

STUDIES
IN THE
BOOK OF RUTH

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[NOTE.—*Quotations from the Bible not agreeing with the Authorised Version have been made from the New Translation by J. N. Darby.*]

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Like the Book of Esther, the Book of Ruth is one of the smaller historical Books of the Bible. The two Books are remarkable by being the only ones in the inspired scriptures bearing the names of women. Ruth was a Moabitess and Esther a Jewess ; but both exhibited piety and faithfulness to God in an unexpected manner and in unexampled circumstances.

The single reference to Ruth in the New Testament shows the great importance of her brief biography recorded in the Old Testament, for this reference occurs in the genealogy of our Lord given by Matthew (i. 5). In the fuller genealogies of 1 Chronicles Ruth's name is not found. It recurs twelve times in her own Book, but nowhere else either in the O.T. or the N.T., save in its solitary mention (Matt. i. 5) along with divinely honoured names such as Abraham, David, Solomon, Josiah, and Zerubbabel. God's grace has, therefore, given the Moabitish stranger a distinctive place in the line leading up to David the king and onwards to Jesus the Messiah, the King of kings. This fact alone should awaken in us a special interest in the study of the Book of Ruth.

Its Relation to the Book of Judges

The Book of Judges is a history of the children of Israel in the land of Canaan after the death of Joshua, showing their shameful declension from the law of Jehovah. Repeatedly "they had rebelled against the words of God, and had despised the counsel of the Most High" (Ps. cvii. 11). In chastisement, God allowed their enemies to oppress them, but when they cried to Him in their distress He raised up judges who delivered them from their servitude. Nevertheless, after each deliverance, the people quickly forgot their Deliverer, and relapsed into idolatry, copying the evil worship and wicked

ways of the heathen nations around them and among them. It is made evident by this history that the twelve tribes utterly failed to maintain a national testimony to the One living and true God in the face of the gross darkness of idol worship prevailing in Canaan and the surrounding lands (see this solemn indictment in Judg. ii. 4-23).

The historical connection of the Book of Ruth with the Book of Judges is marked in its opening sentence, "And it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled" (Ruth i. 1). The earlier Book relates the history of the departure of the twelve tribes from Jehovah and the laws of Sinai as soon as they were settled in the land of promise. The later Book relates the history of a single family leaving the land of promise to take refuge in the idolatrous country of Moab. And because the general theme of the nation's sin and God's punishment of it by famine is carried on from Judges to the Book of Ruth, the latter has been called its appendix.

But while Judges presents the dark picture of Israel's apostasy, Ruth and her story present bright gleams of God's gracious mercy coming for His people. In the very midst of the national disorder God was moving secretly, providentially, for the accomplishment of His promise of that Seed of Abraham Who should bring blessing to all the nations of the earth. Accordingly, while the Book of Ruth opens with the flight of Elimelech from Immanuel's land, it closes with the name of David, the "man after God's own heart."

Undoubtedly, this little piece of personal history well deserves the separate and distinct place given it in the canon of Holy Scripture. On this point another has written as follows*: "But while there can, to my mind, be no reasonable question that the Book of Ruth fittingly follows the Judges, it is equally plain, I think . . . that it appropriately forms a Book to itself, and this as the natural and, one may say, necessary prelude to the Book (of Samuel) that follows. . . .

* *Lectures Introductory to the Earlier Historical Books* by W. Kelly.

“Besides, the story itself is of very great importance as preparing the way, not for David only, but for his greater Son. This, however, does not at all link itself with Judges, admirable as it is just where God has given it to us. It is neither a part of Samuel on the one hand, nor of Judges on the other, though morally it is far more of a preface to the former than a supplement to the latter. In short, it is just what God has made it, a most suitable transition scene between the two, but in fact a Book to itself.”

In the Book of Judges, the history of the judges and their rule ends with the death of Samson (chap. xvi.), and is resumed in 1 Samuel with the accounts of Eli and of Samuel, the last of the judges (1 Sam. vii. 15). In the closing chapters (xvii.-xxi.) of the Book of Judges, no judge is mentioned. They record two awful instances of the **idolatry** and the **immorality** which characterised the Israelites after the death of Joshua, viz.—

- (1) the idolatry of Micah (xvii., xviii.) ;
- (2) the gross immorality in Gibeah (xix.-xxi.).

We shall find evidence that these shameful incidents took place before what is recorded in the earlier part of the Book. It seems clear, therefore, that the history of Othniel and his successors was interrupted at this point (chap. xvi. 31) to introduce two **flagrant but typical examples** of the degraded religious and moral state of the redeemed nation immediately after the tribes had been established in the land of promise.

What could be done with such an evil and perverse generation? Righteousness demanded their entire destruction, but God remembered His own mercy and His promise to Abraham. And the Book of Ruth follows immediately with its bright and remarkable reassurance of the promised Seed. Darkness and desolation had prevailed when “there was no king in Israel” (xvii. 6 ; xviii. 1 ; xix. 1 ; xxi. 25), but “the

son born to Naomi" (Ruth iv. 17) was the progenitor of Jehovah's King, Whom at the appointed time He would anoint "upon Zion, the hill of" His "holiness" (Ps. ii. 6). Thus, in Judges xvii.-xxi, we see Israel's sin in lurid detail abounding, but in Ruth, the grace, mercy, and faithfulness of God super-abounding. To men of faith, His promise was confirmed by the striking episode of piety in Bethlehem. There in due time the Christ Himself should be born.

The Prevailing Disorder and Degradation

It will help in the study of the Book of Ruth to note in the last five chapters of the Judges some of their outstanding features, evidently given to disclose the dark and degraded apostasy among the tribes.

First, in "things pertaining to God" and His worship, confusion had arisen. From the narrative it appears that the ark of the covenant was in one place (Bethel), but the tabernacle of the congregation, of which the ark with its mercy-seat was the principal feature, was in another place (Shiloh). The latter place, which was to the north of Bethel (Judg. xxi. 19), was where the tabernacle was set up by Joshua (Josh. xviii. 1; Ps. lxxviii. 60). Moreover, it is said that an annual feast to Jehovah was held in Shiloh (Judg. xxi. 19). Yet the children of Israel went to Bethel to seek counsel of God through Phinehas the high priest, for "the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days" (Judg. xx. 18, 26, 27; "the house of God" is "Bethel" in the R.V. and the N.Tr. of vers. 18 and 26). No reason is given why the ark was at Bethel, and not in the tabernacle at Shiloh where it was afterwards in Eli's time (1 Sam. iv. 3, 4). Was not this grave irregularity in sacred procedure an indication of the lawlessness prevailing in the land? The comment of the Spirit of God at the close of this history is "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. xxi. 25).

Further, there was degeneracy among the foremost religious leaders of the nation. For instance, the renegade Levite who conducted the idol-worship in Micah's house was no other than Jonathan, one of the grandsons of Moses (Judg. xviii. 30, where the R.V. and N.Tr. read "Moses" for "Manasseh").

Jonathan forsook the God of his grandfather, the leader and lawgiver of Israel, and encouraged the worship of idols. Prompted apparently by avarice and ambition, he originated and established that succession of idolatrous priesthood which continued in the tribe of Dan through many centuries "until the day of the captivity of the land" (Judg. xviii. 30), that is, until the ten northern tribes, some six centuries later, were carried away by the Assyrians (2 Kings xvii.). It will be remembered that when the usurper, Jeroboam, set up the two calves of gold to be the gods of Israel, he placed one in Dan and one in Bethel (1 Kings xii. 28-30). The subtle, poisonous, Satanic influence of Dan upon his fellow-tribes seems to be implied in dying Jacob's prophecy (Gen. xlix. 17), describing Dan as "a serpent on the way, a horned snake on the path." This pernicious influence is first indicated historically by the installation of Micah's graven image in the city of Dan (Judg. xviii. 29-31). The corruption was increased under the successive kings of Israel, until Amos, before the Assyrian captivity, prophesied of the judgment that should fall upon those "that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, As thy god, O Dan, liveth" (Amos viii. 14). The serpent's venom had then spread from Dan throughout the whole land, and was beyond cure. But at the beginning a Levite, the grandson of Moses, was the chief organiser of this idolatry!

Again, the prevalence of moral corruption and physical violence among the children of Israel is illustrated by the story of lust and bloodshed told in the final three chapters of Judges (xix.-xxi). A Levite with his concubine from Bethlehem was on his way to the house of Jehovah when he became

involved in the shameful lewdness of the men of Gibeah in the tribe of Benjamin. The foul habits of the men of Sodom were practised in Gibeah. A bloody tribal war ensued. The children of Benjamin, that fierce, wolf-like tribe (Gen. xlix. 27), defended the "vile lusts" of the men of Gibeah. Tens of thousands were slain in battle, and the tribe of "little Benjamin" was almost exterminated. This shocking incident is regarded in scripture as a starting point of national wickedness in Israel. In the later days of the monarchy, the prophet Hosea reminded the nation, "From the days of Gibeah hast thou sinned, O Israel" (Hosea x. 9).

In this landslide of the chosen nation into idolatry and infamy, such as is attributed in Rom. i. 21-32 to the whole Gentile world, the priests as well as the Levites appear to have been carried away. It was as true then as in after times, "as the people, so the priest" (Hos. iv. 9; Isa. xxiv. 2; Jer. v. 31). Once, in the wilderness, the godly zeal of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, was notably established by the passionate use of his javelin when wholesale immorality threatened the camp of Israel at Shittim, and the single-handed bravery of his faith "was reckoned unto him for righteousness, from generation to generation, for evermore" (Num. xxv. 7, 8; Ps. cvi. 30, 31).

But in Canaan, where he succeeded to the high priesthood, the fervent spirit of Phinehas in the cause of righteousness on the borders of Moab seems to have cooled after the death of Joshua. Though he was now the divinely appointed representative between God and His people, he was powerless to check the spread of idolatry and iniquity in the land. The salt had lost its savour. His remonstrances, if any, were as ineffective as the feeble protests of Eli, a later high priest, to his sons against their scandalous behaviour at the very door of the tabernacle in Shiloh (1 Sam. ii. 22-25). The priesthood was as corrupt as the people at large; alike they sinned grievously against God and man, and were not ashamed.

The Intervention of Jehovah

By the flagrant disobedience of the tribes to Jehovah's commandments, Israel had incurred the divine displeasure in Canaan as they had done at the foot of Sinai, and for the like sin of idolatry. But, as then, Jehovah in His righteous indignation acted upon His promise and His oath to Abraham. He suspended His wrathful judgment and foreshadowed afresh in the pious and peaceful scenes of the Book of Ruth the coming of the Saviour and Redeemer of His people.

Typical Tracings of Israel's Restoration

In the domestic story contained in the Book of Ruth there are some analogies to certain great future events in the national history of Israel. In its four brief chapters the outlines of these events must necessarily be faint, and on a miniature scale. Here, as always in the interpretation of scripture, the exercise of the natural imagination must be feared and shunned. But the eye of faith that looks for Christ, the Hope of Israel, will be gratified and not disappointed by the result, for this portion, like every scripture, bears its appropriate testimony to Him.

The widowed **Naomi**, an exile from the land of promise, is an unmistakable type of Israel at the present day, still under the first covenant of law and still exiled from the land of promise. **Ruth** the Moabitess prefigures the Jewish remnant of the latter days of Israel according to the flesh. Her Gentile origin makes her the more fitting to be a type of the restored nation. Now the ancient people of God are in the "Lo-ammi" condition (Hosea i. 9), and for their sins are regarded as a Gentile people, but eventually they will no longer be outcasts, for, in accordance with prophecy, Jehovah will say to Israel, "Thou art My people" (Hosea ii. 23).

Boaz represents the **Goel** or Kinsman-Redeemer, Who will restore the lost inheritance. Christ Himself in His risen power and personal right is typified, ensuring "the sure mercies of David" (Acts xiii. 34) for His earthly people. The "**nearer**" **kinsman** portrays the law of God which, though given to Israel by Moses, brought to the people only condemnation and curse, not redemption.

Only the barest outline is offered here in these remarks ; but further details of this typical aspect will emerge in the following pages during the consideration of the Book passage by passage from this point of view. It may be added that in these Studies it is not purposed to enlarge upon the doctrine of redemption as it is revealed in the New Testament, where, as the reader knows, this subject is unfolded in ample measure and fuller detail than anything to be found anywhere in the types or the prophecies or the teachings of the Old Testament. The Book of Ruth fits and adorns its own peculiar niche in the fabric of Holy Scripture ; and it will be best understood when it is so considered.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK IN SEVEN PARTS

- A. i. 1-5 During a famine, Elimelech and his family leave Bethlehem for the country of Moab.
- B. i. 6-22 Naomi returns to Bethlehem, accompanied by Ruth, her Moabite daughter-in-law.
- C. ii. 1-23 Ruth during harvest gleans in the fields of Boaz, Naomi's kinsman.
- D. iii. 1-18 At Naomi's suggestion, Ruth visits the threshing-floor of Boaz.
- E. iv. 1-12 Boaz redeems the inheritance and marries Ruth.
- F. iv. 13-17 Ruth gives birth to Obed, the grandfather of David.
- G. v. 18-22 Pedigree of David the king of Israel traced from Pharez (Gen. xxxviii. 29).

A.—BETHLEHEM FORSAKEN FOR MOAB (chapter i. 1-5)

On account of famine Elimelech and his family left Bethlehem-Judah for the land of Moab. In the brief narrative no critical comment is made upon the change of residence. This silence indicates that the spiritual significance of the journey of this particular family must be traced by means of light afforded in other scriptures. To seek such enlightenment upon the instruction to be derived from this inspired booklet is the purpose of the present studies.

Famine in the Land of Israel

The reference in the opening sentence of the Book to famine in the land is itself suggestive of the degenerate state of the chosen people. In their case, famine was not a mere physical contingency, but a mark of divine displeasure. The land which Jehovah had bestowed upon the children of Israel was "a land that floweth with milk and honey"—milk from well-fed flocks and herds, and honey from luxuriant vegetation. A threat of starvation in such a fertile land implied that the chastisement of God had fallen upon the tribes because they had neglected His worship and transgressed His laws. And that for this reason God withheld rain from heaven they could have learned from the words of Moses (Deut. xi. 8-15). At any rate, we read here, "*And it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled (judged) that there was a famine in the land*" (ver.1). The physical fact is stated, but not its moral cause.

The exact date of this famine cannot be ascertained. It occurred during the long period when "the judges judged"; and this period extended from about the death of Joshua (Josh. xxiv. 29-31) to the introduction of the monarchy, when

Israel rejected Jehovah as their King and Saul was chosen by "the voice of the people" to reign over them (1 Sam. viii. 7 ; Hos. xiii. 11).

The previous Book shows that under the judges the religious and civil states of the tribes of Israel became appallingly debased. So long as Joshua was with the people they served Jehovah, but when he and the generation that crossed the Jordan with him were gathered to their fathers "there arose another generation after them, which knew not Jehovah, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of Jehovah, and served the Baals" (Judg. ii. 10, 11). Throughout "the days when the judges" administered the laws the people departed further and further from the worship of Jehovah and from obedience to His statutes.

Before their entrance into the land, Jehovah by His servant Moses impressed upon the people that in the land itself they should render to Him their constant love and obedience lest the land, fertile though it was, should be stricken with famine (Deut. xi. 1-17). In that picturesque passage, Moses described the land before them as a good land of plenty where they should "eat and be full"; Jehovah would in its season supply the indispensable rain, the "early" rain to prepare the soil for autumn sowings, and the "latter" or spring rain to swell the corn for ripening and harvest.

But this annual beneficence from heaven would depend upon their own behaviour. They must hearken to Jehovah's commandments, and love and serve Him with all their heart and soul (vers. 13, 14 ; also Lev. xxvi. 3, 4). In the wilderness, the daily supply of manna from heaven had never once failed in spite of their continual murmurings and disobedience but in the land across the Jordan a bountiful harvest would be, the reward of their worship, their love, and their obedience to God.

Therefore, said Moses, "Take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside and serve other gods . . . and Jehovah's wrath kindle against you, and He shut up the heavens that there be no rain, and that the ground yield not its produce, and ye perish quickly from off the good land which Jehovah is giving you" (vers. 16, 17).

From these and other scriptures we learn that in Canaan famine was an instrument of chastisement used by God for the correction of His people. When they, His elect nation, fell into idolatry and immorality, He shut up the heavens, as in the notable instance during Ahab's reign, when on account of His displeasure there was neither dew nor rain for three years and six months (1 Kings xvii. 1; Jas. v. 17).

The Flight of the Family

Emigration to a more fruitful country is an obvious method of escape from the rigours of famine. It is, however, not always successful, nor always the right plan to adopt. Elimelech, however, with his wife and his two sons, left the temporarily barren fields of Bethlehem for the more productive fields of Moab (ver. 1).

Had Elimelech in his own conscience any justification for this serious step that he took? He may have thought that he had a precedent for it in the lives of his forefathers, who were men of faith. What did they do in like circumstances? When the first recorded famine arose in the land of Canaan (cf. Gen. xxvi. 1), it is written, "Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there" (Gen. xii. 10); and these words are echoed in Ruth i. 1. Again, Isaac sought refuge from famine in the land of the Philistines, a land not distant from Canaan like Egypt, but adjoining it like Moab (Gen. xxvi. 1). Further, it was a long and grievous famine that caused Jacob and all his family to go down into Egypt for relief (Gen. xli. 56; xlvii. 4). And Elimelech might have thought that in these patriarchal instances there was surely a parallel to his own

case, and a justification for his journey to Moab. Had he not scripture in support of his plan ? What more was needed ?

But surely a further consideration of the history would have taught Elimelech that these incidents were examples not of the integrity but of the laxity of the patriarchs. In these instances, their conduct was to be avoided, not imitated. For what sad effects upon their life of faith and testimony resulted from their ignominious flight from famine ! They gained food, but lost their reputation. Both Abram and Isaac prevaricated about their wives and respectively were put to public shame by the reproofs of Pharaoh and Abimelech who evidently regarded them as men whose word could not be trusted. What serious damage was thereby done to their testimony to the living and true God as opposed to the deceitful deities worshipped in the lands where they sought refuge ! In Jacob's case, too, how terrible was the sequel to his departure from the land of promise ! His seed became bondmen in Egypt, and suffered long and bitterly under the iron hand of Pharaoh's oppression, while God seemed silent and supine.

No ; the example of the fathers in this matter was not safe for Elimelech to follow. It was certainly an act of faith, pleasing to God, which brought the patriarchs into the land of promise, but it was an act of merely human sagacity or expediency to leave that land in search of food. In entering Canaan they obeyed the call of God ; in leaving it they followed the dictates of their own self-interest, which was to their own discredit as believers in God.

Whether Elimelech observed these danger-signals in the lives of the fathers or not, he took the same risk as they did. He departed from the land upon which Jehovah had promised that His eyes would rest continually, "from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deut. xi. 12). He removed from the land of Judah to the land of Moab ; and there he and his two sons died without posterity, and in consequence his inheritance in the land of Israel lapsed.

The Meanings of the Names

Often in Old Testament history and prophecy proper names have an undoubted significance, which affords a key to the moral and spiritual instruction contained in the passages where they occur. In many cases, the meaning is not clearly defined and there is danger of being led astray by a lively imagination which chooses or invents something suitable to itself. In the Book of Ruth, however, the meaning of some names is unquestionable, and this adds clearness and emphasis to the significance of the narrative as a whole.

Elimelech means "God the King" or "God is King." This name is found in scripture only here. With this meaning in mind, it is striking to read in the last verse of the preceding Book (Judges), "In those days there was no king in Israel." Then in the very next verse (Ruth i. 1) we find a designed contrast: Elimelech was a man in Israel who carried about in his name the constant witness that "God is King," though the nation at large disowned the authority of Him Who dwelled between the cherubim in the tabernacle.

However cloudy and dark the day of apostasy may become, we may be sure that God has His torch-bearers. Elimelech was one who bore the light of truth in his name. When Israel denied God's sovereignty, and "every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. xxi. 25), this man in Bethlehem silently reminded his townsmen that God was "King in Jeshurun" (Deut. xxxiii. 5). In the royal tribe of Judah (Gen. xlix. 10) he stood out as an honourable witness that God was the Sovereign Ruler of His redeemed people in spite of the idolatry, anarchy, and individualism that prevailed in their midst. "Elimelech" seemed to be a suitable name for this man in the land of Judah; in the land of Moab it certainly was a misnomer, for he who bore it had forsaken the people of God in order to be there.

Naomi. Elimelech's wife's name, like his own, does not occur elsewhere in scripture. Her name appears to mean "pleasantness" or "sweetness," especially that graciousness of manner which is associated with spiritual beauty. The word is used by the psalmist when he writes of beholding the "beauty (pleasantness, graciousness) of Jehovah" (Ps. xxvii. 4), and again, of his desire that this "beauty" may be upon His people (Ps. xc. 17). See also Zech. xi. 7, 10, where the word is again found. Naomi (pleasantness) is also connected with wisdom, for Solomon says, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness" (Prov. iii. 17). By name therefore, the gracious, good, and wise Naomi must have been a fitting consort for Elimelech; united they would be a noble and goodly pair, powerful and pleasant in their joint lives.

Mahlon and Chilion. Here again are names occurring nowhere else in scripture. For this reason the exact meaning of both names is obscure; but it is sufficiently clear that a deterioration from the sterling qualities implied in the parental names is indicated. Mahlon has been variously translated; e.g., "great infirmity," "painful," "mild." Chilion may mean "consuming," or "consumption," or "pining." Evidently, the general sense of both names is that weakness and wasting characterised the two sons of Elimelech. There was a recognised declension in the family status.

Bethlehem-Judah

In Judges (xvii. 7; xix. 1), two Levites of evil reputation are associated with Bethlehem-Judah; in Ruth, this place is the home of Elimelech, and afterwards that of Boaz and Ruth. This small town or village in the south of Palestine is of exceptional interest throughout scripture, mainly because of its connection with the life of David (it is called "the city of David," Luke ii. 4), and afterwards with David's Son and Lord. It is here and in a few other passages named Bethlehem-Judah to distinguish it from another Bethlehem, situated in

the north of Palestine, west of Nazareth, and belonging to another tribe, that of Zebulun (Josh. xix. 15).

Micah used a different name for the town in Judah. He prophesied that out of "Bethlehem-Ephratah," though "little among the thousands of Judah," He should come forth Who should be the Judge and Ruler of Israel (Micah v. 1, 2). Ephrath or Ephratah was Bethlehem's ancient name (Gen. xxxv. 16, 19; xlviii. 7), which it bore when Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, died, both sons being types of our Lord in His sovereignty and rule.

Bethlehem lies about five or six miles south of Jerusalem, on a mountainous ridge some 2,500 feet high. The vicinity is noted for its productive corn-fields, oliveyards and vineyards, and also its rich pasturage for flocks and herds. This pastoral abundance is indicated by both its names: Ephrath or Ephratah means "fertility," while Bethlehem means "the house of bread." In a land of general plenty, Bethlehem was known by all to be specially favoured of God with a bountiful supply of food.

How then could Elimelech justify his step in leaving the fruitful fields of Bethlehem for the idol-worshipping land of Moab? If God had withheld His rain from heaven because He was not honoured in Bethlehem, was He more honoured in Moab? Surely, faith, instead of fleeing, would have said, As God has given to me and my seed an inheritance in Bethlehem for ever, I will trust Him daily for the sustenance needed by my family, and I will remain here until He bids me depart. After all, the famine gave him an occasion to show by his "works" that he had faith in God (see Jas. ii. 17-26); but he was afraid, and his fear brought about his failure.

The Land of Moab

In the distress of famine, Elimelech from the heights of Bethlehem may have looked eastward across the Dead Sea

and have seen thirty or forty miles away the mountains of Moab and among them the peak of Mount Nebo from which Moses not so long before viewed the promised land before his death (Deut. xxxiv. 1-5). At any rate, to this neighbouring territory he took his family to find food and shelter, ignoring the evil origin and reputation of the Moabite people whose hospitality he was seeking. "*And they came into the country of Moab and continued there*" (ver. 2).

The two sister-nations, Moab and Ammon, are known as "the children of Lot" (Deut. ii. 9), and are of incestuous origination (Gen. xix. 37, 38). They have always been inveterate and implacable enemies of God's elect nation, and they are included in the coming great confederacy of nations which will be formed under the revived Assyrian power to destroy the children of Israel and blot out their very name from the earth (see the prophecy in Psalm lxxxiii. 4-8).

Moab displayed this enmity against Israel on the way from Egypt to Canaan. When the travelling people reached the plains of Moab (Num. xxii. 1), Balak the king hired Balaam to effect their destruction by his curses (Josh. xxiv. 9, 10). This scheme failing through divine guardianship, other means of injury were adopted on the advice of the wicked prophet. The people were induced "to join themselves" to Baal-Peor and to indulge in the lascivious rites of the gods of Moab, thousands of the people dying from the plague that followed. This was a dark page in Israel's history, to which there are many allusions in the admonitions of scripture (Num. xxxi. 16; xxv. 1-5; Deut. iv. 3; Ps. cvi. 28-30; Hos. ix. 10; 1 Cor. x. 8; Rev. ii. 14).

Elimelech could not have been unacquainted with this terrible incident in the recent history of his people. Nevertheless because of famine he went to sojourn among the heathen Moabites who had even refused bread and water to his fathers when they were on their borders. Because of their flagrant

enmity God had said to His people, "Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever" (Deut. xxiii. 4-6 ; Neh. xiii. 2) ; yet Elimelech went there to seek bread for the family.

Misery in Moab

Twice in the Book of Proverbs it is said, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death" (Prov. xiv. 12, xvi. 25). Following his own judgment, Elimelech chose the way which led to Moab to find the food which perisheth, but there he also found his grave. "*And Elimelech Naomi's husband died ; and she was left and her two sons*" (ver. 3). The house of the Bethlehemites in Moab became the house of mourning. There Naomi lamented the loss of the husband she loved and revered. There Mahlon and Chilion lost for ever the wisdom and strength a father's guardianship had hitherto afforded them.

To sojourn in Moab must have seemed to Elimelech the right course to take ; but had he first sought to know the will of God ? Did he wait to hear God's voice saying to him, "This is the way, walk ye in it ?" He was seeking bread, but he should have remembered the newly-written words of Moses, "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by everything that goeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live" (Deut. viii. 3). He no doubt found bread in Moab, for, like Bethlehem, it was a place of fruitful fields (Jer. xlviii. 31-33) and vineyards (Isa. xvi. 8-10), as well as of pasturage for flocks (2 Kings iii. 4). But Elimelech had no word from God as his warrant for being in Moab ; and he died there. In his independent act, he was a contrast with our Lord in the wilderness of Judaea, a hungry dependent Man, but One Who found sufficient food in the word and will of Him Who sent Him (Matt. iv. 1-4 ; cp. John iv. 31-34).

Bereavement, however, did not drive the widowed Naomi and her sons back to Bethlehem. They settled down in Moab ;

and the sons "*took them Moabitish wives ; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the second Ruth ; and they abode there about ten years*" (ver. 4). Mahlon and Chilion acted as they pleased and on their own responsibility. If they had come to Moab at their father's bidding, they chose their wives of their own freewill. If their father's intention was to "sojourn" in Moab (ver. 1), they now decided to stay in the land of idolatry indefinitely. Those who take a downward path soon accelerate their pace almost unconsciously.

Marriage with idolatrous nations was forbidden by the law of Moses (Deut. vii. 3), and no Moabite was permitted to enter "the congregation of Jehovah for ever" (Deut. xxiii. 3, 4). But these two young men of weak piety and stubborn wills married Orpah and Ruth. They abode in Moab about ten years, and both died childless. By the death of the two sons the name and inheritance of Elimelech perished. In this family of Bethlehem the solemn warning was fulfilled which the apostle Paul wrote long afterwards, "Be not deceived ; God is not mocked ; for whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap" (Gal. vi. 7). "*And Mahlon and Chilion died also, both of them, and the woman was left of her two children and of her husband*" (ver. 5). Thus Naomi became a childless widow in a strange land !

B.—BACK TO BETHLEHEM

(chapter i. 6-22)

Naomi "*heard in the fields of Moab how that Jehovah had visited His people to give them bread*" (ver. 6). True to their respective names, Bethlehem had again become "the house of bread," and Judah "the land of plenty and of praise." Naomi, after so many years, resolved to retrace her steps, and she with her two widowed daughters-in-law "*went on the way to return to the land of Judah*" (ver. 7).

But there is no record that Naomi was repentant toward God concerning her original departure from Bethlehem. Her first thought like that of the miserable prodigal was to go where there was "bread enough and to spare."

The Three Widows

In leaving Moab, the elder widow felt that the case of her young companions greatly differed from her own. She was an Israelite, and was returning to the land of her birth, of her family inheritance, and of her God. But Orpah and Ruth had no such prospect in Judah. Indeed, they would leave behind in Moab their relatives, their own nation, and their idols. And Naomi felt she ought not to expect them to renounce their natural ties with Moab on her account; she would journey on alone to Bethlehem. Therefore, Naomi advised them each to return "to her mother's house," at the same time invoking the blessing of Jehovah upon both of them for their kindness to her and to the dead (vers. 8, 9).

The young widows were both deeply affected by Naomi's kind and considerate words, and they wept much as she kissed them, but strongly protested that they were prepared to accompany her to Bethlehem, saying, "*We will certainly return with thee to thy people*" (vers. 9, 10). But Naomi had learned wisdom out of her own experience. She no doubt remembered her late husband's rash decision to go away from "the house of bread" and to seek bread elsewhere, and she recalled its unhappy results. At any rate, she besought her daughters-in-law to make no such hasty choice. They would gain no earthly benefit by following a forlorn and forsaken woman as, alas, she was. They must not expect a second marriage into the house of Israel. Besides, added Naomi mournfully and rather peevishly, "*I am in much more bitterness than you; for the hand of Jehovah is gone out against me*" (vers. 11-13).

No doubt the saddened woman was speaking unselfishly, but viewed as the words of one professing faith in Jehovah, the God of Israel, her witness to the Moabitish women of His unchanging providence and unfailing goodness was feeble, and even false. It was feeble for her after ten years still to be smarting under the bitterness of her own bereavement. It was false of her to declare that the hand of Jehovah was against her. His hand had not led the family to Moab ; it was by their own choice that they turned away from the land where His hand would have preserved their souls alive through the days of famine (see Ps. xxxiii. 18, 19).

Naomi's discouraging words exercised and tested the hearts of the young women ; *"and they lifted up their voice and wept again,"* seeking some relief or resource in tears, as women will. But there they stood at the parting of the ways, and decide they must forthwith. Naomi's plain speaking was a stringent trial of their inward motives. Should they forsake their mother-in-law, or their own mothers ? Should they leave the land of Moab for the land of Israel ? Should they seek Jehovah, the God of Naomi and her fathers, or should they continue to serve the gods of their own people and of their own childhood ? Each decided for herself what to do. *"And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave to her"* (ver. 14).

Orpah's kiss was an affectionate farewell, coupled with a decent and sincere regard for her husband's mother, but nothing more. Ruth's embrace expressed similar affection and respect, but indicated also, what Orpah lacked, an entire surrender of herself to a future life of faith in the living God. Naomi, however, appeared to have some doubts of the latter's sincerity, and she again advised her to stay in her native land, for she said to Ruth, *"Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back to her people and to her gods : return after thy sister-in-law"* (ver. 15). But neither sisterly affection nor matronly advice could change her steadfastness. A divine power was secretly,

but irresistibly working within her. As it has been said, "If Orpah shows us the feelings of nature, Ruth certainly displays the power of grace."

Ruth's Great Decision

Considering in the light of Ruth's subsequent history her resolute determination to accompany her mother-in-law, it seems certain that her conscience and heart must have been deeply exercised by something of the truth of God which she had seen and heard and believed to be true. Inward anxiety and unrest were now constraining her to forsake her idols and seek the favour of Jehovah, the living God of Israel. But she feared lest Naomi's repeated dissuasions might turn her from her purpose. Accordingly, Ruth's fervent outburst of devotion and determination came swiftly in reply.

"And Ruth said, 'Do not intreat me to leave thee, to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried.'" This emphatic declaration she confirmed by a solemn oath—"Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part me and thee." The piety, resolution, and enthusiasm of this speech convinced Naomi of the integrity and determination of Ruth. *"And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, she left off speaking to her. And they two went until they came to Bethlehem"* (vers. 16-19).

The bold and devout words of Ruth bespoke her career as a genuine disciple of truth. Already in her heart "faith was working through love" (Gal. v. 6). The "good fruit" of her lips was a clear indication that the tree was "good," not "corrupt" (cp. Matt. vii. 16-20). Like Abram, the father of all who believe, Ruth was forsaking the land of idols for the land of Jehovah's promise. Indeed, the pious attachment of this young Gentile woman to a sorrow-stricken "mother in

Israel" would have been an "ornament of grace" upon even a well-seasoned veteran, while her expressions of intense devotion to Naomi may well be compared with those of Ittai the Gittite to David (2 Sam. xv. 21), of Elisha to Elijah (2 Kings ii. 3-6), of Simon Peter to our Lord (Luke xxii. 33 ; John xiii. 37). Indeed, by leaving her father and mother for the truth's sake (ii. 11), Ruth bore one of the marks which, the Lord said, distinguished His true disciples (Matt. x. 37 ; Luke xiv. 26).

Let us, before passing on, glance again at verse 14, where we read that in contrast with the departure of Orpah, Ruth "**clave** unto her (Naomi)." The word, "**clave**," denotes Ruth's complete self-surrender in love and loyalty to her new calling. She was yielding herself wholeheartedly and unreservedly to share not merely the temporal fortunes of her mother-in-law, but the worship of Jehovah in the land of His chosen people.

To **cleave** is the term used by God at the beginning of human history to express the undivided and unchanging affection that a man should maintain for the wife of his choice (Gen. ii. 24) ; this love is so intimate and unifying that by **cleaving** the "two shall be one flesh" (Eph. v. 31). Moreover, **cleaving** is expressive of the loving obedience and worshipping service which should mark the people of God, and six times the children of Israel were exhorted by Moses and by Joshua to **cleave** unto Jehovah their God (Deut. x. 20 ; xi. 22 ; xiii. 4 ; xxx. 20 ; Josh. xxii. 5 ; xxiii. 8). It is significant, therefore, that in recording Ruth's decisive step towards Bethlehem, it is said that she "**clave**" unto Naomi. Her choice sprang not from a mere whim of her friendly emotions, but from a rooted conviction of her soul. Her eye was upon the God of Israel rather than upon the mother of her dead husband.

Naomi's Tongue Bitter, Hands Empty, Soul Afflicted

After an absence of more than ten years, Naomi returned to Bethlehem, and her appearance there accompanied by

Ruth, the Moabite stranger, stirred the interest and curiosity of the townspeople, many of whom probably knew her before the great famine, when her late husband was, as it seems, a person of eminence and influence in the city. Those who recognised Naomi were astonished at the change in her. *"And it came to pass, when they came to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and the women said, 'Is this Naomi?'"* (ver. 19).

In her reply to the women, Naomi spoke as an unhappy woman, no longer to be known in Bethlehem as Naomi the pleasant but as Mara the bitter. She magnified her own sorrows and trials, and had not one word to say of the goodness of Jehovah in bringing her back safely to His own land and to her own kindred and city. Whatever her testimony for God may have been in the land of Moab, it was very weak when she stood once more on her own doorstep. Thinking still, no doubt, of her triple bereavement, as well as other grievances, she "foolishly" charged the Almighty with dealing bitterly with her, and Jehovah with bringing her home empty-handed and afflicted. She said to the women, *"Call me not Naomi—call me Mara; for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and Jehovah has brought me home again empty. Why do ye call me Naomi, seeing Jehovah has brought me low, and the Almighty has afflicted me?"* (vers. 20, 21). Such were the strange words of complaint against God uttered by a woman of faith!

The beginning of Barley-harvest in Bethlehem

But if the heart of Naomi was sombre and sad, there was a melody of gladness in the land where the Almighty was the Shield and Jehovah was the Sun. The fields of Bethlehem were rejoicing in the bounties of the early crops ripening for the harvesters: "For behold, the winter is past, The rain is over, it is gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing is come" (S. of Sol. ii. 11, 12). Jehovah was blessing

with renewed fruitfulness the land He had chosen out of all other lands to be called His own land.

Barley ripened early, and well in advance of wheat, in Canaan as in Egypt (Exod. ix. 31, 32). In the sheltered valleys of Bethlehem, barley would usually be ripe and ready for the reaper in the first weeks of Nisan (March-April), which was made the first month of the sacred year for the new-born nation of Israel (see Exod. xii. 2). This, too, was the appointed season for the offering to God of the firstfruits of the harvest (Lev. xxiii. 9-14). And in accordance with the law of Moses, godly Bethlehemites, about the time of Naomi's arrival, would have been bringing their sheaf of the firstfruits of the barley harvest to the priest as a wave offering unto Jehovah. But Naomi had no such offering to bring. She had come back, as she said, "Empty." She confessed that she was the poorest of the poor in Israel.

Nevertheless, backsliding Naomi had returned to Bethlehem at the beginning of a New Year. The month Nisan had its message of hope for her. The deadness of her winter was past; new life and fruitfulness were before her, did she but know it. Mara the bitter, the morose, impoverished, childless widow, was about to find the joy of plenty around her and within her, and once more she would be Naomi the pleasant, in Bethlehem, "the house of bread."

It is ever heaven's way to make glad returning, repentant prodigals; hence unexpected joys awaited Naomi in Bethlehem. Soon the heart of the bereaved wife and mother would sing for joy (Job xxix. 13), for Jehovah would give her one who had the right of redemption, so that her inheritance might not be forfeited after all (iv. 14, 15). Jehovah, blessed be His name, would also give the disconsolate widow a son (iv. 17), and his name would be famous in Israel. She who came back with empty heart and hands would have them filled with unexpected joys and undeserved blessings. Moreover, she was to find abiding comfort and reward in Ruth the

Moabitess who "clave to her" on the borders of Moab, and who proved, as the women of Bethlehem afterwards said (iv. 15), to be better to the childless widow than seven sons.

C.—RUTH THE STRANGER IN THE FIELDS OF BOAZ (chapter ii. 1-23)

Faith brought Naomi the pauper and Ruth the stranger into Bethlehem, Jehovah's house of bread. Both felt much as the prodigal in the parable did—to tarry in the "far country" of Moab would be to "perish with hunger," while in the land of Naomi's God there was "bread enough and to spare," food for the soul also as well as for the body. The land of divine promise must be the land of plenty, where the poor are never forgotten, but always fed.

Before the people of Israel entered the land of Canaan, Jehovah through His servant Moses gave them a full code of regulations for their religious and social behaviour when settled there. And along with other duties, the people were enjoined to care for the poor (Deut. xv. 7-11), and especially for the widows and orphans (Deut. xxiv. 19).

The landowners of Israel were enjoined not to forget the needs of the poor, particularly at harvest-time, but to allow them to share in the bounties bestowed by the God of heaven. A special clause to this effect was attached to Jehovah's instructions regarding the annual observance of "the feast of weeks," when the tribute of a freewill offering was to be given Him according as He had blessed them (Deut. xvi. 10). The children of Israel were then to bring with their animal sacrifices "the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering" before Him. But it was added, "Thou shalt not in thy harvest entirely reap the corners of thy field, and the gleaning of thy harvest

shalt thou not gather : thou shalt leave them unto the poor and to the stranger" (Lev. xxiii. 20, 22). See also Lev. xix. 9, 10 ; Deut. xxiv. 19. A similar combination of giving our thanks to God and our goods to the needy is found in the New Testament (Heb. xiii. 15, 16) ; our worship will be incomplete and unacceptable if it lack either the one or the other.

Jehovah desired to develop a merciful spirit in His people. By its exercise they would themselves be blessed, and would obtain still further mercy (Matt. v. 7). The nation should remember the kindness of God to themselves when they were all "strangers" and bondmen in the land of Egypt (Exod. xxii. 21). Therefore they ought to show their kindness to any "strangers" in their midst by allowing them to glean in their fields and vineyards, taking care that the reapers left something specially for the gleaners. Though the strangers were not of "the seed of Abraham according to the flesh," and though they had taken no part in the ploughing or sowing or reaping, they were not to be stinted in their share of the bounties of God at harvesting-time.

This commandment of Jehovah concerning the poor and the stranger was recorded in the statute-book of Israel, and in accordance with its generous terms Naomi and Ruth found their immediate sustenance in Bethlehem, and also divine favours far more surprising and extensive than could have been imagined. Only the transcendent mercy of Jehovah could have brought both these widows into genealogical contact with the promised Messiah of Israel. Their humble entry into Bethlehem in the obedience of their faith was the first step to this unexpected end.

Going out to Glean, Ruth lighted on the Field of Boaz

Prompted by the pinch of poverty, the two women sought relief through the national poor law. It was, however, not Naomi, the elder, a "mother in Israel" by birth and breeding, that took the initiative, but Ruth, the younger, a convert

from the worship of idols to the service of Jehovah. As barley harvest had begun, she volunteered, "stranger" though she was in Bethlehem, to glean in the barley-fields. Her mother-in-law agreed.

Now Naomi had rich kinsmen of her husband's, who apparently did not emigrate from Bethlehem on account of the famine as she had done. They stayed at home, were preserved, and had prospered. One especially, named Boaz, had risen to eminence in Bethlehem. "*And Naomi had a relation of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz*" (chap ii. 1). But Naomi, though badly in want, had not solicited any favours from her relatives, not even from Boaz. The poor often cling to their pride to the very last.

Nor, as it appears, did Ruth on setting out to glean intend to seek the field of Boaz, her mother-in-law's kinsman. Early in the morning she went forth humbly as a poor stranger to gather up a gleaner's portion of corn wherever opportunity offered, not however, without a firm trust that the God of Israel under Whose wings she had come to take refuge, would guide and protect her. "*And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, Let me, I pray, go to the field and glean among the ears of corn after (him) in whose sight I shall find favour. And she said to her, Go, my daughter. And she went; and she came and gleaned in the fields after the reapers; and she chanced to light on an allotment of Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech*" (ii. 2, 3). To outward seeming, Ruth by "chance" chose the field of Boaz, but to faith it was by God's devising and directing that she went to the field of a pious and gracious man who was her mother-in-law's kinsman by marriage, and in whose eyes she quickly found favour.

Ruth's First Day of Gleaning

Naomi's relation's name, Boaz, signifies "a pillar," or "strength is in him." One of the two pillars or supports in

the porch of Solomon's temple was called "Boaz" (1 Kings vii. 21). Boaz, the strong man of Bethlehem, is described also as "a mighty man of wealth" (ii. 1). The same phrase is applied to Gideon and to Jephthah, but in these instances it is translated "a mighty man of valour" (Judg. vi. 12 ; xi. 1), courage and leadership being necessary qualities in their service for God. Here, in reference to Boaz, "wealth" is used as it is in Deut. viii. 17, 18, where it signifies God-given personal possessions in the land, such as the goodly houses, herds and flocks, silver and gold, mentioned in vers. 12, 13. For the godly Israelite "wealth" was a mark of the blessing of Jehovah which "maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow to it" (Prov. x. 22).

Boaz, then, was a godly man of substance and standing in Bethlehem, whose moral and spiritual character had been strengthened rather than spoiled by His riches. He was courteous, considerate, and generous to the poor. His recorded words and actions both witness to his deep-rooted faith in God ; and therein lay the secret of his strength. *"And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem ; and he said to the reapers, Jehovah be with you ! And they said to him, Jehovah bless thee !"* (ii. 4).

As Boaz was wont to do, he took a personal interest in the welfare of all the workers. Observing the newcomer, he made inquiries concerning her of the overseer, who described her as the Moabitish maiden. *"And Boaz said to his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose maiden is this ? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish maiden who came back with Naomi out of the fields of Moab ; and she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers. And she came, and has continued from the morning until now : her sitting in the house has been little as yet"* (ii. 5-7). The "house" was a temporary shelter in which the workers might rest awhile from the great heat.

As a "stranger," Ruth would no doubt have been timid and shy. Boaz addressed her with friendly words of encouragement and consideration, speaking like an elderly man rather than a master. "*And Boaz said to Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from here, but keep here with my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field which is being reaped, and go thou after them; have I not charged the young men not to touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go to the vessels and drink of what the young men draw*" (ii. 9, 10).

This friendly and gracious advice touched the damsel deeply. She felt herself altogether unworthy of such favour. "*Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said to him, Why have I found favour in thine eyes, that thou shouldest regard me, seeing I am a foreigner (stranger)?*" (ii. 10). For similar acts of prostration to show reverence, according to the Eastern custom, see 1 Sam. xxv. 23, 24; 2 Sam. i. 2.

The reply of Boaz showed that he was already acquainted with her devoted attachment to Naomi, giving up her parents and her fatherland to accompany her to Bethlehem; he prayed that Jehovah, the God of Israel, Whose overshadowing protection she had sought, would reward her labour of love. "*And Boaz answered and said to her, It has been fully shewn to me all that thou hast done to thy mother-in-law since the death of thy husband; and how thou hast left thy father and mother and the land of thy nativity, and art come to a people that thou hast not known heretofore. Jehovah recompense thy work, and let thy reward be full from Jehovah the God of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to take refuge*" (ii. 11, 12). By these gracious words the lonely "stranger" was cheered and comforted, and her faith in Jehovah encouraged. "*And she said, Let me find favour in thine eyes, my lord: for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken kindly to thy handmaid though I am not like one of thy handmaidens*" (ii. 13).

At mealtime, Boaz showed further favour to the Moabitess. Ruth was allowed to share fully with the rest, and to dip her morsel or sop in the dish of vinegar or sour wine. As she sat among the reapers Boaz himself passed her a bountiful helping of parched or roasted corn, a double portion to mark his favour. "*And Boaz said to her at mealtime, Come 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 ate and was sufficed, and reserved some*" (ii. 14). Truly blessed are the meek; they "shall eat and be satisfied" (Ps. xxii. 26).

When Ruth resumed her gleaning, Boaz instructed his young men to afford her every facility in gathering up the barley-stalks left scattered on the field when the sheaves were tied. They were also to pull out a few handfuls from the sheaves for her special benefit. "*And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and ye shall not reproach her. And ye shall also sometimes draw out for her some ears out of the handfuls and leave them that she may glean, and rebuke her not*" (ii. 15, 16).

Harvest work continued while the light lasted. Then with a stick Ruth threshed her gleanings, and found that she had about an ephah (three pecks) of barley grain to take home to Naomi. This would be a substantial addition to the household store. "*And she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out what she had gleaned; and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up, and came into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned*" (ii. 17, 18).

Naomi and Ruth's Evening Talk

It was surely a tired but happy gleaner that returned home that evening to her new home in Bethlehem; for Ruth had on that first day proved for herself how good a thing it was for a poor stranger to trust in the God of Israel, Who "regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward; Who executeth the

judgment of the fatherless and the widow, and loveth the stranger, to give him food and clothing" (Deut. x. 17, 18). The ephah of barley told the tale of Jehovah's goodness, while the bread and parched corn from Boaz added a richness to the bounty for the widow and the stranger. "*And she took it up, and came into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned; and she brought forth and gave to her that which she had reserved after she was sufficed (satisfied)*" (ii. 18).

The elder woman was evidently affected by these unexpected but undeniable marks of God's providential care. Only yesterday she had said, "The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me" (i. 20); but to-day Naomi saw that He was dealing very graciously with Mara, as she had called herself. The love of God was lifting the veil of unbelieving complaint from Mara's heart. And soon Mara the bitter would once again be Naomi the pleasant. "*And her mother-in-law said to her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where hast thou wrought? Blessed be he that did regard thee! And she told her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz*" (ii. 19).

The name Boaz awakened fresh hopes in the despondent widow woman. Provision for present needs had come through her wealthy relation; might not Jehovah through this rich kinsman also redeem the inheritance forfeited by the death of her husband and sons? Mara's distrust of the Almighty was disappearing, and making room for Naomi's confidence and hope in Jehovah. "*And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of Jehovah, who has not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead! And Naomi said to her, The man is near of kin to us, one of those who have the right of our redemption*" (ii. 20). See Lev. xxv. 25.

Being a comparative stranger to the laws of Israel, Ruth had nothing encouraging to say to her mother-in-law in reply, but she did tell her that Boaz had bidden her to continue

gleaning in his fields not only throughout the barley-harvest but through the wheat-harvest which would follow. "*And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said to me also, Thou shalt keep with my young men until they have ended all my harvest. And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. So she kept with the maidens of Boaz to glean, until the end of the barley-harvest and of the wheat-harvest. And she dwelt with her mother-in-law*" (ii. 21-23). The young men of Boaz were his reapers, and the maidens the gleaners. The harvesting of barley and wheat usually extended from early April until late June, a period of about three months. The prospects of food supplies for Naomi and Ruth had brightened ; and for the lost inheritance there were now tokens of its redemption on their horizon of hope.

D.—RUTH THE SUPPLIANT AT THE FEET OF BOAZ (chapter iii. 1-18)

When David returned ignominiously from the land of the Philistines where he had unwisely sought refuge from Saul (1 Sam. xxi. 10-15), he wrote Psalm xxxiv., possibly in the seclusion of the cave of Adullam where he recovered faith in his God. In this song of praise, he commemorates his deliverance and extols the graciousness of Jehovah to the needy and the afflicted, calling upon all those who were in distress and in debt (see 1 Sam. xxii. 2) to prove Him for themselves. David says, "Taste and see that Jehovah is good : blessed is the man that trusteth in Him ! Fear Jehovah, ye His saints ; for there is no want to them that fear Him. The young lions are in need and suffer hunger ; but they that seek Jehovah shall not want any good" (Ps. xxxiv. 8-10).

Like David returning from Gath, the city of Goliath, Naomi returning from Moab, the kingdom of Balak, had tasted

and seen for her unworthy self that Jehovah is good, and that "none of them that trust in Him shall bear guilt," or "be desolate" (Ps. xxxiv. 22). In the abundant provision that Ruth brought home to Naomi from the fields of Boaz, she discerned the "loving-kindness and tender mercies" of the Lord Who had thus so promptly and richly rewarded the confidence of the two lonely widows in Himself. Therefore Naomi encouraged herself in Jehovah. For their present need He had satisfied their mouth with good things; would He not provide for the future also? Might not her faith advance a step further, and trust Him to provide a redeemer for her late husband's inheritance, which by the death of her two sons was forfeited through the lack of an heir?

Naomi Bids Ruth Seek a Redeemer (iii. 1-5)

Naomi directed her daughter-in-law to make a personal appeal to Boaz, their "near" and wealthy kinsman. In this matter she was actuated by that unselfish spirit of grace, so perfectly manifested in Christ Who "pleased not Himself." She desired favour for Ruth the Moabitess rather than for herself, the wife of the late Elimelech. As she said, her object was to "seek rest" that it might be well with the stranger from Moab in the land of promise and that Ruth might rightfully share her family heritage in the tribe of Judah. Naomi was seeking not her own, but the spiritual interests of her daughter-in-law. So Paul's constant aim in his service was the spiritual well-being of his children in the faith. He wrote, "I do not seek yours but you; for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. Now I shall most gladly spend and be utterly spent for your souls" (2 Cor. xii. 14, 15). Such examples of unselfish devotion demand our respect and our emulation.

No doubt the piety and kindness already shown by Boaz to Ruth fostered these fresh hopes in Naomi's heart, and she counselled the damsel to make her application to him forth-

with. “ *And Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, My daughter shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee ? And now, is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast ? Behold, he is winnowing barley in the threshing-floor to-night. Wash (bathe) thyself therefore, and anoint thyself, and put thy raiment upon thee, and go down to the floor ; make not thyself known to the man until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lies down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall have lain down, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thyself down ; and he will shew thee what thou shalt do*” (iii. 1-4).

The process of winnowing, that is, of separating the grain from the chaff after the threshing, was usually undertaken in the evening because the necessary winds for carrying away the flimsy grain-husks (Ps. i. 4) sprang up at that time of the day. To guard the winnowed grain from the pilferers, who love darkness rather than light, it was customary for the owner himself to sleep in the open upon the threshing-floor in his usual raiment, with a mantle over his feet for extra covering. It seems to have been common knowledge in Bethlehem that Boaz would follow this practice that night. Naomi therefore advised Ruth to take advantage of this occasion and make a private personal appeal to “Boaz of our kindred”, seeking his protection in her friendlessness, and his interest in the recovery of the inheritance of her deceased father-in-law and her husband. Ruth agreed to carry out Naomi’s proposal. “ *And she said to her, All that thou sayest will I do*” (iii. 5).

Ruth’s Personal Petition to the Kinsman-Redeemer (iii. 6-9)

Naomi’s plan, founded upon divine ordinances (Lev. xxv. 23-28 ; Deut. xxv. 5-10), was made in all good faith, believing that Boaz was the kinsman whose bounden duty it was, according to the law, to undertake the recovery of the lapsed inheritance, and to marry her daughter-in-law, Ruth. She had confidence that Boaz, having shown himself to be a God-fearing man, would not hesitate to accept this responsibility,

and also that he would, as she said to Ruth, "shew thee what thou shalt do" (iii. 4). *"And she went down to the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law had bidden her. And Boaz ate and drank, and his heart was merry, and he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn. Then she went softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid herself down. And it came to pass at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth, thy handmaid; spread thy skirt (wing) over thy handmaid; for thou hast the right of redemption"* (iii. 6-9).

At the close of the day, Boaz ate his food with a "merry" heart, that is, with the "joy in harvest" (Isa. ix. 3) that came to him because God had so blessed his ploughing and sowing. "Merry" does not, either here or in Luke xv. 24, imply an excess of conviviality. At midnight Boaz was startled to find a woman lying under the mantle covering his feet. This was the moment for Ruth to present her plea. She owned herself to be the unworthy gleaner to whom Boaz had been so kind. She was now seeking his protection as a poor widow and the daughter-in-law of a poor widow. She had come to him because he was their family relative, and had the right of redemption. She cast herself unreservedly upon his mercy and his favour. She knew he had the power to redeem; was not his name Boaz, the strong and wealthy one? She trusted that he was willing as well as able to redeem.

"Spread thy skirt (wing) over thy handmaid" is to be understood not literally but figuratively. Ruth desired his protection. When danger threatens the defenceless brood, the hen gathers her chickens under her wings (Matt. xxiii. 37). When David was fleeing from Saul, he took refuge in the shadow of the wings of his God (Ps. lvii. 1; see also xxxvi. 7; lxi. 4; xci. 4). It may also be recalled that in the harvest field, Boaz had used this very metaphor in welcoming Ruth as a gleaner, saying, "Jehovah recompense thy work, and let

thy reward be full from Jehovah the God of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to take refuge" (ii. 12). Did Ruth allude especially to these words of Boaz, when she pleaded, "Spread thy wing over thy handmaid"? It might well have been so, for the words of her lips expressed the faith of her heart that the "wing" of Boaz might be the agent of the sheltering "wings" of Jehovah.

Ruth Receives the Promise of Redemption (iii. 10-13)

Boaz, with the fear of Jehovah before his eyes, listened attentively to the piteous plea of the destitute woman at his feet. Surely God Who had brought her from Moab to Bethlehem had now led her from Naomi's home to his threshing-floor. Regarding her request as a reasonable and righteous one, Boaz granted what she desired, though he knew what was involved in her petition better perhaps than either she or Naomi did, the fact being that another man had a nearer right than himself to redeem the inheritance. Boaz, however, undertook to see that justice should be done in the matter, and that the inheritance should be redeemed and established upon the firm basis of equity and truth according to the law of Jehovah. If the nearer kinsman should fail to do this he himself would do it. He meant, in any case, to spread his wing of protection over the forlorn damsel, and do for her whatever justice and generosity might require.

The reply of Boaz to the request of Ruth was as follows :
" And he said, Blessed be thou of Jehovah, my daughter ! Thou hast shewn more kindness at the end than at the first, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not ; all that thou sayest will I do to thee ; for all the gate of my people knows that thou art a woman of worth. And now, truly I am one that has the right of redemption, yet there is one that has the right of redemption who is nearer than I. Stay over to-night, and it shall be in the morning, if he will redeem thee, well—let him redeem ; but if he like not to

redeem thee, then will I redeem thee, as Jehovah liveth. Lie down until the morning" (iii. 10-13).

So Ruth who was by birth a stranger from "the covenants of promise" received the promise of inheritance in Immanuel's land, the glory of all lands, the land from which the bounteous blessings of God will eventually flow to the whole earth. By the fulfilment of this promise she would be, as Boaz himself desired for her (ver. 10), blessed of Jehovah and accepted as a daughter of Israel.

Moreover, her faith in Jehovah was exhibited unmistakably by her godly living and general demeanour ; so much so that, as Boaz testified, the wise and upright men that sat in the gate of Bethlehem knew that she was "a woman of worth" (ver. 11). Already she had been recognised by the ruling elders as one who excelled in those womanly qualities which imparted worthiness or "virtue" to a housewife in Israel. This term is used elsewhere. Such a one is described by Solomon as "a crown to her husband" (Prov. xii. 4). And the final twenty-two verses of this book of moral wisdom are an acrostic eulogy of "a woman of worth" (Prov. xxxi. 10-31).

Such then was the domestic character of Ruth before she entered the home of Boaz. By her comely behaviour the humble-minded handmaiden had in the eyes of the elders of the city shown herself worthy to share an inheritance in the midst of Jehovah's people. So the elders of the Jews in Capernaum said to the Lord concerning the Gentile centurion who sought His aid for the healing of his servant, that he was "worthy" (Luke vii. 4). The centurion himself said, "I am not worthy." But the Lord showed the people that his good deeds towards the Jews sprang from "great faith" such as He had not found in Israel (Matt. viii. 8, 10). In like manner, Ruth was justified before man by her works of "worth" because they sprang from her faith in Jehovah, as also did Abraham's and Rahab's (Jas. ii. 21-25).

Ruth Carries the Good News to Naomi (iii. 14-18)

Boaz requested Ruth to remain where she was until the morning, and not to brave the dangers of a midnight journey to her home. The proved piety of the elderly man and the younger woman was an adequate defence of the decorum of this private and peculiar interview. Ruth, however, departed from the threshing-floor at the break of day that she might "give no occasion to the adversary in respect of reproach" (1 Tim. v. 14). "*And she lay at his feet until the morning ; and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the threshing-floor*" (iii. 14).

But before leaving, Ruth was again made a recipient of the munificence of Boaz, her redeemer by promise. He filled her cloak or overall with six measures of the winnowed barley grain and laid it upon her head to carry home. Thus Boaz crowned her, as it were, with a mark of his goodness and favour, a figure too, we may say, of Jehovah's favour which rests upon the head of those who "keep His covenant" and "remember also His precepts to do them." Such He crowns "with lovingkindness and tender mercies" (Ps. ciii. 4).

"*And he said, Bring the cloak that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And she held it, and he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her : and he went into the city*" (iii. 15). The "six measures" of barley which Ruth was carrying to Naomi were equal to two ephahs ; this amount was twice that of her own gleaning (ii. 17). It was a "double portion," a sign from Boaz of special favour (Deut. xxi. 17 ; 1 Sam. i. 5).

The concluding words of verse 15 in the A.V. are, "*and she went into the city.*" But most revised versions, like the one quoted, change the pronoun to "*he,*" showing that the reference is to Boaz and his departure for Bethlehem and its gate (thus connecting iii. 15, with iv. 1, verses 16 to 18 being

parenthetical. This reading, "he" instead of "she," is undoubtedly correct.

Ruth reached Naomi's house in the dim light of early dawn. "*And she came to her mother-in-law ; and she said, Who art thou, my daughter ? And she told her all that the man had done to her. And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me ; for he said to me, Go not empty to thy mother-in-law. Then she said, Be still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall ; for the man will not rest until he have completed the matter this day*" (iii. 16-18). Naomi's first words do not necessarily imply a lack of recognition. The patriarch Isaac addressed both his sons similarly (Gen. xxvii. 18, 32). Also, the term, "my daughter," denoted a friendly greeting rather than actual relationship. It will be noted that Boaz used the same mode of address to Ruth (ii. 8 ; iii. 10). Ruth quickly unfolded to her mother-in-law the good news that Boaz had given her his promise of redemption, and she also displayed his gift of a double portion of corn, an earnest of that fruitful inheritance which was to come, as well as a mark of his present favour.

Naomi's comment (ver. 18) on this good news is full of faith and hope. She herself had complete confidence in the pious and active beneficence of Boaz. She was sure that what he had promised he would perform without delay—"this day," she said. Ruth, therefore, need not be anxious. Let her "sit still," or "be still." The matter was now entirely in the hands of Boaz, and the strength of the Lord was in him.

Let our readers mark the trust of these women, and take heed to the exhortation of Heb. vi. 11, 12 ; "We desire earnestly that each one of you shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end ; that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience have been inheritors of the promises."

E.—BOAZ BECOMES THE KINSMAN-REDEEMER (chapter iv. 1-12)

In the gate of Bethlehem, Boaz shews himself to be a man full of gracious consideration for the two widows but also of the utmost regard for the righteous requirements of Jehovah's law in the land of Israel. He arranged that the immediate redemption of Elimelech's inheritance should be undertaken in public and according to the approved customs of the people. There was, in fact, more involved in it than the provision of sustenance for the impoverished widows. The inheritance was Jehovah's gift to this family, and should be recovered and secured to them for this reason. In the days of Joshua, the parcel of ground had been bestowed by lot upon Elimelech's forbears to be held by them and their heirs in perpetuity. Jehovah was the landowner: "the land is Mine" (Lev. xxv. 23). Any question affecting the line of succession or a change of occupant should be made on a righteous basis in the eyes of Jehovah. Redemption was a sacred transaction, and not a mere matter of human bargaining.

With the double purpose of redemption and marriage in mind, Boaz betook himself to the "gate," which was recognised as an open court of justice where civil and criminal cases were investigated by the aged and wise men of reputation in the city. This form of local government was authorised by Moses and was embodied in his final instructions delivered to the children of Israel on the borders of the land of Canaan (cp. Deut. xvi. 18-20 ; xxi. 18-21 ; xxv. 7-9). The elders of the city were therefore its civil rulers and were "ordained of God" to be such, rewarding and protecting the good and punishing the evil with magisterial authority exercised according to His law (Josh. xx. 4 ; Rom. xiii. 1-4).

Boaz and the Elders in the Gate

Boaz was aware that another man by reason of closer kinship possessed a greater claim than himself to the right of

redemption from the leaseholder of the estate to whom presumably Elimelech and Naomi ceded it on their departure to the land of Moab. Unless redeemed the land would remain in possession of the leaseholder or mortgagee until the year of jubilee (Lev. xxv. 28). Up to the moment, however, the next-of-kin had taken no steps to redeem the inheritance, neglecting the widows to that extent. But Boaz was for instant action, and he at once raised the question before the lawful authorities, whom he called together in the gate. *"And Boaz went up to the gate, and sat down there. And behold, he that had the right of redemption, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. And he said, Thou, such an one, turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit down here. And they sat down"* (iv. 1, 2).

Bethlehem was situated on a hill, the cornfields being in the valleys and on the slopes. Hence we read that Ruth "went down" from Naomi's house to the threshing-floor (iii. 6), and that Boaz "went up" from the threshing-floor to the gate of Bethlehem (iv. 1). The gate was a place of public resort, roomy enough for twelve persons to be seated and many townspeople to stand around as spectators. In great cities ample space was provided at the gates for important public ceremonies. For instance, in a "void" or open space at the entrance of the gate of Samaria two kings were able to sit on their thrones in state, while all the prophets prophesied before them (1 Kings xxii. 10).

The Next-of-kin Disclaims his Right of Redemption

In the presence of the elders in the gate, Boaz stated the case of the lapsed inheritance to the next-of-kin (**goel**). Naomi, the widow of their relative, was desirous that the allotment of land which was her husband's hereditary possession might be redeemed. Boaz pointed out to the **goel** that on account of his near blood-relationship in the family, the

primary right of redemption belonged to him. Would he exercise this right? If not, Boaz himself would redeem the inheritance. *"And he said to him that had the right of redemption: Naomi, who is come back out of the country of Moab, sells the allotment that was our brother (kinsman) Elimelech's. And I thought I would apprise thee of it and say, Buy it in the presence of the inhabitants, and in the presence of the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem; but if thou wilt not redeem, tell me, that I may know; for there is none to redeem besides thee; and I am after thee"* (vers. 3, 4).

The "nearer" kinsman-redeemer (**goel**) was ready to exercise his legal right and to purchase the property. By so doing he would add to his own estate. Altogether, the proposal seemed to him a good bargain. *"And he said, I will redeem it"* (ver. 4). But apparently he was unaware that the transfer of the allotment to him required that he should also marry Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, Elimelech's son. *"And Boaz said, On the day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance"* (ver. 5). This compulsory marriage was in accordance with the provision made in Jehovah's law (Deut. xxv. 6), in order that the family name might continue with the family freehold, even though its head died without heir, as had been the case of both Elimelech and his two sons. And it was the will of Jehovah that the inheritance of each family of the righteous people should be its perpetual possession (Lev. xxv. 23).

The "nearer" **goel**, however, was not prepared to carry out the latter part of the bargain by taking Ruth to wife and preserving the name of the dead to the inheritance. He at once revoked his former decision. *"And he that had the right of redemption said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance. Redeem thou for thyself what I should redeem, for I cannot redeem it"* (ver. 6). By this declaration

in the presence of the elders of Bethlehem he who had the prior right of redemption publicly surrendered this right to Boaz, and the way was opened for the latter to fulfil the generous purpose of his heart.

Boaz had stated clearly what was the position respectively of the two widows in regard to the inheritance. He said (1) that Naomi, in the eyes of the law, was the seller of the property, although it had, no doubt, been leased or mortgaged in the days of the famine to its present occupier. And as soon as the **goel** redeemed the inheritance, Naomi would receive its value for her own immediate use and enjoyment. He said also (2) that Ruth, not being a daughter of Elimelech, had no title to the property under the special "statute of judgment" applying to daughters (Num. xxvii. 6-11). But as the widow of Mahlon, she had a recognised place in the family. Moreover, seeing that her sister Orpah, the wife of her husband's brother, Chilion, remained in her own country, Ruth was the only one from whom, by suitable marriage, an heir might be expected to Elimelech's inheritance. These two facts will be found to be of importance when the typical aspect of the narrative is being considered (see pp. 60-69).

The "nearer" **goel** had declined to marry Ruth, "lest," he said, "I mar mine own inheritance." He thought that by his marriage with the Moabitess, he would bring upon his family the stigma of a "stranger." Moreover, he would be taking money from his own inheritance to redeem another's, and so he would "mar" it to that extent. He suggested therefore that Boaz had better perform the part of a kinsman-redeemer (**goel**). In fact, the law in Israel had proved its own impotence to redeem the poor and the stranger, and it stood aside that grace and truth in the person of Boaz might act for the blessing of Naomi and Ruth.

This verbal refusal by the **goel** to redeem the inheritance was confirmed publicly and attested lawfully according to

ancient custom by handing to Boaz one of his sandals, thereby signifying that he surrendered to Boaz his claim upon the whole of the inheritance and every part of it down to a foot's breadth. A foot-breadth was a figure of the minimum holding of land a man might possess as an inheritance (see Deut. ii. 5 ; Acts vii. 5). Also, receiving the sandal was an earnest of receiving the whole inheritance in due course. *"Now this was the custom in former time in Israel concerning redemption and concerning exchange, to confirm the whole matter : a man drew off his sandal, and gave it to his neighbour, and this was the mode of attestation in Israel. And he that had had the right of redemption said to Boaz, Buy for thyself ; and he drew off his sandal"* (vers. 7, 8).

As the **goel** who had the legal right of redemption had decided not to make the proposed purchase and had formally renounced his right in favour of Boaz who had made no secret of his readiness to undertake the cause of Naomi and Ruth, everything was left in his willing hands. Neither of the two women appeared at the ceremony. They were persuaded that in Boaz God had raised up a redeemer (**goel**) for them. Both they and Boaz trusted in Jehovah Who "executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed" (Ps. ciii. 6). Acting in the fear of Jehovah and as His servant, Boaz thereupon redeemed the inheritance and married Ruth, for the two acts were inseparable in the circumstances of this twofold redemption.

Boaz becomes the Redeemer for Naomi and Ruth

Accordingly, Boaz purchased all the property that had belonged to Elimelech and his two sons, and further he took Ruth to wife so that the inheritance might not become void and the name of the deceased disappear from among his family and his tribe. This beneficent act Boaz announced that day to the elders and people assembled in the gate. *"And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, Ye are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was*

Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi ; moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased 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" (vers. 9, 10).

As will be seen from the narrative of the proceedings in the gate of Bethlehem, the redemption was twofold, comprehending (1) the purchase from Naomi of all that belonged to her husband and her two sons, the three men having died in the land of Moab, and (2) the "purchase" of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, to be his wife. Thus, both widows benefited by the transaction : (1) Naomi received from Boaz the value of the inheritance as a means of subsistence ; she who had been dependent upon Ruth's gleanings in the barley-fields was now comparatively "rich and increased with goods" ; while (2) Ruth the "stranger" became wife of Boaz the Bethlehemite, the "mighty man of wealth." Boaz had acknowledged himself to be "brother" in the broad sense of near relationship to the deceased Elimelech (ver. 3), and therefore he had accepted and fulfilled a brother's obligation under the law in Deut. xxv. 5-10 to marry the widowed Ruth and raise up seed for the continuance of Elimelech's name and inheritance in the tribe of Judah and the land of Israel.

The elders and the people who witnessed the "act and deed" of Boaz showed neither envy nor jealousy, but rather expressed their congratulations and pious wishes that the special favour of Jehovah might crown the happy event. "*And all the people that were in the gate and the elders said, We are witnesses. Jehovah make the woman that cometh into thy house like Rachel and Leah, which two did build the house of Israel ; and acquire power in Ephratah, and make thyself a name in Bethlehem ; and let thy house become like the house of Pherez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, of the seed which Jehovah shall give thee of this young woman"* (vers. 11, 12).

The united desire of the assembly in the gate was that Jehovah would grant His blessing (1) to Ruth (2) to Boaz himself, and (3) to his house. Their desire (1) was for the childless young widow that she might now be fruitful like Rachel and Leah from whose sons came the eight principal tribes of the nation of Israel. Rachel, the much-loved wife of Jacob, and the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, died in child-bearing, and was buried near "Ephrath, which is Bethlehem" (Gen. xxxv. 19). It may be for this reason that the citizens of Bethlehem mentioned her name before that of her elder sister, Leah.

They desired (2) for Boaz that he who was already a man of substance might through the redeemed inheritance acquire further power and possess a still more famous and illustrious name in Bethlehem. This prayerful hope was gloriously and supremely answered, for by this marriage Boaz became ancestor of Israel's Messiah Who in due time was born in Bethlehem, little though it was "among the thousands of Judah" (Micah v. 2).

Further, their desire (3) was that the house or family of Boaz might be numerous and influential in the tribe of Judah, like the house of Pherez. Pherez (Pharez in the A.V.) was the second son of Judah, and twin-brother of Zerah or Zarah. His two sons and their families are mentioned in the census of the children of Israel taken in the plains of Moab near Jericho (Num. xxvi. 20, 21). He was an ancestor of Boaz (iv. 18-21), and Jashobean, one of his descendants, was "chief of all the captains of the host," commanding 24,000 men selected for service in the court of king David during the month Nisan (1 Chron. xxvii. 2. 3).

Surely we cannot but admire the unjealous spirit and kindly grace that animated the townsmen of Bethlehem when they knew that Ruth the young Moabitess was entering the home of their respected elder, Boaz, as his wife. The law had

said, "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not come into the congregation of Jehovah ; even their tenth generation shall not come into the congregation of Jehovah for ever. . . . Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever" (Deut. xxiii. 3-6).

But all the elders and the people in the gate rose above the austerities of the law of Sinai and sought the peace and the prosperity of the new household in their bridal blessing, naming first the poor Moabiteess and then the wealthy Bethlehemite. It was indeed a glimmering of that true Light which, coming into the world, would lighten every man, Israelite and Gentile alike (John i. 9). The words of the Bethlehemites were of greater significance than they themselves knew, for they contained a latent prophecy of "Jesus Who is called Christ." His genealogy from Abraham appears at the beginning of the New Testament in forty-two generations, and the tenth of those recorded is "Boaz begat Obed of Ruth" (Matt. i. 1-17). And Ruth's name is thus written in the First Gospel because she by faith forsook the idols of Moab and sought sanctuary in Bethlehem where the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Jehovah of Israel, was known and worshipped.

F.—JOY FOR NAOMI AND FAME FOR BOAZ

(chapter iv. 13-22)

The close of the brief narrative in the Book of Ruth records the joy that came to Bethlehem through the marriage of Boaz the **goel** and Ruth. The blessing of Jehovah upon this somewhat singular union was made manifest by the gift of a son to the elderly husband and the barren widow. The women of the town with pious neighbourliness united to bless the God of Israel Who had raised up an heir to the inheritance, long lying in abeyance but now redeemed. By the birth of Obed, Naomi's sad heart was filled with joy, and Boaz

acquired the fame of becoming a progenitor of Abraham's Seed of promise and of David's Son and Lord.

The Heir born for Naomi

Naomi, the widow of Elimelech, being the "seller," had the primary interest in the redemption of her husband's inheritance in Bethlehem, as Boaz publicly acknowledged when negotiating its purchase (iv. 5). When the transfer of the property to Boaz had been completed, she then ardently desired to see with her own eyes an heir born to Boaz and Ruth, so that her husband's name might thereby be preserved in his tribe, and the main object of the redemption be attained (for the anxiety of wives and mothers in Israel on this score, cp. the words of the widow of Tekoah, 2 Sam. xiv. 5-7). Naomi's desire for a family heir was granted, and her faith in Jehovah rewarded by the gift of a grandson. "*And Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and Jehovah gave her conception, and she bore a son*" (ver. 13).

The women of the neighbourhood also recognised how signally Jehovah had wrought in the case, and with piety and intelligent insight they expressed their sympathy and delight to the elderly Naomi rather than to Ruth herself. "*And the women said to Naomi, Blessed be Jehovah Who hath not left thee this day without one that has the right of redemption (goel) and may his name be famous in Israel! And he shall be to thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law who loves thee, who is better to thee than seven sons, has borne him*" (vers. 14, 15).

Evidently, these women were not idle, curious, chattering gossips, but godly sober-minded matrons with the fear of God before their eyes. They were able to discern that Jehovah had a purpose before Him in which this exceptional marriage and birth was involved. They no doubt remembered the outstanding case of Abraham and Sarah, to whom Isaac, the

child of Jehovah's promise and plan for blessing to all the nations of the earth, was marvellously given. Perhaps they also recalled Amram and Jochebed and their child Moses; and again, Manoah and his wife and their child Samson. What blessings those children were to their parents! What honour those parents subsequently received through their children whose names became "famous in Israel," because God had "raised them up" and chosen them from birth for His special service! At any rate, the women, consciously or unconsciously, framed their congratulations to Naomi in the spirit of Jehovah's past dealings with the "fathers" of Israel. They told Naomi that in this baby boy Jehovah had given her the **goel** she had hitherto lacked, and He had thus made her inheritance secure, not only for the present but for the future also.

Moreover, the women seem to have had in mind Naomi's words of complaint on her return from Moab to Bethlehem (cp. i. 20-21); she then said that she went away full (with a husband and two sons), and had returned empty (with neither a husband nor a son). But Jehovah Whom she had blamed had regarded her "low estate," and had dealt not "bitterly" but bountifully with her. Ruth, the wife of the wealthy Boaz, had now become a mother, and in the newly-born infant Naomi saw the **goel** of her husband's inheritance for the coming years. The little grandson would be the "restorer of her life." In him, her dying family-possession was given a living hope again. Ruth's son had brought nourishment to Naomi's old age.

Further, the women reminded Naomi of the great treasure she had in the mother of the young child. In Ruth she had found "the comfort of love" in the loneliness of her treble bereavement. Ruth had loved her when she was Naomi the pleasant, and she still loved and clung to her when she was Mara the bitter widow. Was Naomi still grieving that she had lost her two sons in Moab? Why, they said, Ruth herself "is

better to thee than seven sons." Has she not borne to thee a grandson, the son of Boaz? To be the mother of seven or more sons was esteemed a signal honour in family life (see Gen. xlv. 25; 1 Sam. i. 8; ii. 5; Job i. 2; xlii. 13; 1 Chron. iii. 24; Jer. xv. 9). So the wise women of Bethlehem bade Naomi to be glad in the Lord and to rejoice; the hour of sorrow had passed, and "a man" had been born into the world, whose name should be famous among the posterity of Abraham.

The Motherly Grandmother

The long pent-up maternal emotions of Naomi were aroused towards the child of Ruth. She took an intense interest in the babe, and was ready to devote her energies and experience to its upbringing in the ways of the Lord, as "grandmother Lois" seems to have done with Timothy (2 Tim. i. 5). "*And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse to it*" (ver. 16). "Nurse" or "foster-parent" is used in the general sense of one who is "instructor" and "protector." Moses, speaking to Jehovah, uses it to describe his office of leadership of Israel in the wilderness: "... Thou sayest to me, Carry them in thy bosom, as the nursing-father beareth the suckling, unto the land . . ." (Num. xi. 12). See also Isa. xlix. 23.

The interest of the neighbouring women-folk was so effusive that, like the neighbours of Elisabeth in later days (Lu. i. 58, 59), they undertook to select a name for the child, whom they regarded as Naomi's because of its connection with the redemption of the inheritance which stood in her name. "*And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi. And they called his name Obed (that is, worshipper, or servant). He is the father of Jesse, the father of David*" (ver. 17). The neighbours' choice of a name was accepted by Naomi and the parents of the child, and he was called Obed. Worship and service Godward seem both to be embodied in the meaning of this name, and the two qualities sum up the required attitude of man to God.

Our Lord referred to this essential combination when resisting the temptations of Satan in the wilderness. Quoting from Deut. vi. 13, He said to the devil, "It is written, Thou shalt do homage to (worship) the Lord thy God, and Him alone shalt thou serve" (Matt. iv. 10). The Lord Jesus had taken "the form of a servant," and as such He glorified God to the uttermost; for He was Jehovah's Beloved Servant, of Whom the prophets of Israel bore ample witness.

Obed (servant), the son of wealthy Boaz, by his name, at any rate, and perhaps also by an obedient and dedicated life of piety bore a quiet witness, not only to his coming grandson David who "served his own generation by the will of God" (Acts xiii. 36), but to David's Son and David's Lord, Whose service to God is unequalled and incomparable. The scripture record shows that in Obed's posterity his name became "famous in Israel"; for besides this brief record in Ruth, his name occurs nowhere else but in 1 Chron. ii. 12, as the grandfather of David, and in Matt. i. 5 and Luke iii. 32 as the ancestor of the Messiah of Israel. But what illustrious honour for the son of a Moabitess is this association with the Anointed of Jehovah in His pedigree!

The Genealogical Appendix

The brief narrative in this Book shows how, through the providential over-ruling of Jehovah, Ruth the Moabitess became naturalized in Bethlehem-Judah in the land of Israel. The narrative ends with the statement that Obed, the son of Boaz and Ruth, "is the father of Jesse, the father of David," this brief sentence expressing the main object of the record. But a fuller genealogy is added, which extends David's pedigree backwards as far as Pherez, the son of Judah. "*Now these are the generations of Pherez. Pherez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab, and Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salma, and Salma begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed, and Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David*" (vers. 18-22).

This table of lineage unaccompanied by comment is of importance, forming as it does plain proof of the descent of David from the tribe of Judah, to which tribe the sceptre and the lawgiver in Israel belonged, according to the inspired promise and prophecy of Jacob on his deathbed (Gen. xlix. 10). The evidence afforded by this short list of names is sufficient in itself to invalidate all rival claims to royalty either by the tribe of Ephraim or by the tribe of Benjamin. It therefore connects the Book of Ruth with the histories of king Saul of Gibeah in Benjamin and king David of Bethlehem in Judah, which follow in the Books of Samuel. The period covered by the table extends from the calling of the Israelites out of Egypt to be Jehovah's people and nation to the time when Jehovah raised up David to reign over them as His king.

The list contains ten generations, and these may be divided into two groups of five. The first five names—Pherez to Nahshon—are connected mainly with Israel when in Egypt and in the wilderness; the second—Salmon to David—with Israel in the land up to the time when monarchy was established under God's chosen king. The pedigree shows the distinct line of constitutional royalty promised to the nation. The names given in it are not always those of the eldest in the family. David himself, for instance, was the seventh son of Jesse (1 Chron. ii. 15). The line of descent from Pherez was decreed to end with the Messiah, and it was therefore continuously under the superintendence of Jehovah. Elimelech's name does not appear in the list, but that of Boaz, the son of Salmon. This selection shows the religious value attached to the marriage of Ruth and the redemption of the inheritance, of which perhaps the happy couple themselves were entirely unaware.

Some historical items connected with the names in this list may be noted. **Pherez** (Perez), the son of Judah and Tamar is always given precedence over his twin-brother Zarah or Zerah, so that he possessed the right of primogeniture.

The family of Pherez (Num. xxvi. 20) held highest rank in the tribe of Judah in David's reign (1 Chron. xxvii. 3), and seems to have been distinguished by its fertility and virility. This rapid increase of the family explains the allusion to "the house of Pherez" by the people at the marriage of Boaz (iv. 12). The list in Ruth begins with Pherez, and not with his father, Judah, who died prior to the time of the Exodus, which was the beginning of national life for the children of Israel. **Hezron** was the firstborn of Pherez. **Ram** is sometimes called Aram (Matt. i. 3). **Amminadab** was the father of Elisheba, who became the wife of Aaron, brother of Moses, and first of the hereditary high-priests of Israel (Exod. vi. 23). **Nahshon** (Naason) was brother-in-law of Aaron (Exod. vi. 23), and prince or head of the tribe of Judah (Num. i. 7 ; ii. 3 ; 1 Chron. ii. 10). **Salmon** (Salma), son of Nahshon, married Rahab the harlot, and was the father of **Boaz** (Matt. i. 5). Salmon was probably one of the two men whom Joshua sent to Jericho and the neighbourhood secretly, and who lodged in Rahab's house (Josh. ii). **Obed** has been already noticed. **Jesse** the Bethlehemite (1 Sam. xvi. 1, 18 ; xvii. 58) had eight sons (1 Sam. xvi. 10, 11 ; xvii. 12). Jesse is described as "that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-Judah," and "was old in the days of Saul, advanced in years among men" (1 Sam. xvii. 12). He was a wealthy man, but his great distinction in the nation seems to have been that he was the father of **David**, his youngest son, who rose to the throne of Israel, having been chosen by Jehovah to be the ruler of His people.

G.—A TYPICAL OUTLINE OF ISRAEL'S FINAL RESTORATION

The brief and simple narrative in the Book of Ruth obviously contains many weighty lessons of that moral goodness in the personal life which in all ages has been inseparable from a fear of God in the heart. These profitable lessons rest

upon the surface of the narrative and provide much spiritual food within easy reach of the diligent gleaner.

But besides the didactic value of the history as an object-lesson in piety for all time, there is evidence of its prophetic value as a brief sketch of a particular phase in the national history of the children of Israel as Jehovah's chosen people during the period of their future restoration.

The list of names from Pherez to David at the end of the Book suggests that something more is involved in the narrative than the interest and instruction of a family episode. This period (iv. 18-22) covers the rise of the nation from the squalor of slavery in Egypt to the glory and riches of world-eminence in Canaan with David on the throne. Not that the universal fame of the Davidic kingdom is in any way indicated in the Book of Ruth, where we find only his name and not his title. Indeed, in the divine foreshadowings of scripture, principles are often foreshewn, rather than the "very image" of the coming events in detail and sequence. Accordingly, while there seems to be no direct reference to the establishment of the millennial kingdom in power and glory on the earth, there are pointers to the moral features of the nation at the time of its final redemption and its full possession of its allotted inheritance, attached as this climax is to the name of David in so many well-known prophecies.

These historical analogies have their instructive value. And when viewed by the light of prophetic scripture it will be seen that the personal events recorded in this Book depict on a miniature scale (1) the nation's spiritual declension and moral departure from Jehovah and (2) its ultimate restoration to His favour and blessing through the intervention of a Kinsman-Redeemer (*goel*). These broad prophetic features, relating mainly to the falling away and to the ultimate uprising of the favoured nation, may be traced in the historical notices given in this Book of four of the few persons mentioned by name, viz., Elimelech, Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz.

The Four Principal Persons

In the homely history of this Bethlehem family, the names of four of the persons stand out most conspicuously: (1) **Elimelech**; (2) **Naomi**; (3) **Ruth**; (4) **Boaz**. Each of these was closely connected with the family inheritance which was in peril of forfeiture until it was finally redeemed by Boaz the kinsman-redeemer (**goel**). In the events recorded of these persons striking resemblances may be discovered to certain outstanding characteristics of the national history taken as a whole. The chosen people and their inheritance have passed and will pass through similar stages of decline and revival until the day when their **Goel** will appear and their inheritance will be secured for ever by His redemption. Soon after settlement in the land under Joshua, Israel, through lack of the faith which their father Abraham had, departed from the unique place of privilege and testimony bestowed upon them by the favour of Jehovah; and consequently the nation lost possession of the inheritance which by promise was theirs for ever. At length, the inheritance of the sons of Jacob will be restored, not, however, until the people of Israel in the obedience of faith return to their own land, and find their Kinsman-Redeemer in the Messiah Whom they once guiltily despised, rejected, and crucified, but Who is waiting to be gracious unto them as Jehovah's exalted Servant.

(1) **Elimelech** by leaving Bethlehem-Judah to seek bread in the idolatrous land of Moab represents the nation of Israel who from the days of the judges showed their "evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God," and serving the false gods of other nations. For a temporal advantage, Elimelech, despising his birthright, forsook the inheritance divided by lot to his family by Eleazar the priest and by Joshua the captain of Jehovah's victorious hosts (Josh. xix. 51). In thus turning his back upon the land of Israel, he was abandoning the worship of Jehovah at His tabernacle

in Shiloh. In short, Elimelech's act was an open denial of his confidence in the faithfulness of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when a time of famine and hardship fell upon His people.

This act of religious disloyalty and declension by Elimelech and his family symbolized the more extensive and flagrant failure of Jehovah's chosen nation to worship and serve Jehovah only and, whatever the cost to themselves, to avoid all intercourse with the idol-worshipping nations around them. But at the beginning of their national career, the children of Israel disregarded the divine admonitions, and mingled again and again with other peoples to obtain some temporal benefit. In a time of famine they forgot Him Who in the barren desert "satisfied them with the bread of heaven" (Ps. cv. 40). They "despised the pleasant land" even before they reached it (Ps. cvi. 24). Unmindful of the "spiritual Rock that followed them" in the wilderness (1 Cor. x. 4), their unbelief angered Jehovah at the waters of strife (Ps. cvi. 32). Indeed, Jehovah's charge against the nation a thousand years later was "My people . . . have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, to hew them out cisterns, broken cisterns that hold no water" (Jer. ii. 13). What profit did backsliding Elimelech gain in the land of Moab? And Jehovah said of apostate Israel in that same prophecy, "My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit" (Jer. ii. 11).

(2) **Naomi** by her condition of widowhood, childlessness, and poverty, represents the nation of Israel in the series of manifold desolations, afflictions, and infirmities which befell them because they persistently forsook God their Saviour and disobeyed His holy laws and statutes. In the land of Moab, Naomi the pleasant became even in her own estimation Mara the bitter; her "coal was quenched"; her family name was "ready to perish"; she was bereft of all earthly hope.

What an impressive likeness there is between the nation of Israel homeless in Gentile lands and the widow Naomi

friendless in the land of Moab ! The figure of widowhood, that is, the loss of divine ownership, protection, and supporting care, is used by the Holy Spirit in the prophecies to depict the religious and moral destitution of the people of Israel because of their public association with the false gods of the nations. Thus, by one of the earliest of the prophets, Jehovah renounced all relationship with His people because of their unfaithfulness to Him, saying, "She is not My wife, neither am I her Husband" (Hosea ii. 2). Jeremiah, in describing the desolation of Jerusalem when Jehovah permitted its destruction by the Chaldeans, begins his elegy by exclaiming, "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people ! She that was great among the nations is become as a widow" (Lam. i. 1).

The spiritual destitution which will continue for "many days" to be the lot of the nation because of its unfaithfulness to Jehovah is plainly declared by Hosea ; for he says, "The children of Israel shall abide many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without statute, and without ephod and teraphim" (Hosea iii. 4). Again in prophetic language, the "widowed" people are declared to be "Forsaken," and their land "Desolate" (Isa. lxii. 4) ; but full deliverance of the nation from the Naomi-state will eventually come, and the ancient promise of redemption will be fulfilled : "Thy Maker is thy Husband : Jehovah of hosts is His name, and thy Redeemer (**goel**), the Holy One of Israel . . . Jehovah hath called thee as a woman (wife) forsaken and grieved in spirit, and as a wife of youth that hath been refused (or, when rejected), saith thy God" (Isa. liv. 5, 6 ; xlix. 14). As it was with Naomi, so will it be in a coming day with the penitent daughter of Zion : Jehovah will give her beauty for ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness (Isa. lxi. 3). And the prophetic words of the Psalmist will be fulfilled : "He maketh the barren woman keep house, as a joyful mother of sons. Hallelujah" (Ps. cxiii. 9).

(3) **Ruth** by her condition of widowhood, childlessness, and poverty represents, like Naomi, the forlorn and forsaken state of the people of Israel, due to their incorrigible backsliding. But while there is a close resemblance in their widowed condition, there is also an obvious contrast between the two women. Unlike Naomi, Ruth was a Moabite stranger, and not an Israelite by birth like her mother-in-law. For this reason, many have assumed, somewhat hastily, that in Ruth's remarkable story there can be no designed allusion to the people of Israel. How can we expect, it is asked, that divine mercy to a Gentile widow should portray divine mercy to Israel, the chosen race?

The truth is, however, that this very difficulty due to Ruth's foreign nationality provides the clue to the correct understanding of the prophetic bearing of the history. Ruth represents Israel not as the nation distinguished from and elevated above all other nations by Jehovah's choice and calling and redemption, but Israel as the nation degraded from this position of eminence because of her religious and social apostasy, a degradation which became evident to the eyes of the whole world from the times of the Assyrian and Chaldean captivities. At this stage of its national history, Israel, by divine chastisement, lost its political primacy among the nations of the earth. It sank to the level of the Gentile nations, and is so regarded in God's present government of the world. Indeed, the first among the peoples of the earth has become the last and the least.

Here Ruth the Gentile rather than Naomi the Israelite more fittingly represents the chosen people. In their degraded status the resemblance between the Moabitish damsel and the nation begins, and in her progress from Moab to Bethlehem and then to the house of Boaz may be seen a dim but discernible outline of the ultimate recovery of Israel from its present quasi-Gentile state and of its final possession of the inheritance through Jehovah of hosts, the Redeemer (**Goel**) of His people.

This lapse of Israel from its position of national nearness to Jehovah through its inveterate wickedness, followed by its consequent loss of this position through the judgment of Jehovah, is plainly indicated in the scriptures. The merging of the people among the mass of the Gentiles is, for instance, predicted by Hosea in a well-known passage. Because of their continual rebellion against Jehovah, He dissociated Himself from them, and gave them the name, "Lo-ammi," which signifies, "Ye are not My people, and I will not be for you" (Hosea i. 9). From their deliverance out of Egypt to their captivity under Gentile rule, the children of Israel had been distinctively His own peculiar people, but no longer were they so regarded by Him. Jehovah hid His face of favour from them and withdrew from them His protecting arm. They were cast back into the sea of nations out of which He had drawn them.

So applicable is this figure of Israel being a national castaway to the loss of religious relationship to Jehovah that when He bade a later prophet, Jeremiah, to take the cup of His wrath to **all** the Gentile nations, the one that heads the list is Judah, for by her sinful backsliding she had forfeited the special favour of God, and in His righteous government of the earth she was treated as one of the peoples that knew Him not (Jer. xxv. 15-18). And in Daniel's day the "times of the Gentiles" had begun, and heathen rulers were reigning in Jerusalem, where once the house of David held sway.

This judicial abandonment of the chosen people by their God became even more evident in the earth after they had wantonly rejected and crucified their Messiah, refusing, as they did, to own Him as Jehovah's promised Servant and King on earth and also as the risen and glorified Christ on high. Hence the "natural branches" of the olive tree of promise were broken off (Rom. xi.). They had smitten "the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek . . . therefore," it was said, "will He give them up" (Micah v. 1-3). This divine ban upon

the nation, begun in the Old Testament and confirmed in the New, continues. God's earthly people are still disinherited, and are still wandering among the Gentiles, with no national nor political status owned upon earth, and with no religious worship owned in heaven.

Ruth in Moab, then, represents this anomalous religious and political state to which the nation of Israel has descended—which will continue until the repentant remnant of the dispersed people return in faith to their own land, and in like faith commit themselves to the kind offices of their Kinsman-Redeemer (**Goel**). Further, **Ruth** in Bethlehem-Judah, more than Naomi, represents in particular the pious remnant of the Jews, who in due course will be the first to seek the feet and then to see the face of their long-rejected Redeemer (**Goel**); they will be "bought from men as first-fruits to God and the Lamb" (see Rev. xiv. 1-5). Also, Ruth corresponds in great measure with the figurative term, *Ruhamah* (meaning "having obtained mercy"), applied by the prophet Hosea to the restored remnant of Israel which will again become Jehovah's people (*Ammi*); (cp. Hosea i. 6-9; ii. 1, 23).

(4) **Boaz**, the redeeming kinsman of Bethlehem, the city of David, is undoubtedly a typical representative of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Kinsman-Redeemer (**Goel**) of Jehovah's earthly people, Israel. In scripture, redemption has more than one phase. It may be, and often is, effected by blood, but in the Book of Ruth sacrifice is not even mentioned. It may be by destroying the foe that holds another in bondage, but neither is this phase to be found in the narrative. It may also be the deliverance effected by the **goel's** payment of the debt involved, which is what took place in this case. Boaz exercised his "right of redemption" by purchasing the inheritance, supplementing his generosity by marrying Ruth, the Gentile widow who had professed the faith of Abraham.

The nation of Israel was redeemed from Egypt both by purchase and by power (Exod. xv. 6, 13, 16). As their **Goel**,

Jehovah brought them out of bondage with His "stretched out arm and with great judgments" (Exod. vi. 6). And when, centuries later, the nation was carried into captivity, first by Assyria and then by Chaldea, Jehovah repeatedly sent them promises of His deliverance by redemption, calling Himself, "Jehovah. thy Redeemer (**Goel**)," with other titles added such as "the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. xli. 14 ; xliii. 14 ; xliv. 6, 24 ; xlvii. 4 ; xlviii. 17 ; xlix. 7, 26 ; liv. 5, 8 ; lx. 16). In these and other prophecies, Jehovah reminds His earthly people that He possesses the sole "right of (their) redemption." At the appointed time, He will by His exalted Servant (Isa. lii. 13-15) redeem the nation for ever from their thralldom to Gentile supremacy, and restore them to "the mountain" of His inheritance, where He made His own dwelling and where He "planted" them at the first (Exod. xv. 17).

The narrative records that the concern of Boaz the redeemer with Naomi's inheritance was (1) by purchase to free it from its encumbrance, and (2) by marrying Ruth the widow to ensure its continuance in the family through lawful heirs until the glorious days of the Davidic kingdom.

In these two particulars, Boaz dimly foreshadowed Christ Jesus and His redeeming work on behalf of the people of Israel, whereby He will (1) restore to them the land Jehovah gave them for a perpetual inheritance (Deut. iv. 21 ; Ps. cv. 11), and (2) provide a succession of undying heirs to that earthly kingdom by fulfilling Jehovah's promise, "I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah a possessor of My mountains" (Isa. lxv. 9 ; liv. 1 ; lxvi. 8). Then the Lord Jesus Himself "shall reign over the house of Jacob, and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i. 33). And when, as "the Lord God of Israel," He shall have "visited and redeemed His people" (Luke i. 68), He then will manifest Himself throughout the earth as the true Boaz, the Kinsman-Redeemer (**Goel**) of Israel and its inheritance.

Another feature in the typical character of Boaz should be observed: he foreshadows the Messiah in His exaltation rather than in His humiliation. In the scriptures, the sufferings of Christ are distinguished from His acquired glories, which come after the sufferings (Luke xxiv. 26 ; 1 Pet. i. 11). Now, Boaz, the strong and wealthy **goel**, represents Christ, not in His vicarious sufferings, but in His risen power and ascended glories, not in His death, but in His life beyond death.

In the Boaz character Christ Jesus is the Branch, the Son of man, Whom Jehovah made "strong" for Himself (Ps. lxxx. 15, 17). He is the Mighty One upon Whom Jehovah has "laid help" for His people (Ps. lxxxix. 19). The Kinsman-Redeemer (**Goel**) of Israel and Judah is "strong ; Jehovah of hosts is His name" (Jer. l. 34). He is the "Mighty One of Jacob" (Isa. xlix. 26 ; lx. 16). And when "the year of His redeemed is come" He will appear "travelling in the greatness of His strength," "mighty to save". He will then vanquish the enemies of His people and "bring down their strength (blood) to the earth" (Isa. lxiii. 1, 4, 6). Thus, the redemption of Israel's earthly inheritance will take place when, and not before, their **Goel** destroys every foe, and subdues all things to Himself.

Boaz, however, redeemed the inheritance by purchase, and not by destructive power. His wealth enabled him to pay what was demanded for its recovery. The price paid is not disclosed, but its amount amply met every righteous claim of the creditor. And, as the New Testament reveals, it was by the immeasurable value and efficacy of His sacrificial offering that Christ Jesus "obtained **eternal redemption**" (Heb. ix. 12).

But another eloquent feature of the transaction is its finality. Boaz completed the redemption of the inheritance by marrying Ruth. In this act also, Boaz is a type of Israel's

Kinsman-Redeemer (**Goel**) ; for in the prophecies, marriage occurs as a figure of Jehovah's final restoration of His earthly people to a state of perennial joy and prosperity. The "reproach of widowhood" is taken away from the nation, and she rejoices as a bride with the Bridegroom, then known as "Jehovah, the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. liv. 4, 5).

By comparing, for instance, Isa. liii. with Isa. liv., it will be seen that the future confession of the remnant of Israel of their atrocious guilt in rejecting their Messiah is first foretold ; and that this prophecy is immediately followed (chap. liv.) by one announcing the reception of the nation into the intimate favour of Jehovah. For a long span of centuries, Israel had languished in the widowed state of Naomi and Ruth, but now this mourning and privation should be exchanged for marriage felicities with Jehovah, her **Goel**. "Thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thy Husband : Jehovah of hosts is His name, and thy Redeemer (**Goel**), the Holy One of Israel" (vers. 4, 5).

The blessedness of Zion in the day of her future redemption is portrayed under the impressive figure of marriage in another of Isaiah's prophecies. Israel will in a coming time be delivered from her forsaken and desolate condition. Jehovah-Messiah will then be her Bridegroom, and she will be His earthly bride. Even the land of her inheritance will be "married." The Spirit of Christ in the prophet says, "Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah will name. . . . Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken ; neither shall thy land be termed Desolate : but thou shalt be called, My delight is in her (Hephzibah), and thy land, Married (Beulah) ; for Jehovah delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married . . . with the joy of the bridegroom over the bride shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa. lxii. 2-5).

In this vivid language, Isaiah depicts the contrast between Israel's forsaken (Naomi) condition and the millennial joys which the Kinsman-Redeemer (**Goel**) will share with Zion and Jerusalem in Immanuel's land (as Boaz did with Ruth in Bethlehem).

H.—RUTH AS A VESSEL OF DIVINE MERCY

“Hear, my beloved brethren: Has not God chosen the poor as to the world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which He has promised to them that love Him?” (James ii. 5).

In the last paper it was shown that the brief history of Ruth presents a typical illustration of the future restoration (redemption) of the Jewish people from their present scattered and apostate condition among the Gentiles in order that they may share the blessings and glories of the coming millennial kingdom under the rule of their Redeemer (**Goel**).

But this history has an **individual as well as a national bearing**, and we may profitably trace how graciously the sovereign mercy of God wrought in establishing and exalting Ruth the Moabite stranger to a place of distinction within “the commonwealth of Israel.” Her case is a striking instance in Old Testament times of divine mercy exercised outside the limits of Israel, that nation which Jehovah chose out of all others to be His own peculiar people. The fruitful branches of *His goodness ran over the wall. The river of His mercy overflowed its banks.* In this impressive example, Jehovah acted according to His own right to show favour where, when, and how He pleased; as He said, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy” (Exod. xxxiii. 19; Rom. ix. 15).

According to His own sovereign prerogative, therefore, Jehovah had mercy upon Ruth the Moabitess, daughter of an

accursed race, and He saved her from the delusions and horrors of idolatry to mingle rightfully and acceptably with the worshippers of Himself, the only true and living God. On this account, Ruth stands in those dark days of apostasy when "the judges ruled" in Israel a bright and shining **vessel of the abounding mercy of God**, chosen by Him from among the Gentiles. The Moabitess is not unlike another outstanding example in a later day who described himself as the chief of sinners to whom "mercy" was shown (1 Tim. i. 15, 16), and of whom the Lord said, "this man is an elect vessel unto Me" (Acts ix. 15). Thus Ruth of Moab and Saul of Tarsus were alike "**vessels of mercy** which He had before prepared for glory" (Rom. ix. 23, 24). Indeed, all of us who believe can say in the words of the apostle, "According to His own **mercy** He saved us" (Tit. iii. 5).

Mercy and Glory

In the purposes of God regarding man, His mercy is the forerunner of His glory. The vessels which He fills to overflowing with divine mercy will eventually glow resplendently with divine glory. Mercy first supports the weak and erring traveller through the desert wastes of a sinful world and then ushers him into the glittering scenes of glory with Christ in the Father's house on high. At the throne of grace, therefore, where we receive mercy in the time of our need, we may always lift up our eyes of faith and exult in the sure hope of the glory of God.

Often in the scripture record, the divine act of signal mercy is tinged with gleams of a glory to come as its appointed sequel. This is notably the case in the Book of Ruth. The story of divine mercy to the widowed Moabitess closes with the name of David, the glory of whose kingdom was soon to break forth from Mount Zion, a harbinger of the more brilliant earthly kingdom of David's Son and Lord which is to spread to the ends of the earth.

Mercy and Grace

These two familiar words of Scripture are allied in meaning, but are distinct in use and application. God acts in **mercy** towards men, having in view their need and infirmity, their misery and suffering due to their presence in an evil world. Moved by compassion, the good Samaritan showed "**mercy**" to the wounded and destitute Jew (Lu. x. 37). On the other hand, **grace** is the activity of God's love towards wicked and rebellious men, as we read, "Where sin abounded **grace** has overabounded" (Rom. v. 20). The **mercy** of God can be traced throughout the scriptures, but the **grace** of God is revealed fully in the New Testament, for it could only thus be made known by Jesus Christ Who Himself was "full of grace and truth" (John i. 14, 17). In Him, the grace of God appeared, bringing salvation for all men (Tit. ii. 11).

Grace then is for the guilty, and **mercy** is for the miserable. This distinction has also been expressed in these words: "**Grace** is that energy and outflow of divine goodness which rises above men's evil and ruin, and loves notwithstanding all"; while **mercy** is "God's pitiful consideration for individual weakness, need, or danger."

The two words, **grace and mercy**, are beautifully combined and distinguished in an inspired description of what our Saviour God has done for Christian believers. The apostle Paul writes, "We were once ourselves also without intelligence, disobedient, wandering in error. . . . But when the kindness and love to man of our Saviour God appeared . . . according to His own **mercy** He saved us . . . that having been justified by His **grace**, we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit. iii. 3-7).

Ruth's Need of Mercy

For what special reason did Ruth need God's mercy? Her personal character appears to have been irreproachable. It

is nowhere said that she was guilty of open immorality like so many of her countrywomen in the days of Balak and Balaam (Num. xxv. 1-5). And as scripture records no stain upon her womanly conduct we may assume there was none, since the Spirit of God neither conceals nor excuses the flagrant sins of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of Moses, David, and Solomon, and of others in the line of faith. Moreover, it may be added that Ruth is one of four women, appearing in the genealogical table of male descent from Abraham to Jesus Christ (Matt. i. 3, 5, 6). Her three associates, Tamar, Rahab, and the wife of Uriah (Bathsheba), were all women of ill fame, nevertheless the four are recorded without comment in the line of Messiah's descent, shining there like stars of glory in the firmament of Jehovah's mercy. Of the four women, however, Ruth, because of her untainted history, is a striking contrast.

Was then Ruth without defect in the sight of God? Was she so entirely without spot or blemish as to be a worthy object of the special favour of God and to become the chosen wife of a pious "prince" of the house of Judah? Alas, no: for "**all** have sinned," whether they are "under the law" as Israelites, or "without law" as Moabites and all other Gentiles. All mankind alike stood in equal need of divine mercy.

Ruth especially was disqualified by the law of Jehovah, for she was under its ban which rested specifically upon the whole of her people. She belonged to "the children of Lot," and she bore the stigma of the incestuous origin of that race. Her birth excluded her from the worshippers of Jehovah in Shiloh. Her marriage with Mahlon, the second son of Elimelech, did not remove nor lessen her disqualification, for by the ordinance of Moses the marriage was illegal. The instructions relevant to her case were to be valid "for ever" (Deut. xxiii. 3-6). Ruth, therefore, was permanently barred by birth from entering "the congregation of Jehovah," the circle of His special earthly blessing.

Thus the Moabitess was under the condemnation of the law of Jehovah. Nevertheless, though He could not righteously receive her according to His own law, He graciously accepted her according to His own mercy; and according to the riches of His coming glory by Christ Jesus He also gave her an honourable place in the royal archives of the Son of God Who as to the flesh came at the appointed time of the seed of her great-grandson, David (Rom. i. 2-4).

Ruth Cleaving to Naomi (chapter i)

Having observed how the mercy of Jehovah filled this chosen vessel to overflowing, it will be interesting and instructive to note the characteristic features of the vessel itself. What spiritual qualities appear in Ruth's conduct? Wherever and whenever the Spirit of God forms a soul for the reception of the gift of God the outline of His handiwork may be traced. And some features of the heavenly pattern are plain enough in the history of Ruth's sayings and doings. Take the first chapter. Is not her **faith in God** plainly outlined here?

By her outspoken and uncompromising decision to accompany Naomi (i. 16, 17), Ruth showed what was working deep down in her heart. She believed that Jehovah was God in Israel, and with her mouth she openly confessed that Naomi's God was her God, thus fulfilling the two conditions of the righteousness of faith, concerning which Paul speaks in Rom. x. 9, 10.

Ruth's intense devotion to Naomi arose not only because she was the mother of Mahlon, her deceased husband, but because she was a representative of that people redeemed by Jehovah out of Egypt and established by Him in the land of Canaan. Accordingly, she boldly declared that henceforward neither in life nor in death would she be separated from Naomi and Naomi's God. "Whither thou goest I will go . . . where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried," said the young widow.

By this surrender of her kindred and nation, Ruth displayed the faith in her heart. She showed the genuineness of her faith by her works, as each believer is expected to do (Jas. ii. 17, 18). Her choice of the unknown road to Bethlehem, against the advice of Naomi, proved that her faith was like the uncompromising faith of Abraham, "the father of all them that believe," who at the call of God "went out, not knowing where he was going" (Rom. iv. 11; Heb. xi. 8). Happy was it for Ruth that she fixed her eyes upon "things not seen as yet" by her in the land of Israel, the dwelling-place of Jehovah. Otherwise, the "things seen" might reasonably have deterred a thoughtful woman like Ruth from renouncing her people, and her religion. Doubts and difficulties might easily have arisen to hinder her. How could Canaan be called Jehovah's land when so many of the aboriginal inhabitants continued to dwell there (Judg. i.)? Had not the Israelites forsaken Jehovah to serve the gods of the Canaanites (Judg. ii. 11-13)? Did not Eglon, the king of her own land of Moab, rule over the children of Israel recently for eighteen years (Judg. iii. 14)? And had not the very woman she was about to follow to Bethlehem fled from that so-called "house of bread," not believing that Jehovah could or would feed her family in a famine?

These were hard facts, and notoriously "facts are stubborn things." But Ruth was not turned aside by "things seen." Like Moses who by faith left Egypt, "seeing Him Who is invisible" (Heb. xi. 27), Ruth by faith left Moab, saying to Naomi, "Thy God shall be my God." She acted in the same spirit of faith as the Lord's disciples, of whom Peter said to his Master, "Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee" (Lu. xviii. 28). In self-denying trust, they clave to the Lord Jesus. This self-renouncing quality is the usual family likeness in the children of faith. And the Moabitish maiden clave to Naomi as we read, "Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave to her" (i. 14).

Ruth Gleaning for Food (chapter ii.)

When Ruth was settled in Bethlehem with Naomi, her first occupation was to glean in the harvest fields for their daily sustenance. As was customary in that land, the ears of corn she gathered would become her own. During the labour of collecting them Ruth became known to Boaz, whose bounty was her bread. From him she also received exceptional favours, though she appeared in his presence as only "the Moabitish maiden who came back with Naomi out of the fields of Moab" (ver. 6). There was much disparity between the master and the maiden. Boaz was "the mighty man of wealth in Israel"; Ruth was only a poor widowed woman of a banned race. But though she lacked any rightful claim, she was made free of the rich man's fields, where she gathered "bread enough and to spare" for many days. Her daily sustenance was thus made secure by the kindness of the prosperous Boaz.

In this liberal supply of necessary food for Ruth, we may discern an analogy with the abundant supply of spiritual food for the believer, of which the New Testament gives such ample assurance. Christ is the Bread of life for all who come to Him in faith, as He Himself said, "I am the Bread of life: he that comes to Me shall never hunger, and he that believes on Me shall never thirst at any time" (John vi. 35).

Thus, Christ is the continuous support of that new spiritual life which He bestows upon all who believe on Him. To believe on Christ is to "hear His voice," and the Son of God quickens or gives life to those who hear Him (John v. 25). This life needs to be supported by a supply of suitable food. Christ is the Bread of that life. For the maintenance of spiritual life there must be a continuous appropriation by faith of Who Christ is, and of what Christ has done. Day by day, this ration of manna must be diligently collected. Daily, the ripened and reaped corn must be gleaned personally. This gathering

is the believer's daily labour. The Lord said, "Work constantly (this is implied in the form of the Greek verb) . . . for the food which abides unto life eternal, which the Son of man shall give unto you" (John vi. 27). Seeking such spiritual nourishment should be the primary and habitual activity of every believer. Each one should imitate Ruth, and, as she said, "go to the field and glean among the ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find favour" (ii. 2).

Ruth at her Redeemer's Feet (chapter iii.)

Apart from food, Ruth's main concern was to obtain a permanent place among Jehovah's redeemed people. And in the matter of her redemption, the Moabitish widow cast herself unreservedly upon the mercy of Boaz. Her words to him were few. She had implicit confidence that his goodness, his wisdom, his strength, his interest, would all be forthcoming on her behalf. She said, "I am Ruth . . . thou hast the right of redemption (**goel**)" (ver. 9). Her one spoken desire was to be immediately "under his wing." As to her future, she was content to remain entirely dependent upon his mercy. She believed, and she was not made ashamed, for at once she received from Boaz words of encouragement, of assurance, and of hope: "all that thou sayest will I do," were the satisfying words of her redeemer. At the feet of Boaz, she first learned the lesson of absolute trust in him for whatever blessing her redemption might bring to her.

The incident is fruitful in lessons of great spiritual value for believers of every age. We point now to one only of them. Ruth's lowly attitude before her **goel** is an example for us all. It is the humble-minded who are taught the will and the ways of the Lord, what He has already done, and what He will yet do. In the sphere of spiritual redemption, lowliness is the prelude to exaltation. Christ "in Whom we have redemption" and "in Whom we also have obtained an inheritance," humbled (emptied) Himself. And He said to His disciples,

"Whoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens"; and He also said, "Whoever shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. xviii. 4; xxiii. 12). Clearly, self-effacement before the Lord is of great value in His eyes. James wrote, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He shall exalt you" (Jas. iv. 10). To the meek and lowly in heart, He will by His Spirit impart the marvels of their redemption and the glories of their inheritance.

Ruth's Share in the Harvest of Redemption (chapter iv.)

In merciful lovingkindness, Boaz undertook the case of Ruth and made himself responsible for her deliverance. All the benefits she ultimately received were his gracious endowment. She herself was helpless in the matter. The redemption of the inheritance was the work of the **goel** exclusively. Ruth is then no longer seen gleaning the few "handfuls of purpose" let fall for her, but gathering in the golden sheaves of redeeming mercy. No longer is she an indigent "stranger" in the goodliest of all lands, but a sharer of the wealth and dignity of Boaz, her kinsman-redeemer, who had with the inheritance purchased her to be his wife, and a partner of his princely power in Bethlehem.

Thus, through the mercy of the Lord, Ruth in the end reaped a twofold blessing in Bethlehem. First (1) she herself was redeemed and wedded by Boaz who had said, "Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife" (ver. 10). Moreover, (2) Ruth the wife of Boaz shared the whole of the inheritance which he had acquired by purchase, as he said, "I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi" (ver. 9). So that Ruth (1) immediately shared with Boaz the possession of the inheritance in Bethlehem, and (2) prospectively shared with him honourable mention in the ancestry of David and of Jesus Christ, Israel's King and Redeemer (Matt. i. 5).

In this twofold manner of sharing the results of redemption, Ruth to some extent illustrates the blessings of redemption made known in the New Testament for Christian believers. In Christ Jesus, the types and shadows are fulfilled, and in Him greater glories still are revealed by the Holy Spirit.

Redemption in Christ Jesus

In the Old Testament redemption is connected with earthly deliverance, while in the New Testament, owing to the atonement of Christ, and His present rejection by the Jewish people, redemption is shown to be heavenly and eternal in its scope.

A special picture of redemption is contained in the Book of Exodus which describes the deliverance of the children of Israel from their bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt. There were two stages in their deliverance ; (1) through the blood of the passover lamb the people were protected by Jehovah in the hour of His judgment upon that land, and (2) through the power of His right arm at the Red Sea, they were delivered from their oppressors. So soon as their enemies were destroyed their deliverance was complete. Then Moses sang the song to Jehovah, "Thou by Thy mercy hast led forth the people that Thou hast redeemed" (Exod. xv. 13).

Figuratively, the slain lamb sets forth Christ sacrificed for us (1 Cor. v. 7), Whose blood screened us from the penalty of our sins, and secured our forgiveness. In like manner, the passage through the Red Sea sets forth the perfection of God's salvation in Christ Jesus. By His death and resurrection, the believer receives entire deliverance from all that was against him, the devil and his power being for ever annulled (Heb. ii. 14, 15). Thus, redemption for the believer rests upon the broad basis of the death and resurrection of Christ—His blood and His power.

In the New Testament, though Christ is not therein named as the Redeemer, our redemption is inseparably associated

with Christ Himself and the one sacrifice He made of Himself for sins (Heb. ix. 26 ; x. 12). He "by His own blood has entered in once for all into the holy of holies, having found an eternal redemption" (Heb. ix. 12). Seated there, Christ comprehends in Himself redemption in its widest scope and minutest detail. Our redemption is secured to us by personal contact through faith in Christ Jesus, Who "has been made to us . . . redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). We are all "justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii. 24). This blessing includes the forgiveness of our sins, for in Him "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. i. 7 ; Col. i. 14). Moreover, He has purchased us for Himself, for "our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ . . . gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify to Himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works" (Tit. ii. 13, 14).

We learn further that the redemption in Christ Jesus is according to the foreknowledge of God, being now manifested to us in Him. Peter writes, "Ye have been redeemed . . . by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but Who has been manifested at the end of times for your sakes" (1 Pet. i. 18-21). But being even now redeemed by blood, redemption by Christ's power has still to be completed with regard to us. By "the working of the power" whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour will at His coming transform our bodies of humiliation into bodies of glory like His own (Phil. iii. 20, 21). The indwelling Holy Spirit is the seal given of God to believers unto this "day of redemption" (Eph. iv. 30). The Holy Spirit is also "the earnest of our inheritance (up) to the redemption of the acquired possession" (Eph. i. 14). This particular result of redemption is future, and we are now "awaiting adoption, that is, the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 23).

Adoption or sonship is yet another fruit of the redemption in Christ Jesus (Gal. iv. 5). We are made children of God by new birth, but sons of God by divine favour. Sonship implies dignity and heirship. We are not servants under bondage, but sons and heirs of God through Christ (Rom. viii. 15 ; Gal. iv. 6). By the grace of God, He "marked us out beforehand for adoption (sonship) through Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph. i. 5). We have already received the Spirit of adoption (Rom. viii. 15). This sonship of which we are conscious when "we cry, Abba Father," will be publicly acknowledged by God when His "many sons" are brought to glory (Heb. ii. 10). At that time of "the manifestation of the sons of God" the whole universe will be brought "into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. viii. 21), when we shall be "sharing the portion of the saints in light" for which we are already made fit (Col. i. 12).

Such are a few of the wonders of the redemption by the blood and power of Christ Jesus revealed in the New Testament for the enlightenment, edification, and comfort of present-day believers whom God has made "objects of mercy" (Rom. xi. 31). We may well exclaim with the apostle, "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable His judgments, and untraceable His ways !" (Rom. xi. 33).

THE END