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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY ON
RUTH

by Adam Clarke.

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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A COMMENTARY AND CRITICAL NOTES

ON THE

HOLY BIBLE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

DESIGNED AS A HELP TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING
OF THE SACRED WRITINGS

BY ADAM CLARKE, LL.D., F.S.A., &c.

A NEW EDITION, WITH THE
AUTHOR'S FINAL CORRECTIONS

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—Rom. 15:4.

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PREFACE TO THE BOOK OF RUTH

WHEN and by *whom* the *book of Ruth* was written, are points not agreed on among critics and commentators.

As to the transactions recorded in it, they are variously placed. In the book itself there is no other notation of *time* than merely this, that the things *came to pass in the days when the judges ruled*; therefore some have placed these transactions under *Ehud*; others, under *Gideon*; others, under *Barak*; others, under *Abimelech*; and others, under *Shamgar*. This last is the opinion of Archbishop Usher; and most chronologers adopt it. The book is evidently an *Appendix* to the book of Judges, and contains a perfect history in itself; and therefore should not be inserted in any part of that book. It also seems to be an *Introduction* to the books of Samuel, in which the history of David is contained, as it gives the genealogy of this prince. It is also not without its use in matters which respect the *Gospels*, as it ascertains the line by which Jesus Christ came.

As to the *author*, he is as uncertain as the *time*. It has been attributed to *Hezekiah*, to *Ezra*, and to *Samuel*; and it is most likely that the author of the two books of Samuel was also the writer of this little book, as it seems necessary to complete his plan of the history of David. See the *preface* to the first book of Samuel.

The sum of the history contained in this book is the following: A man of Bethlehem, named Elimelech, with his wife Naomi, and his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, left his own country in the time of a famine, and went to sojourn in the land of Moab. There he died; and Naomi married her two sons to two Moabitish women: Mahlon married Ruth, who is the chief subject of this book; and Chilion married one named Orpah. In about ten years both these brethren died; and Naomi, accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, set out to return to the land of Judah, she having heard that plenty was again restored to her country. On the way she besought her daughters to return to their own country and kindred. Orpah took her advice, and, after an affectionate parting, returned; but Ruth insisted on accompanying her mother-in-law. They arrived in Bethlehem about the time of *harvest*; and Ruth went into the fields to glean for their support. The ground on which she was accidentally employed belonged to Boaz, one of the relatives of Elimelech, her father-in-law; who, finding who she

was, ordered her to be kindly treated, and appointed her both meat and drink with his own servants. Finding that she was by marriage his *kinswoman*, he purposed to take her to wife, if a nearer kinsman who was then living should refuse. He was accordingly applied to, refused to take Ruth, and surrendered his right to her, according to the custom of those times, at the gate of Bethlehem, before the elders of the city. Boaz then took her to wife, by whom she had Obed, who was father to Jesse, the father of David.

To the questions, Who was *Boaz*? and, Who was *Ruth*? no satisfactory answer can be given: all we know for certain is, that *Boaz* was an *Ephraimite* of Bethlehem; and *Ruth* a *Moabitess*, and consequently educated a heathen. But what we want in certainty several have attempted to supply by conjecture; with them Boaz was the same as *Ibzan*, ~~<0728>~~ **Judges 12:8-10**; and Ruth was the daughter of *Eglon*, king of Moab. This is the opinion maintained by the Chaldee *Targum* on this book; to which I shall, in the course of the notes, have farther occasion to refer. The rabbins say that Elimelech was brother to Salmon, who married Rahab; and that Naomi was his niece.

The genealogy of David, as stated in this book, is as follows:—

A.M. 2236. — Judah,
 Pharez,
 Ezron, called also *Hezron*,
 Aram, called also *Ram*,
 Amminadab,
 Nahshon,
 Salmon, who married Rahab,
 Boaz, who married Ruth,
 Obed, who begat Jesse,
 A.M. 2919. David born.

This chronology is according to Archbishop Usher; and includes, from Judah to David *six hundred and seventy years*.

THE BOOK OF RUTH

- Year before the common year of Christ, 1186.
- Year from the Flood, 1162.
- Year before the first Olympiad, 410.
- Creation from Tisri, or September, 2818.
- This chronology is upon the supposition that Obed was forty years of age at the birth of Jesse; and Jesse, fifty at the birth of David.

CHAPTER 1

Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, flee from a famine in the land of Israel, and go to sojourn in Moab, 1, 2. Here his two sons marry; and, in the space of ten years, both their father and they die, 3-6. Naomi sets out on her return to her own country, accompanied by her daughters-in-law Orpah and Ruth; whom she endeavours to persuade to return to their own people, 7-13. Orpah returns, but Ruth accompanies her mother-in-law, 14-18. They arrive at Beth-lehem in the time of the barley harvest, 19-22.

NOTES ON CHAP. 1

Verse 1. When the judges ruled] We know not under what judge this happened; some say under *Ehud*, others under *Shamgar*. See the *preface*.

There was a famine] Probably occasioned by the depredations of the Philistines, Ammonites, &c., carrying off the corn as soon as it was ripe, or destroying it on the field.

The *Targum* says: “God has decreed ten grievous famines to take place in the world, to punish the inhabitants of the earth, before the coming of Messiah the king. The *first* in the days of Adam; the *second* in the days of Lamech; the *third* in the days of Abraham; the *fourth* in the days of Isaac; the *fifth* in the days of Jacob; the *sixth* in the days of Boaz, who is called Abstan, (Ibzan,) the just, of Beth-lehem-judah; the *seventh* in the days of David, king of Israel; the *eighth* in the days of Elijah the prophet; the *ninth* in the days of Elisha, in Samaria; the *tenth* is yet to come, and it is not a famine of *bread* or of *water* but of hearing the word of prophecy from the mouth of the Lord; and even now this famine is grievous in the land of Israel.”

Verse 2. Elimelech] That is, *God is my king.*

Naomi] *Beautiful or amiable.*

Mahlon] *Infirmity.*

Chilion] *Finished, completed.*

Verse 3. Elimelech-died] Probably a short time after his arrival in Moab.

Verse 4. And they took them wives] The Targum very properly observes, that *they transgressed the decree of the word of the Lord, and took to themselves strange women.*

Verse 5. And Mahlon and Chilion died] The Targum adds, *And because they transgressed the decree of the word of the Lord, and joined affinity with strange people, therefore their days were cut off.* It is very likely that there is more here than conjecture.

Verse 6. She had heard] *By the mouth of an angel,* says the Targum.

The Lord had visited his people] “Because of the righteousness of Ibzan the judge, and because of the supplications of pious Boaz.”-*Targum.*

It is imagined, and not without probability, that Mahlon and Chilion are the same with *Joash* and *Saraph*, mentioned ^{<1302>} **1 Chronicles 4:22**, where the Hebrew should be thus translated, *and Joash and Saraph, who married in Moab, and dwelt in Lehem.* See the Hebrew.

Verse 11. Are there yet any more sons] This was spoken in allusion to the custom, that when a married brother died without leaving posterity, his brother should take his widow; and the children of such a marriage were accounted the children of the deceased brother. There is something very persuasive and affecting in the address of Naomi to her daughters-in-law. Let us observe the particulars:-

1. She intimates that she had no other sons to give them.
2. That she was not with child; so there could be no expectation.
3. That she was too old to have a husband.
4. That though she should marry that night, and have children, yet they could not wait till such sons were marriageable; she therefore begs them to

return to their own country where they might be comfortably settled among their own kindred.

Verse 14. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law] The Septuagint add, *Και επιστρεψεν εις τον λαον αυτης*, *And returned to her own people.* The Vulgate, Syrian, and Arabic, are to the same purpose.

Verse 15. Gone back-unto her gods] They were probably both idolaters, their having been proselytes is an unfounded conjecture. *Chemosh* was the grand idol of the Moabites. The conversion of Ruth probably commenced at this time.

Verse 16. And Ruth said] A more perfect surrender was never made of friendly feelings to a friend: *I will not leave thee-I will follow thee: I will lodge where thou lodgest-take the same fare with which thou meetest; thy people shall be my people-I most cheerfully abandon my own country, and determine to end my days in thine. I will also henceforth have no god but thy God,* and be joined with thee in worship, as I am in affection and consanguinity. I will cleave unto thee *even unto death; die where thou diest; and be buried,* if possible, in the same grave. This was a most extraordinary attachment, and evidently without any secular motive.

The Targum adds several things to this conversation between Naomi and Ruth. I shall subjoin them: “And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee,” *for I desire to become a proselyte. And Naomi said, We are commanded to keep the Sabbath and other holy days; and on it not to travel more than two thousand cubits. And Ruth said, “Whither thou goest, I will go.” And Naomi said, We are commanded not to lodge with the Gentiles. Ruth answered, “Where thou lodgest, I will lodge.” And Naomi said, We are commanded to observe the one hundred and thirteen precepts. Ruth answered, What thy people observe, that will I observe;* as if they had been my people of old. *And Naomi said, We are commanded not to worship with any strange worship. Ruth answered, “Thy God shall be my God.” Naomi said, We have four kinds of capital punishment for criminals; stoning, burning, beheading, and hanging. Ruth answered, “In whatsoever manner thou diest, I will die.” Naomi said, We have a house of burial. Ruth answered, “And there will I be buried.”*

It is very likely that some such conversation as this took place between the *elders* and those who were becoming *proselytes*. This verse is famous among those who strive to *divine* by the Bible. I should relate the

particulars, but am afraid they might lead to a continuance of the practice. In my youth I have seen it done, and was then terrified.

Verse 17. The Lord do so to me, and more] May he inflict any of those punishments on me, and any worse punishment, if I part from thee till death. And it appears that she was true to her engagement; for Naomi was nourished in the house of Boaz in her old age, and became the fosterer and nurse of their son Obed, ^{<RUTH>}**Ruth 4:15, 16.**

Verse 19. All the city was moved about them] It appears that Naomi was not only well known, but highly respected also at Bethlehem; a proof that Elimelech was of high consideration in that place.

Verse 20. Call me not Naomi] That is, *beautiful* or *pleasant*.

Call me Mara] That is, *bitter*; one whose life is grievous to her.

The Almighty] *ydv Shaddai*, He who is *self-sufficient*, has taken away the props and supports of my life.

Verse 21. I went out full] Having a *husband* and *two sons*.

The Lord hath brought me home again empty] Having lost all *three* by death. It is also likely that Elimelech took considerable property with him into the land of Moab; for as he fled from the face of the famine, he would naturally take his property with him; and on this Naomi subsisted till her return to Bethlehem, which she might not have thought of till all was spent.

Verse 22. In the beginning of barley harvest.] This was in the beginning of *spring*, for the barley harvest began immediately after the passover, and that feast was held on the 15th of the month *Nisan*, which corresponds nearly with our *March*.

The *Targum* says, “They came to Beth-lehem on that day in which the children of Israel began to mow the sheaf of barley which was to be waved before the Lord.” This circumstance is the more distinctly marked, because of Ruth’s gleaning, mentioned in the succeeding chapter.

1. THE native, the amiable *simplicity*, in which the story of the preceding chapter is told, is a proof of its *genuineness*. There are several sympathetic circumstances recorded here which no *forger* could have invented. There is too much of *nature* to admit any thing of *art*.

2. On the marriage of Orpah and Ruth, and the wish of Naomi that they might find *rest* in the house of their husbands, there are some pious and sensible observations in Mr. NESS'S *History and Mystery of the Book of Ruth*, from which I shall lay the following extract before my readers:-

“A married estate is a state of *rest*; so it is called here, and in ~~(880)~~ **Ruth 3:1**. Hence marriage is called *portus juventutis*, the *port* or *haven* of *young people*; whose affections, while unmarried, are continually *floating* or *tossed to and fro*, like a *ship* upon the *waters*, till they come into this *happy harbour*. There is a natural propension in most persons towards nuptial communion, as all created beings have a natural tendency towards their proper centre, (*leve sursum, et grave deorsum*.) and are restless out of it, so the rabbins say, *Requirit vir costam suam, et requirit femina sedem suam*, ‘The man is restless while he misses his rib that was taken out of his side; and the woman is restless till she get under the man’s arm, from whence she was taken.’ O! look up to God then, ye unmarried ones, and cry with good *Naomi*, *The Lord grant me rest* for my roving affections in the house of some good consort, that I may live in peace and plenty, with content and comfort all my days. Know that your marriage is, of all your civil affairs, of the greatest importance, having an influence upon your whole life. It is either your making or marring in this world; ‘tis like a stratagem in war, wherein a miscarriage cannot be recalled when we will, for we marry for life. I am thine, and thou art mine, *brevis quidem cantiuncula est*, ‘is a short song;’ *sed longum habet epiphonema*, ‘but it hath a long undersong.’ So an error here is irrecoverable; you have need of Argus’s hundred eyes to look withal before you leap.”

This is good advice; but who among the persons concerned will have grace enough to take it?

RUTH

CHAPTER 2

Ruth goes to glean in the field of Boaz, 1-3. Boaz finds her, and inquires who she is, 4-7. He speaks kindly to her, gives her permission to follow his reapers, and orders them to use her well, 8-16. She returns in the evening to Naomi, and tells her of her fare; from whom she receives encouragement and advice, 17-23.

NOTES ON CHAP. 2

Verse 1. A mighty man of wealth] We have already seen that some suppose Boaz to have been one of the judges of Israel; he was no doubt a man of considerable property.

Verse 2. Glean ears of corn] The word *glean* comes from the French *glaner*, to gather ears or grains of corn. This was formerly a general custom in England and Ireland; the poor went into the fields and collected the straggling ears of corn after the reapers; and it was long supposed that this was their right, and that the *law* recognized it. But although it has been an old *custom*, I find that it is now settled, by a solemn judgment in the court of common pleas, that a right to glean in the harvest field cannot be claimed by any person at common law; see *Law Dictionary*, article *gleaning*. Any person may *permit* or *prevent* it in his own grounds. By the Irish acts, 25 Hen. VIII., c. 1, and 28 Hen. VIII., c. 24, *gleaning* and *leasing* are so restricted as to be in fact prohibited in that part of the United Kingdom. See the note on ^{<BIBD>}**Leviticus 19:9**.

After him in whose sight I shall find grace.] She did not mean Boaz; but she purposed to go out where they were now reaping, and glean after *any person* who might permit her, or use her in a friendly manner. The words seem to intimate that, notwithstanding the law of Moses, the gleaners might be prevented by the owner of the field.

Verse 3. And her hap was] So she was *accidentally* or *providentially* led to that part of the cultivated country which belonged to Boaz.

Verse 4. Boaz came from Beth-lehem] This salutation between Boaz and his reapers is worthy of particular regard; he said, ׀ַּ ׀ַּ ׀ַּ ׀ַּ *hwwhy* *Yehovah*

immachem, “Jehovah be with you!” They said, *hwby Ēkrby yebarechecha Jehovah*, “May Jehovah bless thee!” Can a pious mind read these godly salutations without wishing for a return of those simple primitive times? The words may be thus paraphrased: “May God be with you, to preserve you from accidents, and strengthen you to accomplish your work!” “May God bless THEE with the increase of the field, and grace to use his bounty to the glory of the Giver!”

Verse 5. His servant that was set over the reapers] This was a kind of steward or hind who had the under management of the estate. Some think that an *officer* of this kind is intended in the description given by Homer of the labours of a harvest field, as represented by Vulcan on one compartment of the shield which he made for Achilles:—

Εν δ ετιθει τεμενος βαθυληιον, ενθα δ εριθοι
 Ἑμων, οξειας δρεπανας εν χερσιν εχοντες,
 Δραγματα δ αλλα μετ ογμον επμον επητριμα πιπτον εραζε,
 Αλλα δ αμαλλοδετηρες εν ελλεδανοισι δεοντο.
 Τρεις δ αρ αμαλλοδετηρες εφεστασαν, αυταρ οπισθε
 Παιδες δραγμαευοντες, εν αγκαλιδεσσι φεροντες,
 Ασπερχες παρεχον, βασιλευς δ εν τοισι σιωπη
 Σκηπτρον εχων εστηκε επ ογμου γηθοσυνος κηρ.
 Κηρυκες δ απανευθεν υπο δρυι δαιτα πενοντο,
 Βουν δ ιερευσαντες μεγαν, αμφεπον, αι δε γυναικες
 Δειπνον εριθοισιν, λευκ αλφιτα πολλα παλυνον.

Iliad xviii., v. 550.

*There too he form'd the likeness of a field
Crowded with corn, in which the reapers toil'd,
Each with a sharp-tooth'd sickle in his hand.
Along the furrow here, the harvest fell
In frequent handfuls; there, they bound the sheaves.
Three binders of the sheaves their sultry task
All plied industrious, and behind them boys
Attended, filling with the corn their arms,
And offering still their bundles to be bound.
Amid them, staff in hand, the master stood,
Enjoying, mute the order of the field:
While, shaded by an oak, apart his train
Prepared the banquet—a well thriven ox
New slain, and the attendant maidens mix'd
Large supper for the hinds, of whitest flour.
COWPER.*

This scene is well described; and the person who acts as *overseer* is here called βασιλευς, *king*, and his *staff* is called σκηπτρον, a *sceptre*; and he *stands in mute dignity*, merely to see that the work is well done, and that each person performs his task; and there appear to me to be *gleaners* in the description, viz., the *boys who gather the handfuls after the three binders*. See the *Greek*.

Verse 7. That she tarried a little in the house.] It seems as if the reapers were now resting in their *tent*, and that Ruth had just gone in with them to take her rest also.

Verse 8. Abide here fast by my maidens] These were probably employed in making *bands*, and laying on them enough to form a *sheaf*, which the binders would tie and form into *shocks* or *thraves*. When the maidens had gathered up the scattered handfuls thrown down by the reapers, Ruth picked up any straggling heads or ears which they had left.

Verse 9. The young men that they shall not touch thee] This was peculiarly necessary, as she was a stranger and unprotected.

Verse 10. Then she fell on her face] Prostrated herself, as was the custom in the East when inferiors approached those of superior rank. The *Targum* adds to the conversation between Ruth and Boaz: “How, says she, have I obtained grace in thy sight, that thou shouldest acknowledge me who am a stranger and one of the daughters of Moab, of whom it is said, The unclean

shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord? And Boaz, answered, It has been certainly told me by the word of the wise, that what the Lord hath decreed, he hath not decreed concerning the *women* but the *men*. And it hath been surely said to me by prophecy, that kings and prophets shall proceed from thee because of the good which thou hast done,” &c.

Verse 12. The Lord recompense thy work] The dutiful respect which thou hast paid to thy husband, and thy tender and affectionate attachment to thy aged mother-in-law.

And a full reward be given thee] This is spoken with great modesty and piety: The kindness I show thee is little in comparison of thy desert; God alone can give thee a *full reward* for thy kindness to thy husband and mother-in-law, and he will do it, because *thou art come to trust under his wings*-to become a *proselyte* to his religion. The metaphor is taken from the young of fowls, who, seeing a bird of prey, run to their mother to be covered by her wings from danger, and also to take shelter from storms, tempests, cold, &c. It is evident from this that Ruth had already attached herself to the Jewish religion.

Verse 13. Not like unto one of thine hand-maidens.] I am as unworthy of thy regards as any of thine own maidservants, and yet thou showest me distinguished kindness.

Verse 14. Dip thy morsel in the vinegar.] The *xmj chomets*, which we here translate *vinegar*, seems to have been some refreshing kind of *acid sauce* used by the reapers to dip their bread in, which both cooled and refreshed them. *Vinegar, rob of fruits, &c.*, are used for this purpose in the East to the present day; and the custom of the Arabs, according to Dr. Shaw, is to *dip the bread* and hand together into these cooling and refreshing articles.

Parched corn] This was a frequent repast among the ancients in almost all countries; see the notes on ^{<R10>}**Leviticus 2:1-14**.

Verse 15. Let her glean even among the sheaves] This was a privilege; for no person should glean till the sheaves were all bound, and the shocks set up.

Verse 17. An ephah of barley.] Not less than *seven gallons and a half*; a good day's work. On Hebrew measures of capacity, see **Clarke's note on** ^{<Q16>}**Exodus 16:16**".

Verse 18. And gave to her that she had reserved] As Ruth had received a distinct portion at dinner-time, of which she had more than she could eat, ^{<80214>}**Ruth 2:14**; it appears she brought the rest home to her mother-in-law, as is here related.

Verse 20. To the living and to the dead.] Naomi and Ruth were the *living*; and they were also the representatives of *Elimelech* and *Mahlon*, who were dead. Naomi was of the *family*; and Ruth, though not of the family, was a *representative* of one of its deceased branches, being the *widow* of *Mahlon*.

One of our next kinsmen.] *wynl agm miggoaleynu*, of our *redeemers*, one who has the right to redeem the forfeited inheritance of the family. The word *l ag goel* signifies a *near kinsman*-one who by the Mosaic law had a right to *redeem* an inheritance, and also was permitted to *vindicate* or *revenge* the death of his relation by killing the slayer, if he found him out of the cities of refuge.

In order to prevent families from running to decay, if a brother died childless, the next unmarried brother took his widow; and the children from that marriage were reputed the children of the deceased brother. The office of the next akin was *threefold*: 1. It belonged to him to buy back the forfeited inheritance, or the liberty of him who had been obliged to sell himself for a servant. 2. It was his right to avenge the blood of any of the family who had been killed, by killing the murderer. 3. It belonged to him to take the widow of a deceased brother or relative, if he died childless. If the nearest akin in any case refused, he was treated with indignity, lost his right to the inheritance, and the next akin to him might come forward and take the widow, &c., as in the case of Boaz. See ^{<8004>}**Ruth 4:4-10**.

Verse 21. Keep fast by my young men] The word *pyr [nh hannearim* should be translated *servants*, both the *male* and *female* being included in it; the latter especially, as we see in ^{<8022>}**Ruth 2:22, 23**.

Verse 23. And of wheat harvest] That is, she was to continue gleaning in the farm of Boaz to the end of the *barley* harvest; and then, when the *wheat* harvest began, to continue to its conclusion in the same way. In the interim, as well as each night, she lodged with her mother-in-law.

1. RUTH seems to have been a woman of a very amiable mind: she was *modest*, and she was *industrious*, and most probably a comely woman; and

all these things served to attract the *attention* of Boaz, and to engage his *affection*. Her *attachment* also to her mother-in-law could not fail to secure his *esteem*. All these things worked together in the course of Providence, to bring about a matrimonial connection, which in its issue was intimately connected with the salvation of a lost world; for, from this very *line*, Jesus Christ, according to the flesh, sprang; and Ruth showed herself as worthy to be one of His progenitors as the Virgin Mary was to be His mother. See the notes on ~~4000E~~ **Matthew 1:1-16**

2. We should carefully attend to the *leadings* and to the *workings* of God's providence; it is our duty and our interest to do both, for the path of duty is ever the way of *safety*. Had not Ruth acted thus, how dreary and uncomfortable must her life have been! but she followed God fully, and in a path apparently *dangerous*, and yet, not only sustained no injury, but succeeded well in all things: from this, as well as from innumerable other circumstances, we see the truth of that word, *Acknowledge him in all thy ways, and he will direct thy steps*; and with this we may ever connect, *Trust in the Lord with thy whole heart, and lean not to thy own understanding*. Whosoever follows God in simplicity of heart, will most assuredly be guided into all truth.

RUTH

CHAPTER 3

Naomi's advice to Ruth, how to procure herself a marriage with Boaz, 1-5. She acts according to her mother-in-law's direction, and is kindly received by Boaz, who promises to marry her, should her nearer kinsman refuse, 6-13. He gives her six measures of barley, and sends her away privately to her mother-in-law, who augurs favourably of the issue of the plan she had laid, 14-18.

NOTES ON CHAP. 3

Verse 1. Shall I not seek rest for thee] That is, Shall I not endeavour to procure thee a *proper husband*? See ^{<800>}**Ruth 1:9**, and the observations at the end of that chapter.

Verse 2. He winnoweth barley tonight] It is very likely that the winnowing of grain was effected by taking up, in a broad thin vessel or sieve, a portion of the corn, and letting it down slowly in the wind; thus the *grain* would, by its own weight, fall in one place, while the *chaff*, &c., would be carried to a distance by the wind. It is said here that this was done at night; probably what was threshed out in the day was winnowed in the evening, when the *sea breeze* set in, which was common in Palestine; and as this took place in the *evening* only, that was the time in which they would naturally winnow their corn.

Verse 3. Wash thyself, therefore] She made Ruth put on her best dress, that Boaz might, in the course of the day, be the more attracted by her person, and be the better disposed to receive her as Naomi wished.

Verse 4. Uncover his feet, and lay thee down] It is said that women in the East, when going to the bed of their lawful husbands, through modesty, and in token of *subjection*, go to the bed's foot, and gently raising the clothes, creep under them up to their place. See *Calmet*.

On the whole, we must say, had not Boaz been a person of extraordinary piety, prudence, and continence, this experiment might have been fatal to Ruth. We cannot easily account for this transaction, probably Naomi knew more than she revealed to her daughter-in-law. The experiment however was dangerous, and should in no sense be imitated.

He will tell thee what thou shalt do] The *Targum* reads the clause thus: *Thou shalt ask counsel from him*, “and he shall tell thee what thou shouldst do.”

Verse 7. When Boaz had eaten and drunk] The *Targum* adds, “He blessed the name of the Lord, who had heard his prayer, and removed famine from the land of Israel.”

Went to lie down] As the threshing-floors of the Eastern nations are in general in the *open* air, it is very likely that the *owner* or some confidential person continued in the fields till the grain was secured, having a *tent* in the place where the corn was threshed and winnowed. Boaz seems to have acted thus.

Verse 8. The man was afraid, and turned himself] The verb *תפלי יללפת*, which we render he *turned himself*, has puzzled even the Targumist, who translates the clause thus: “The man trembled, and his flesh became like a (boiled) turnip through fear.” It is fully evident Boaz had no intimation of the present proceedings. To this verse the Targumist adds much; he says, “Boaz subdued his concupiscence, and acted towards her as Joseph did to the Egyptian wife of his master, and as Pelatiel, the son of Laish the pious, did to Michal, the daughter of Saul, the wife of David, who put a sword between Michal and himself, because he would not approach to her.”

Verse 9. Spread therefore thy skirt over thine hand maid] Hebrew, *Spread thy wing*. The *wing* is the emblem of protection, and is a metaphor taken from the young of fowls, which run under the wings of their mothers, that they may be saved from birds of prey. The meaning here is, *Take me to thee for wife*; and so the Targum has translated it, *Let thy name be called on thy handmaid to take me for wife, because thou art the redeemer*; i.e., thou art the *אג גויל*, the *kinsman*, to whom the right of *redemption* belongs. See on ^(אגג)**Ruth 2:20**. Even to the present day, when a Jew marries a woman, *he throws the skirt or end of his talith over her*, to signify that he has taken her under his protection.

Verse 10. In the latter end than at the beginning] It is not easy to find out what Boaz means. Perhaps *דסג* *chesed*, which we translate *kindness*, means piety; as if he had said: Thou hast given great proof of thy *piety* in this latter instance, when thou hast avoided the young, and those of thy

own age, to associate thyself with an elderly man, merely for the purpose of having the Divine injunction fulfilled, viz., that the brother, or next akin, might take the wife of the deceased, and raise a family to him who had died childless, that his name might not become extinct in Israel: this latter act is a greater proof of thy piety and sincerity than any thing that could be inferred from thy becoming a proselyte.

Whether poor or rich.] So it appears from this that it was not to mend her condition in life that Ruth endeavoured to get Boaz for her husband, for she might have had a *rich young man*, but she preferred the building up the house of her deceased husband. See above.

Verse 12. There is a kinsman nearer than I.] It is very likely that Naomi was not acquainted with this circumstance. Some have supposed that there was a *brother* of Elimelech remaining, who was nearer than Boaz, who is supposed to have been only a *nephew*; the former, therefore, must have a prior right.

Verse 13. As the Lord liveth] Thus he bound himself by an *oath* to take her to wife if the other should refuse.

Verse 15. Bring the veil] *tj pcmh hammit pachath*; this seems to have been a cloak, plaid, or what the Arabs call *hayk*, which has been largely explained elsewhere. See ^{<07412>}**Judges 14:12.**

Six measures of barley] We supply the word *measures*, for the Hebrew mentions no *quantity*. The Targum renders *six seahs*, *ˆyas tyv shith sein*, which, as a seah was about *two gallons and a half*, must have been a very heavy load for a woman; and so the Targumist thought, for he adds, *And she received strength from the Lord to carry it*. If the *omer* be meant, which is about *six pints*, the load would not be so great, as this would amount to but about *four gallons and a half*; a very goodly present. The Targum says, that on receiving these six measures “it was said in the spirit of prophecy, that from her should proceed the six righteous persons of the world, viz., David, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and the King Messiah; each of whom should be blessed with six benedictions.” It is, however, remarkable, that the Targum makes the *Messiah* to spring from her through the line of David, and goes down to Daniel and his companions; which Daniel prophesied so clearly, not only of the advent of *Messiah the prince*, but also of the very *time* in which he was to come, and the *sacrificial* death he was to die.

Verse 18. Until thou know how the matter will fall] That is, whether he who is nearer of kin than Boaz will take thee to wife; do not return again till this thing is determined. Boaz lost no time to bring this to an issue, as we shall see in the following chapter.

RUTH

CHAPTER 4

Boaz gathers a council of the elders at the city gates, states the case, and proposes to the nearest kinsman to redeem the inheritance of Elimelech, and take Ruth to wife, 1-5. The kinsman refuses, and relinquishes his right to Boaz, 6. The manner of redemption in such cases, 7, 8. Boaz redeems the inheritance in the presence of the elders, and of the people, who witness the contract, and pray for God's blessing upon the marriage, 9-12. Boaz takes Ruth for wife, and she bears a son, 13. The people's observations on the birth of the child, 14, 15. It is given to Naomi to nurse, 16. The neighbouring women name the child, and the book concludes with the genealogy of David, 17-22.

NOTES ON CHAP. 4

Verse 1. Then went Boaz up to the gate] We have often had occasion to remark that the gate or entrance to any city or town was the place where the court of justice was ordinarily kept. For an account of the officers in such places, see Clarke's note on ^{“-051618”}Deuteronomy 16:18’.

Ho, such a one!-sit down here.] This familiar mode of compellation is first used here. The original is *ynml a ynl p hp hbv shebah poh, peloni almoni!* “Hark ye, Mr. Such-a-one of such a place! come and sit down here.” This is used when the *person* of the individual is known, and his *name* and *residence* unknown. *ynml a almoni* comes from *μl a alam, to be silent* or *hidden*, hence the Septuagint render it by *κρυφε* *thou unknown person: ynl p peloni* comes from *hl p palah, to sever* or *distinguish*; you of such a *particular place*. Modes of compellation of this kind are common in all languages.

Verse 2. He took ten men] Probably it required this number to constitute a court. How simple and how rational was this proceeding! 1. The man who had a suit went to the city gates. 2. Here he stopped till the person with whom he had the suit came to the gate on his way to his work. 3. He called him by name, and he stopped and sat down. 4. Then ten elders were called, and they came and sat down. 5. When all this was done, the appellant preferred his suit. 6. Then the appellee returned his answer. 7. When the elders heard the case, and the response of the appellee, they pronounced judgment, which judgment was always according to the

custom of the place. 8. When this was done, the people who happened to be present witnessed the issue. And thus the business was settled without lawyers or legal casuistry. A question of this kind, in one of our courts of justice, in these enlightened times, would require many days' previous preparation of the attorney, and several hours' arguing between counsellor *Botherum* and counsellor *Borum*, till even an enlightened and conscientious judge would find it extremely difficult to decide whether *Naomi might sell her own land*, and whether *Boaz* or *Peloni* might *buy* it! O, glorious uncertainty of modern law!

Verse 3. Naomi-selleth a parcel of land] She was reduced to want; the immediate inheritors were extinct, and it was now open for the next heir to purchase the land, and thus preserve the inheritance in the family according to the custom of Israel.

Verse 4. I thought to advertise thee] Both Dr. *Kennicott* and Father *Houbigant* have noticed several corruptions in the *pronouns* of this and the following verses; and their criticisms have been confirmed by a great number of MSS. since collated. The text corrected reads thus: "And I said I will reveal this to thy ear, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it; but if thou wilt not redeem it, tell me, that I may know; for there is none to redeem it but thou, and I who am next to thee. And he said, I will redeem it. And Boaz said, In the day that thou redeemest the land from the hand of Naomi, thou wilt also acquire Ruth, the wife of the dead, that thou mayest raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance;" ~~RODE~~ **Ruth 4:4, 5.**-See *Kennicott's Dissertations*, vol. i., p. 449; *Houbigant in loco*; and the *Variæ Lectiones* of *Kennicott* and *Deuteronomy Rossi*. This is Boaz's statement of the case before the kinsman, and before the people and the elders.

I will redeem it.] I will pay down the money which it is worth. He knew not of the following condition.

Verse 5. Thou must buy it also of Ruth] More properly, *Thou wilt also acquire Ruth*. Thou canst not get the land without taking the wife of the deceased and then the children which thou mayest have shall be reputed the children of Mahlon, thy deceased kinsman.

Verse 6. I cannot redeem it for myself] The *Targum* gives the proper sense of this passage: "And the kinsman said, On this ground I cannot redeem it, because I have a wife already; and I have no desire to take

another, lest there should be contention in my house, and I should become a corrupter of my inheritance. Do thou redeem it, for thou hast no wife; for I cannot redeem it.” This needs no comment. But still the gloss of the *Targum* has no foundation in the *law* of Moses. See the law, ^{<6276>}**Deuteronomy 25:5-9.**

Verse 7. A man plucked off his shoe] The law of such a case is given at large in ^{<6276>}**Deuteronomy 25:5-9.** It was simply this: If a brother, who had married a wife, died without children, the eldest brother was to take the widow, and raise up a family to the brother deceased; and he had a right to redeem the inheritance, if it had been alienated. But if the person who had the right of redemption would not take the woman, she was to pull off his shoe and spit in his face, and he was ever after considered as a disgraced man. In the present case the *shoe* only is taken off, probably because the circumstances of the man were such as to render it *improper* for him to redeem the ground and take Ruth to his wife; and because of this reasonable excuse, the *contemptuous* part of the ceremony is omitted. See **Clarke’s note on “^{<6276>}Deuteronomy 25:9”.**

Verse 11. We are witnesses.] It is not very likely that any writing was drawn up. There was an appeal made to the people then present, whether they had seen and understood the transaction; who answered, *We have witnessed it.* If any minutes of court were kept, then the transaction was entered probably in some such words as these: “On —— day of ——, Boaz bought the land of Elimelech from Naomi his widow, and took Ruth, her daughter-in-law, to wife; ——, who had the nearest right, refusing to buy the land on the conditions then proposed.”

The Lord make this woman-like Rachel and like Leah] May thy family be increased by her means, as the tribes were formed by means of *Rachel* and *Leah*, wives of the patriarch Jacob!

Which two did build the house of Israel] We have already seen that ^ˆ**b** *ben*, a *son*, comes from the root **hnb** *banah*, *he built*; and hence ^ˆ**ba** *eben*, a *stone*, because as a *house* is built of *stones*, so is a *family of children*. There is a similar figure in PLAUTUS, *Mostell.* Act i., sec. 2, ver. 37.

—————*Nunc etiam volo*
Dicere, ut homines ædium esse similes arbitremini.
Primum dum parentes fabri liberum sunt,
Et fundamentum liberorum substruunt.

“I would also observe, that ye men are similar to *houses*; ye parents are the *fabricators* of the children, and they are the *foundation* of the *building*.”

Verse 12. Like the house of Pharez] This was very appropriate; for from Pharez, the son of Judah, by Tamar, came the family of the Beth-lehemites and that of Elimelech.

Verse 13. So Boaz took Ruth] The law of Moses had prohibited the Moabites, even to the tenth generation, from entering into the congregation of the Lord; but this law, the Jews think, did not extend to *women*; and even if it had, Ruth’s might be considered an exempt case, as she had been already incorporated into the family by marriage; and left her own country, people, and gods, to become a *proselyte* to the true God in the land of Israel.

Verse 16. Naomi took the child] This might do for Naomi, but it was bad for the child. A child, unless remarkably healthy and robust, will suffer considerably by being *nursed* by an *old woman*, especially if the child *sleep with her*. The *aged* gain refreshment and energy by sleeping with the *young*; and from the same means the young derive premature decrepitude. The vigour which is *absorbed* by the *former* is *lost* by the *latter*. It is a foolish and destructive custom to permit young children, which is a common case, to sleep with *aged aunts* and *old grandmothers*. Bacon’s grand secret of the *cure of old age*, couched in so many obscure and enigmatical terms, is simply this: *Let young persons sleep constantly with those who are aged and infirm*. And it was on this principle that the physicians of David recommended a *young healthy girl to sleep with David in his old age*. They well knew that the aged infirm body of the king would absorb a considerable portion of healthy energy from the young woman.

Verse 17. The neighbours gave it a name] That is, they recommended a name suitable to the circumstances of the case; and the parents and grandmother adopted it.

They called his name Obed] dbw[*obed, serving*, from db[*abad, he served*. Why was this name given? Because he was to be the nourisher of her old age, ^{<R0415>}**Ruth 4:15**. And so he must be by *lying in her bosom*, even if *services* in future life were wholly left out of the question. These neighbours of Naomi were skilful people. See on ^{<R0416>}**Ruth 4:16**. Other

meanings, of which I am not ignorant, have been derived from these words; those who prefer them have my consent.

He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.] And for the sake of this conclusion, to ascertain the line of David, and in the counsel of God to fix and ascertain the line of the Messiah was this instructive little book written.

Verse 18. Now these are the generations] The Targum gives a copious paraphrase on this and the following verses, I shall insert the principal parts in their proper places.

Verse 19. Hezron begat Ram] He is called *Aram* here by the *Septuagint*, and also by St. Matthew, ^{<40103>}**Matthew 1:3.**

Verse 20. Amminadab begat Nahshon] The Targum adds, “And Nahshon was chief of the house of his father in the tribe of Judah.”

Nahshon begat Salmon] In the Hebrew it is **hml c Salmah**, which *Houbigant* thinks was an error of an ancient scribe, before any final letters were acknowledged in the Hebrew alphabet: for then the word would be written **^wml c Salmon**, which a scribe, after final letters were admitted, might mistake for **hml c Salmah**, and so write it, instead of **^wml c Salmon**, the **w vau** and **^ final nun** in conjunction (**^w**) bearing some resemblance to **h**.

The *Targum* calls him “Salmah the Just; he was the Salmah of Beth-lehem and Netopha, whose sons abolished the watches which Jeroboam set over the highways; and their works and the works of their father were good in Netopha.”

Verse 21. And Salmon begat Boaz] The *Targum* goes on, “And Salmon begat *Absan* the judge; he is *Boaz* the Just, on account of whose righteousness the people of the house of Israel were redeemed from the hands of their enemies; and at whose supplication the famine departed from the land of Israel.”

And Boaz begat Obed] “Who served the Lord in this world with a perfect heart.”

Verse 22. And Obed begat Jesse] “Who,” says the *Targum*, “also is called Nachash, **vj n** because neither iniquity nor corruption was found in him, that he should be delivered into the hands of the angel of death, that

he might take away his soul from him. And he lived many days until the counsel was remembered before the Lord, that the serpent gave to Eve the wife of Adam, that she should eat of the tree; by eating of the fruit of which they became wise, to distinguish between good and evil: and by that counsel all the inhabitants of the earth became guilty of death; and by this iniquity Jesse the Just died." Here is no mean or indistinct reference to the doctrine of *original sin*: and it shows us, at least, what the very ancient rabbins thought on the subject. I should observe that these *additions* are taken from the *London Polyglot*; they are not found in that of *Antwerp*; but they are the same that appear in the Targum of the great Bible printed by *Bomberg*, at Venice, in 1547-49.

And Jesse begat David] To this no comment is added by the Targumist, as the history of this king is found in the following book.

The *ten* persons whose genealogy is recorded in the five last verses, may be found, with a trifling change of name, in the genealogical list in **Matthew 1:3-6**, as forming important links in the *line* of the Messiah. To introduce this appears to have been the principal object of the writer, as introductory to the following books, where the history of David, the regal progenitor and type of the Messiah, is so particularly detailed.

FOR the account of the birth of Pharez and his brother Zarah, the reader is requested to refer to **Genesis 38:12-30**, and to the notes there; and for several particulars in the genealogy itself, to the notes on **Matthew 1:1-16** and **Luke 3:23-38**, where the wisdom, goodness, and providence of God, in the preservation of this line, are particularly noticed.

MASORETIC NOTES ON RUTH

Number of verses in Ruth is 85.

Middle verse is **Ruth 2:21**.

We have already seen that Archbishop Usher places the event mentioned here in A.M. 2686, about one hundred years after the conquest of Canaan.