

question of great awfulness; have not many (like the daughters of *Shiloh*, in their dances, carried off by the lyers in wait), dropped suddenly dead in their midnight revels, and been hurried away, from the frivolous music of the dancing room, to the land of darkness, and shadow of death!

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### REFLECTIONS.

MAY a gracious God, be pleased to follow up his own blessed designs, in recording the sad relations of Israel in this book, to make both the Writer, and Reader of this Commentary upon it, wise, under his divine teaching, from what is written. If, Reader, the page of Israel's transgressions, in this book of the Judges, be so blessed of God the Holy Ghost, as to prompt both your heart, and mine, to behold in it, what it really is, the history of all men according to nature, and unrestrained by grace: and, if the consciousness of the whole, tends to endear Jesus, in all his Person, Offices, Relations, and Characters, as the only remedy for sin; and, if our hearts are led to him for salvation; then let us both bless the Great Author of our mercies, who hath given this, as well as *all scripture, by inspiration of God; and made it profitable, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* Amen,

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### R U T H.

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#### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE Holy Ghost hath not thought proper to gratify our curiosity, in giving information from whose pen the book of *Ruth* hath issued. Had it been at all needful, no doubt the Church would have been made acquainted with it. But, that it carries with it marks of being written under his own blessed inspiration, and that he intended it for the perpetual instruction and comfort of the Church in all ages, there can be no question. Indeed, according to my view of things, the truest evidence that any Book bears his signature is, when his people are enabled, from his own precious teachings therein, to set to their seal *that God is true*. For, when at any time the Holy Ghost refreshes their minds with his word; when those sweet truths they read, in any part of the divine oracles, are made life and spirit to their hearts; this is what the Apostle says, *in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established*. And in the instance of this book of God's

when those blessed effects accompany the perusal, here are the *three* all agreeing together. The sacred word itself is *one*. The Almighty Author of it is *another*. And the heart of the believer, in whom the word seals its authenticity, is a *third*.

The design the blessed Author of the book of *Ruth* had in giving it to the church, seems to have been directed for the display of the divine mercy, both in the world of Providence and of grace. And perhaps yet more pointedly, to lead unto Jesus.

The gracious superintending mercy of God over his people, in a way of Providence, is beautifully illustrated in *Ruth's* history. In her life, simply considered, as relating to the things of time and sense, connected with this world only, we behold the fullest proof of our dear Lord's promise displayed, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all things needful shall be added unto you.* *Ruth*, in leaving all that was near and dear to nature, to seek the God of Israel, and finding him, and all things *with* him, and *in* him, became a living testimony of this precious doctrine. But though I very readily and cheerfully allow that this, in a subordinate sense, might be among the gracious designs of the Holy Ghost, in causing the Book of *Ruth* to be written, and her history recorded; yet I cannot but believe that a greater and more important design was intended in giving this sweet morsel of sacred truth to the Church. Was it not to display yet more illustriously the wonders of his grace? And what can more illustriously display the riches of his grace, than the call of this poor *Moabitish* daughter to be among the fellow-heirs of the same covenant promises with Israel?

Independent of all other considerations, the Book of *Ruth* claims peculiar regard from the followers of the blessed Jesus, in that Christ, after the flesh, sprung from *Ruth*; and thereby manifested his alliance to the Gentile as well as to the Jewish church. So that we may upon this occasion, as well as many other grand considerations connected with it, say with Paul, *Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes! of the Gentiles also.* And it is, I conceive, a very delightful consideration to the believer, to trace this connection even in the minutest point. For it is not the question, or enquiry, after *endless genealogies* (as an apostle terms it) but it is concerning him, who is in all characters and offices dear to his people, *not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.*

I shall not presume, in this humble Commentary on the book of *Ruth*, which I here offer, under divine teachings, in aid to the Believer to be wise above what is written; and therefore will not venture to allegorise the several very interesting things contained in it, which certainly seem to lean that way. That there are very many beauties in scripture of this kind, no one, who is conversant in the word of God, will question. It corresponds so much to the ancient method of instruction in the eastern world, that we

might reasonably expect, in a gracious revelation from heaven, the great truths contained in it might, in accommodation to the capacities of men, be conveyed that way. And hence we find, not only the servants of the Lord Jesus, but the Master himself, adopted similitude and parable in their teaching. Whether *some* of the most interesting outlines in the book of *Ruth* be of this kind or not, I leave undetermined. But the Reader will perhaps be led to think, (and I wish him not to think otherwise), that I am strongly inclined to this belief, when I add, who among the fallen race of Adam would ever have understood, unless the Holy Ghost had commissioned his servant Paul the Apostle to inform the Church of it, that the things concerning the history of Sarah's Isaac, and Hagar's Ishmaël, *were an allegory*.

Reader! may the blessed Spirit of all truth guide me into all truth, while writing, and you while reading, this precious book of God! May our hearts be mutually refreshed and comforted in all our researches, in the faith *which maketh wise unto salvation*. And may we be led into a saving acquaintance, and full assurance of understanding, to *the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. Amen.

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## CHAP. I.

### CONTENTS.

*The book of Ruth opens in this Chapter with the relation of a certain family leaving Bethlehem in consequence of a famine, and sojourning in the country of Moab. The distressing events which followed: the death of the husband and his two sons; and the return of the widow, with one of her daughters in law, from Moab to Bethlehem. These are the principal things related in this Chapter.*

**N**OW it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

2 And the name of the man *was* Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

It is not so very material at what period during the commonwealth of Israel the events here recorded took place, as it is to make particular remarks on the events themselves. And here the first thing to be noticed is the famine which prevailed in the land. Famine was one of the

four sore judgments of God, which the Lord had decreed to punish Israel with, when the land sinned by trespassing grievously, to break the staff of the bread thereof. Ezek. xiv. 13—21. And what rendered a famine of bread more peculiarly afflicting, and carrying with it a decided mark of a divine judgment, was, that this famine was in *Bethlehem*; for the very name of *Bethlehem* signifies the land, or house of bread. Reader! do not forget, that Bethlehem is the hallowed spot of the birth of thy Redeemer. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. See Matt. ii. 1. How awful must a famine be when it carries with it a testimony that it is a divine judgment! But how infinitely more awful must be a spiritual famine: not of bread, and of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And is not this the case with Bethlehem now? I mean the descendants of ancient Bethlehem, the Jews. The Lord by his servant Amos threatened this judgment. And for how many generations hath it been fulfilled? Precious Jesus! how sweet is it to my soul, that thou breakest thy bread to me in secret. How delightful is it to know thee to be the bread of life, which came down from heaven, of which whosoever eateth shall live for ever! Lord! evermore give me this bread. See Amos viii. 11. John vi. 33, &c.

There is somewhat very striking in the manner in which the Holy Ghost hath introduced this man and his family. He is stiled, *A certain man*. And his name is not less so: *Elimelech*; which is compounded of two words, *Eli* and *melech*, signifying my God, and king. *Naomi* means pleasant. *Mahlon* and *Chilion* conveyed very different ideas; the former intimating a sick and weakly one, and the latter a wasting. But the most remarkable circumstance was their removal from the house of God, to the idolatrous country of Moab. Alas! do we not see in this certain man and his family, our nature strongly pictured? Did not Adam, our first father, induce a spiritual famine by transgression, and entail sickness and disease upon all his children, so that our whole nature may well be called *Mahlon* and *Chilion*? And did he not leave the Lord, and his mercies, and ever since, in his poor, blind, and fallen race, have we not all by nature sought fulness in the Moabs of the world, and the idols thereof?

3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

*Sin hath entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passeth upon all men, because all have sinned.* Rom. v. 12.

4 And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.

What miseries spring out of original transgression! When Elimelech left Bethlehem-judah, he left it only for a little while, according to his intention. He meant to return again when the famine was over. Alas! when men leave God, neglect his ordinances, seek pleasure in the world, who shall calculate the end of such awful departures? Here are affinities with Moab unnatural, unscriptural alliances! Oh! how sweet is that precept of the Lord, and how full of mercy; *Come out of her my,*

people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. Rev. xviii. 4.

5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

How reviving is the thought to the people of God, amidst the devastations and ravages of death, that Jesus ever liveth: and as he ever liveth, so he ever loveth his people. And doth he not say, in the soft whispers of his grace, *Am I not better to thee than ten sons?* 1 Sam. i. 8.

6 ¶ Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.

Reader! may we not, without violence to the history, conceive this to be no unapt representation of the return of a sinner after his wandering from the Lord? Every man, like Elimelech, hath departed from the Lord by sin and transgression. The Lord in mercy sends afflictions after us: There is a famine of ordinances, trouble, sickness, death. When these visitations are properly received and felt, and the heart by grace is humbled under them, the soul, like Naomi, *hears the rod, and who hath appointed it.* And then, like her, we are told that *the Lord is returned to Jerusalem in mercies. I will arise, and go to my Father,* is then the language of the soul. Oh! how sweet, how very sweet is it, when by sanctified afflictions the Lord *hedges up our way with thorns,* or unsettles the nest we had made for ourselves, amidst the *Moabs* of the world. Luke xv. 18. Hosea ii. 7.

7 Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

Here we may learn that resolutions formed in grace lead to practice. Had Naomi simply sent forth a wish to return to Bethlehem, when she heard that the Lord had visited his people, and yet never put that wish into effect, she would have resembled the hearers by the wayside. But effectual grace leads on to effectual practice. It is founded in divine strength, and will be carried on in the same. See that sweet resolution in the word, Psalm lxxi. 16.

8 And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.

9 The LORD grant you that ye may find rest,

each *of you* in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lift up their voice, and wept.

There is somewhat very interesting in this account of the parting of Naomi and her daughters-in-law. Even on the score of natural feelings it is not without affording much instruction, in teaching us how those that are allied in the bonds of nature, conscious of being alike exposed to all nature's sorrows, should soften each other's burthens in a mutual regard. But the subject riseth much higher, when beheld in a way of grace. It is evident from the sequel of the history, how exceedingly Naomi longed for both her daughters-in-law to be proselytes to the true God, and to leave the dunghill gods of Moab. Parting therefore from them, when they might return to everlasting ruin, it was this which aggravated the pang of separation. Reader! is there nothing in all this that you can make personal? Hath it been told you how the Lord hath visited his people, and are you, from long having wandered away, now returning to thè God of salvation? And do you not feel the pang of sorrow, in the view of your unawakened relations? Do you not wish them to go with you to Jesus? and is not the language of your heart towards them, *Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.* Micah iv. 2. Psalm xxxiv. 3.

10 And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

There is something captivating, even to natural affections, in the first view of religion. Nature, as in the case of these two *Moabitish* daughters, could not but feel a desire to be among God's people. But alas! though nature feels, and is compelled to allow, the superiority of grace, yet the mere feelings of nature, originating only in nature, can never rise above its source. When the spring ceases to flow, the streams dry away.

11 And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? *are there yet any more* sons in my womb that they may be your husbands?

12 Turn again, my daughters, *go your way*; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, *if* I should have an husband also to-night, and should also bear sons;

13 Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes, that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.

They who attend only to the mere letter of the history, will discover nothing more in it than the affectionate feelings of a tender-hearted woman, in the necessity of separating from those she held dear. But they who look deeper than the surface of the history, will behold in it the finer feelings of an awakened soul, interested for the everlasting welfare of those whom the Lord had made dear to her in the ties of nature; that they might be brought nearer in the bonds of grace. There can be no doubt, but that Naomi, all along, coveted that her daughters should be her companions to the house of God. She knew how gracious Israel's God was, and that in his house there was bread enough and to spare. But in her zeal for their salvation she judged it prudent to set before them the difficulties in the way, that hereafter they might not turn back. If the Reader would behold a brighter example of the same kind, he may view it in the person of Jesus. Luke xiv. 25—27.

14 ¶ And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

What a striking evidence is here, in these two characters, of the wonderful difference between nature and grace. While both Orpah and Ruth felt the tender affections, and were melted at Naomi's discourse, with *one* it operated no further than the momentary impulse, but like the early cloud, or morning dew, soon vanished away; with the *other* it fastened like a nail, in a sure place. And thus, Reader, is the effects of the blessed gospel of Jesus, in all the congregations where the word is preached every Lord's day. It may affect, it may strike the mind of all, and even carnal men, like the wayside hearers, may receive the word with seeming joy; but some, like Orpah, will kiss and depart; and others, like Ruth, without the kiss, will feel their souls cleaving unto it. So that the same word is *to some a savour of life unto life; and to others a savour of death unto death.* Reader! it is a grand and important question, In which class are *you* found?

15 And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.

This verse throws a light upon the real design Naomi had in view, in all her discourse, when seemingly persuading her daughters-in-law to go back. For when she talked of the gods to which Orpah was returned, nothing can more decidedly shew how much she desired Ruth to follow the true God of Israel; however it might at first view appear that she recommended Ruth to follow her example.

16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or 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:

17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, *if ought* but death part thee and me.

In what sweet and engaging language hath the Holy Ghost been pleased to convey to the church, the pious and unalterable resolution of this poor Moabite. No doubt Naomi had brought her well acquainted with the history of the God of Israel; and very many precious things she had learnt concerning the Lord's care of his people. But Reader! had this been all, Ruth's resolution would never have been what it was. Doubtless, from an higher power, her mind was constrained into the love of God; and hence, from this one source, the firmness of her principles derived their strength. And may not, ought not indeed, every true believer in Jesus, to feel the same firmness of attachment? Where Jesus goeth I would go. Where Jesus lodgeth I would lodge. His people are my people. His God and Father, is my Father and God in him: and both in life and death would I be with him. Death, indeed, must have parted Ruth and Naomi; but the dying day of thy people, blessed Jesus, is the real wedding-day, in which the marriage supper of the Lamb is consummated in heaven. Lord! help me to cleave unto thee, for thou art my life. May my soul say to Jesus, as *Ittai* did to David, 2 Sam. xv. 21.

18 When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

*An oath for confirmation* (saith an Apostle) *is to them an end of all strife.* Ruth had solemnly protested the firmness of her resolution of accompanying Naomi; and this the other accepted, as a thing now settled. My soul! how ought I to blush in the recollection, that neither the word nor the oath of Jehovah hath at times been found of such sufficient validity with me, as to quiet my foolish doubts and fears, concerning the infinite security of the redemption of Jesus! Reader! hath it been *your* experience also? Heb. vi. 16—19.

19 So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, *Is* this Naomi?

Such is the surprise whenever a sinner is brought home to Jesus! It excites the wonder and astonishment of man, in beholding the mighty change wrought by sovereign grace. And as we are told that angels rejoice in heaven over the recovery of every poor sinner from the power of sin and Satan to the living God, think, Reader, what a moving of the heavenly city is there above, when Jesus brings home a soul that he hath rescued from Moab, of the wanderers from Bethlehem? Is there any thing yet more surprising? Yes! how astonished shall you and I look in upon ourselves, and all around, if God in his infinite mercy, and from the riches of his inexhaustible grace, should bring us home from



those regions of sin we now inhabit, to surround the throne of God and the Lamb!

20 And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

21 I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why *then* call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

Such language is suitable to a sinner. It is the highest evidence of grace, when the soul is led to see the hand of God in our afflictions. And oh! how very precious is it when the soul can say, "I went out full in creature-comforts, creature-confidences, creature-dependencies; but my God hath stripped me of them all. Call me no longer therefore *pleasant*; but let my name be *bitterness*." How delightful are those preparatory works of God the Holy Ghost in the heart! And Reader, depend upon it, when your soul and my soul are thus emptied of all that we once named pleasantness, then are we prepared for that precious gift in Jesus of the new name, and the white stone, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it. Compare Isaiah lxii. 2. with Rev. ii. 17. iii. 12.

22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

All souls, both Jew and Gentile, when brought home to the Lord, will always find it a harvest-day whenever they return. *This day* (saith Jesus to Zaccheus, in the day of his conversion) *is salvation come to this house*. Luke xix. 9. Oh! precious day, when the Lord makes the sinner willing *in the day of his power*. Psalm cx. 3.

### REFLECTIONS.

PAUSE, my soul, in the review of what is written in this Chapter, and see what reference it bears to thy spiritual state and circumstances. Is there not, by nature, a famine induced in the land to all the fallen race of Adam, when, before the soul is quickened to the use of any of its spiritual faculties, it neither feels the sense of its lost and famished state, nor hath any spiritual appetite to the bread of life, which came down from heaven? And hast not thou, my soul, like Elimelech and all his household, left the land of bread to seek among the husks of the world the gratification of thy sensual appetite?

Oh! thou merciful Lord God, how gracious hast thou been to my soul, when hedging up my way, and inducing disappointment and afflictions in the creature, thou hast again inclined my heart to return to the Lord God of my salvation! Oh! how gracious hath it been in thee, Lord, to visit thy people again with spiritual sustenance, when by sin

and disobedience we had called forth a dearth of such rich provisions! Shall I not hasten back to my Father's house, convinced, as I am, that the world, like Moab, affords no resting place to dwell in. Shall any persuasions of others, or fears of my own, keep me from this purpose? Dearest Jesus! to whom shall I go but to thee, thou art both the bread of life, and thou only hast the words of eternal life; thou art the very Bethlehem of thy people, and in thee I shall find enough to live upon for ever! Like Ruth, may it be my most determined resolution, to go where thou goest, and to know nothing among men but thee. I would forget my own people, and my father's house, and both in life and in death, desire none in comparison of thee. And though my flesh and my heart faileth, yet thou art and wilt be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

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## CHAP. II.

### CONTENTS.

*As the history advanceth in its progress, the several particulars of it become more interesting. In this chapter we are introduced into the acquaintance of the hero of the subject, Boaz: and informed how Ruth became first brought acquainted with him. The events of a day are circumstantially related, and the consequences of it, in Ruth's conduct during the season of the harvest, follow.*

**A**ND Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name *was* Boaz.

As the main hinge upon which the whole of this sweet history turns, considered in a spiritual and typical sense, is centered in the character of *Boaz*, here spoken of, it will be proper, in the opening of the chapter in this place, to attend particularly to what is said of him. *Boaz* by name signifies *strength*. And he is said to be a rich kinsman's of Naomi's husband. Now it is a point which should never be lost sight of through the whole of this history, that the self-same word which in this place is rendered *kinsman*, is in some other scriptures rendered *Redeemer*. The original word is *Goel*. Thus for example: If the man have no (*Goel*) kinsman to recompense the trespass. So it is rendered Numb. v. 8. So again in this same book, chap. iii. 12. I am thy (*Goel*) near kinsman. But in the book of Job, chap. xix. 25, the same word is rendered Redeemer. I know that my (*Goel*) Redeemer liveth. So again in the book of the Proverbs, chap. xxiii. 11. For their (*Goel*) Redeemer is mighty. So likewise in the prophecy of Isaiah, chap. xlvii. 4. As for our (*Goel*) Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts is his name. And what is the evident conclusion from the comparative view of all these scriptures, but that the *Goel*-kinsman of our nature is one and the same person, the *Goel*-Redeemer of his people: of whom *Boaz*, in whom is said to be strength, is a lively type. Moreover, he is said to be the kinsman of Elimelech. And may we not, without violence to the sacred text, consider this *certain man* (as Elimelech is first called in the opening of the Book of Ruth), a lively type of our whole

nature, to whom the Lord Jesus is indeed both our kinsman and Redeemer; being in his humanity bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and in his Godhead our Redeemer, mighty to save, the Lord of Hosts is his name. And as it is a subject of the most interesting nature, to trace the affinity after the flesh of Boaz with the Lord Jesus, as well as to view him as the type of Jesus, I detain the Reader to make a further remark concerning his pedigree. And if the Reader will consult the opening of the Gospel by St. Matthew, he will there discover how that our Lord after the flesh sprung from Boaz and Ruth; and thereby manifested his connection both with the Jewish and the Gentile church. See Matt. 1—5. Hence, thou blessed Jesus, I may truly say thou art the Goel, the kinsman Redeemer, of thy people! thou art of our family, for thou didst take our nature upon thee, when thou becamest man for our sakes. And surely thou art a mighty man of wealth, for in thee dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and in thee are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Coloss. ii. 9. 3.

2 And Ruth the Moabite said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after *him* in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.

Reader! if we apply this passage in a spiritual sense to the state of the soul (and I see no reason why we may not) it will open a subject both pleasing and profitable. When a sinner is brought by the Holy Ghost out of the world, as Ruth was out of Moab, though the world promiseth plenty of enjoyments, and a fulness of all sensual pleasures, yet the poor in spirit desires rather to glean of the bread of life, even though but in the smallest portion of the ears of corn, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. But then the desire of the awakened soul is also to glean after him in whose sight is found grace. And in whose sight but Jesus can sinners find grace? In the field of his word, his scriptures, his ordinances, there is plenty indeed to glean; and if the Lord Jesus gives grace, he will give the soul to find and inherit substance, and he will fill their treasures. Prov. viii. 18—21.

3 And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field *belonging* unto Boaz, who *was* of the kindred of Elimelech.

Are not these reapers similar to the ministering servants of Jesus, who while gathering fruit for the Lord, leave sweet gleanings for the people that come after them? But Reader! do not overlook what is said concerning Ruth in this verse, that unknown to her it was her hap to light upon the field of Boaz. To her indeed it appeared casual, but not so in reality. Most graciously doth the Holy Ghost direct sinners to Jesus; and not only leads them *to* Jesus, but brings them in his own time and way acquainted *with* Jesus. John xvi. 13, 14.

4 ¶ And, behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem,

and said unto the reapers, The LORD *be* with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.

What a beautiful picture is here given of the simplicity of antient times, in the pious salutations which passed between Boaz and his servants. What an evident proof it affords, that both were living under divine influences. Oh! how exceedingly to be desired, that such was the usual salutation between masters and servants in the present day! How lovely that house, that family, that service, which is endeared to one another in the several members of it, and cemented in God's blessing. There is another charming instance of it recorded in Psalm cxxix. 8.

5 Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel *is* this?

The enquiry of Boaz so immediately concerning Ruth, may serve to teach us how very early the eye of Jesus is upon any and every poor stranger that comes under the ministry of his word, to glean instruction in the fields of salvation. Yes! Reader, depend upon it, however any poor sinner may fancy himself overlooked, unnoticed, or unknown, his case, as well as his person, become the immediate object of attention in the view of Jesus. How doth the Lord wait to be gracious; and even before his people call, to answer. Isaiah xxx. 18. and lxxv. 24.

6 And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It *is* the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab:

7 And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.

There is a great beauty in this relation, and yet more real religion. If the Reader will please to consult Levit. xix. 9, 10, he will discover the law of God concerning the poor gleaner. So that the servant of Boaz, if necessary, justified the permission he had given Ruth to glean in his master's field by this law. But is there not a spiritual illustration of this report of Boaz's servant to his master concerning Ruth, yet far more interesting? Are not the stewards of God's mysteries supposed to encourage gleaners to traverse over the field of scripture, and attend to the ministry of the word? And are they not supposed to gain all possible information concerning the spiritual state and circumstances of their followers in the ministry, and then in prayer and praise to spread the whole before the Lord? Oh! how truly lovely is it to behold the faithful servant in Jesus's house, imitating his divine master; and when having in public ministered in the word, in private to know that he

spreads all the wants of his people before the throne: *When Jesus had sent the multitudes away he went up into the mountain apart to pray.* Matt. xiv. 23.

8 ¶ Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens:

9 *Let* thine eyes *be* on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of *that* which the young men have drawn.

How sweet and precious are all the tokens of Jesus to his people! Doth he not, as in the case of Boaz to Ruth, speak personally to every one of them? Is it not Jesus himself that doth in reality speak when his word comes home with power to the heart? And is not this the longing desire of every truly awakened soul? *Let me hear thy voice. The companions hearken to thy voice; cause me to hear it.* Song viii. 13. *My sheep* (saith Jesus) *hear my voice, and they know my voice. A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.* John x. 3—5. But this is not all. Jesus bids the poor seeker not to glean in another field. No, blessed Lord! there is no other we need to glean in, nor any other in which the true bread of life can be found. *There is salvation in no other, neither is there any other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.* Acts iv. 12. But in Jesus there is all fulness, all-sufficiency. Bread for the hungry, and water for the thirsty. We may go therefore to the earthen vessels which the ministers hold the sacred treasure in, and *draw with joy from the wells of salvation.* Isaiah xii. 3.

10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I *am* a stranger?

How surprising are the first manifestations of the Lord Jesus to the heart of the sinner! While the poor creature, under the convictions of sin, is approaching with a mixture of great fear and little hope, to hear Jesus speaking in the ministry of his word, and by the sweet constraining tokens of his grace, to discover that his case is known, and that the Lord hath mercy in store for him. And still more, if possible, in the distinguishing grace which the soul feels, as shewn to a poor Gentile stranger. Oh! how very low will the soul lie in the dust of the earth, under the deepest self-abasement, crying out, *How is it, Lord, that thou hast manifested thyself unto me and not unto the world.* Reader! do you know any thing of these precious soul-transactions in your own case and circumstances? John xiv. 22.

11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and *how* thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

12 The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

Might I be permitted to paraphrase those gracious expressions with an eye to the rich mercies of Jesus, I humbly conceive that the language of our dearest Lord to a poor sinner seeking his face, might be supposed to breathe a tenderness like this. It hath fully been shewed me, all the state and circumstances of those awakenings by my grace in thy soul. I have long known and viewed the struggles you have encountered. The death you have experienced in your first husband, to whom you were wedded in a covenant of works: and the workings of grace, in prompting you to leave and forget your own people, and your father's house, to cast yourself wholly on the sovereignty of my salvation, and to come to a people you knew not before, to be espoused to Christ; these are things with which I am fully acquainted. A full satisfaction shall be given thee, and thou shalt not be disappointed of thine hope. Oh! how inexpressibly sweet and precious is it to the mind of every poor seeking sinner, when Jesus thus speaks peace, and satisfies the desires of the soul! But how strange doth it seem to the heart, that in the moment when we fear that our case is overlooked, and that neither our person, nor our cries, attract the divine attention, Jesus gives us to understand, that every secret desire, every tear, every sigh of the soul, he hath been a witness to, and knows us better than we do ourselves. That of Nathaniel is a delightful instance in point: See John i. 48, 49.

13 Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.

Such, Reader, will be the invariable consequence in the soul's view of grace. Never doth a soul lay lower before God than when the Lord is comforting that soul with the manifestation of himself. See Job xlii. 5, 6.

14 And Boaz said unto her, At meal time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers:

and he reached her parched *corn*, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.

The Lord Jesus delights that his table should be filled. He commands all seeking souls to come at meal-time to his ordinances. He hath made *a feast of fat things* in his holy mountain, and there the souls of his people may delight themselves in fatness. And how sweet is it to see, that while his people sit beside his ministers, Jesus himself reacheth to them their corn and meat in secret. *They have* (as he had when upon earth) *meat to eat that others* (even disciples) *know not of*. And they not only eat and are full, but leave abundance for others, *Eat O friends*; (is the call of Jesus) *drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved*. Song v. 1. Precious Redeemer, though thy people eat and are full, thy fulness is not diminished, neither is thy table ever empty.

15 And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not:

16 And let fall also *some* of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave *them*, that she may glean *them*, and rebuke her not.

There is a great beauty in this scripture, still viewing it spiritually. When a soul is risen up from the table or ordinance of Jesus, it is only to follow up one means of grace after another. Believers are continually gleaning, wherever they are, or however they are occupied. In the market or in the house, as well as in the temple, like *Enoch, they walk with God*. Reader! do *you* find this in *your* experience? But what a beautiful and endearing trait of character is it in our Jesus, that he commands his servants to let his people glean, even among the richest sheaves of grace; and from his abundant fulness, there shall be handfuls scattered every where, as if to surprize poor sinners with the abundant riches of his grace. Grace shall exceed all things, even sin and our undeservings: for so saith the apostle—*Where sin abounded grace doth much more abound*. Rom. v. 20.

17 So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.

So do all labourers in the vineyard remain in their employment until the evening of their day; and when the even of life is come, *the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers*. Blessed Jesus! grant, when the evening of my day is come, and thou commandest me to return, that I may be of that happy number, whom the voice from heaven pronounced to be blessed. See Rev. xiv. 13. It is evident how diligent Ruth had been, for an *ephah* is not less than between three and four pecks, forty *omers*: see Exod. xvi. 36.

18 And she took *it* up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned:

and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.

Believers love to spread abroad the savor of Jesus's name; and, as the apostle speaks, *are ready to distribute, and willing to communicate.* 1 Tim. vi. 18.

19 And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day *is* Boaz.

The enquiry of Naomi, and the pious acknowledgment of the Lord's hand in Ruth's success for the day's labour, suggests to us a most useful examination, which believers in Jesus should always make at the close of the day. Where hath been my gleanings to day? In what part of the field of scripture have I wrought? Hath Jesus indeed taken knowledge of me, and hath my soul eyed him? Do I know his name so as to lean upon him, and put my whole trust in him? Psalm ix. 10.

20 And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed *be* he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man *is* near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.

How very sweet and interesting is this even as an history, considered in the way of God's providence. There was but one man in Israel by right of inheritance, as the Goel-kinsman of the decayed house of Eli-melech, that could repair their broken circumstances, and redeem their mortgaged land. And the Lord in his providence sends Ruth, who was altogether unconscious of all this, into the very path by which this blessing might be accomplished. But how infinitely more precious and interesting is the subject, when viewed spiritually, and in a way of grace. There is but one man under heaven which can repair our desolate ruined state of nature, by redemption of our long-forfeited inheritance, and he is indeed our next kinsman, for he hath married our nature for this very purpose. Precious Jesus! am I indeed come, unconscious as I was at the time of my ruined state by nature, out of the country of *Moab*, a poor awakened Gentile, to glean in thy fields? Hast thou eyed me and took pity on me in my lost estate, *for thy mercy endureth for ever*? Hast thou commanded thy servants, the ministers of thy gospel, to suffer me to glean in thy fields of truth and to rebuke me not; and even to let fall handfuls of the bread of life on purpose for me? Have I indeed wrought under thy eye, and in thy favour, and found an *ephah*? Is this the man, even the Lord of the



country, the God-man Christ Jesus, unto whose corn-fields I am come? O blessed be Jesus JEHOVAH! who hath not left off his kindness to dead sinners, whom he hath quickened, nor to the living, whom when quickening he hath called!

21 And Ruth the Moabite said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest.

Delightful thought! Jesus not only gives plentifully and suitably to his distressed relations, but he enjoins them to come again and again, and not to go to glean in the fields of another. *He that overcometh* (saith Jesus) *shall inherit all things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son.* Rev. xxi. 7. We need not go elsewhere. We have all and abound. *Blessed* (saith the apostle) *be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.* Our persons are accepted in Jesus, and all grace must flow in him and from him. Hence it is, perhaps, with this view, that Jehovah in a covenant relation is called *El-Shaddai*, that is, *God all-sufficient.* A sufficiency to live upon to all eternity. So that all blessedness is wrapped up in this one comprehensive mercy of our Jesus.

22 And Naomi said unto 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.*

Believers in Jesus are sometimes called virgins, for their chaste and close adherence to him, as well as also for the singleness of their affection to his person, and the inviolable purity of their doctrine. See Song i. 3. Rev. xiv. 4. It is well, therefore, for all such to be found no where else but in the society of true believers. That is a sweet direction to every enquiring soul, who wishes to know where Jesus feeds, and where his people are to be found. Song i. 7, 8.

23 So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law.

It is one of the most important precepts of the gospel as well as the law, *cleave unto him* (that is, the Lord) *for he is thy life.* Deut. xiii. 4. And certain it is, that if Jesus be our chief joy he will have our chief company. We shall stand fast by him and his people, and not be found in the field of the world, nor seeking our comfort from carnal pursuits. From one harvest to another, and from one full moon to another, if the Lord be our portion the Lord will be our delight.

#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! pause over this chapter. Are we not, like Naomi and Ruth, returned out of the country of Moab, brought by divine grace

to seek sustenance in the land of Bethlehem? And have we not, like them, a kinsman of our first parent, a mighty man of wealth indeed, whose name is Jesus? Yes, dearest Lord! let it be our hap to glean in thy fields, for all the world beside thee is but as a wilderness. All other sustenance is but as the husks which the swines do eat. And wilt thou not, dear Lord, though we are strangers, eye us when we seek to glean in thy pastures, and bid thy servants, the ministers of thy word, to drop suitable supply to our need? Conscious of our nothingness and poverty, we have reason indeed, like Ruth, to come with trembling and with apprehension. And should our Lord but graciously condescend to speak to his servants, Oh! what holy joy will it afford, that One so great, so glorious, should regard creatures such as we are. Surely the most becoming language of our hearts must be, like Ruth: *Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger.* Oh, Lord! let a poor Gentile, whom thou hast taken into thy church and family, find grace in thy sight: and let thine Holy Spirit give to me such strength, that I may never glean in other ground, nor seek comfort from other resources. No! blessed Jesus! there is enough in thee to live upon for ever. Oh! may I abide in thee, and keep fast by the companions of my Lord's service. And let thine eyes be upon me from harvest to harvest, and from one end of the year even to the other end of the year, until the whole of thy dispensations concerning thy church on earth are ended: and then may it be my lot, with *all the ransomed of Zion, to return with songs and everlasting joy upon our heads; then shall we obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

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## CHAP. III.

### CONTENTS.

*The history is prosecuted through this chapter, and of consequence in its progress and drawing nearer to a close, becomes more and more interesting. Naomi gives instructions to Ruth how to conduct herself in her deportment towards Boaz. According to the laws of Israel, Ruth had a claim upon Boaz to do the kinsman's part and marry her. Naomi directs her towards the attainment of this great end. This chapter relates also Ruth's obedience to Naomi's direction, and the noble behaviour of Boaz towards her.*

**T**HEN Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

2 And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor.

3 Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: *but* make not thyself known unto the

man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.

4 And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.

5 And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.

If there were no other evidences in the whole history of the Book of Ruth, to lead to the conviction that the grand scope of it is of a spiritual signification; the circumstance here related, together with what follows in consequence thereof, would incline me to this opinion. To persons not conversant with Jewish customs, and especially if ignorant of the Jewish laws, in reference to that grand point, the expectation of the Messiah, Naomi's advice to Ruth, and the deportment of Ruth in obedience to that advice, must appear highly reprehensible and indecent. But if the Reader, before he prosecutes this chapter any further, would pause, and consider what the Lord appointed Israel concerning the marriage of widows in relationship; neither the conduct of Naomi nor Ruth will be found indecorous or improper, but agreeable to the written law. Let the Reader first, therefore, be told, that with an eye to what God had promised concerning the redemption of our fallen nature, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*: every Jew, unconscious from what womb this child should be born, became extremely solicitous to have a numerous offspring: and the going childless, was considered as one of the most awful punishments of heaven. *Write ye this man childless, (saith the Lord) a man that shall not prosper in the earth.* See Jer. xxii. 30. Hence the distress of Jephtha: Judges xi. 34, 35. I would desire the Reader, when he hath made his own remarks on this part of the subject, to go on and consider yet further, how the Lord himself, as if to encourage this laudable desire of children among his people, with an eye to the Messiah, appointed certain laws to keep up the stock of families. Thus the precept ran, *If brethren dwell together, and one of them die and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.* And observe what follows: *And it shall be that the first-born which she beareth, shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.* See Deut. xxv. 5—10. And if the Reader will consult the whole passage, he will see that the object was considered so important, that the refusal subjected the man which objected to do the brother's part to an opprobrious name in Israel. I do not detain the Reader in this place, with adding the sweet spiritual truths which arise out of it, in reference to our blessed brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, these will meet us in their proper place, before we close our observations on this chapter. But what I am chiefly desirous of at this

time, in opening the view of Ruth's conduct and Naomi's advice, is to remove from the mind of the christian Reader every idea of indelicacy and improper behaviour in Naomi's counsel to Ruth. It is worthy remark, that this law was considered so universally binding and so sacredly attended to, that it was not lost sight of in the days of our blessed Lord. See Matt. xxii. 23, 24.

6 And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.

After the former observations I have made concerning both Naomi and Ruth, I conceive it would be superfluous to add any further considerations, by way of justification of their conduct. Neither would I detain the Reader from attending to what is infinitely more important, in the view of the subject considered in a spiritual light. May we not then behold in Ruth, the representation of every poor sinner, brought as she was, from the ignorance of Gentilism into an acquaintance with the God of Israel, and seeking grace and favour with the Lord Jesus: and will not every one of this description, when under a sense of sin, and the ruined state of our poor fallen nature, desire to be united to Jesus, when we have learnt that he is our Kinsman-Redeemer, and nearly allied to us, by reason of his taking upon him our flesh for the purposes of salvation? Psm. ix. 10.

7 And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

An ordinary Reader might be tempted to conceive unfavourably of Boaz from this account; but the expressions here used concerning Boaz, favour no such ideas. It should be recollected, that in the seasons of harvest in those warm countries, it was very common to sleep in booths and tents, to avoid the excessive heat. Boaz doing this in his corn-chamber, corresponded to the same. And that he had committed no excess in his supper, seems evident from what is said soon after, that he *blessed the Lord*. Indeed the expression, that his heart was merry, means no other than that his heart was *cheerful*. The Chaldee paraphrase translate it that his heart was *good*; meaning that he was cheerful in his own mind, and thankful to the Lord for the plenty of his harvest.

8 ¶ And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

9 And he said, Who *art* thou? and she answered, I *am* Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou *art* a near kinsman.

It is for the most part midnight in the soul, when first the Lord Jesus is revealed to the heart of a poor sinner. Here, as in the former in-

stance, we have the most decided evidence, that the subject is intended to be spiritual: for we find the Lord expressing his covenant-love and redemption unto his people, under the very figure here made use of, when having described our lost estate, under the similitude of an infant cast out to perish from its birth, the Lord saith, *I spread my skirt over thee, and thou becamest mine.* Ezek. xvi. 8.

10 And he said, Blessed *be* thou of the LORD, my daughter; *for* thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

11 And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou *art* a virtuous woman.

12 And now it is true that I *am thy* near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

13 Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, *that* if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, *as* the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning.

The generosity and greatness of mind in Boaz, to condescend to the situation of this poor creature, is not more to be admired in the history, than the obedience also which he thereby manifested to the law of God. Boaz knew that the law of God had made provision for such cases; and as such, he took no shelter under the disparity of circumstances, but declared himself ready to do the kinsman's part, if him that was nearer of kin, and therefore had a prior claim, refused to do it. And though, no doubt, the first and principal motive which operated upon the mind of Boaz in this concern, was obedience to the divine law, yet he very graciously remarked to Ruth, that her attachment to the family and house of Israel, in leaving all the relations of Moab, and the gods of the place, since her husband's death, were such evidences of her virtue, that this weighed much upon his mind, and was well received by all the city of his people. These are very interesting points, simply considered as an history, and deserve to be noticed. But when the Reader hath paid all due attention to them on this account, I would call upon him to remark with me, those far more important points, which strike us in the passage, considered in their spiritual signification. When a poor cast-off sinner is brought by the Holy Ghost into an acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, hath heard of his grace, and lies down at his feet, desiring to be covered with the skirt

of his mantle, the Son of God takes immediate notice of the poor creature, and as he knows all his state and circumstances, intimates for the poor creature's encouragement, that he is not a stranger either to his wants or desires; and promiseth, in the assurance of the covenant-engagements of his Father, that he will perform the Kinsman-Redeemer's part. Perhaps the nearer kinsman here alluded to, might mean the angels, which in one sense, considered in the scale of *creature* existence, might be said to be nearer. But of these there could be no help, for the Lord Jesus is introduced by the prophet, as saying, *I looked and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury it upheld me.* Isaiah lxiii. 5.

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 floor.

15 Also he said, Bring the vail that *thou hast* upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six *measures* of barley, and laid *it* on her: and she went into the city.

Following up this sweet history in a spiritual point of view, how beautiful and interesting every event in it appears. Awakened sinners will lie at the feet of Jesus until the morning, in which grace shines in upon their souls, and Jesus hath given them an assurance of his love. And yet how often in their rising up, though every thing tends to assure them that they have been with Jesus, do they seem, from the remains of doubt and unbelief in their hearts, to come forth as in the dark, and before the twilight hath given the soul a glimpse of the Redeemer's presence? And doth not Jesus say to all his people in the personal manifestations of his love, Let it not be known what I have shewed thee! At least, they cannot communicate to others, all the gracious things they have seen and known of Jesus. They have *bread to eat*, which others know not of: and *a stranger cannot intermeddle in their joy*. But, Oh! what a fulness of grace doth Jesus in his visits dismiss the praying soul with! This is, indeed, strengthening the believer with strength in his soul: not only as much as they can carry, but sometimes their cups running over. But, Reader, do not overlook the expression, that as Boaz measured out to Ruth of his bounty; so Jesus imparts the graces of his Holy Spirit. Of him only can it be said, that *God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him.* John iii. 34. But of all others even the highest and most plentifully supplied servants of Jesus, *unto every one is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.* Ephes. iv. 7.

16 And when she came to her mother in law, she said, *Who art thou, my daughter?* And she told her all that the man had done to her.

17 And she said, These six *measures* of barley

gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law.

18 Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.

Still spiritualizing the history of Ruth, we may remark on these verses, how strikingly they set forth the assurance seeking souls ought to have, so that it is impossible any of the praying seed of Jacob should ever seek the face of God in vain. When a poor awakened sinner hath been with Jesus, sought his face, implored his favour, and determines by grace to hang on him and his great salvation, until the Lord shall answer in mercy: as to Israel at the sea, the direction is, *Stand still and see the salvation of God.* We may in every instance, and upon every occasion, consider that prayer as good as answered, which is asked in faith; founded in grace; and is resting upon covenant promises. And I do not know any passage in the whole bible more interesting, considered in reference to the person of the Lord Jesus, and his love and attention to his people, than this; in which Naomi saith: *the man will not rest until he have finished the thing this day.* A *not* which every true believer may use. The God-man Christ Jesus will not cease; doth not even now in glory remit one moment his priestly office, in the carrying on, and completing that redemption in his people, which on earth he finished for his people; when by righteousness he justified them, and by the one offering of himself once offered, he perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Heb. x. 14. Lord! help both Writer and Reader to believe *the record which God hath given of his Son!* 1 John v. 10—12. And there is one circumstance more in those precious words, considered as applicable to the person of the God-man Christ Jesus, which I could wish ever to keep in view myself, and which I would affectionately recommend to every lover of Jesus: namely, that the seeking soul is not more earnest for a speedy issue in his treaty with Jesus, than the Lord Jesus himself is. Reader! it is equally true in the case of every humble follower of Jesus, as in the instance of Boaz and Ruth, and may be said with equal truth and confidence, the God-man will not rest, until he have finished the thing, in this day of salvation. And what a relief would such a thought bring in every dark and trying hour, if cherished with full faith and affection under the influence of the Holy Ghost in the heart, that the soul is not more desirous to win Christ, than Christ to reveal himself to that soul, and to form himself there the hope of glory.

#### REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! In the perusal of this chapter, I would say to thee, as Naomi did to Ruth, Shall I not seek rest for thee? And can there be any rest on this side the grave, but in Jesus? Is he not *the rest wherewith the Lord will cause the weary to rest, and is he not the refreshing!* And as an encouragement to go to him, may I not say as

she did: *Is he not of my kindred? Hath he not married our nature: united it to himself, and become bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh? And can I go to one nearer and dearer than he? And doth he not hold a constant feast in his harvest seasons? And are they not in his church perpetual? Oh! for grace to anoint myself, and the sweet washings of the Holy Spirit, that I may go forth and lie low at his feet, and seek from the blessed condescensions of his love, that he may spread his skirt of righteousness, and his garment of salvation, over me, and betroth me to himself for ever, in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies: yea betroth me unto himself in faithfulness, and that I may know the Lord.*

And, dearest Jesus! give me grace while I wait at thy feet, that I may lie passive until the morning. Oh! for the lively actings of faith to believe what my God hath promised, and that he will do the kinsman's part, for he hath said it. He is the Holy One of Israel, and all the saints of God have borne testimony to his faithfulness. Help me, Lord, to believe under every event: to trust and depend upon thee, how discouraging soever circumstances may seem. And do thou, blessed God, grant me such a degree of faith, that I may be enabled to make an application of thy general promises to my own particular circumstances: and if needful, like the patriarch, *against hope to believe in hope*: and like him, *to be strong in faith, giving glory to my faithful God.*

And Holy Spirit of all truth! as thou art the glorifier of Jesus, do thou by thy blessed influences, so glorify the Lord Christ to my view, that I may behold in him the very Saviour my soul stands in need of, and in myself may I behold the very circumstances which renders Jesus so suitable a Saviour for me. Oh! for thy constraining grace, to fix my soul firm in this most unquestionable truth, that my desires for Jesus are not more earnest, when those longings are at the highest, than the desires of Jesus are for me. The God-man, my husband, brother, friend, will not rest, until he hath finished the thing he hath begun in righteousness. *He will save; he will rejoice over me with joy. He will rest in his love: he will rejoice over me with singing.* His name is Jesus: he is, he will be Jesus. *He will save his people from their sins.*

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## CHAP. IV.

### CONTENTS.

*This Chapter concludes the eventful History of Boaz and Ruth: and a most interesting conclusion, even in this point of view only, it forms. But in the higher relation of a spiritual tendency, it comes home infinitely more strongly recommended and endeared. The relationship of Boaz, and his claims to Ruth in consequence thereof, the chapter opens with, and the marriage which follows, under the auspicious blessings of the people of Israel, are recorded. And, as if to direct the Reader to the consideration of a much more important subject veiled under the history, the sacred historian closes the book with the genealogy of Boaz, leading from Pharez (the son of Judah, Jacob's son) unto David, and consequently from David to Christ.*



**T**HEN went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there; and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such an one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside and sat down.

2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.

It appears to have been the custom in Israel to settle all points of law at the gates of the city: perhaps, that all going by might attend if they pleased. It was therefore an open court. Hence the Psalmist describes the happiness of the man that had his quiver full of bows, in a plentiful progeny. And he saith, such shall not be ashamed, when *speaking with the enemies in the gate*. Psm. cxxvii. 5. To this spot Boaz came attended by the elders, and called the other kinsman, which had a prior claim in the mortgaged inheritance of Elimelech's family. There is a great beauty in the expression, *Ho! such an one!* turn aside. The gospel call is, *Ho! every one*. But when the Holy Ghost makes that call personal, like the young man of the prophet's to Jehu, it is delightful indeed. See Isaiah lv. 1. 2 Kings ix. 5.

3 And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which *was* our brother Elimelech's:

4 And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy *it* before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem *it*, redeem *it*: but if thou wilt not redeem *it*, *then* tell me, that I may know: for *there is* none to redeem *it* besides thee; and I *am* after thee. And he said, I will redeem *it*.

5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest 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.

6 ¶ And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem *it*.

If I do not greatly err, the chief point in the whole history turns up—  
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on this hinge. And if so, it will serve to throw a light upon the subject all along intended from it, in introducing under this endearing part of his character, by the representation of Boaz, the Lord Jesus Christ as our kinsman-Redeemer. Behold it in this light, and we see Jesus assuming our nature for the purpose of redemption. We view him going forth from everlasting, as the great covenant head of his people. And when he saw our ruined nature, and every one of the stock of Adam totally unable to redeem themselves, much less to save his brother, then Jesus, moved with compassion; resolved to undertake their cause. Angels durst not venture on redemption-work, for this would have been to have marred their own inheritance; therefore his own arm brought salvation, and of the people there was none with him. In the law of redemption there were several things included which became necessary for the compleat recovery and happiness of our ruined nature, and which none but our (Goel) kinsman-Redeemer, the Lord Jesus, could be competent to perform. He was, as Boaz proposed to the nearer kinsman to do, not only to redeem the mortgaged inheritance, but he was to marry the widow of the deceased kinsman, in order to raise up seed unto his brother. That our original birth-right was lost is evident from our ruined and impoverished state. Our first father, deceived by Satan, sold his inheritance by tasting the forbidden fruit; and never could any of his own fallen seed have been found in circumstances sufficiently affluent to ransom it. But yet it must be recovered; and therefore the year of jubilee, which was typical of redemption by Christ, sent the insolvent home again to his possession. Jesus our brother, and Goel-Redeemer, then accomplished redemption. See Levit. xxv. 23—28. But the redemption of the mortgaged inheritance was connected also with the marrying the widow of the deceased brother, and to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And this the Son of God did, when in the fulness of time, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law. Gal. iv. 4. Hence, by virtue of this mystical union, a foundation is laid for the marriage of believers with him, and that our nature, purified and made clean by this union, might recover its lost fruitfulness, without which it would have been for ever barren and dead before God. Neither was this all. Though it be not noticed in this book of Ruth, there were *two* other grand offices belonging to our Goel-Redeemer, which the law enjoined, and which none but Jesus could perform. The *one* was, to ransom the poor brother who had not only lost his inheritance, but was in bondage also. And the *other* was, to avenge the blood of his slain kinsman on the slayer. Concerning the *former*, the law enjoined, *If a sojourner or stranger was rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him was poor, and sell himself unto the stranger; after that he is sold he may be redeemed again. One of his brethren may redeem him.* Lev. xxv. 47, 48. Blessed Jesus! were we not sold in the loins of Adam, when the enemy sojourned in Paradise, and our unhappy parent sold himself and all his posterity? Were we not brought into bondage, slaves to sin and Satan, and justly exposed to the anger of the broken law of God! And didst not thou, dearest Redeemer, as our brother, redeem us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us? Gal. iii. 13. And concerning the *latter*: here again, blessed Jesus, we behold thee the

avenger of the blood of thy slain kinsman; for when the devil, who was a *murderer from the beginning*, (John viii. 44.) murdered our whole nature in Adam; and no avenger could be found equal to the vast work of taking vengeance on the manslayer; then didst thou, because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, thyself likewise take part of the same, that through death thou mightest destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage. Heb. ii. 14, 15. And then was that sweet scripture literally fulfilled. Deut. xix. 11, 12. These are all sweet and interesting views of the Lord Jesus. And though I do not take upon me to say that all, or either of these things, are shadowed out in this scripture, yet I hope I may be forgiven for introducing them in this place, as the subject itself, without doing violence to it, seemed to lead that way.

7 Now this *was the manner* in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave *it* to his neighbour; and this *was* a testimony in Israel.

8 Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy *it* for thee. So he drew off his shoe.

This was an ancient custom, as we read, Deut. xxv. 7—9. Spiritually considered, none but Jesus could undertake it. Had he declined it, and drawn off the shoe of offering to any other, what being in all creation could have been found to have put it on. Yes, precious Jesus! thou, and thou only couldst undertake it, without finally maring thine own inheritance: for *though thou wert rich, yet didst thou for our sakes become poor, that we through thy poverty might be made rich*. And now, having accomplished redemption through thy blood, God our Father hath highly exalted thee, and given thee a name which is above every name, that *at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*. Phil. ii. 9, 10.

9 And Boaz said unto the elders, and *unto* all the people, Ye *are* witnesses this day, that I have bought all that *was* Elimelech's, and all that *was* Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.

10 ¶ 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.

There is a great deal of force in these expressions considered spiritually, and with an eye to Jesus. He hath purchased *all* that was Elimelech's; all that was our original inheritance in Adam. Angels are witnesses of the blessed conditions in the covenant. The same sons of God which shouted for joy at *creation*, sang glory to God in the view of *redemption*; and are to grace our Lord's return, we are told, when *he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all that believe*. Oh! dearest condescending Jesus, hast thou indeed purchased all that belongs to us? Didst thou bear our sins, and carry our sorrows, and in all our affliction wast thou afflicted! Witness, ye angels of light, the unequalled love of our Jesus! Oh! for grace to love him who hath so loved us.

11 And all the people that *were* in the gate, and the elders, said, *We are* witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come unto thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem:

12 And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman.

It is easy to gather wherefore, in this blessing, the wives of the Patriarch Jacob are mentioned rather than those of Abraham or Isaac. Sarah had but Isaac in the covenant; and Rebekah but a Jacob. Her other son Esau rejected the blessing. Whereas Rachel, and Leah, were mothers to several of the tribes of Israel. Pharez, who descended from Judah, was the progenitor of the Bethlemites.

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.

The sacred writer justly ascribes the fruit of the womb unto the great Author. So saith the Psalmist, Psalm cxxvii. 3.

14 And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.

15 And he shall be unto thee a restorer of *thy* life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.

It was a very common thing in Israel, to offer pious salutations upon

any auspicious events, and especially when the hand of the Lord was seen in them. That is a sweet instance, Luke i. 42, 45.

16 And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.

17 And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

The names in scripture are for the most part significant. It was the custom among God's people (and a very gracious one it was) for parents to name their children after some remarkable providence. Perhaps with this intent, that every time they looked upon their child, or heard him named, they might have their memory refreshed in the recollection of that special mercy. Thus Hannah's Samuel was so called, because it was an answer to prayer. 1 Sam. i. 20. Places also have furnished our memorandums of God's mercies. Jacob's Bethel and Hagar's well, are eminent instances of the kind. Gen. xxviii. 19. xvi. 14.

18 Now these *are* the generations of Pharez:  
Pharez begat Hezron,

19 And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab,

20 And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon,

21 And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed,

22 And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

There can be no doubt (for it seems to carry with it a decided evidence), that as the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to close the book of Ruth with this genealogy, tracing back the pedigree of Boaz from Pharez the son of Judah, and carrying it forward to David, very plainly the intention is, to shew our Lord's descent after the flesh from him: for *our Lord sprang out of Judah*. And as the Holy Ghost in the opening of Matthew's gospel, hath yet further followed up this genealogy his gracious design is manifest therein. But with what pleasing acknowledgment and holy joy, ought we of the Gentile church, to behold the junction of the Gentile with our elder brother the Jew in this genealogy. Reader! is it not a matter of heartfelt satisfaction, to trace our alliance with Jesus among the poor Gentiles of the earth, when we see that Boaz sprung out of Rahab, and Obed from Ruth; both aliens by nature, *from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise*. Surely! we may well exclaim, in the contemplation of such marvellous grace, *What hath God wrought*; See Matt. i. 1—5.

## R E F L E C T I O N S.

AND now, my soul, before thou takest thy leave of this sweet book of God, pause over it, and review again, and again, the many, very precious things, contained in it, for thy edification, comfort, and delight.

I behold, O Lord, thy gracious providences strikingly exemplified, in this history. In a land of *Bethlehem* itself, the house of bread, thou turnest it into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. And when our poor fallen nature, as in the case of this certain man *Eliamelech*, had left thee, and wandered into the world of sin and transgression, by which death entered into the world, and ruin followed: it was thou, by thy preventing mercy going before, didst again visit the land in favor, and incline the hearts of the people, by thy grace, to return to the Lord, that he might have mercy upon them, and to our God, that he might abundantly pardon.

And do I not behold in the history of this poor Moabitish damsel, the astonishing proofs of thy grace? What but almighty, sovereign, free, and unmerited grace, could incline the heart of thy poor sinner, to leave her country, and the gods of Moab, to join herself unto the people of God in Israel? What but the sweet drawings of the Lord *Jehovah*, could prompt her to leave her father, and all that she had, to go forth like *Abraham*, into a land that she knew not. Holy Father! was not all this the effect of thine everlasting love wherewith thou lovest the objects of thy grace, as thou didst behold them, in thy dear Son, before the foundation of the world! Blessed Jesus! was it not, because thou didst set thy love upon *Ruth* before all worlds, and she was the purchase of thy blood and righteousness, in the counsel of peace, from all eternity! Holy Spirit! didst thou not know her person, and was not thy gracious influences pledged to call her to herself, and to reveal the Father's love, and the Redeemer's grace, to her heart, when in the economy of redemption, thou didst undertake to make sinners willing in the day of thy power. Oh! may my soul feel interested in the same precious discoveries of grace! And since I see in so striking an instance, that the Father hath given the heathen to his blessed Son for an inheritance, and that he might be the Father's salvation unto the ends of the earth; may this view of the call and conversion of *Ruth*, so often as I shall peruse this sacred history, comfort my soul, under the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, with the assurance, that God also to the *Gentiles* hath granted repentance unto life. And O Lord! grant that I may be the happy partaker of it.

But principally, and above all (if any thing upon earth can be more interesting) Lord, lead us to see in *Boaz*, the man of *Bethlehem*, the God-man, *Christ Jesus*, pointed out, my *Goel*, my Kinsman-Redeemer, my husband, friend: performing the kinsman's part, redeeming our mortgaged inheritance, marrying our nature, uniting believers to himself, rescuing our souls from everlasting bondage, and avenging the blood of our souls on the cursed enemy, who by his snares ruined us. Yes! dearest Jesus! thou art all this, and infinitely more. Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood. Thou givest us grace by thy Holy Spirit, to seek thy fields and ordinances, and enablest us when

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there to glean among the sheaves. Thou commandest thy servants, the ministers of the bread of life, to let fall handfuls for our souls to gather. Thou spreadest thy skirt over us, and marriest us to thyself, and we become thine. Oh! for grace to abide by thee, and never, never to seek another field to glean in, nor by creature confidences to forget our entire dependence upon thee. Be thou all in all to our souls: for in thee all fulness dwells, and all the Father's love and Spirit's grace come to our souls in and through thee. Thou art such a Saviour and Goel-Redeemer as our souls need; and are we not, blessed Jesus, sinners suited for the display of the riches of thy grace to be manifested upon? Here, therefore, may our souls fix, cleave unto thee, and abide in thee, for thou hast betrothed us to thyself, until, at the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven, we are brought home to dwell with thee for ever, Amen.

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## FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL.

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### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

IT is not certain, that Samuel was the author of this book, which bears his name, though, probably, he might be the writer of that part of it which contains so much of his own life and ministry, which is prosecuted to the end of the twenty-fourth Chapter. But it is certain from this very cause, that neither the close of this first book of Samuel, nor the whole of the second book could be his. The general title therefore given to it in our Bibles, should seem to be the more proper: otherwise called *the first book of the Kings*. But, (as I have before remarked in the general observations, introductory to the perusal of either of the books of the sacred volume), it is not so material to us in the present hour, to be informed *who* the person was, the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to appoint as a scribe, for committing his truths to record; as to discover in the book itself, the blessed marks and well known characters, that it was written under his immediate inspiration. When the Reader is himself illuminated to know the Spirit's testimony, and can plainly read that testimony in the sacred writings; these are the grand things to be attended to, and the *imprimatur* of the Holy Ghost, which is to be looked for. And in these points, both the first and second books of Samuel, carry with them the fullest assurance.

In point of time, the history contained in the first book of Samuel, relates to the annals of the world about eleven hundred and