing women. She would prefer, therefore, as he foresees, to keep herself back, rather than work in their immediate neighborhood. Be not concerned, he says: I have already given charge that no one touch thee.² Act without fear; and when thou thirstest, go boldly and drink.

Ver. 10. **Then she fell on her face, etc.** It may be clearly seen here, that only such as can exercise love, understand how to receive it. No one is humbler than he who truly gives from love — of that Ruth is a proof; and for that reason, humility never shows itself more beautiful, than when love receives. Ruth had made the greatest sacrifices, although no one had a right to expect them from her, and is withal so unassuming, as not to look for anything from others. Most people in her place would have made the first favor shown them, the occasion for saying that in truth they were not at all used to such work. Their thanks would have been combined with complaints and accusing insinuations about the distress in which they found themselves, although they had exchanged the people and God of Moab for those of Israel. Ruth's love did not spring from selfishness, and hence did not give birth to any proud self-consciousness. Instead of a sigh that she who had said, "thy people is my people, thy God my God," could scarcely by weary toil procure sustenance in Israel, she utters her humble thanks to Boaz: How is it that I, a stranger, obtain such favor!

¹ The words **לֹא־תֵעָבְרִי מִן־הַקָּצֵר** [on the form **תֵּעָבְרִי**, cf. Ges. 47. Rem. 1] would be a useless repetition, if they did not express the idea that she is not to leave the place where she now stands before him (and whither he probably caused her to be called), as being favorable to her success.

² Dr. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, ii. 510, explains the charge of Boaz to the reapers in almost the same language as our author, and adds: "Such precautions are not out of place at this day. The reapers are gathered from all parts of the country, and largely from the ruder class, and, living far from home, throw off all restraint, and give free license to their tongues, if nothing more." — Tr.]

Instead of taking it as a matter of course that Boaz should especially regard (וְאַתָּה) her, being a stranger, she is so unassuming as to deem this very fact an enhancement of his kindness.

Ver. 11. **And Boaz said, It hath been told me, etc.** The answer which Boaz gives, is not simply that of the landed proprietor, but of the Israelite. He speaks out of the abundance of the faith of Israel. We feel that he acts as he does from a sense of his duty as an Israelite. The Jewish expositors have identified Boaz with Ibzan the judge (Judg. xii. 8), because the latter also was of Bethlehem — manifestly the northern Bethlehem, however, and not that of Judah (cf. the Comment. on Judges). But in enunciating such opinions, they have their eyes more on the spirit than on the historical facts. They only felt themselves bound to point out that, since Boaz, like other Judges, is said to have been a "valiant hero," and is evidently rich and highly esteemed, he must also have exercised the functions of the judge. Literally, this cannot be maintained; for, had it been the case, our Book would not have been silent on the subject. But during the so-called period of the Judges, there were certainly other able men in Israel than the heroes mentioned in the Book of Judges, who filled the office of judge in their cities (cf. Com. on Judg. ii. 16); and Boaz would certainly furnish us with a beautiful likeness of one of these. In his words, at least, there is undeniably the breathing of a pious, national consciousness, such as becomes an Israelitish family-head and hero in the presence of a recent proselyte to his faith and people.

All that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law, etc. The words of Boaz here clearly state what, in accordance with the delicacy of ancient narration, was not expressly said above. Ruth has nowhere hinted that she was showing kindness to her mother-in-law in going with her to Israel. All she said, was, "I will not leave thee." When Naomi arrives at Bethlehem, and everybody is eager with curiosity, the lamentations in which she breaks out are indeed recorded, but not the words in which she praised her daughter-in-law. Nevertheless, she fully appreciated what Ruth did for her. This was the very reason why she at first refused to accept her sacrifice. Afterwards, however, she gratefully recounted her obligations to her daughter-in-law, but, as discreet minds are wont to do, behind her back. Boaz could have derived his knowledge only from narrations proceeding from Naomi herself.

The merit which Boaz imputes to Ruth is of a twofold nature. Induced by affection, she has left the highest possessions of life. She was no orphan, she was not homeless; she had what she needed, but left all, and that for something unknown, the value of which she was not able to estimate. "Thou camest," he says, "to a people which yesterday³ and the day before yesterday (*i. e.*

³ It is remarkable that this belongs to the same root with **נָכַר**, "stranger," which also occurs in the address of Ruth

In the High. **וְהַיָּרִי**, and the adject. form **יָרִירִי**, the two offshoots of the radical signification appear in juxtaposition to each other, as in the German *unterscheiden* (to distinguish) and *ausscheiden* (to separate).

⁴ **הַיְהוּדִים** is an abbreviation of **יְהוּדֵי הַיְהוּדִים**. The explanation becomes clearer by comparison with other languages. The Greek **Ἰουδαῖος** (*Ἰουδαῖος*), the Latin *heri* (*hester-nus*) and the German *gestern* (Goth. *gistra*), may all be recognized

formerly) thou didst not know." How? had she not known her family, Naomi, and her own husband, who were of Israel? But this family lived in Moab, where Israel's law was not in force. The national usages and institutions which had been impressed upon Israel by Israel's God, she did not know. And notwithstanding this, she had said, "Thy people is my people, thy God my God."

Ver. 12. **Jehovah recompense thy work.** As Boaz praises a double merit in Ruth, so he gives a double form to his wish for her. First he says, generally, "Jehovah recompense thy work." Independently of Naomi's connection with Israel, Ruth's love for her mother-in-law, for whose sake she has left parents and native land, deserves the reward of God. But she came to Israel with Naomi, and for her sake has trustfully connected herself with a people whose laws she did not know, and whose character she has only seen mirrored forth in her husband and his mother. For this love and trust may Jehovah, the God of Israel, as he expressly adds, reward thee! Jehovah is known in Israel. Whoever accepts his wing, may build on Him. He covers with his wings, him who confides in Him and sets his hopes on Him (Ps. xci. 1 ff.), Ruth has come trustfully expecting to be able to live in Israel with Naomi. She has brought nothing with her; has left everything. They have come, both poor; and have scarcely what is necessary to sustain life. Nevertheless, for her love's sake, she dared to make the God of Israel her God. Like Abraham, leaving all, she went abroad. And as to Abraham God said, "I am thy great reward" (Gen. xv. 1), so Boaz wishes that God may be to her a full reward. A "full reward," abundant as her love, so that she shall miss nothing, but recover all; and so that in her it may be seen, how those are entertained who shelter themselves beneath His wings. Boaz does not discourse as one would speak to a Moabitish beggar. Having heard who she is, he looks upon her with eyes full of joy over her pious actions. He speaks to her as a priest and prophet. And since he spoke from the enthusiasm of piety, and she was deserving, his words found fulfillment. She received a reward which was not only full, but which completed and wholly filled her, all of which is implied in the words **יְשַׁלְּמֶנּוּ** and **יְשַׁלְּמָהּ**.

Ver. 13 ff. **May I find favor in thy sight; for thou hast comforted me.** The impression of the words of Boaz must have been very grateful to the humble mind of Ruth. It was the first sunbeam that broke through the grief and tears of many weeks. Hitherto, she had tasted only parting sorrow. She had suffered at the grave of her husband, suffered on the way from the land which held the dwelling of her parents, and her sufferings were not yet at an end when she reached Israel. There she had hitherto suffered from the sense of loneliness. Everybody talked of her as the "Moabitess." She was poor to beggary. Now, for the first time, she is addressed about the God of Israel and his grace, and hears the voice of blessing from one of that people with members of which she has endured so much. The full import of his words her humble heart does not presume to appropriate. But the kindness and benevolence of the speaker's voice,

is for her like the sound of a bubbling spring in the desert to the thirsty. I have long been sad, she intends to say; thou hast comforted me. I look for no reward; but thou hast spoken to the heart of thy servant, that was full of grief and anguish. Her phraseology also indicates her sincere humility. "May I find favor in thy sight," she says, by way of humble introduction to her grateful acknowledgment of the comfort he has imparted to her. It is a formula expressive of the reverence she feels for Boaz. She invokes his favor, that she may tell him how his words have refreshed her. Whoever has, like her, left everything, in order to live in Israel, will feel that the highest and best utterance she could make, when for the first time she tasted the kindness of Israel, was gratitude for the comfort experienced. A word of love comes on a loving heart like hers, long afflicted by sorrow, like morning dews on a thirsty field.

And yet I am not as one of thy handmaidens.¹ No one can speak so well and beautifully as an unassuming person. Ruth manifests no consciousness of having done anything special. Boaz she thinks is doubtless equally kind and good to all his people. So much the more is it her part to be grateful that he has also been kind to her, who does not, as they, belong to his household, nor even to his people. It might be thought strange that Boaz says nothing to her of his relationship to her husband. But if he thought of it, he purposely kept silent about it. He showed her kindness, not because she was distantly related to him, but solely because of her excellence. In the case of one like Ruth, he needed not the remembrance of kinship to stir him up to take interest in her. It was not as the widow of his kinsman that he distinguished her with special favor, but as one who had taken refuge under the wings of Israel's God. Ruth likewise did not know what Boaz was to her husband's family; nor had she wasted a word to make him aware that she had ever been more than a maid-servant, which, had she done, might have brought their relationship to speech.

The answer of Ruth raised her still higher in the esteem of Boaz. He is not satisfied with the provisions already made in her behalf. He bids her join in the common meal, and helps her to a portion of everything on hand. Nor is he satisfied to let her have merely a common gleanings. He orders that now and then some ears be intentionally drawn out of the "bundles" and left for her to gather up. This last injunction he gives to the workmen themselves, not merely to the overseer.

It is interesting also to notice the different expressions in which he forbids any rude treatment of Ruth by the workpeople. Above, in ver. 9, he told them not to "touch" her. In ver. 15, where she receives permission also to glean *between* the sheaves, he tells them not to "shame" her, in other words, to say things to her that would make her blush, whether they referred to her nationality or to the special favor by which she was directed to glean close behind the reapers. In ver. 16, finally, having ordered the people even to pull ears out of the bundles for her, he charges them not to "speak harshly" to her (**לִּפְנֵי**), or to scold her, on account of the extra trouble which this order might occasion to "former," while **כֵּן**, as pronoun, "that," indicates the defined former day, yesterday.

1 [KEN: "With this clause she restricts the expression 'thy handmaid,' which she has just used: 'thou hast spoken to the heart of thy handmaid.'" — TR.]

u the Sanskrit *hjas* (Benf. ii. 208). *Jas* (in *hjas*) is, "the day," and the *h* is the demonstrative article pointing backward, cf. Lat. *ille*; so that *hjas*, and the other cognate forms, signify, "that day," i. e. "the former day." The formation of **יְשַׁלְּמֶנּוּ** is analogous. **יְשַׁלְּמָהּ** (**יְשַׁלְּמָהּ**) is equivalent

sion them. It is necessary to distinguish carefully between עֲמָר and עֲבָרָה. The former is the sheaf, already bound by the maid-servants, and lying on the ground; the latter,¹ is the bundle as "taken up" and still held in the arm, *manipulus*.

Amid all the unusual favors bestowed on her, Ruth does not cease for a moment to be herself. Boaz reached or caused to be reached to her an abundance of roasted ears. She eats and is satisfied — this is stated in order to indicate the abundant supply; the remainder she carefully takes up to carry home. She never thinks only of herself. After the meal, — at which it is appropriate² to suppose Boaz to be present, — gleaning is an easier task than before his coming; she finds ears in plenty, but not on that account does she cease the sooner. She gleans till evening, takes the pains, too, to beat out what she has gathered, and carries home a plentiful harvest, almost an ephah. It is impossible to ascertain the quantity, still less its weight, exactly, but it was considerable, say fifty-five pounds.

HOMILETICAL AND PRACTICAL.

"Let me go to the field and glean ears of corn."

Ruth manifested her confession of the God of Israel not merely by words: she testifies her love also by deeds. She is inclined to work for Naomi as well as to live with her. She not only learned to pray to God with her, but she will also beg for her among men. Accordingly, Naomi, in her poverty, is not maintained by the friends of her family, but by the love of her proselyte daughter-in-law. What Ruth had never done in Moab, — the hard service of begging at the hands of men, and of gleaning in the hot days of harvest-time in the midst of vulgar surroundings, — that she freely offers to do in Israel. As proselyte she felt herself compelled to what as heathen she had never had need of. Had a sister Moabitess met her in this employment, and inquired what it was that could urge her to it, she would have answered her as Elger von Hohenstein did his brother, who finding him, away from his castle and its life of ease, engaged in taking care of the poor, exclaimed, "Alas, my brother, what are you doing? what distress compels you to this?" "Sir brother mine," was the answer, "distress compels me not; but the love of Christ my Lord constrains me."

Here also Ruth is the great type of all true conversion in the history of the Christian Church. While Pharisees and priests were too dull to recognize the light of Christ, the apostles whom he had won to himself, constrained by love, labored for their nation, and were willing to be banished and to suffer, if only they might win some. While in Southern Europe, in the old cities of the Roman Empire, the love of Christians had become cold, the new-won proselytes from Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, and German heathendom went forth, and in the heat of conflict and suffering, gleaned rich harvests for their Lord in the North and East.

Enough has never been done in the way of seeking to win and train converts by the force of exam-

ple and doctrine. Of example, indeed, they have often seen too much. Everything that has ever been done for them, and which is sometimes made matter of disguised boasting, is not equal to what a single proselyte, burning with love for the kingdom of his Lord, has suffered and accomplished.

STARKE: "To begin a good work is glorious; but to continue in it, notwithstanding all inducements to apostasy, is godly."

True love can never fail in its purpose, although success may tarry long. Ruth had been married ten years in Moab, before she could say, "Thy God is my God." But now only a few harvest-days elapsed, and the favor of God, exerting itself through a genuine Israelite, overspread her. Failure always has its ground in the spirit of the purpose. If that spirit be love rooted in God, as in Ruth, it will not be disappointed. Hence, the surest sign of love is gentle and thankful patience.

CHRYSOSTOM: "Observe that what happened to Ruth is analogous with what happened to us. For she was a stranger, and had fallen into the extremest distress; but Boaz, when he saw her, neither despised her poverty, nor contemned the lowliness of her family. So Christ took up the Church, and chose the stranger, who lacked the most necessary possessions, for his bride. But as Ruth would never have attained to such a union, had she not previously left her parents and given up people, home, and kindred, so the Church also does not become dear and deserving in the eyes of her Bridegroom, until she has left her ancestral (heathen) morals and customs."

"Boaz came from Bethlehem and said unto the reapers," etc. A true believer is also the best employer. He greets them, "Jehovah be with you!" They answer, "Jehovah bless thee!" Living faith in God is the best bond between master and workman, preventing a wrongful use of power on the one side, and presumptuous insubordination on the other. Not as if the servants of Boaz were free from the rude manners so generally characteristic of their class; but the just demeanor of their master, refined by humility, controlled them. Where a pious and brave spirit like that of Boaz pervades the community, social questions and crises do not arise. For external laws can never restrain the inward cravings of the natural man. But where the landed proprietor, in his relations to his people, is governed by other principles than those of self-interest, and cares also for their moral and religious development; where, further, the laborer understands that an increase in wages is not necessarily an increase of peace and happiness; where, in a word, the consciousness of an omnipresent God regulates the uprightness and care of the one, and the honesty and devotion of the other, there no artificial solutions of conflicts between capital and labor will be required. Boaz lives in God, and therefore knows what duties of faith and love are obligatory upon him.

STARKE: "If God be with work-people, and if they are reverently mindful of his omnipresence, they will be preserved from idleness and unfaithfulness, and restrained from all sorts of frivolous and

1 But neither are עֲבָרָה (עֲבָרָה) and עֲמָר (ver. 14), both of which words occur only here in Hebrew, to be referred to the same radical signification, as has been done, e. g. by Fürst (in *Lex.*), who renders ver. 14: "and they bound together for her parched ears of corn (in bundles):" and declares the meaning "to reach out," after the Targ. לְעֵבְרָה, to be merely conjectural. — Tg.] The one comes

from a root which means "to give," the other from one which means "to take." The first is cognate with the Arabic *dhabatha*, to take, to lay hold of with the hand hence a "handful," *manipulus* (cf. *Il.* xi. 69). The other is to be compared with the Greek *ἄρ-ἀντι*, expense, "out-give," cf. *διδωμι*, Sanskrit *dadami*, dare.

2 [And necessary, too, if we follow the Masoretic accentuation, according to which Boaz himself calls Ruth at meal time: "Come hither." Cf. note under the text. — Tg.]

offensive babble; and such labor draws after it God's especial blessing."

"*Jehovah, the God of Israel, give thee a complete reward.*" Boaz finds that Ruth has come to glean on his field. He had not yet seen, but had heard of her. But now, seeing her diligence, but also her neediness, he yet does not speak to her as a rich man to one on whom he bestows an alms, nor as one relative to another, but, before all else, as an Israelite to one who has come to shelter herself under the wings of Israel's God. The Israelitish proprietor speaks like a priest of Jehovah. Before all his people, he blesses her in her confession of his God. He announces to her prophetically the reward of her love. And his word was fulfilled, for, as a church-father expresses it, "every believer, in spirit and in truth, is a prophet." Boaz presents a beautiful contrast with Ruth; with him, love comes of faith. The chief and special reason why he does good to her, is, that she is a guest in Israel, a dove under Jehovah's protection, — that

love has made her a believer. His religion has the uppermost place in his soul. It gives birth to his works — it makes him conscious of his duty as an Israelite. It gives him also that delicacy of perception which enables him to sympathize with the anxiety, lonesomeness, and isolation, which attend an entrance into a new land, among a new people. Only a genuine believer is truly discreet. Refinement of the heart springs only of faith. There may be a lack of courtly manners; but the most elevated style of intercourse with men, and the truest politeness, are the natural outgrowth of a disposition permeated with the humility of the gospel of truth.

STARKE: "This also is given to pious souls by God, that being devoted to him, he often secretly, and even without their becoming aware of it, impels them to this or that good action." THE SAME: "A meritorious person may well enough be informed that his merits, or whatever there be worthy of praise and love about him, are recognized and properly estimated."

VERSES 18-23.

The Beginning of the Blessing.

- 18 And she took it up, and went [came] into the city: and her mother-in-law saw⁴ what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved
- 19 [left over] after she was sufficed [satisfied]. And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest² thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge [friendly notice] of thee. And she shewed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to-day
- 20 is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord [Jehovah], who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead.⁵ And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin [related, lit. near, i. e. near, not in comparison with other relatives, but with men in general] unto us, one of our next kinsmen [one of our redeemers]. And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also,⁴ Thou shalt keep
- 22 fast by my young men [by my people], until they have ended all my harvest. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out
- 23 [only] with his maidens, that they meet [maltreat] thee not in any other field. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley-harvest and of wheat-harvest; and dwelt [and then she abode, remained] with her mother-in-law.

TEXTUAL AND GRAMMATICAL.

[1 Ver. 18. — $\text{וַתִּשְׁׁרָה} \text{ וַתֵּלֶךְ}$]: Wright points the first word as Hiph., וַתִּשְׁׁרָה , "and she showed." "So we prefer to read, following the Vulg., Syr., and Arab. It is rather harsh with the ordinary punctuation to make וַתֵּלֶךְ the nom. to וַתִּשְׁׁרָה (so pointed by the majority of MSS.), when Ruth is the subject of all the verbs that precede and of those that follow immediately after. Two of Kennicott and De Rossi's MSS. read $\text{וַתִּשְׁׁרָה} \text{ וַתֵּלֶךְ}$, which would seem to imply a reading וַתִּשְׁׁרָה ; but while two of my own MSS. have the reading $\text{וַתִּשְׁׁרָה} \text{ וַתֵּלֶךְ}$, either by first or second hand, the verb is pointed as ordinarily, וַתִּשְׁׁרָה ." The absence of וַתֵּלֶךְ does not prove that וַתִּשְׁׁרָה is not an accus., cf. Ges. 117, 2. — Tr.]

[2 Ver. 19. — וַעֲשִׂיתָ]: used absolutely for "to labor," as in Prov. xxx. 13; Job xxxiii. 9. Dr. Cassel translates: "und woher hast du (dies) geschafft," i. e. "and where (woher, whence, freely for wo, where) didst thou procure (וַעֲשִׂיתָ , acquire, make, cf. Gen. xxxi. 1; 2 Sam. xv. 1), this?" But, 1, in this sense the verb could hardly be left without an object; and, 2, the word must have the same sense here in the question which it has in the answer in the next clause. Wright prefers to render "where hast thou stayed," i. e. spent the time, וַעֲשִׂיתָ being understood (cf. Eccles. vi 12 and the phrase ποιεῖν χρόνον , Acts xv. 33). But when the talk is of gleaning, it is certainly more natural for Ruth to say, "the man with whom (on whose fields) I worked to-day is Boaz," than "the man with whom I spent my time to-day,"

etc. Wright says that "Gesenius in the *Lex. Man.* prefers this rendering." It is not impossible that Ges. may have varied in different editions; but he has no such preference in the sixth edit. of his German *Handwörterbuch*, nor in Robinson's transl. of his *Lat. Lex. Man.* — In אָרְצָהּ, the force of הַ local is lost, as in אָרְצָהּ = אָרְצָהּ לְיִלְהָ = אָרְצָהּ לְיִלְהָ. — Ta.

[3 Ver. 20. — אֲרֻמֵּי הַחַיִּים וְאֲרֻמֵּי הַמֵּתִים • "with reference to the living and the dead." Accusatives of the objects to which the kindness is done, cf. Ges. 139, 2. "The verb עָוַב is here construed with a double accusative; for if אָרְ were used as a preposition, it would have to be אֲרֻמֵּי as we find מַעַם in Gen. xxiv. 27" (Keil). — מְבַרְכֵנִי לְנִי according to Ges. (*Lex. s. v.* בָּרַךְ and בָּרַךְ) is a sg. noun, מְבַרְכֵנִי, with the plur. suff. of first person = "our second goal." But as no such word is found elsewhere, and as there is no real difficulty in the way, the form in the text is to be taken as script. defect. for מְבַרְכֵנִי, and readened "one of (on כֹּן in this sense, cf. Ges. 154, 3, c) our redeemers." — Ta.]

[4 Ver. 21. — בָּ: not "even so, i. e. may he be blessed, as you have said" (Wright), which with the following "for (בְּי) he said to me," etc., would make but a mercenary amen to Naomi's prayer, to say nothing of the fact that by the intervention of another clause the prayer is too far away; but, "also!" as we say, "more! I have not told you all; for he said," etc., cf. Ges. 155, 2, a. — On the periphrastic genitives of the verse, cf. Ges. 115, 1 — Ta.]

EXOGETICAL AND DOCTRINAL.

Ver. 18 f. **And her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned.** Naomi looked with astonishment at the large quantity brought home by Ruth; and her amazement increased when Ruth in addition produced and gave her the remains of her dinner. To this astonishment she gives utterance by asking, "Where hast thou been? in whose fields canst thou have been at work?" Piety, however, does more than indulge in curiosity simply. The natural heart would have rejoiced, received, enjoyed, and inquired just as Naomi did, but withal with no thought except of self. She, on the contrary, before her inquiries are answered, induced simply by the abundance of the gifts and the manifest happiness of Ruth, blesses the giver. For this she needs not to know who he is. Whoever treated Ruth kindly and loaded her with presents, must have designed to indicate his appreciation of her lot and her virtues. He must know what Ruth has done, seeing he manifested so much solicitude for her, a Moabitess. "Blessed be he who has taken special notice¹ of thee!" It had been a hard thing for her to send Ruth out for such work. The man who has treated her dear child so kindly that she comes home, not only enriched with presents, but also cheerful and happy, deserves a blessing, and that before she knows anything more. This done, Ruth has opportunity to relate the particulars of her good fortune, and finally gives the name of the man who has befriended her, namely, Boaz. She could not know what a consolation and joy the utterance of this name conveyed to Naomi.

Ver. 20. **Blessed be he of Jehovah, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead.** This peculiar exclamation of Naomi on hearing the name of Boaz is undoubtedly worthy of more careful attention than it has hitherto received. Light is thrown upon it by a passage in the history of Abraham. Eliezer has come to Aram, to procure a wife for Isaac from among Abraham's kindred. He is aware of the great importance which his master attaches to his mission. Arrived at the well outside of the city of his destination, he prays that Jehovah would so "order" it (אֲרֻמֵּי הַחַיִּים, Gen. xxiv. 12), that he may there meet with the one appointed to answer the wishes of his master. And, in fact, it turns out

that the affable maiden who draws water for himself and his camels, is Rebecca, the daughter of Bethuel, Abraham's nephew. The desired "ordering" has been vouchsafed, and the astonished Eliezer exclaims, "Blessed be Jehovah . . . who hath not left off his kindness," etc. (לֹא עָוַב) אֲרֻמֵּי, precisely the same expression as in our passage).

A similar providence has happened to Ruth (אֲרֻמֵּי מְקַרְתָּהּ, ver. 3). Without knowing what field to select, she lights on that of Boaz. Without knowing who he is, she is favored by him. Naomi recognizes God's hand in this, even more profoundly than Eliezer did. It is to be remembered that above (ch. i. 13, 20, etc.) she has repeatedly lamented that God's hand is against her, that God has inflicted sorrow upon her. She has indicated that in her view this fate comes upon her because she — or properly her husband and sons, although she does not say this — went to Moab. In the wonderful providence which made Ruth find a friend in Boaz, the rich relative of her husband, she feels herself justified to find an indication that God is once more gracious to her, and has not left off his kindness. If now it was through the fault of her dear departed ones that she had hitherto experienced distress, then it also follows that, since God's goodness again manifests itself so conspicuously, his anger against those must likewise be come to an end. For that reason, she speaks of his kindness not only to the living but also to the dead. For these had died through the same sin which had brought suffering on herself. Hence, God's help to her in her suffering, is a manifestation of his unwearied grace toward both the living and the dead.

But it is certainly proper to find a yet farther meaning in these words. Independently of the special history of the family of Elimelech, this utterance of Naomi concerning God's kindness to the living and the dead, must have its absolute and general application. Indeed, it must be assumed that in using it, Naomi only applied a generally employed formula to her special case. When one says of God that "He does not leave off his kindness," he thereby praises him as the God of pardoning love; as the God who, though He tarry long, hears at last, and does not leave the penitent forsaken. In this shorter form, the expression was appropriate in the above-mentioned passage from Abraham's history. For Eliezer is in perplexity, and knows not well how to perform his task. But

1 מְבַרְכֵנִי: the same word used by Ruth in expressing her gratitude to Boaz (ver. 10): לְהַבְרִיכֵנִי.

it was especially appropriate in the mouth of Naomi, who had thought herself wholly forsaken of God. And hence, it would seem natural to think that if the saying had not already been current in a fixed form, Naomi would have contented herself with saying, "Jehovah who hath not left off his kindness toward us," or "toward the widowed and the poor," etc. The kindness of God "toward the living and the dead," is the most general form of which the saying is susceptible. Now, that God does not leave off his kindness toward the living, is evident to believers from the history of every individual human being, of Israel, and of the world in general (Ps. liii. 4). The very existence of the world testifies of mercy that never ceases, of love that is never embittered. But wherein is his "kindness toward the dead" manifested? If these words do not presuppose the immortality of the soul, as an article of Israelitish faith, what meaning can they have? Although Naomi, reassured by the benevolent actions of Boaz, may regain confidence in God's mercy toward herself, she surely cannot speak of them as kindness to the dead, if the dead have no longer any being. In that case, the actions of Boaz, however viewed, are and continue to be kindness to the living only. God could indeed release the living from the consequences of the guilt of the dead; but when in one and the same mercy He is said to show kindness to the latter as well as to the former, this can have its ground only in the presupposition that the grave ends but this earthly state of existence. Bertheau and Keil both explain, in the same words, that God, "by his care for the widows, showed himself merciful to the husband and sons even after their death." But how can mercy be shown to such as exist no longer? It would never occur to any one to speak or think of that as a mercy to the dead, which, in whatever light it be put, is just mercy to the living, and nothing more. No; we have in this exclamation of Naomi a significant indication of the consciousness of the immortality of the soul which existed in Israel. It had its natural basis in that very mercy of God which does not cease. In this mercy the history of Israel in the world and in the domain of the spirit originated and lives. The Sadducaic doctrine was raised on no other foundation than an Epicurean negation of history. On the enduring mercy of God toward the living and the dead, rests our Saviour's great answer (Matth. xxii. 32): "God is not a God of the dead, but of the living."

Ver. 21 f. The man is related to us. Naomi, observing the astonishment of Ruth at her exclamation, explains the reason of it. (The "redeemer," **גֹּאֵל** will be treated of farther on.) That Ruth had been directed to the field of a blood-relative, seemed to her a sufficiently great mercy. For from all that Ruth had told her, it was evident that she was there well and securely situated. The fear lest Ruth might meet with rude treatment in the harvest-fields, must have been one of Naomi's chief anxieties. Ruth, having learned who Boaz is, now adds, as if she now understood the reason of it, what is not expressly brought out in the foregoing conversation, namely, that Boaz had given her

permission to keep with his people (**בְּעַמִּי**) during the whole harvest-season. And it testifies again of the loving solicitude with which Naomi, like a tender mother, thinks for Ruth, that, as soon as she hears the latter repeat the words of Boaz about keeping with his **בְּעַמִּי** (people, masc.), she at once rejoins: "Good, my daughter, go with his maidens (**בְּעַמִּי**), that they injure thee not in any other field." She has in all this as yet no other thoughts than those of joy and gratitude toward God, that He has so ordered it as to direct Ruth to a relative on whose estate she can glean safely and profitably through the entire harvest, and thus provide the sustenance of both for a whole year. The great question, how to live, was by this providential intervention answered. The fear of want was dissipated and that without insult or shame. While all other means of help failed Naomi, she was first comforted by the love of her daughter-in-law, then upheld by her self-sacrifice, and finally saved from want by the fame of her virtues. Amid the sorrows that befell her in Moab, Naomi, as she herself acknowledged, was not altogether free from blame, for she too had gone thither; only Ruth of all the family had nothing to repent of; and it was through her that God now showed that He had not left off his kindness to the living and the dead.

Ver. 23. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz unto the end of the harvest. It is manifestly not without design that it is added concerning Ruth, that she continued with the maidens throughout the harvest-season. Her diligence did not relax from what it was the first day, although she now knew more than then. Her demeanor was modest and unassuming as ever, so that she returned to the field not otherwise than as she had left it. Her eyes were on the field; and to provide for her mother-in-law continued to be her only solicitude. Boaz had opportunity enough to observe this. He daily saw her gentle and virtuous conduct. Externally and internally, she was no longer a stranger to him. He doubtless found opportunities to show her favors. After an acquaintance so long and hearty, the narrative of chap. iii. is happily introduced.

HOMILETICAL AND PRACTICAL.

["Blessed be he that took kindly notice of thee."]

FULLER: "Learn we from hence, upon the sight of a good deed, to bless the doer thereof, though by name unknown unto us. And let us take heed that we do not recant and recall our prayers, after that we come to the knowledge of his name; as some do, who, when they see a laudable work, willingly commend the doer of it; but after they come to know the author's name (especially if they be prepossessed with a private spleen against him), they fall then to derogate and detract from the action, quarrelling with it as done out of ostentation, or some other sinister end."

BP. HALL: "If the rich can exchange their alms with the poor for blessings, they have no cause to complain of an ill bargain."

1 [In the Pentateuch **בְּעַמִּי** is used, in every instance except one (Deut. xxii. 19), where the later language would write **בְּעַמִּי**, cf. **הָיָה** for **הָיָה**. Gesenius and Fürst take the plural here in the same way, as used for the feminine; but both Boaz (ver. 3) and Nanmi (ver. 22) use the

fem. form, which seems to show that at that time the distinction of gender was no longer neglected. **בְּעַמִּי** is here, as in Job i. 19, to be taken as including both sexes there in the sense of "young people," here in that of "servants." — Tr.]

"*Kindness to the dead.*" The following remarks, though based on an interpretation which Dr. Cassel decidedly, and in so far as it assumes to be exhaustive, probably justly rejects, may nevertheless suggest a very true and useful line of thought. Its entire exclusion by our author is certainly an error. Nothing is more natural or universal than the feeling that kindness done to those left behind by the dead is kindness done to the dead themselves; but it may well be asked whether this feeling is rooted in anything else than the conviction, natural and instinctive, or otherwise, of the continued existence of the soul after death. FULLER: "To the dead. Art thou, then, a widower, who desirest to do mercy to thy dead wife; or a widow, to thy dead husband; or a child, to thy deceased parent? I will tell thee how thou mayest express thyself courteous. Hath thy wife, thy husband, or thy parent, any brother, or kinsman, or friends surviving? Be courteous to them; and, in so doing, thy favors shall redound to the dead. Though old Barzillai be incapable of thy favors, let young Chimham taste of thy kindness. Though the dead cannot, need not have thy mercy, yet may they receive thy kindness by a proxy, — by their friends that still are living." — TR.]

CHAPTER THIRD.

VERSES 1-6.

Obedience in Innocence.

- 1 Then [And] Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek
- 2 rest [a resting-place] for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not
- 3 Boaz of our kindred [i. e. our acquaintance, i. e. relative], with whose maidens thou
- 4 therefore, and anoint thee, and put¹ thy [best] raiment upon thee, and get thee
- 5 down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto [suffer not thyself to be per-
- 6 ceived by] the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall
- be when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou
- shalt go in, and uncover [the place at] his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell
- thee what thou shalt do. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me² I
- will do. And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her moth-
- er-in-law bade her.

TEXTUAL AND GRAMMATICAL.

[¹ Ver. 3. — On שְׂמֵרְתִי and וְרִדְתִי , cf. Ges. 59, 1, c. They are older forms of the second per. fem., and there is no occasion to substitute the *keri* for them. Another instance occurs in ver. 4. — TR.]

[² Ver. 5. — לִּי , supplied by the Masorites, is unnecessary, cf. ver. 11 (where, however, Wright also inserts it on the authority of versions and some MSS.). The same remark is applicable to the case in ver. 17. So Bertheau and Kell. Dr. Cassel omits it here, but retains it in ver. 17. — TR.]

EXEGETICAL AND DOCTRINAL.

Ver. 1. Shall I not seek a resting-place for thee? The peculiar proceeding which these words introduce, may appear somewhat surprising when viewed from the standpoint of modern social life and relations. At all events, this explains why its psychological significance has not yet been properly appreciated. But the narrative of the fortunes of Ruth is so deeply embedded in the characteristic life of Israel, that in order to appreciate its full beauty, it is indispensable to enter thoroughly into the spirit of that life. Perhaps no history teaches more clearly than this, that when love and trust, in their childlike and therefore divine strength, first suffer and then conquer, there is a presentation in actual history of that which the highest works of the imagination present only in idea.

That which made the fate of the daughter of Jephthah so sad, was that she never found a

"resting-place" in the house of a husband. With regard to woman, marriage was viewed as the natural fulfillment of her calling, without which her life was helpless and defenseless, as that of a people without a God. Hence the prayer of Naomi, when about to part from her daughters-in-law, that they may find "rest" in the house of a husband. Orpah returns because she fears never to find it in Israel. Ruth goes with her, because she places her love for Naomi above all other considerations. Then, indeed, the hearts of them all were filled with sorrow. But since then God's mercy has again become manifest. New hope has dawned upon their tears. What a beautiful and happy contrast presents itself now! The same mother-in-law who formerly, in her self-forgetfulness, bade her daughters-in-law return to Moab and find resting-places for themselves, is now in a position, self-forgetful as ever, to seek for Ruth the Moabitess a place in Israel, where it may be well with her. And what was the force that brought about

this beautiful revolution? The love of Ruth which seeks not her own, the faithfulness of Naomi which deserved such love.

The understanding of what chap. iii. relates will be chiefly facilitated by a comparison with the beginning of chap. ii. While the women are in distress, it is Ruth who takes the initiative; now, when hope grows large, it is Naomi. When hardship was to be endured, the mother submitted her will to the daughter,—for Ruth was not sent to glean, she went of her own accord; now, when the endeavor is to secure the joy and happiness held out in prospect, the daughter yields in all things to the direction of the mother. The thought of labor for the mother originates with the daughter; but it is the mother who forms plans of happiness for the daughter. On both occasions, Ruth undertakes a mission. The first time she sets out, a stranger, without a definite place in view, and dressed in the garb of toil and mourning; the second time, with a definite plan, encouraged by the former success, and decked in holiday attire. And yet the second undertaking was not less hard than the first. Humiliation which she had to fear on the first, might also befall her on the second. Indeed, anything that might have befallen her on her first expedition, had not God ordered her goings, would have been far less wounding to her, the foreign and needy woman, than that which on this second expedition might pierce her sensitive heart. The first undertaking was more sorrowful, the second more delicate. At the first she could act openly, at the second only secretly. Then the worst risk she ran was to suffer hunger, now her honor is at stake. The faithfulness to Naomi which she then showed was not greater than the obedience which she now manifests.

And yet Naomi is as little to be reproached for sending Ruth on this second mission, as she was for accepting her proposal to go on the first. On the contrary, her course rather shows that she did not bear her name, or had won such love among strangers, for nothing.

Neither journey of Ruth, taken with the approbation of Naomi, can be measured by modern measuring-rules. They are not attempts at speculative adventure. In both cases, what was done was in accordance with unimpeachable rights afforded by Israelitish law and custom.

When Ruth went to the field to glean, she only asked a right guaranteed to the widowed and the poor. To deny her the privilege of gleaning would have been to deprive her of her right; to injure or put her to shame in the exercise of it, would have been to diminish it. True, the liberal treatment she received from Boaz was no longer a right to be claimed, but the expression of good-will and kindness. Naomi recognized in this the providential arrangement of God. And it is precisely this also that gives courage to Ruth to claim for herself and for Naomi the second right to which she is entitled.

It was an ancient law in Israel, sanctioned by the Mosaic legislation (Deut. xxv. 5), that when a man died without issue, his brother was bound to

marry his widow. This is a right of the woman. She can demand it of him, and if he refuses, put him openly to shame. How early and deeply this usage was rooted in Israel, may be seen from Gen. xxxviii., where the death of Onan is ascribed to his refusal to marry the widow Tamar. The significance of this usage is clear. It is also found among other nations, although distorted and rendered impure. It rests on the historical feeling of the nations, which leads them to attach importance to the preservation not only of the national spirit, but also of the national body, by propagation. In the first psalm, the pious man is compared with a tree whose leaf never withers. And the tree is, in fact, the image best adapted to explain the reason of the usage in question. It is not without reason that the founder of a people is called its *stammvater* [stem-father, trunk-father, cf. the Heb.

terms שֵׁטֶל and שֵׁטֶל shoot, sprout, branch, used for "tribe."—Tr.]. United about this common trunk, the ancient peoples distinguished themselves nationally (from *nasci*) very sharply from those who were not his offshoots.¹ The different families are the branches of this tree. But the head of a family is in his turn a stem, putting forth boughs, as a tree puts forth branches.

The withering of the tree is the image of death. As no branch in the tree, so no member in the family, should perish. Now, the nation lives in its families. Hence, if a man dies without children, it is as if a branch withered in the tree. To remedy this, a new branch is, as it were, engrafted on the tree. This is done when the brother marries the widow, and regards the son she bears as heir to the name and possessions of the deceased husband. But what if there be no brother? Is the name then to be after all extinguished and the branch to be forever wanting? The law, as given in Deut. xxv. 5 ff., does not indeed declare it, but it is an inference in accordance with its spirit, that in that case the obligation passes over to the nearest relatives of the deceased. Every family—such is manifestly the idea of the usage—must take care that no member in it dies out. What the brother is to the brother, that, when he has no brother, his more distant blood-relatives must be. The letter of the law, it is true, did not command this; but, as the narrative of our Book shows, the spirit of that usage which the law sanctioned, required it. Naomi, by way of explaining to her daughter-in-law her joy over the way in which God had ordered her steps, says, Boaz is related (בִּרְיָ, like *propinquus*) to us, he belongs to our *goelim* (גֹּאֲלִים). The word *gaal* (גָּאֵל), to which *goel* belongs, is philologically and in its original signification one and the same with the Greek *λύω*, "to loose."² It is not to be ascribed to the same root with the similarly sounding גָּעַל, although it is true that, owing to the well-known interchange of *N* and *G*, it sometimes occurs instead of it.³ The latter word means, "to pollute;" and is related to the former

that גָּאֵל was lengthened from גָּל, as גָּעַל from גָּל.

This גָּל, originally related to both *λύω* and *luo*, has retained its *g*, which in the ancient languages has been frequently thrown off. The copious discussion of Benfey, *Gr. Gram.* ii. 119-124, should be compared.

³ The few instances, Isa. lix. 8, ixlii. 8, Zeph. v. 1, Mal. i. 7, 12, Lam. iv. 14, in which גָּעַל—i. q. גָּעַל written

¹ The sensual abuse into which the practice of levirate marriage is said to have fallen among the Nairs of Malabar, has extinguished the family proper among them. All are blood-relatives. They are a tree without branches. The correction of many of the views of Bohlen, *altes Indien*, ii. 142, however much they need it, cannot here be undertaken.

² Furst (*Concordantia*, s. v. גָּאֵל) has truly remarked

as the Latin *luc*, pollute (cf. *lutum*, *pol-luc*), to the Greek *λύω*, "to loose." The correspondence of the ideas "to redeem" and "to loose," in their external relationship, testifies, both in Hebrew and in Indo-germanic, to their internal mutual connection. The idea currently attached in Israel to the term *gual*, "to loose," is everywhere definitely determined by the conception of the people as an historical organism. By this it was defined mainly as a "redeeming" [*einlösen*, "inloosing," from *ein*, "in," and *lösen*, "to loose;" i. e. a loosening of that which has been bound, by means of which it is brought back into its original position (e. g. a captive into his home, a slave into his freedom) or ownership (e. g. a piece of land, a promissory note, etc.). — Tr.]¹ According to the social philosophy of the Mosaic law, no member of the national organism was to perish, no branch of the tree was to wither. Whatever had been dislocated by natural events was to be re-set; whatever had been alienated must be redeemed. This applied, as an example in our Book itself teaches, to lands as well as to persons; and the duty of redemption rested, as within the nation, so within the families into which the nation branched out. No one could redeem anything for a family, who did not belong to it by blood-relationship. Hence also the transition of the idea of *goel* into that of blood-relative was perfectly natural. Properly speaking, there could be no redeemer who was not a blood-relative. The meaning of the word is profoundly set forth in the various grand historical unfoldings of its idea. For every redemption [*einlösung*, "inloosing,"] has always been a setting free [*lösung*, "loosing"], albeit not always without security. The Greek *λύω* also passes over into the idea of "setting free," "releasing." Dionysos, in his character as god of the spring-season, is called *Lysios*, the Liberator. The Liberator of Israel is God. He frees out of and from servitude. For that reason, the Messiah who delivers Israel is especially called *Goel*. When he appears, he will come as Israel's blood-relation and brother, as Christ was. The dismal counterpart of the *goel* as redeemer and deliverer, is the *goel* as blood-avenger. He owes his origin to the opinion, which slowly and painfully disappeared in Israel,² but which is still partially prevalent in the East, and inspires many current superstitions, that the blood of the slain cannot be put to rest and liberated, until his murderer has been killed. The duty of this blood-revenge rests upon the blood-relatives, not only on the brother, strictly so called, but on the nearest relative, whoever he may be. So far this terrible usage becomes instructive with reference to the beneficent national custom which made it the duty of the blood-relative not to let the house of his kinsman die out; for this also was a blood-redemption, not unto death, however, but unto happiness and peace. The *goel* was no judge — as

with an *N* — occurs in the sense "to pollute," should not have been placed under *לֹאֵל*, "to loose," in the concordance [cf. Fürst]. No one would identify *luc* (*polluc*) with *λύω* in that way.

1 Our *lösen*, "to loose," also, has in M. H. Germ. the sense of *einlösen*, "to redeem," "to ransom," sc. a pledge, land, etc. It occurs in this sense in poets and documents, especially Low German, cf. Riedel, *Cod. Brand*, i. 2, 207: "*van den drozsten dat land losete.*" In another document Herr Heinrich von Mecklenburg is to "*ledegen und losen (einlösen) alle hus und stede und de land;*" cf. Kröcher, *Urkundenbuch zur Gesch. des Geschlechts*, i. 172; also, i. 143, etc.

also the greatest *Goel* came not to judge the world — but a comforter, a dispenser of life and love.

Ver. 2. Is not Boaz of our kindred? By these words Naomi explains to Ruth the right she has to engage in the undertaking she is about to recommend. His relationship gives her a right to apply to him for a performance of its duties. It is not to be thought singular that, if Ruth had this right of marriage, the first motion toward its fulfillment did not come from Boaz. In the first place, it was in accordance with ancient usage to leave the assertion of a right with its possessor. It was not the duty of a landowner, for example, to go after the poor, and make them glean; but it was his duty not to forbid them, when they came. In the next place, however, we learn farther on that Boaz was not the nearest relative. The objection which Ruth in her humility might find in her Moabitish nationality, or which she might entertain even without reference to that fact, is met by Naomi in the words: "with whose maidens thou wast." She thus reminds Ruth that Boaz, so far from slighting her on account of her nationality, has distinguished her, and put her on perfect equality with his Israelitish work-people.

Behold, he winnoweth barley to-night in the threshing-floor.⁸ This remark shows that since Ruth's participation in the harvest of Boaz, Naomi must have come into closer connection with her relative. She is minutely informed of what he does and where he is. We must also suppose that it had not escaped her how much kindness Boaz had shown to Ruth. She could not but feel sure that the claim which Ruth was to prefer, would not be addressed to a hard and unsympathetic heart. On the other hand, it was natural to think that although Boaz was an elderly man, Ruth must be heartily attached to him. It was he, whose kindness fell like a first beam of light on her sadness. Such an impression, after scenes and moods like those through which Ruth had passed, is never lost. She went forth on her first undertaking at the beginning of barley-harvest; she enters on the second, when the barley is winnowed on the threshing-floor. Between the two there lies an interval of time sufficient to explain how Naomi could have the courage and the information necessary to send her daughter on such an errand.

Ver. 3 ff. But let not thyself be perceived by the man. Ruth was directed to pay special attention to the adornment of her person, to which, to this extent at least, she had since the death of her husband been a stranger. She is to lay aside the weeds of mourning and the garments of toil, and after bathing and anointing, don the festive garb; for the expedition on which she goes is of a joyous, bridal nature. All this, however, is *not* done in order to win Boaz by external beauty; for she is specially cautioned against allowing him to see her by day. But why this caution? Boaz was

² My observations in my treatise on "*den armen Heinrich*," will hereafter, D. V., be further elaborated. Cf. the article of J. G. Hoffmann on *Blutrache*, in the *Hallschen Encycyl.*

⁸ [Winnowing is done by tossing the mingled grain and chaff up into the air, when the chaff is blown away to a distance, while the heavier grain falls straight down. Hence, the evening and early night when a cool wind frequently arises after hot, sultry days (cf. Gen. iii. 8), was taken advantage of by Boaz for this work. For "to-night," the Targum has, "in the night wind." On threshing and threshing-floors, cf. Rch. i. 560; Thomson, ii. 814 ff. — Ta.]

a believing Israelite, and therefore also a man of strict morals. It would have perplexed and displeased him to think that anybody else had seen Ruth, and might suspect both her and himself of an illicit meeting on the solitary threshing-floor. He would have scarcely listened to her, but removed her at once. The purpose for which she came had also an appropriate symbolism, which any previous meeting would have disturbed. By whatever means, Naomi knew that this night — for it was in the night that Ruth was to present her petition — Boaz was to be alone on the threshing-floor. The floor, albeit not entirely closed in, may have been partially surrounded by some sort of fencing, by means of which Ruth could conceal herself until the proper time, and within which Boaz ate and drank. Most probably the grain-heaps themselves formed the natural boundaries, between which, accordingly, Boaz also betook himself to repose.

Ver. 6. And did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her. Ruth was to do something a little beyond what the prudence and delicacy of a woman ordinarily permitted. For that reason, it is expressly repeated that she did as her mother-in-law directed her. She was justly confident that the latter would order nothing that could injure her. True love, such as Ruth cherished for Naomi, always includes perfect obedience. It was not in Ruth that the thought of a new marriage had originated. Her heart had no other thought than to serve Naomi like a dutiful child. But Naomi, equally self-forgetful, busied herself with plans for a "resting-place for her child." She, too, thought not of herself only, but of Ruth. She had undoubtedly done all that was in her power by way of preparation, before she directed Ruth to take the decisive step. From that step she could not save her, for custom devolved it on her. It is the beauty of the present instance, that this custom compelled Ruth to nothing that was against her will. For although she acted in a matter regulated by law, it was not settled in this case that Boaz was the right man. So much the more essential was it that, by Ruth's personal action, the perfect freedom and inclination of the woman should be manifested. The greater the stress that was laid on this by the whole symbolical proceeding, the more significant is the remark that Ruth "did everything, as her mother-in-law commanded her."

HOMILETICAL AND PRACTICAL.

"Go down to the threshing-floor." Love speaks only of duties, not of rights. Ruth offered to go to the field and glean; but of the right of redemption which she had, she said nothing. She thought of the duties that devolve on the poor, but not of her right to marriage. In going to Boaz, she manifested the obedience of love, the most difficult of all love's performances. It is much to toil for a loved one, to humble one's self, to give up everything, and to forget the past; but the hardest thing for a woman is to conquer the fears of feminine delicacy, to quiet the apprehensions of the heart, and that not by boldly transgressing moral law, but by virtue. Ruth's visit to Boaz in the night was harder for her, than it is for a young girl to leave home and enter service. Her obedience in this matter was the utmost sacrifice she could make. She risked her womanly feelings; and that to a virtuous woman is more than to risk life. She claimed a right, to claim which was more painful than the heaviest duties. But her self-forgetful love pours an auroral glow of divine purity over everything. Her love was not the sensual love of romances. She loved Naomi, her mother; and in order to procure honor and love in Israel for this mother, and to save the name of her deceased husband from extinction, she does what only a chaste woman, inspired by the obedience of love dare do, and what the polluted eyes of impure souls never understand. Vanity and self-interest had found but a slight trial in her undertaking. To virtue and ancient patriarchal manners, the visit of Ruth to Boaz was the utmost of womanly endurance. It was harder for Ruth to don her best attire for this purpose, than to go about in her working clothes. For virtue would rather put on sackcloth and ashes, than the garments of a joy which may easily be misconceived. It is more of a martyrdom to face the possibility of appearing as a sinner, than to suffer punishment for the sake of virtue. But the chaste love of obedience succeeds in everything. Ruth conquers, and is neither seen nor misapprehended. She receives the crown of love and faith.

SAILER: Galleries of beautiful pictures are precious; but virtuous young men and maidens are more precious than all the picture-galleries of the world.

STARKE: The bride of Christ is pleasing to her Bridegroom only when anointed with the Spirit and clothed in the garments of salvation.

VERSES 7-18.

Innocence and Piety.

- 7 And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry [cheerful], he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn [-sheaves]: and she came softly,¹
 8 and uncovered [the place at] his feet, and laid her down. And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid [startled], and turned himself [bent himself over]:
 9 and behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt [wings]² over thine
 10 handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman [a redeemer]. And he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord [Jehovah], my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the

latter end than at the beginning,³ inasmuch as thou followedest not [didst not **gc**
 11 after] young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not; I will
 do to thee all that thou requirest [sayest]: for all the city [gate] of my people doth
 12 know that thou *art* a virtuous [brave]⁴ woman. And now it is true⁵ that I *am thy*
 near kinsman [a redeemer]: howbeit there is a kinsman [redeemer] nearer than I.
 13 Tarry⁶ this [to] night, and it shall be in the morning, *that* if he will perform
 unto thee the part of a kinsman [redeemer; *it*. if he will redeem thee], well; let
 him do the kinsman's part [let him redeem]: but if he will not do the part of a
 kinsman to thee [shall not be inclined to redeem thee], then will I do the part
 of a kinsman to thee [then will I redeem thee], as the Lord [Jehovah] liveth:
 14 lie down until the morning. And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she
 rose up before⁷ one [a man] could know another [recognize his friend]. And
 15 [For] he said, Let it not be known that a [the] woman came into the floor. Also
 he said, Bring the vail [mantle]⁸ that *thou hast* upon thee, and hold it. And when
 she held it, he measured six *measures* of barley, and laid *it* on her: and she [he]⁹
 16 went into the city. And when [omit: when] she came to her mother-in-law, [and]
 she [*i. e.* the mother-in-law] said, *Who art thou, my daughter?* and she told her all that
 17 the man had done to her. And she said, *These six measures of barley gave he me;*
 18 for he said to me, *Go not empty unto thy mother-in law. Then said she, Sit still*
 [Remain quiet], my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the **man**
 will not be in [omit: be in] rest until he have finished the thing this day.

TEXTUAL AND GRAMMATICAL.

[1 Ver. 7. — **לְבַיְתִי**: not "secretly" (Keil), which would be superfluous here; but as in Judg. iv. 21, "**quietly**,"
 "softly," so as not to wake the sleeper — in a muffled manner, cf. *Lex. s. v.* לְבַיְתִי. — Ta.]

[2 Ver. 9 — **כַּנְּפֵי** must be regarded as dual, with the suffix defect, written (Ges. 91, 2, Rem. 1); for as the word
 does not stand in pause, the seghol cannot be a mere lengthened sheva (Ges. 29, 4, b). The Masoretic tradition, there-
 fore, understands "wings" here, and not "skirt," or "coverlet," in which sense the word is always used in the singular.
 The covering wing is a favorite emblem of protection in the psalms and elsewhere, and is here far more beautiful and sug-
 gestive than "skirt" or "coverlet," even though the translation of the metaphor into the language of action did carry
 with it an actual spreading of the skirt over one, cf. the commentary. The rendering "wings" is also adopted by Ber-
 theau, Keil, Wright, etc. — Ta.]

[3 Ver. 10. — Dr. Cassel: *du hast deine Liebe, die spätere, noch schöner gemacht, als die erste*; or, as Dr. Wordsworth
 very happily, as well as literally renders: "thou hast bettered (**הִיטְבִיתְךָ**) thy latter loving kindness above the former."
 The comparison is not as to quantity, but as to quality. — Ta.]

[4 Ver. 11. — **אִשְׁתֵּי חֵיל**: lit. "a woman of strength." Dr. Cassel here renders it (with DeWette) by *wackeres*
Weib, brave, valiant woman, while he afterwards (see foot-note on p. 43) substitutes *braves Weib*, *i. e.* good, excellent wo-
 man (so also Keil). Others: "capable woman." All these renderings, including that of the E. V. (which is not to be
 taken in the restricted sense of "chaste," but in that of its Latin original), agree much better than they seem to do.
 They are all embraced in **חֵיל**, which is here manifestly used of moral strength, cf. Prov. xii. 4, xxxi. 10. A morally strong
 person is brave and good, capable in the noblest sense; in a word virtuous, possessed both of virtue and of virtues. — Ta.]

[5 Ver. 12. — "כי" before **אֲמֵן**, in order to strengthen the assurance: 'and now, truly indeed,' cf. Job xxxvi. 4.
 Beside the Kethibb **אֲמֵן** **כִּי**, we have here, as in 2 Sam. xiii. 33, xv. 21; Jer. xxxix. 12, the Keri **כִּי**. After the as-
 severating **אֲמֵן** **כִּי** occurs in Job xii. 2, as elsewhere after an oath, Gen. xxii. 16 f.; 2 Kgs. iii. 14: but **אֲמֵן** **כִּי**
 occurs also in such a position, 2 Sam. xv. 21 (Kethibb); 2 Kgs. v. 20; Jer. li. 14, cf. Ew. 356 b.; and there is therefore
 no ground for preferring the easier reading of the Keri, especially as **אֲמֵן** **כִּי** excludes from the assurance the opposite of
 what forms its object yet more decidedly than the simple **כִּי**, thus: truly, indeed, only a goel am I = truly, I am cer-
 tainly a goel — I am that and nothing else." (Bertheau.) Keil also thinks that the meaning of **אֲמֵן** **כִּי** is to be ex-
 plained from its use in the sense of *nisi*, cf. *Lex.* — Tr.]

6 Ver. 13. — **לְיָגִיל**. The MSS. have here either a large **ל** or a large **ג**. The Masora parva remarks that the Ori-
 ental (*i. e.* Babylonian) Jews, especially preserve the large **ל**. Many conjectures as to the meaning of the large letter
 are clearly wide of the mark. The ground of such *majuscule* is undoubtedly to be sought in the purpose of ancient tran-
 scribers (as Le Clerc rightly intimates), to direct the attention of the reader to facts or thoughts which to them appeared
 especially noteworthy. Thus in Eccles. vii. 1, where the first letter of **טוֹב** is a *majuscule*. The value of a good name
 impressed itself here. So also in Eccles. xii. 13, where the **ס** in **סוֹף** is written large. The fidelity of later transcribers,
 unwilling to obliterate any, even subjective marks, has preserved such peculiarities. With doctrine or any special ex-
 gressus, these letters have nothing to do. Thus, in Esth. i. 6, the transcriber, wishing to direct attention to the splendor

of the royal banquet, the description of which begins with **וְהָיָה**, wrote **וְ** large. And so in our passage, it seemed important to the pious transcriber (as Buxtorf not without reason indicates), to call the reader's attention to the language and moral conduct of Boaz.

7 Ver. 14. — Instead of the usual **טָרוֹם**, we have here, and only here, **טָרוֹם** in Kethibh. The pointing **טָרוֹם** was occasioned by the endeavor to derive the word from a specifically Hebrew root. I hold the form **טָרוֹם**, **טָרוֹם**, to be itself original. Comparative philology satisfactorily explains the word. It belongs to *πρίν, πρόμος, primus, parama*, Goth. *fruma* (as **טָרוֹר** belongs to *purus*, **טָרוֹר** to *paries*, etc.), and is not at all to be explained from the Hebrew. The Midrash (*Ruth Rabba* 34 d.) has also noted the reading **טָרוֹם**, and in its usual way explains the added **ו** of six hours, which Ruth spent in the threshing-floor. [According to Bertheau **טָרוֹם** is a later Aramaic form for the old, genuine Heb. **טָרוֹם**, and is by Aram. analogy to be pronounced **טָרוֹם**. Not likely; as **טָרוֹם** is not found in Aram. Fürst derives it from **טָר** (**טָרוֹר**, an unused root, meaning "to wait") with the termination **וֹם** = **וֹן**. Ewald seems to regard **טָרוֹם** as a shortened (?) form of **טָרוֹם**, which he derives from **טָרוֹה**, an unused root, meaning "to be fresh," cf. *Lehrb.* 337 c. — Ta.]

[8 Ver. 15. — **הָבֵי תְּמַטְפָּחֹתַי הֵבֵי** (mille), as it is written in most MSS., is the second per. sg. fem. imperat. of **הָבֵי**, to give, cf. Ges. 69, 3, Rem. 2. The reading **הָבֵי**, found in some MSS. is either for **הָבֵינִי** (i. e. the high. inf. const. of **הָבֵי** used imperatively, like an infin. absol.), or better for **הָבֵינִי**, second fem. imper., cf. Green, *Gram.*

184, 2. — On the **מְטַפְּחֹתַי**, Wright quotes the following explanation from Schroeder, *De Vest. Mul. Het.*: "Quia adeo ampla erant veterum pallia, ut pars in humerum rejiceretur, altera brachio subduceretur, Rutha, prehensens aliquam partem ejus sinu oblatas a Boaso fruges exceptit. Imo aliam vestem quam *pallium* ne admittere quidem ipse textus videtur. Nam ex verbis **עָלַי**, **מִמֶּנִּי**, da vestem quæ est super te, haud obscure colligitur, vestem intelligendum esse totum corpus tegentem; quoniam alias pro geio linguæ Hebrææ, specialius membrum corporis cui illa applicata fuisset, expressis potius verbis fuisset nominatum. Accedit quod aliud quodcumque tegumentum, nonnisi uni corporis parti, v. g. capiti, destinatum, ad ueum, quem volebat Boasus, fuisset ineptum. Neque insolitum id veteribus fuit, ut in sinu vestimenti exterioris aliquid deportarent." — Ta.]

[9 Ver. 15. — **וַיֵּבֶן**, "and he went." Wright proposes to read **וַיֵּבֶן**, "and she went," on the ground that many MSS. have this reading, and that there seems to be no reason why Boaz should go to the city at so early an hour. The MS. authority, however, loses all its force when the strong probability is considered that the reading is only a conjectural amendment. Wright's other ground is by no means decisive. The simple idea is, that Boaz, after he had dismissed Ruth, also went to the city, probably to his house, whence afterwards he "went up" (**עָלָה**), expressive of the reverence with which the mind regards the place of judgment, cf. Deut. xvii. 8), to the gate, ch. iv. 1. So Keil; but cf. Dr. Cassel on ch. iv. 1. — Ta.]

EXEGETICAL AND DOCTRINAL.

Ver. 7. **And Boaz ate and drank, and was cheerful.** It illustrates the simplicity of ancient patriarchal times and manners, that Boaz, the wealthy proprietor of a great estate, himself keeps watch on his threshing-floor, works till late, and then betakes himself to rest in the solitude of the open field.¹ It is clear that he did not do this every day; for the well-informed Naomi says, "to-night he winnows barley." It is probable that this night he relieved his overseer. The remark, that "his heart was cheerful," is not added without a reason. It is not, however, intended to indicate that this was why Ruth was directed to present her petition after he had eaten and drunk. It is true, indeed, that it was a current and probably well-founded maxim among the ancients that requests should not be made of great men before, but after eating (cf. Esth. vii. 3), they being then more kindly disposed. But Ruth made no use of this post-prandial benevolence, for she allowed Boaz to betake himself to rest before she approached him. These words are rather designed to point out the danger encountered by Ruth on the one hand, and the virtue of Boaz on the other.

¹ [The same practice is still contoured in Palestine, cf. Rob. ii. 83; Thomson, ii. 511. Its design is, of course, to keep the grain from being stolen. Thomson says, that "it is not unusual for husband, wife, and all the family to encamp at the threshing-floors, and remain until the harvest is over." — Ta.]

Ver. 8. **And it came to pass at midnight,** etc. Boaz had laid himself down; it had become dark. Thereupon Ruth had come, and had laid herself softly down at his feet, drawing over herself a part of the cover under which he lay. The simple narrative paints most beautifully. It was midnight, when, perhaps, by a movement of his foot, bringing it in contact with the person of Ruth, he was startled out of his sleep. He bends himself forward² in order to see what it is he touches, and lo, a woman lies at his feet! He says, Who art thou? and she answers:

Ver. 9. **I am Ruth thine handmaid; spread thy wings over thy handmaid, for thou art a redeemer.** Ruth had been sent to demand the fulfillment of an ancient right. This right, peculiar as it was, had its symbol, under which it was claimed. We are made acquainted with it by the words addressed by Ruth to Boaz, and by her action in drawing an end of his coverlet over herself. The words are not contained in the instructions of Naomi to Ruth, as to what she is to do; but the action taught her, necessarily presupposes them. Marriage is a resting-place. The wife finds rest under the protection of her husband, as Israel finds it under the overshadowing wing of Jehovah.

² **וַיִּלָּכֵת**, as it is said of Sampson, **Judg. xvi. 29**, that he bent over the pillars, **וַיִּלָּכֵת**.

Even until the latest times, the figurative representation of God as the loving Bridegroom of his people, continues, instructively and sublimely, to run through Scripture and tradition. Christ says (Matt. xxiii. 37): "How often would I have gathered you, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." Israel has rest (*menuchah*) when God spreads out his wings over them. The psalmist prays to be covered by the shadow of Jehovah's wings. Boaz says to Ruth (chap. ii. 12): "May thy reward be complete, since thou hast come to take refuge under the wings of Jehovah, the God of Israel." That which Ruth there did with respect to the God of Boaz, she now asks to be permitted to do with respect to Boaz himself. The husband gives "rest" to his wife by spreading out his wings over her. For this reason the covering of his bed, under which he took the wife, was designated by the beautiful term, "wing" (cf. Deut. xxiii. 1 [E. V. xxii. 30], etc.) Very attractive is the use of this expression, with figurative application to God, in Ezekiel, when Jehovah, speaking through the prophet, says (ch. xvi. 8): "Behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread out my wing over thee, and covered thy nakedness, . . . and entered into a covenant with thee." As the chicken takes refuge under the wings of the hen, so Ruth hid herself under a corner of the coverlet of Boaz. It was the symbol of the right which she had come to claim. "Spread out thy wings over thy handmaid; for thou art a redeemer (*goel*). It is because he is a blood-relative that she can make this demand. Hence, she does not say, I am Ruth, the Moabitess; but, I am Ruth, thy handmaid. Here, where she lays claim to an Israelitish right, she drops all remembrance of Moab. And has he not himself received and treated her as an Israelitish maiden?

Undoubtedly this symbolical method of claiming the most delicate of all rights, presupposes manners of patriarchal simplicity and virtue. The confidence of the woman reposes itself on the honor of the man. The method, however, was one which could not easily be brought into operation. For every foreknowledge or pre-intimation of it would have torn the veil of silence and secrecy from the modesty of the claimant. But when it was once put into operation, the petition preferred could not be denied without disgrace either to the woman or the man. Hence, we may be sure that Naomi did not send her daughter-in-law on this errand without the fullest confidence that it would prove successful. For it is certain that to all other difficulties, this peculiar one was added in the present case: namely, that Boaz, as Ruth herself says, was indeed a *goel*, but not the *goel*. The answer of Boaz, also, suggests the surmise that such a claim was not wholly unexpected by him. Not that he had an understanding with Naomi, in consequence of which he was alone on the threshing-floor; for the fact that he was startled out of his sleep, shows that the night visit was altogether unlooked for. But the thought that at some time the claim of Ruth to the rights of blood-relationship might be addressed to himself, may not have been strange to him. Even this conjecture, however, of what might possibly or probably take place, could not be used to relieve Ruth of the necessity of manifesting her own free will by means of the symbolical proceeding. The ancient usage spoke a discreet language, with which not even a certain mutual understanding would have dispensed. For the rest, how truly the action of Ruth, far from eluding her womanly delicacy, was a new evidence of

the nobility, purity, and genuine love that ruled her, is unequivocally testified to by the answer of Boaz.

Ver. 10. **Blessed be thou of Jehovah, my daughter! Thou hast made thy latter kindness even more beautiful than the former.** This answer also opens to our view the simple, unassuming soul of Boaz, whose modesty and sincere heartiness are truly admirable. He makes no complaint of being disturbed in the night, nor of the too great importunateness, as another might have deemed it, with which the request is made. On the one hand, he entertains no thought of abusing the confidence of the woman, nor on the other does he play the modern conservator of virtue, who loudly blames another because he distrusts himself. He has only words of divine benediction for the blameless woman, so attractive in her naive humility. He knows how to value her act in its purely objective character, apart from every consideration of its relation to himself, as only a heart trained by the word of God could do. He blesses Ruth, whom like a father he addresses as "my daughter," because he found her present kindness yet nobler and more beautiful than the former. But how is that to be understood? Ruth's former kindness approved itself, when, after the death of her husband, she left parents and home in order to console and take care of her mother-in-law, unmoved by the certainty of misery and humiliation in a foreign land. What does she now? Young, comely, and favorably known, she might before this have looked out a husband according to her wish, rich or poor, from among the young men of Israel. Did she do it? By no means; she subordinates every such possibility to her mother-in-law and the usages of Israel. Instead of preferring the love of a young man, as were natural, — says Boaz, — thou comest to assert thy right with one more advanced in life, solely because he is a *goel*. Thou askest him for the protection of his wings, in order that a blood-relative may again raise up a name for thy husband and mother-in-law in Israel. In this, also, thou offerest thine own heart and happiness as a sacrifice of love to thy family! It is indeed possible that as Boaz intimates, Ruth's present act of kindness was even a severer test of her love than the earlier. For those, done in the time of sorrow and mourning, were for that very reason easier than this, rendered at a time when perhaps a new life and fresh joy had been offered her. But the modesty of Boaz was too great. It is doubtless correct to think of him as a contemporary of Elimelech, and consequently no longer young. But in ancient as in modern times, a woman like Ruth will find a more engaging "rest" with a man like Boaz than she would find among thousands of young men.

Ver. 11. **And now, my daughter, fear not.** Trembling with excitement, Ruth had done as she had been directed; and in the darkness of the night, the tremulous tones of her voice had informed Boaz of her anxiety. What he had hitherto said, contained no decision, but only praise. She, however, trembles for the answer to her prayer, on which so much depended. Hence, he says, again addressing her by the kindly name of daughter, "fear not." As above he invoked on her, in Jehovah's name, a full reward, because, led by love to Israel, she had trustfully come to take refuge under the wings of Israel's God, so he will not deny her who has come to himself to ask for the protection of his "resting-place." Her Moabitish nationality can offer no obstacle, since he has already

commended her to the blessing of Jehovah. She has shown no Moabitish morals. There exists no ground whatever for denying her the rights of Israel. For the whole gate of my people knows that thou art a brave woman. In the words "my people," he hints at the sole reason on which a refusal could base itself. But there is no Israelite among us in Bethlehem, who does not know how good thou art.¹ Whatever thou hast a right to claim, can be unhesitatingly done for thee, for thou art loved by all.

Ver. 12. But yet there is a redeemer nearer than I.² These words teach us that what Ruth demanded was an actual objective right, which belonged to her. Although Boaz perhaps surmised that, apart from the consideration of her right, she applied with special confidence to himself for the boon desired, he modestly and considerably decides only on the question of her formal right. Her proceeding receives its unimpeachable justification only when putting aside every personal inclination, it simply regards the matter of right. Thy claim, he says, cannot be gainsaid; but I am not the one to whom it is to be directed in the first instance. There is another, who is more nearly related to Elimelech. But he does not leave her a moment in doubt, whether this be not an excuse for refusing her petition. If that other person prove not able to fulfill his duty, then he himself will do it. This he confirms with an oath by the living God. Nor will she be required to repeat the proceeding of this night. A noble, womanly heart — this is what his tenderness implies — does not dare to undertake such a mission more than once. He himself will prosecute the matter. The symbolic act with which she came to him, addressed itself not so much to him, individually, as through him to the whole family. Perhaps he knew very well that Naomi had for good reasons sent Ruth to his threshing-floor, — that the other relative would not be able to act as redeemer; but it is best for both Ruth and himself that due regard be had to formal right.

Ver. 13 ff. Abide here to-night; lie down until the morning. He repeats the same injunction twice. He cannot send her away in the darkness of night; nor is he afraid to let her remain. She, for her part, hears his words, and obeys, with equal confidence. But she is only to remain till earliest dawn. Before it was possible to recognize each other clearly,³ both were up; that it might not be known that the woman came into the floor.⁴ By an early departure, he hopes that Ruth may escape meeting with any one, who might put injurious suspicions into circulation. He undoubtedly speaks of "the woman," with special

emphasis. It would have been very unpleasant to Boaz to have people connect himself with any woman in a suspicious way; but scandalous rumors of this kind, with Ruth for their object, would have been exceedingly injurious. To say nothing of the fact that an undeserved stain would have been fixed on the good name of Ruth, it would have rendered it very difficult for him to prosecute her claims in Bethlehem.⁵

But as she is about to go, he bids her first spread out her cloak or shawl, into which he empties six measures of barley,⁶ to be carried home to her mother-in-law. What is his intention in this act? That, as he says, she "come not empty to her mother-in-law." A mere sign of his friendly disposition, it cannot have been; for Ruth will tell her all that he has said. He must have had other reasons for not wishing her to go away empty. If notwithstanding every precaution, Ruth was recognized when she returned from the threshing-floor, her appearance, laden with grain, would be less suspicious, than if she were met dressed up as a fine lady. Thus laden, it was usual to see her come from the fields of Boaz. Thus, the last occasion of possible suspicion was cut off. Still, the whole significance of the proceeding is not exhausted with this. Decided stress is laid on the fact that he gave her six measures of barley. When Ruth comes home, and Naomi asks, "Who art thou, my daughter," i. e. "how comest thou? as one whose claim has been acknowledged, or otherwise?" she informs her mother-in-law of all that Boaz said, and expressly adds, what the reader has already been informed of, and what if only the liberality of the giver came into consideration, Naomi could see without being told: "these six measures of barley gave he me." She evidently deems it important that Naomi should know, that he gave her just six measures of grain. The old Jewish expositors have made all sorts of allegorical attempts with this "six." They are undoubtedly so far right, that apart from the friendly custom of sending visitors away enriched with gifts for their families, Boaz, on this occasion, meant to give a hint to Naomi of the result of Ruth's application. This result was, that in any event Ruth would obtain a "resting-place." The number six is the symbol of labor and service, which is followed by seven, the time of rest. Whoever has served six years, is released in the seventh. Naomi receives what she may take as an intimation that the time has come, when after long labor she must let Ruth go out free. The day of rest is at hand.

Ver. 18. And she said, Remain quiet [cf. Gen. xxxviii. 11], my daughter. Ruth is to remain at home, like an affianced bride. From both words

1 "All know that thou art a good woman." The LXX., with singular literalness, render $\text{הַיְשֵׁתָּהּ בְּיָמֶיךָ}$ by $\gamma\epsilon\gamma\eta\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\mu\epsilon\omega\varsigma$.

2 The Midrash (*Ruth Rabba*, p. 34 b), which would fain hold fast to the letter of the law, which speaks only of the brother as *goel*, thinks that the name of the nearer relative was Tob (cf. ver. 13). As if Boaz had intended to say: "If Tob will redeem thee, let him redeem." But Ibn Ezra already found this unsuitable, and ch. iv. makes it wholly impossible.

3 The Talmud (*Berachoth*, p. 9 a) teaches how to measure the break of day. The Mishna had decided day-break to begin when it becomes possible to distinguish between white and blue; R. Mair, when a wolf and a dog — R. Akiba, when an ass and a wild ass — could be distinguished. "But others said, when one sees and recognizes another person at the distance of four ells."⁴

4 [WRIGHT]. "These words express Boaz's opinion, which he had previously intimated to Ruth; for the use of the

article (the i. e. this woman) forbids us to suppose that they were actually addressed to Ruth. The Targumist, probably influenced by this reason, and considering it unlikely that Boaz should have been alone in the threshing floor, renders: "and Boaz said to his young men," etc. — Tr.]

5 The Mishna (*Jebamoth*, ii. 8) determined that one suspected of previous intercourse with a foreigner, even though she were a convert, was not allowed to perform the duty of levirate marriage.

6 The measure is not given; the expression is simply "six of barley." It made a considerable load, for he had to put it on her. The allegorical interpretation of the Midrash (in the *Targum*) brings out six descendants of Ruth, namely, David, Daniel, "the companions" (Dan. i. 6) and "the king, Messias." *Ruth Rabba*, p. 34 a, counts eight descendants with six prominent characteristics. In this case, Hezekiah and Josiah are added to the others already named.

and actions of Boaz, Naomi perceives that he will not rest, until he makes good his promise. This very day will decide the issue of the matter. And whatever that issue may be, it will not be without a blessing. "The man will not rest, until he have provided for thee a resting-place."

HOMILETICAL AND PRACTICAL.

"And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou sayest." The faith of Boaz is such as leads to action. He not only instructs, by his prophetic words to Ruth (ch. ii. 12), and by the pious spirit that breathes in his intercourse with his servants; he not only gives, moved by sympathy sprung from faith; he not only enters into the necessities and anxieties of Ruth; but he has also a clean heart, in which no impure thought arises, and stands as firm in the hour of temptation and secrecy as when the eyes of all Bethlehem are upon him. He is an Israelite not only before man, but also before God alone. And it was because he did not forget, what man is naturally so prone to forget, that God sees him, that he is so mindful of his duty. Hypocrites, when alone, are different from what they appear in company; Israelites like Boaz feel and act in the presence of the all-knowing God alone, not otherwise than they would if all the stars of heaven and all the creatures of earth could testify against them. Boaz showed an active faith when he gave no place to temptation. Pious and offenseless as he was when Ruth came to claim the right of the poor, he is equally so now when she

asks for her right of redemption. Then the question was only about a few ears of grain, now it involves his own person and estate. Then he was kind in the presence of Ruth's humility, now he is humble in the presence of her claim to be righted. Then he forgot herself in the fact that she had left the land of Moab, now he forgets that she had ever owned another law than that of Israel. Then his tender delicacy made Ruth assured of her safety in his fields; now that same delicacy understands that since she has come to him, the right she claims must be fulfilled. He might have released himself by the letter of the law to which she appeals, — there was a nearer relative; but his faith is an active faith. The question was one of right, not of ingenious play with the letter. The claimant must be satisfied; and he does what he promised to do. Freely and purely, full of that love which is the characteristic of faith, he keeps himself and keeps his word. People speak of a man's "word of honor;" it were more correct to speak of "the word of a Christian," "the word of a confessor of God." For only the Christian does not walk in the crooked ways of intrigue and false advocates.

STARKE: "Christian, behold the kindness and gentleness of Boaz! Will it then be possible that God, when thou art in need, will send thee empty away? Never! his generous hand is never closed. Only open Him thy heart, and divine gifts flow in upon thee, without any action on thy part."

THE SAME: "A Christian must be upright in word and deed."

CHAPTER FOURTH.

VERSES 1-12.

The Israelite without Guile.

- 1 Then went Boaz [And Boaz went] up to the gate, and sat him down there: and behold, the kinsman [redeemer] of whom Boaz spake ¹ came [passed] by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat
- 2 down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here.
- 3 And they sat down. And he said unto the kinsman [redeemer], Naomi, that is come again out of the country [territory] of Moab, selleth [sold] a parcel of land
- 4 [the field-portion], which was our brother Elimelech's: And I thought to advertise thee [determined to inform thee ²], saying, Buy *it* before the inhabitants [the sitters, *i. e.* those present ³], and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem *it*, redeem *it*; but if thou ⁴ wilt not redeem *it*, then tell me, that I may know: for *there is* none to redeem *it* besides thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem *it*.
- 5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest ⁵ the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy [thou buyest] *it* also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up
- 6 the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And the kinsman [redeemer] said, I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I mar [injure] mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right [my redemption, *i. e.* that which it is my right or duty to redeem] to thyself; for I
- 7 cannot redeem *it*. Now this was the manner [custom] in former time in Israel concerning [in cases of] redeeming and concerning [in cases of ex-] changing, for to confirm all things [every matter]; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave *it* to his
- 8 neighbour: and this was a [omit: a] testimony ⁶ in Israel. Therefore [And] the kinsman [redeemer] said unto Boaz, Buy *it* for thee. So [And] he drew off his

9 shoe. And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and 10 Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased [acquired] to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord [Jehovah] make the woman that is come [that cometh] into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily [i.e. make thou 12 strength] in Ephratah and be famous [and get a name] in Beth-lehem: And let thine house be like the house of Pharez [Perets, Perez], whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord [Jehovah] shall give thee of this young woman.

TEXTUAL AND GRAMMATICAL.

[1 Ver. 1. — Sc. "to Ruth," ch. iii. 12. אֶתְּךָ is the accus. after הִנֵּהְךָ, cf. Geo. xix. 21; xxiii. 16. — On the forms סֹדֶה and אֶתְּךָ, cf. Ges. 48, 5; 72, Rem. 3; 69, 3, 2; on אֶתְּךָ, 72, Rem. 4. — Tr.]

[2 Ver. 4. — Lit. "And I said, I will uncover thine ear," i. e. I determined to inform thee. אֶתְּךָ, is the same in sense as the fuller אֶתְּךָ בְּלִבִּי, Geo. xvii. 17, etc., cf. Ex. ii. 14, etc. It might be supposed to refer to what Boaz said to Ruth, ch. iii. 12 f.; but as Ruth is not spoken of until the next verse, this is less likely. The expression "to uncover the ear," originated in the practice of removing the hair that hangs over the ear, for the purpose of whispering a secret to a person. In general it means to communicate anything confidentially, but is here used in the wider sense of imparting information. The suffix of the second per. in אֶתְּךָ is perhaps best explained by regarding the whole clause after אֶתְּךָ as mentally uttered by Boaz, while considering how to proceed in the matter of Ruth. In this consideration, the nearer kinsman was present to his mind, and to him he addressed the conclusion, which he now only rehearses, "I will inform thee," etc. — Tr.]

[3 Ver. 4. — So Dr. Cassel. Keil: "Many translate רְיִישֵׁיבִים by 'inhabitants,' sc. those of Bethlehem. But although according to ver. 9, a goodly number of the people, besides the elders, were present, this can scarcely be conceived to have been the case with the inhabitants of Bethlehem generally, so as to meet the requirement of רְיִישֵׁיבִים. Nor would the inhabitants have been named before, but as in ver. 9, after, the elders as principal witnesses [but cf. ver. 11]. For these reasons אָשֵׁב is to be taken in the sense 'to sit,' and רְיִישֵׁיבִים is to be understood of the same persons who form the subject of אָשֵׁב in ver. 2, the elders. The following זֶהְנִי רְיִישֵׁיבִים is to be taken explicatively: before those who sit here, even before the elders of my people." — Tr.]

[4 Ver. 4. — The Text. Recept. reads אֶתְּךָ, third per., concerning which Keil remarks, that "it strikes one as singular, since one expects the second person, אֶתְּךָ, which is not only read by the LXX., but also by a number of MSS., and seems to be required by the context. It is true, the common reading may (with Sebastian Schmidt, Carpov, and others) be defended, by assuming that in uttering this word Boaz turned to the elders, and so spoke of the redeemer as of a third person: 'if he, the redeemer here, will not redeem;' but as this is immediately followed by a resumption of the direct address, this supposition — to our mind at least — seems very artificial." — The substitution by the Keri of אֶתְּךָ for אֶתְּךָ is not necessary, cf. Ges. 127, 3 b. — Tr.]

[5 Ver. 5. — קִנִּיתִי. Keil: "According to sense and connection, this form must be the second per. masc.; the ך at the end was either added by a slip of the pen, or it arose from an original ך, so that we must read either קִנִּיתִי (with the Keri) without an accusative, or, with an accusative, קִנִּיתִי, 'thou buyest it.'" — Tr.]

[6 Ver. 7. — הַתְּעוּדָה. Gesenius and Fürst define this word here as "custom having the force of law," "attested usage." Dr. Cassel's rendering, *Wissthum*, is probably intended to convey the same idea (cf. Hoffmann's *Wörterb.*). But it seems better to take the word here in its proper sense of "attestation," as in E. V. So the ancient versions, Bertheart, Keil, etc. Cf. the root עוּדָה. — Tr.]

[7 Ver. 10. — The Heb. קָנָה is less specific than our word "purchase." It means to obtain, to acquire; which may be done in a variety of ways. The rendering "purchased" is unfortunate in this particular case, as it tends to convey the erroneous idea that Ruth was treated as a chattel, or at least as a sort of *adscripta gleba*. The same word is used also in vers. 4, 5, and 9, where there is no particular objection to represent it in English by "buy," although "acquire" would be preferable for the sake of uniformity. — Tr.]

EXEGETICAL AND DOCTRINAL.

Ver. 1. And Boaz went up to the gate, and seated himself there. Very early, even before Ruth with her burden of barley had yet started for home (ch. iii. 15), Boaz, energetic in deed as he was kind in word, took the way to Bethlehem. It

was necessary to set out so early, in order to be sure of reaching the gate before the person with whom he wished to speak, and who like himself was probably in the habit of coming to the city from the country. The gate, it is well known, was the place where judicial business was transacted and markets were held (Deut. xxi. 19 ff.; cf. Ps

xxxvii. 5). This is still the case in the East. In Zach. viii. 16, the prophet says: "Judge truth and the judgment of peace in your gates;" on which Jerome (ed. Migne, vi. p. 1474) remarks: "It is asked, why among the Jews the gate was the place for administering justice. The judges sat in the gates that the country-people might not be compelled to enter the cities and suffer detriment. Sitting there, they could hear the townsmen and country-people as they left or entered the city; and each man, his business finished, could return at once to his own house." At the gate was the proper *forum*; and it is certainly more satisfactory than all other explanations of the Latin word, to derive it, notwithstanding the later central situation of the place to which it was applied, from the archaic *fora*, gate, whence *foras*, cf. *biforis*, *septiforis*.

Certain Some-one, come and seat thyself.

We have here the whole course of an ancient legal procedure before us, with its usages and forms. The fact that Boaz sat at the gate, plainly declared that he sought a judicial decision. When the person for whom he waited made his appearance, he made no delay to seat himself as requested, for the language addressed to him was a formal judicial summons. His name is not mentioned. *Peloni almoni* is a formula like our German N. N. [used as in English we now generally use a simple — or "blank." — Tr.] In former times, it was customary among us, in legal documents, to use in the same way names that were very common, such as Hans, etc. (cf. my *Erf. Bilder u. Bräunche*, p. 29). The underlying idea of *Peloni almoni* is a different one from that of *δεῖνα* (cf. Matth. xxvi. 18) or *quidam*. It intimates that the name is unknown and hidden. It conveys the idea of *anonymus*, in every sense of the word. There is an ancient explanation to the effect that the name of the first *goel* is not given, because he was unwilling to raise up a name for his deceased relative. This is the reason, probably, why the LXX. here have *κρυφίε*, "hidden one." Without maintaining this, but even supposing that the narrator omitted the name merely because he did not know it, it remains none the less an instructive fact that he who was so anxious for the preservation of his own inheritance, is now not even known by name.

Ver. 2. He took ten men of the elders of the city. That the number of elders in any city was not necessarily limited to ten, may be inferred from Judg. viii. 14; but ten were sufficient to form a college of witnesses. In post-biblical times it was a maxim that an assembly for religious worship (*עֲדָתָא*, "congregation"), must consist of ten persons (cf. the Jerus. *Targum* on Ex. xii. 4); but the attempt of the Mishna (*Sanhedrin*, i. 6) to ground this biblically on the supposed fact that the ten faithless spies are spoken of as a congregation (Num. xiv. 27), can hardly be deemed satisfactory. The custom, however, of selecting exactly ten men for such service as was here required, was so old and well-established among the Jews, that the term *עֲדָתָא*, "number," by itself, meant ten persons.

¹ *אֲחֵי*. It is only necessary to refer to the Commentaries of Bertheau and Keil, to perceive in what respects I have deemed it needful to depart from their expositions of this passage. Benary (*de Hebræorum Levitate*, Berlin, 1835, p. 23 ff.), following Jewish example, has made Boaz a nephew, and the *Peloni* a brother, of Elimelech. But no

great stress is to be laid on this tradition. *אֲחֵי*, brother, as our passage itself shows, is often used where the relationship is more distant than that which exists between

Others, it is true, as we learn further on, had assembled about the two relatives; but the ten elders formed, so to speak, the necessary official witnesses.

Ver. 3. The inheritance of our brother¹ Elimelech, Naomi has sold. The expositors, with one consent, demand by what right Naomi could sell the inheritance of Elimelech, since the Mosaic law contains nothing to indicate that it considered the widow as the rightful heir of her deceased husband. But this view of the law is incorrect.² The whole system of levitical marriage presupposes that the title of the deceased husband's property vests in the widow. When a man dies childless, leaving a widow, the brother of the deceased is to marry her, in order "that the first-born may enter upon the name of the dead," i. e. that the name of the dead may continue to be connected with the inheritance which he has left behind, for in no other sense can the expression "to raise up the name of one" have any meaning in Israel; and, accordingly, in ver. 5 the words of the law, "to raise up the name of the dead," are supplemented by the addition, "upon his inheritance." But in case the brother-in-law refused to marry the widow, and consequently refused to raise up the name of his brother, he thereby also gave up all right to enter on the inheritance of his brother. The duty and the right were indissolubly connected. The law would have been illusory, if the brother, notwithstanding his refusal to marry the widow, had obtained the inheritance. In that case, possessor remained with the widow, who, albeit childless, carried within herself, so to speak, the embryonic right of the heir. Of the symbolical act of drawing off the shoe, we shall speak farther on. But it is to be noted here that when the widow drew off the shoe of the recusant brother-in-law, she thereby declared that he must withdraw his foot from the possessions of his brother.

Naomi was a widow. But although she herself says (ch. i. 12) that she is too old to become a wife, even this fact gives no right to her property to any blood-relative, without marriage. Undoubtedly, the name of her husband would vanish from his estate as soon as she died; but until then it remained upon it, and Naomi had the same right and power to dispose of the property as the law gave to the husband himself. Now, in Lev. xxv. 25, we read: "If thy brother become impoverished and sell his possession, let his nearest blood-relative (*בְּאֵלֵי הַקָּרִיב*) come to him, and redeem that which his brother sold." This contingency was here actually come to pass. Naomi had become impoverished, — she had sold. The name of Elimelech was still on the property; consequently the law demanded its redemption, and directed this demand to the nearest blood-relative. It is on the basis of this prescription, that Boaz begins his negotiation with the unnamed kinsman, in the interest of Naomi.

The sale of the land had hitherto not been mentioned. Nothing was said about it in the conversation between Ruth and Boaz on the threshing-floor. The fact that Boaz knew of it, confirms the

sons of the same parent. Blood-relatives, and even friends, are also "brothers." The very law, by which the usage now under consideration is sanctioned, uses the term in a wider sense, Deut. xxv. 5 (cf. Hengst. *Pentateuch*, ii. 83 ff., Ryland's ed.).

² Compare the later determinations in the Mishna (*Sanhedrin*, 4, 3), the spirit of which, at least, confirms what is said in the text. Both Rabbinical schools admit that a wife can sell.

surmise that before Ruth came to him with her great request, he and Naomi had already had some communication with each other. These communications, having reference to the sale of the land, and the necessity of its redemption according to law, may be regarded as having ultimately led to the proposition made by Naomi in ch. iii. 1. Naomi advanced from the redemption of the land to that of the widow, just as Boaz does here in his negotiation with the nearer kinsman.

Ver. 4. Buy it before these who sit here, and before the elders of my people. Boaz had said to Ruth, that he would ask the nearest kinsman whether he "will redeem thee; and if not, then will I redeem thee." But this is not the way in which he opens his address to the man. He does not mention the name of Ruth at first. He desires of him apparently only the redemption of the land. This testifies to the uncommon delicacy of legal proceedings at that time, as conducted by pious and believing persons. The cause is entirely saved from appearing as if Boaz had begun it only in behalf of the woman. Nor does Boaz put the nearer kinsman under any constraint; for he says at once: "If thou wilt not redeem it, then will I, for I come next." He admonishes the other of the duty imposed on him by the law, by the recognition of his own; while, on the other hand, he facilitates the other's decision, by intimating his readiness to render the service demanded, if the other should prefer to be excused. He says nothing of Ruth's connection with the matter. He leaves it to the kinsman himself to take the open and generally known relations between Naomi and Ruth into consideration, and to shape his answer accordingly. His address is gentle, noble, and discreet. It brings no complaint that the kinsman as nearest relative has not troubled himself about the matter in hand. It asks nothing of the other, that he is not willing to do himself. It is sufficiently discreet to wait and see how far the other will limit his duty. And withal, the interest and decision with which he urges the matter to a conclusion, make the transaction a forcible example to the people, teaching them to make the law a living spirit, and openly to acknowledge the duties which it imposes.

And he said, I will redeem. The kinsman, therefore, acknowledges the right of Naomi to sell, and also his own duty to redeem. But he thinks only of the land. He answers the question of Boaz only according to the literal import of its terms. By saying, "I will redeem," he declares his readiness to buy back the land left by Elimelech, but his words do not indicate whether he is conscious of the further duties therewith connected. Boaz may have expected that he would make further inquiry concerning them; but as he did not do this, Boaz could not rest contented with the brief reply, "I will redeem," seeing that he was chiefly solicitous about the future of Ruth, and that the duty to redeem not only the land but also the widow must be expressly acknowledged before all who were present. Hence he says farther:

Ver. 5. In the day that thou buyest the field of Naomi, thou buyest it also of Ruth the Moabitess, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. With these words, the law of entailment as recognized in Israel, becomes perfectly clear. Elimelech had left sons, who, had they lived, would have been the

1 This view of the reason of the refusal is also indicated by the Midrash (*Ruth Rabba* 35a). Le Clerc is very far from the right understanding. Other opinions, to which he

proper heirs. But they died. Now, if Ruth had not come from Moab with Naomi, Naomi would have been the sole possessor of the land. Having no means to cultivate it, she could have sold it, and the blood-relative could have bought it back without taking upon himself levirate duties, since her age rendered it improbable that they would answer the purpose for which they were instituted. But Ruth did come; and having entered into the Israelitish community, she also possesses Israelitish rights. She is, consequently, the heiress of Mahlon; and no one can redeem her inheritance, without at the same time providing for the continuance of the name of the dead. In her case, considerations like those which applied to Naomi, have no existence. Her husband Mahlon, whether he were the younger or the older brother, was an heir. Since Orpah remained in Moab, the claims of Chilion as heir, were also transferred to the estate of his brother. Separate possessions of their own, the sons of Elimelech probably had not, as long as they lived in Israel. Consequently, the land was the joint possession of Naomi and Ruth. And just because Ruth was part proprietress, the obligation existed not to let the names of Elimelech and Mahlon perish. The inheritance alone could not, therefore, be redeemed, as the anonymous relative proposed to do.

Ver. 6. And the redeemer said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I injure mine own inheritance. Thus far the kinsman has accurately acknowledged his duty as prescribed by the Mosaic law. He is ready to redeem the land. Nor does he challenge the right of Ruth, as wife of the deceased Mahlon. Why then does he think that the performance of levirate duty to her will damage his own inheritance? For although accepted even by the most recent expositors, the idea that he is influenced by the thought that the land which he is to buy with his own money will one day belong not to himself, but to his son by Ruth, has no great probability. There is something forced in an exegesis that makes a father regard it as a personal detriment and injury when his own son enters upon an inheritance. Nor could the kinsman justify himself with a ground so external, before the assembly present. No; as he has hitherto not failed to honor the requirements of the law, it is to be assumed that he deems his present refusal also to be not in contravention of its provisions. Boaz here expressly speaks of Ruth as the "Moabitess." It must be her Moabitish nationality that forms the ground, such as it is, of the kinsman's refusal. Elimelech's misfortunes had been popularly ascribed to his emigration to Moab; the death of Chilion and Mahlon to their marriage with Moabitish women. This it was that had endangered their inheritance. The *goel* fears a similar fate.¹ He thinks that he ought not to take into his house a woman, marriage with whom has already been visited with the extinguishment of a family in Israel. To him, the law against intermarriage with Moabites, does not appear to be suspended in favor of Ruth. He is unwilling to endanger his own family and inheritance; and as Ruth is a Moabitess, he holds it possible to decline what in any other case he would deem an imperative duty.

The man appears to be superstitious, and devoted to the letter of the law. He sees only its formal decisions, not the love that animates it. He fears; but love knows no fear. From anxious refers, come no nearer to it. Cf. Selden, *Uzor Hebræa*, lib. I. cap. 9.

regard to the lower, he overlooks the higher duty. He thinks of Moab; whereas Ruth has taken refuge under the wings of the God of Israel. He does not comprehend the difference of the conditions under which Mahlon once married her, and those under which he is now called upon to act toward her. He knows not how to distinguish times and spirits. The legal severity which he would bring to bear on the noble woman, recoils on himself. He is unwilling to endanger his name and inheritance, and — history does not even know his name. While the guilt of Elimelech and his sons is removed through the love of Ruth; so that their name survives, his lovelessness toward Ruth is visited by namelessness.¹ What a priceless lesson is hereby taught! What an honor does it award to love, and what a punishment does it hold out to the superstitious Pharisee!

Ver. 7 f. Formerly,² in cases of redemption and exchange, a man pulled off his shoe and gave it to the other. The symbolism of the shoe, as it existed in Israel and among other nations, has been so wretchedly misunderstood and perverted, especially in the books of a man whose distorted and dishonest compilations will be injurious to many (Nork's *Mythol. der Volkssagen*, p. 459, etc.), that it will be worth the trouble to explain it, at least in outline.

The shoe is the symbol, first, of motion and wandering; secondly, of rest and possession. The following may serve to illustrate the first of these significations: When Israel is directed to eat the Passover in a state of readiness for instant departure, among other specific injunctions, is this: "your shoes on your feet" (Ex. xii. 11). With reference to the wanderings through the desert, it is said: "thy shoe did not grow old" (Deut. xxix. 4 (5)), etc.³ The wanderings of the gods form a singular feature of the old heathenism, in its search after God. The fact of their passage was often supposed to be attested by the footprints they left behind; but in Chemmis in Egypt, a blessing ensued (as Herodotus tells us, ii. 91) whenever the gigantic shoe of Perseus was seen. It was not the shoe, but the god, who brought the blessing. Heathendom, especially Germanic heathendom, continued to search and wander even after death. The dead, when buried, were provided with an *helskö*, or shoe, for the journey they had to make (Grimm, *Myth.* 795). Even until comparatively recent times, there were popular legends concerning deceased persons who lament that they received no shoe. (Stöber, *Elsassische Sagen*, p. 34). In certain districts, any last token of respect shown the dead is, perhaps to this very day, called "the dead-man's shoe." The sorrowful idea expressed in the practice was that the dead must be helped on in his last journey. Simrock's explanation concerning good works is entirely erroneous (*Myth.* 154). The passage of Pope Gregory on Ex. xii. 11, means something altogether different. Gregory intends there to refer to the example of pious persons who have gone before. The Christian Church opposed, rather than favored, the heathen usage.

¹ The Greeks also spoke of an *oikos anónimos genómenos*, to ease a family died out without leaving heirs to its name, Cf. *Isocrates*, xix. 35.

² **לְרַגְלֵי**. Formerly it was customary to pull off the shoe on every occasion of exchange or barter; now, i. e., at the time when the writer of our Book lived, it was done only in the special case contemplated in Deut. xxv. 7 ff., and then it was removed not by the man himself, but by the

Of cognate and yet very different signification are certain passages of the Talmud and the Midrash (Jerus. Talmud, *Kelajim*, § 9, p. 23, b; *Midrash Rabba*, § 100, p. 88a), where the aged teacher desires that when he is buried sandals may be fastened to his feet, in order that he may be able to follow after the Messiah as soon as He comes.

Luther gave utterance to the saying: "Tie a pair of sandals to his door, and let them be called 'Surge et ambula.'" Hence also the still current popular superstition of throwing the shoe on New Year's day, the alighting of which with its toe pointing outward, is considered to be indicative of departure (cf. my *Weihnachten*, p. 273).

The shoe was the symbol, secondly, of rest and possession. With the shoe one trod the earth, whence on holy ground it must be pulled off; over it, one had complete control, and hence it symbolized the power of the possessor over his possession. In the Psalms (ix. 10 (8); cviii. 10 (9)), God casts his shoe over Edom. Rosenmüller (*Morgenland*, n. 483) has already directed attention to the practice of the Abyssinian Emperor, who throws his shoe over that which he desires to have. That which in ecclesiastical architecture is called *Marienschuh*⁴ points to nothing else than the dominion ascribed by the mediæval church to the mother of God. The custom of kissing the pope's slipper, likewise refers to his dominion. The idea of the old Scandinavian legend, according to which, at the last day the wolf finally submits to Widar, who sets his shoe upon him, is that of the victory of the new earth over the old wicked enemy.

The shoe symbolized a possession which one actually had, and could tread with his feet, at pleasure. Whoever entered into this possession conjointly with another, put his foot into the same shoe, as in old German law was done by an adopted child and the wife (Grimm, *Rechtswörterb.* p. 155). Hence, when in our passage the *gōt* pulled off his shoe and gave it to Boaz, he there surrendered to him all claims to the right of possession which would have been his had he fulfilled its conditions. Nor has that use of the shoe, of which the law speaks, in connection with the leviratical institute, any different meaning. The widow, whose brother-in-law refuses to marry her, is authorized to pull off his shoe, and to spit in his face. His house, henceforth, is "the house of him that hath had his shoe pulled off." Had he performed his duty, he would have set his shoe upon the inheritance of his brother (including wife and estate) as his own. But having contemned this, he undergoes the shame of having his shoe drawn off by the widow. The shame of this consisted in the fact that he must submit to it at the hands of the woman. A man might pull off his own shoe, and hand it to another, without suffering degradation. This was done in every instance of exchange. It was but the exercise of his manly right. But when the shoe was taken from him, he was, as it were, declared destitute of every capacity and right toward the widow symbolized by the shoe, and in this consisted the disgrace.

Now, although in our passage, strictly speaking,

woman. The present case does not fall under the latter head (Cf. the *Introd.* p. 8).

³ [Wordsworth: The returning prodigal in the gospel has shoes put on his feet (Luke xv. 22): he is reinstated in the lost inheritance. We, when reconciled to God in Christ, have our "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. vi. 15). — Tr.]

⁴ [*Marienschuh*, "Our Lady's slipper." A sculptured representation of the flower or plant usually called "Lady's slipper?" — Tr.]

■ similar ease to that contemplated by the law in Deut. xxv. 7 ff. occurs — for the kinsman refuses to marry Ruth — yet the ceremony of the kinsman's delivering his shoe to Boaz was significant only of his simple, voluntary renunciation of his rights. On the one hand, Ruth was not his sister-in-law; and although custom, in accordance with the spirit of the Mosaic law, acknowledged the duty even in cases of more distant relationship, the letter of the law did not reach him. On the other hand, — and this was undoubtedly a point of real weight, — his refusal to marry Ruth was itself based on regard for the law, albeit narrow and unspiritual; for, from his readiness to redeem the land, it is but fair to infer that he would have been equally ready to do his duty by her, had she been an Israelitess. Inasmuch, therefore, as he thinks it possible to separate the redemption of the land from that of the woman, he comes off more honorably than would under ordinary circumstances have been the case. His language refers explicitly only to the estate, which had the effect of lessening the dishonor done to Ruth, especially as Boaz declares himself ready to take his place. Finally, according to ch. iii. 18, Ruth was not present at the negotiation, the representation of Josephus to the contrary notwithstanding.¹

Ver. 9 f. And Boaz said, Ye are witnesses this day that I have acquired (do acquire), etc. The kinsman having drawn off his shoe, in token of his renunciation of his rights as nearest *goel*, Boaz arose, and declared, fully and formally, that he acquires everything that belonged to Elimelech, and (as is now expressed at full length) everything that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. He acquires it from Naomi; but as he cannot acquire it without also marrying the wife of Mahlon, as Ruth is here for the first time called, — for which reason he made special mention of the possession of the sons, — he adds that he takes her "to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, in order that his name be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place." In these words, he thoroughly, albeit indirectly, refuted the motive by which the anonymous kinsman was actuated in his refusal. When the name of a brother is to be rescued from oblivion among his own people, all scruples vanish. The fulfillment of a duty so pious, lifts a man up beyond the reach of fear. Boaz apprehends no damage to his own inheritance; but hopes rather, while taking Ruth under his wings, to repair the evil which the migration to Moab has inflicted upon the house of Elimelech. This pious magnanimity, this humble acceptance of duty, this readiness to act where the nearer kinsman hesitates, and this true insight of faith, which looked not at the birthplace of Ruth, but at what she had done for Israel and now was in Israel, and thus dissolved all superstitious fear in the divine wisdom of love, win for him also the approbation of all present. The public voice spoke well of Ruth; all knew how loving, virtuous, and self-sacrificing she was (cf. ch. ii. 11; iii. 11). Hence, not only the elders who had been summoned as witnesses, but also all the people, unitedly invoked the blessing of God upon him.

Ver. 11. Jehovah make the woman that cometh into thy house, like Rachel and Leah, which two did build the house of Israel. From Rachel and Leah came the tribes of Israel. As these built the house of Jacob, so, say the people, may Ruth build thy house. The extent of the general delight, may be measured by the fact that it wishes for Ruth the Moabitess a blessing equal to that of the wives of Jacob who were Israelitesses. The Jewish expositors point out that Rachel stands before Leah, although younger and less blessed with children, and although the tribe of Judah, and Bethlehem with it, descended from Leah. It is probable that the whole sentence was already at that time, the usual formula of blessing in Israelitish marriages. However that may be, the traditions of Israel made Rachel more prominent than Leah. Rachel was Jacob's first and best beloved. Rachel took away her father's idol images. As she suffered many sorrows up to her death, so the prophet represents her as weeping bitterly after death for her children (Jer. xxxi. 15; Matth. ii. 18). It was Rachel, too, who after she had been long unfruitful, as Ruth in Moab, had brought forth most of those sons in whom Jacob was most highly blessed. But the people desire not merely that many children may adorn her house; they proceed: *עֲשֵׂה חַיִּים*, may she make, produce, strength, ability, heroism.² They wish that sons may be born, who, like Boaz, shall be heroes of strength (cf. ch. ii. 1), so that "great names" may proceed out of Bethlehem.³ The blessing was most abundantly fulfilled.

Ver. 12. And be thy house like the house of Perez. After the general comes the special wish, which in this instance is of peculiar importance. Boaz was descended from Perez, and Perez was the son of Tamar. Now, although the history of Tamar (Gen. xxxviii.) is not as pure as that of Ruth, it yet contained features which might have served as precedents to Boaz. Tamar's first two husbands had died on account of their sins, and Judah, their father, would not give her the third, "lest he also die as his brethren." This was the same motive as that which must have influenced the nearer kinsman. The very fact that he had this history before him, confirms the conclusion we have already reached concerning the grounds of his refusal. Tamar suffered injustice, her right being withheld from her. The same thing happened to Ruth. No one thought of her rights, until she laid claim to them. Tamar did the same, albeit not in the pure and graceful manner adopted by Ruth. Nevertheless, Judah, when he found himself outwitted by her, said: "She is more righteous than I," thus acknowledging his injustice. Boaz had not been guilty of any such injustice; but he felt it his duty, in behalf of the members of his family, to see that that which had hitherto been neglected was neglected no longer. His proceeding involved an admission that Ruth had not received what was her rightful due in Israel. The confession of injustice draws after it a blessing; especially here in the case of Boaz, whose kind and noble conduct is beyond all praise.

¹ Although, singularly enough, Grotius has adopted it. On the manner in which the law against the recusant *goel* was executed in the times of the second temple, cf. the Mishna, *Jebamoth*, cap. xii.

² [It is perhaps superfluous to remark, that our author intends this as an interpretation, not as a translation. His translation is bracketed in the text. — Tr.]

³ These great names, as sprung from Boaz, would of course redound to his honor. To be nameless was to be fameless, as is illustrated in the *Peloni*. The Greeks also used ἀνόμιμος as the opposite of κλεινός, i. e. in the sense of fameless, like *פְּלוֹנִי*. Cf. Schleusner, *Lex.* on the LXX., i. 315.

HOMILETICAL AND PRACTICAL.

"Ye are witnesses this day that I take Ruth the Moabitess to be my wife." What a noble pair confront each other in the persons of Ruth and Boaz! They are types for all times of the mutual relations of man and woman. The remark of Pascal, that the Old Testament contains the images of future joy, is here especially applicable. Ruth acts to the utmost of her power out of love: Boaz is a man of unfeigned faith. Ruth takes voluntary duties upon herself from love to Naomi: Boaz meets these duties in the spirit of obedience to the commands of God. Ruth, moved by love, dares to risk the delicate reserve of woman; and Boaz offsets her deed by a delicacy of faith which would comply, if it were but to avoid wounding, and gives all, in order to satisfy. He promises everything, if only he may relieve Ruth from fear. Ruth followed into

poverty from love; and Boaz, though rich, regarded only the duty prescribed by faith. Ruth was ignorant of the prejudices that stood in her way; Boaz knew and overcame them. Ruth thought she had a right to claim; Boaz was under no obligation, and yet acted. The nearest redeemer retreated, most probably because Ruth was a Moabitess; Boaz says, "Ye are witnesses that I take the Moabitess to wife." An ancient church-father says: "Boaz, in accordance with the meritoriousness of his faith received Ruth for his wife, in order that from so sanctified a marriage a royal race might be born. For Boaz, well advanced in years, received his wife, not for himself, but for God; not to fulfill the desires of the flesh, but to fulfill the righteousness of the law, in order to raise up a seed for his relative. He was inflamed more by conscience than by passion; he was old by years, but youthful by faith, — and for this perhaps he was called, Boaz — 'in him is virtue.'"

VERSES 13-22.

The Completion of the Blessing.

- 13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was [became] his wife: and when [omit: when] he went in unto her, [and] the Lord [Jehovah] gave her conception, and she bare a
 14 son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord [Jehovah], which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman [redeemer], that his name may be [and may
 15 his name be] famous in Israel. And he shall [may he] be unto thee a restorer of thy life [soul], and a nourisher [support]¹ of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law,
 16 which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him. And
 17 Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.
 18, 19 Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, and Hezron
 20 begat Ram, and Ram begat Aminadab, and Aminadab begat Nahshon, and
 21 Nahshon begat Salmon [Salmah],² and Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat
 22 Obed, and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

TEXTUAL AND GRAMMATICAL.

[1 Ver. 15. — Lit. "and may he support thine old age." On the form of פִּלְכָל (from פָּגַל), cf. Ges. 55, 4; on its construction after הָיָה, which here however has the force of the jussive (optative) through its connection with the preceding verb, Ges. 132, 3, Rem. 1. — On the forms אֶת־בְּרָיָה and לְיָרִי, cf. Ges. 59, Rem. 3. — Tr.]

[2 Ver. 20. — Salmah (שָׁלְמָה or שָׁלְמָה, 1 Chron. ii. 11) appears in ver. 21 as Salmoo, which many MSS. read here also. Originally, the name was probably used indiscriminately either with the termination יָ or ון cf. Ges. 84, 15). By detrition of the ב, שָׁלְמָה became שָׁלְמוּ. — Tr.]

EXOGETICAL AND DOCTRINAL.

Ver. 13. And she brought forth a son. With this happy event the last shadows disappear from the checkered lives of the two women. The fears of superstition are shown to have been groundless. Sorrow in Moab has been changed into happiness in Israel. The reward of love has begun, and Jehovah mercifully owns the daughter of Moab, who has left home and native land for his people's sake. Great are the joys which surround the cradle of the child

of such parents as Boaz and Ruth. The father of Nero is said to have made the terrible exclamation: "What shall come of a son who has me for his father and Agrippina for his mother!" But here, where love had been married to piety, humility to heroism, innocence to believing insight, everybody must look for a future of blessings. A child of Ruth and Boaz had no need of goddesses and fairies to come to its cradle, in order, according to popular legends, to bring wealth and good wishes. The blessing of the Almighty God, who looks not at the

person, but at the heart, has spread out its wings over the child.

Ver. 14. **And the women said unto Naomi.** What a difference between the beginning and the end of Naomi's life in Israel since her return! When she came back, poor and lonely, where were the women and neighbors, who ought to have comforted, supported, and stood by her in her necessity? Nothing is heard of them. Nobody was with her but Ruth. But now they appear with their good wishes for Naomi and praises to God; for adversity has vanished. Ruth is no longer the poor gleaner, who painfully gathers a living for her mother, but the happy wife of Boaz. A new name has been raised up for the inheritance of Elimelech.

Who hath not left a redeemer to be wanting to thee this day. It is one of the peculiar beauties of our narrative that its last words are almost wholly devoted to Naomi (vers. 14-18). And justly so; for it was Naomi who by her exemplary life in Moab had been the instructress of Ruth. For her sake, the noble woman had come to Israel. Upon her, affliction had fallen most severely (ch. i. 13), bereaving her of both husband and children. Against her, the hand of Jehovah had gone forth, so that she bade acquaintances to call her, not Naomi, but Mara. Moreover, a heart-union existed between herself and Ruth, such as is not often to be found between even natural mother and daughter. The happiness of Ruth would have been her happiness also, even if no national usages and habits had come in to make it such. How tender and delicate is the feeling which these usages and habits set forth, of the sacred and indissoluble character of the marriage bond. And yet modern self-conceit—that, and not Christian self-knowledge—perpetually talks of the inferiority of woman's position under the old covenant! Boaz had married Ruth, as a blood-relative of her former husband, in order to raise up the name of the latter upon his inheritance. The childless widow did not, as happens so often among us, leave the family of her deceased husband, as if she had never become a member of it. The blood-relative obtains a son by her, and the birth of this son becomes an occasion for congratulations to the mother of the former husband. The child borne by Ruth to Boaz as a blood-relative, although not the nearest, of Naomi's husband, is called by the women the *goel* of Naomi, and they praise God that he has not left Naomi without him. There is, no doubt, a legal ground for this. For the child inherits the estate of Elimelech, because its mother was formerly the wife of his son, and with this estate the life of Naomi also is connected. Not Boaz, who has redeemed the inheritance, but the child for whom he redeemed it, is the real *goel* of Naomi—the person, that is, in whom her sinking house again raises itself; for he is the son of her son's wife, albeit by another husband. He is the grandson of her family, though not of her blood. Ruth's *goel* was Boaz, but Naomi's the son of Ruth; for Ruth lives in the house of Boaz, but Naomi in that of the child, which belongs to him by virtue of his birth from Ruth. These are practical definitions of the levitical law; but how thoroughly moral the views on which they rest! how close the sympathy and brotherhood they seek to establish, and how indissoluble the marriage covenant which they presuppose!

Undoubtedly, the most moral law can become torpid, and receive only an external fulfillment or even be evaded. Laws are living and active among a people only so long as the spirit that gave them being continues to live. The conduct of the un-

known blood-relative has sufficiently shown, that the law alone could have afforded no help to Ruth and Naomi. The whole history of Naomi in Israel, after her return from Moab and up to the intervention of Boaz, testifies to the inability of the letter of the law to avert misery and distress. Boaz followed, not the letter of the law, but its spirit; and hence did more than the letter demanded. In the persons of those with whom our narrative is mainly concerned, the doctrine verifies itself that there is no law so strong as the law of love. It is this doctrine which the women also have come to recognize when they say to Naomi:—

Ver. 15. **For thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, and who is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him.** The child, say the women, shall refresh thy soul,—the soul נַפְשְׁךָ, *animus*, of Naomi was bowed down with sorrow, the child will restore (וְשִׁבְתִּי) her courage,—and support thy old age; and this, they add, not because the law makes him heir to the estate of his mother's family, but because Ruth has borne him. The revivification of Naomi's happiness through the birth of this child, was more securely guaranteed by the love of Ruth, than by friendship and blood-relationship. True, Naomi herself is childless; but seven sons could not have done for her what Ruth did. The women acknowledge now how far short the legal friendship of Israel towards Naomi has fallen, in comparison with the self-sacrifice of the daughter of Moab. And thus there comes to view here so much the more plainly, the doctrine—in its higher sense prophetic, under the old covenant—that love, living, active, self-forgetful, self-sacrificing love, transcends all law and family considerations. Christ announces the same doctrine in its highest form, when he says: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. xii. 50). Ruth's love for Naomi takes the place of physical descent. It engrafts her child, as it were, into the heart of Naomi. In itself the child is only the grandson of her family and estate; on account of Ruth's love, it becomes to her a veritable grandchild of love, nearer to her heart than if a daughter of her own had given birth to it. The power of pure and self-forgetful love, such as Ruth had entertained, could not be more beautifully delineated.

Ver. 16. **And she became foster-mother to it.** She took it into her lap, like an actual grandmother. She formed the child in Israelitish life and customs. She became to it what Mordecai was to Esther, an instructress in the law and Israelitish culture. The son of Ruth became to her an actual grandchild of love. For this reason the female neighbors give him a name whose signification is equivalent to Naomi's son.

Ver. 17. **They called his name, Obed.** There are several noteworthy points connected with this. The female neighbors, in order to give pleasure to Naomi, give the child a name. But beside this, he doubtless received a name from his parents, probably one that belonged to the family. But that given by the women continued to be his usual name, and by it he was inserted into the family genealogy. Consequently, the idea enunciated in it must have been specially characteristic. The text says: "They gave him a name, namely, a son is born to Naomi;" and hence they called him Obed. Now, whether the name Obed be explained as servant of God or servant of Naomi, the sense in either

case remains insipid.¹ What the women mean is, not that the child is the servant of Naomi, but that he is to her as a son.² If the words of ver. 17 are to have a plain sense; nay, if the preservation of just that name which the female neighbors gave him is to have an explanation, the name Obed must in some way express the idea of the word "son." For in this name "son," given with reference to Naomi, there is contained the idea that the sin which lay at the base of her evil fortune had been atoned for. She who lost the children of her own body, had now a son in the spirit of true love. It is true, that from the philological stores extant in the Bible, the explanation of Obed in the sense of "son" is not possible; but it may be done by the assistance of other languages. It is sufficiently clear that Obed is to be connected with the Greek *παῖδιον* (*païs, païdós*), Latin *putus*, Sanskrit *póta, putra*, Persian *puscr*.³

The circumstance that Obed was used in the sense of "son," justifies the conjecture that in the Hebrew of that day there were various foreign words in use, probably introduced through Aramaic influences, without postulating a closer contact of the so-called Semitic with the Indo-germanic tongues than is usually assumed.

He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. In these words the doctrine of the whole Book reaches its point of culmination. They point out the completion of the blessing pronounced on Ruth by Boaz. The name of the superstitious kinsman, who thought that marriage with the Moabitess would endanger his inheritance, is forgotten; but from Boaz descends the Hero (*גִּבּוֹר תַּלְמִי*), the King of Poets, DAVID, the Prophet, and type of the Messiah. From him Christ comes through the promise, even as Obed was the son of Naomi through the love of Ruth.⁴ The doctrine of the whole narrative is expressed in the words of the Apostle, "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

NOTE. — Verses 18-22 are an addition from the genealogical tables of the House of David. The chronological question involved in them must be considered in connection with the other analogous data, for which reason we refer here to 1 Chron. ii. 8 ff.

HOMILETICAL AND PRACTICAL.

"Naomi took the child." Whoever was once capable of true love, preserves its power forever after. Throughout her history, until the close of the narrative, Naomi's name is truly descriptive of her character. Her love is the cause of the bless-

1 The subterfuge of Le Clerc, who proposes to read *אִי־בָד*, in the sense of "unfortunate, poor one," with reference to the poverty once suffered by Ruth, is entirely wrong, to say nothing of the fact that the word itself does not have the sense which he assigns to it.

2 [But is not the emphasis to be laid on "to Naomi" rather than on "son?" It is true, that analogy leads us to expect the name to contain specifically the same idea expressed by the women (cf. however Gen. xxix. 32); but it must also be admitted (with Berth.) that Obed in the sense of "one that serves," sc. Naomi, harmonizes well with the words in ver. 15: "May he be to thee a soul-restorer, and a support of thine old age." — Tr.]

3 As regards the *ע* in *בָּד*, its value (best compared perhaps with a *spiritus asper*) is exactly the same as in *עלץ* to be compared with *latari* and *letus*, *עמל* with *moliri*, *עמך* with *μῆκος*, etc.

ing that finally ensues, for by it she won love. It sustained her in suffering,—it prompted her to action in behalf of her daughter-in-law. Now in the end she enjoys its blessing, and becomes the loving foster-mother of the child of her who was better to her than seven sons.

Naomi is everywhere an image of the Church of Christ, which wins, confesses, and fosters through love. Men whose natural hearts are hostile to her, become her obedient children. When there as apostasy and misery in the church, it is for priests and preachers to repent, as Naomi did, and not to excuse themselves. If they really have the spirit of love, they cannot but feel that they have to blame themselves first of all. When the church does not make converts among heathen and Jews, the attempt to lay the guilt of this judgment on them, and to excuse ourselves, is a sign of a hard heart. Alas! God alone knows what heavy loads of guilty responsibility rest on the church for having herself given the impulse by which thousands were kept from coming to the Saviour. And how greatly she sins, when she does not rightly foster those who do come, exhibiting neither love, nor wisdom, nor faith in her treatment of them,—that too will one day be made manifest. Impatience is not in love; and a little money does not make amends for the coldness of consummate self-righteousness. They are children, who are laid in the lap of the church,—children according to the spirit, that is to say real children, who, by God's grace, bring a greater blessing to the church than seven sons according to the flesh.

PASCAL: "Two laws are sufficient to regulate the whole Christian Church more completely than all political law could do: love to God, and love to one's neighbor."

"They said, there is a son born to Naomi, and called his name Obed; he is the father of Jesse, the father of David." Boaz predicted a blessing for Ruth, and the faith through which he did it was rewarded by his being made a sharer in it. All he did was to utter a word of prophecy, prompted by his faith in the grace of his God, and lo, he was made the progenitor of David, the prophet! He who firmly relies on the love of God, is always a seer. Boaz had faith enough to bring about, in due time, the fulfillment of his own benediction, and became the ancestor of Him in whom all the prophecies of David are fulfilled. Of Boaz himself no warrior deeds are known, and yet the greatest of Israel's heroes, the conqueror of Goliath,⁵ sprang from him. He conquered himself, and on that account became the ancestor of Him who triumphed over sin and death. Similarly, Ruth had

4 The reference of Grotius to the traditionary history of Oerisia, who became the mother of Servius Tullius, is very unfortunate. Oerisia was a slave. Her story has no ethical background. The legends concerning her were only designed to glorify the derivation of the king. Cf. Niebuhr, *Röm. Gesch.* i. 375 (2d edit.).

5 It is on the ground of this contrast that Jewish tradition homiletically advanced the idea that Goliath descended from Orpah, who returned to Moab, as David from Ruth. The early teachers of the church were acquainted with this tradition, and Prudentius even introduced it into his poem, *Hamartigenia*, ver. 782:—

"Sed pristinus Orphæ
Fanorum ritus præputiis barbara enasit
Malle, et semiferi stirpem utriusque Goliz.
Ruth, dum per stipulas agresti amburitur æstu
Fulcra Boaz meruit, castoque adscita cubili
Christigenam fecunda domum, Davidica regna
Edidit atque deo mortales miscuit ortus."

nothing but a heart full of love, and yet to her, once a daughter of Moab, there was given what neither Deborah nor Jael obtained, — to become the mother of Him by whom all the nations are redeemed.

JEROME (on Is. xvi. 1): "O Moab! out of thee shall come forth the unspotted Lamb, which bears the sins of the world, and rules over the whole earth! From the rock of the wilderness, *i. e.* from Ruth, widowed by the death of her husband, Boaz

derived Obed . . . and from David came Christ."

GERLACH: "Thus the coming of the great King is prepared for, upon whom the Lord had determined to confirm the dominion over his people for evermore; and the converted Moabitess, who entered as a worthy member into the commonwealth of the people of God, became the mother of David and of Christ."

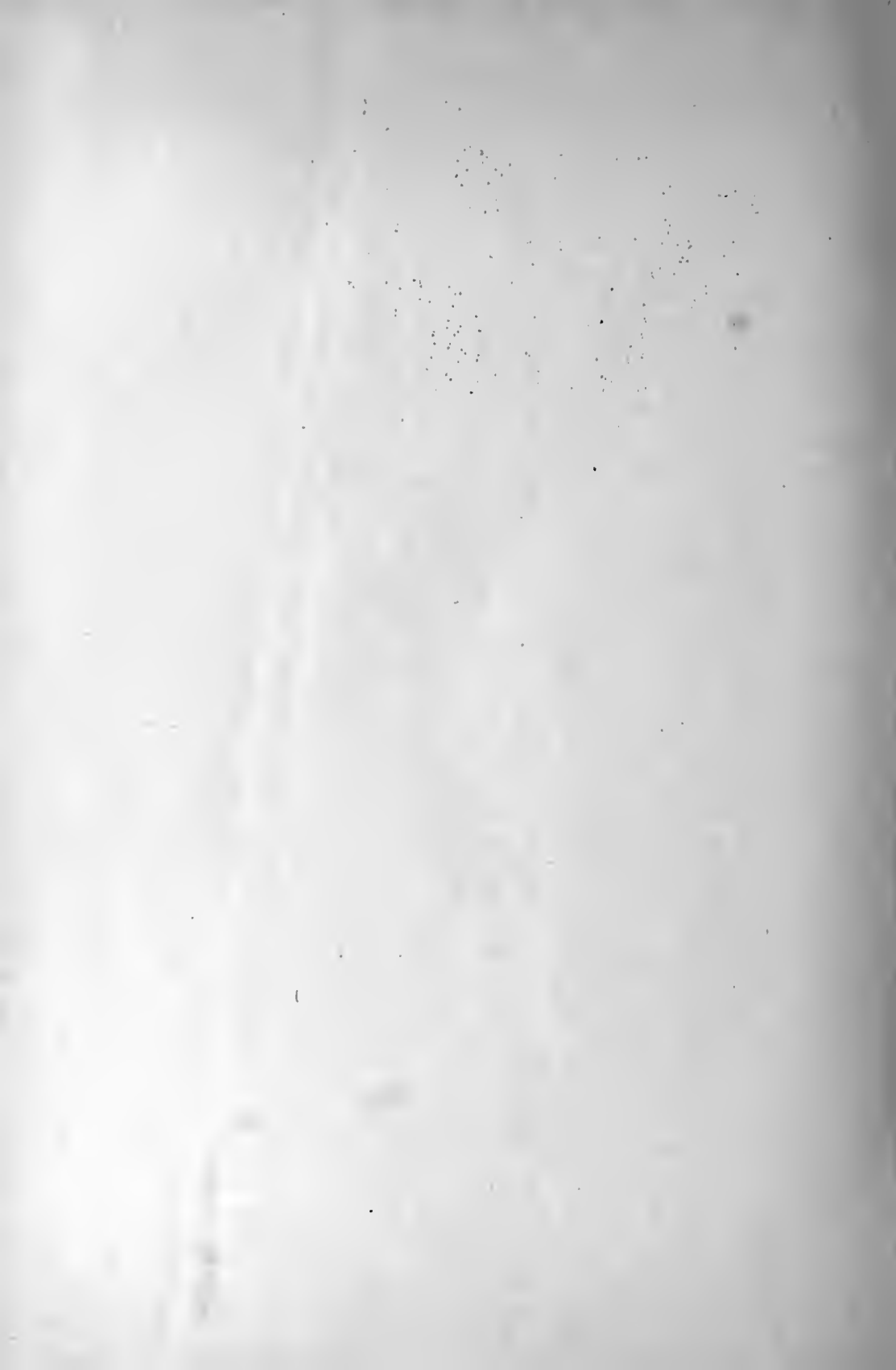
The Jewish tradition which makes Ruth a descendant of Eglon, the Moabitish king who oppressed Israel as a punishment for its sins, contains an allegory worthy of notice. The daughter of the oppressor, becomes the mother of the Liberator, the Redeemer out of the House of David. According to the Jewish expositors the name Ruth is derived from a root which signifies to give drink, to assuage thirst (*Berachoth*, 7 a); and from her, say they, David came, who with his songs and psalms supplied the wants of those who thirst after God. And from David, we may add, came the Saviour who gave to the Samaritan woman when she thirsted, of that fountain which springs up unto everlasting life.

The ancient church selected the sixteenth of July as the day on which to commemorate Ruth.¹ The reason for this is probably to be found in the following considerations: In Deut. xxiii. 3, it is said: "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of Jehovah; even to their tenth generation they shall not enter." This was supposed to have been fulfilled in Ruth. In the genealogy of the Gospel according to Matthew, Boaz, through whom Ruth was received into the congregation of Jehovah, is the tenth from Abraham. But it was the Lord and Saviour, whose day Abraham saw, and who according to the flesh descended from Ruth, who first took away the curse from Moab also. This was announced by Isaiah, when in addressing Moab, he says (ch. xvi. 5): "In mercy shall a throne be prepared, that one sit upon it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, and judge, and seek judgment, and hasten righteousness." Now, as the ancient church set apart the sixth of July for Isaiah, because he prophesied of Christ, who suffered on the sixth day of the week, and whose incarnation was celebrated on the sixth of January, it fixed the anniversary of Ruth ten days later, on the sixteenth of July. Thus her name and the number of her day are symbolical of prophecy and grace. But ten days farther on, the twenty-sixth, is the day of Anna, whom tradition makes to be the mother of the Virgin Mary. Thus the name of Ruth stood ten days after the prophecy and ten days before its approaching fulfillment, equally distant from him who prophesied of the Virgin and from her who was the Virgin's mother. The Moabitish stranger finds herself in the middle between the seer who beheld the wilderness of Moab become fruitful, and the nearest ancestress of Him who delivers Moab and all the world from barrenness and thirst.


Pictorially, the ancient church represented Ruth with a sheaf in her hand. As was natural, she was always conceived as youthful. She might be represented with a rose, in accordance with what may be the meaning of her name (see on ch. i. 4). The Rose of Bethlehem was the ancestress of the Rose of Jesse (Mary), whom ancient pictures represent sitting in a rosebush. Both rose and sheaf are symbols of the truth that though love may sow in tears, it will through God's compassion reap in joy.

¹ Cf. my article in the *Berl. Wochenblatt*, 1863, Num. 82.





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