

A COMMENTARY ON

THE BOOK OF RUTH

By

FR. TADROS Y. MALATY

TRANSLATED TO ENGLISH BY

DR> GEORGE BOTROS

A PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

The story of Ruth and Naomi is the story of every generation. Naomi, a Jewish woman, enjoyed many divine graces: She got to know the law, some prophecies; heard about the salvation, and God's works with her fathers; yet, in the time of tribulation she fled from Judah, as though from Christ who came from the tribe of Judah, to live an easy life in Moab. She represents the soul which, after tasting the grace of God, she denied Him in the time of temptation, and set forth from the bosoms of the true Judah to the world with a desire to satisfy herself by it.And as there is 'Naomi', there is also 'Ruth' in every generation, who was raised in Moab (homeland of her pagan father); but, having heard about the Living God, she, by faith, set forth to Bethlehem to encounter the incarnate Word of God, to find in Him her satisfaction and comfort.

The Lord Christ "came for the fall and rising of many" (Luke 2: 34); for the fall of Naomi, who despised the grace of God; and for the rising of the Moabite 'Ruth', by her living faith in Him,

Hegomen Fr. Tadros Y Malaty

AN INTRODUCTION

The author of the book of Ruth:

It came in the 'Telmud' that the prophet Samuel is the author of this book, which includes the story of a Moabite girl who got married to an Israeli, and was so attached to his God, that when her husband died she insisted on returning together with her mother-in-law to Judah to live in Bethlehem, to worship, and to spend the rest of her life under the wings of the living God.

We know that 'Moab' means (from the father); as he came the fruit of a sinful relationship between 'Lot' – while drunk – and his older daughter (Genesis 19: 37). According to St. Jerome, therefore, the word 'Moab' refers to the devil, and to those who are away from, and do not think in God their heavenly Father. The Moabites bore a great animosity against Israel. But in the midst of this dark portrait, there was the Moabite 'Ruth, who, by faith, could set forth from the bondage of the pagan worship to return to her living God.

- + According to some scholars, the book of Ruth was written in the days of the latter kings, probably after the captivity; even though its language reveals that it was written before the captivity.
- + The old custom in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging; in which, man would take off his sandal and give it to the other, as a sign of confirmation, has, for a long time ceased to exist (4: 7), But, according to 'Raven', explaining that custom was necessary, on account of that, forsaking it for fifty years would be long enough to forget all about it by the current generation.
- + The story of 'Ruth' most probably happened in the era of the judges; the famine mentioned here happened in the days of 'Gideon' (Judges 6: 1-6, 11); and according to the historian 'Josephus', Ruth lived in the days of 'Eli' the priest.
- + According to some, this story was written to make the friendship between David and the king of Moab (1 Samuel 22: 3-4) stronger, to show that David's grandmother was a Moabite.

The importance and features of the book of Ruth:

- + In the minds of the Jews, this book was bound to the feast of the harvest (the Pentecost); and was read during that feast; on account of that Ruth was shown gleaning heads of grain after the reapers to sustain her and her mother-in-law.

It was truly the book of the harvest; for in it was proclaimed the entrance of the Gentiles into faith in the person of 'Ruth', who, seeking the fallen heads of grain, was found worthy to bear among her descendants the Lord Christ "the true Head of Grain of life"; and to provide, not only her mother-in-law but every soul, with the secret of the true satisfaction.

According to St. Ephraim the Syrian, praising the infant of the manger, said: [For the sake of her love for You, she (Ruth) went gleaning and gathering the fallen heads of grain; and as a full reward for her humility, she became the mother of kings; and instead of the heads of grain, she got the 'Head of life' to come out of her].
- + Owing to the exalted rank reached by 'Ruth', this is the only book named after a Gentile woman in the Holy Book. Even though the prophetess Deborah played a role by which she surpassed men, namely, overcoming king Sisera; and even though queen Esther who was married to a Gentile king saved the lives of her people; and so did Judith with a similar role; and even though Tamar sacrificed her honor, and risked her life to have a heir of her dead husband; Yet it was 'Ruth', a Gentile, who took by force a great portion for herself in the people of God, by having among her descendants the Savior Messiah, something strongly desired by all believing women in Israel; and by being counted, as well, a symbol of the church of the Gentiles, the bride of Christ who came from Moab to Bethlehem.
- + The genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1: 5) included her name, and revealed to us that her blood – a Gentile – ran in the veins of the Savior of the world.
- + During the era of judges the Jews have generally perverted to paganism with great persistence; but this book proclaims that God still had remnants even among the Gentiles who held fast to faith in Him, without any wish for earthly reward nor for an evil carnal desire.

- + This book presented to us the “secret of true satisfaction” for the human soul through her unity with her Groom – the true Boaz --. The words (a relative, a close relative) were repeated, being the book of the genealogy of the Lord Christ to humanity as a whole, Jews and Gentiles.
- + This book came to bind between the exalted life of faith, proclaimed in Ruth, and the gentle social behavior, shown in the superb spiritual ways of address between individuals, as that of Naomi to her daughter-in-law, of Ruth to Boaz, and of Boaz to the reapers in his field .
- + This book included certain traditions and customs of the Jews.
- + This book revealed the living ecclesiastical way of behavior of the members of the church. Ruth – a Gentile widow who had no possessions nor talents, except for love, could reach an exalted level, ahead of many of her contemporaries. She presented to us a living example of the active worker in the church; if honored, it would not be for his priesthood rank itself, nor for his kind of talent, but rather for his life of faith in the Lord. In this concern, Ruth was crowned with an honor that went beyond that of king Saul, who was counted as the Lord’s anointed, but behaved unfaithfully.

I wish, in our work in the vineyard of the Lord, we would not seek priestly ranks, titles, or positions; but seek the hidden love which justifies us in the eyes of the true Boaz.

The divisions of the book of Ruth:

We can divide the book into two main divisions:

The first division: The world and the void	Chapter 1
The second division: Christ and satisfaction	Chapters 2 to 4
1- Ruth in Boaz’ field	2
2- Ruth in Boaz’ threshold floor	3
3- Ruth and the heavenly wedding	4



CHAPTER 1

THE WORLD AND THE VOID

Elimelech, together with his wife Naomi and his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, departed from Bethlehem because of the famine that dwelt over Judah, and set forth to Moab; as though like someone, who, thinking of the church (Bethlehem) as a deprivation, and of Christ as a loss, would set forth to the world by his wife (his body), and his two sons (his spiritual and physical talents and energies), with the hope that the world would satisfy his needs, water his body, and increase his talents; to end up losing everything, even himself.

1- The migration of Elimelech and his family	1 - 5
2- The return to the land of Judah	6 - 7
3- Naomi shows compassion toward her two daughters- in-law	8 - 14

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| 4- Ruth insists on returning to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law | 15 - 18 |
| 5- Naomi and Ruth in Bethlehem | 19 – 22 |

1-THE MIGRATION OF ELIMELECH AND HIS FAMILY:

“Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land; and a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons” (1)

The era of judges was characterized by a bitter spiritual collapse. After the departure of Joshua, came a generation that did not know the Lord, nor the work which He had done for Israel (Judges 2: 10); and worshipped foreign gods. The Holy Book summarizes that period of time which extended 450 years by saying: *“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes”* (Judges 17: 6). The Israelites, having sold themselves as slaves to foreign gods, God often allowed for them to be enslaved by the Gentiles; to perceive their inner humiliation through delivering their hearts and minds to pagan gods. I may say that what the Lord allowed for them of sufferings, were actually a mirror of what happened to them internally by their own will through their perversion away from the true faith.

In this period, appeared Elimelech in Bethlehem, Ephrathah, together with his wife Naomi, and his two sons: Mahlon and Chilion, who migrated from Bethlehem to the land of Moab seeking satisfaction.

The man was called ‘Elimelech’ meaning (My God is a King); yet, unfortunately he carried that name formally, while, with his heart not trusting in his King, he went to Moab to live under the shade of her king. He departed from ‘Bethlehem’ meaning (the house of bread), five miles south of Jerusalem, known for the tomb of Rachel (Genesis 35: 19); set forth hungry from the house of true bread, not perceiving that in that location the Lord Christ “the Heavenly Bread” will be born. And although he belonged to ‘Ephrathah’, meaning (fruits), yet he was barren in his inner life. And even though he begat two sons they did not take away his barrenness, but rather confirmed it. The first was called ‘Mahlon’ meaning (wilderness or sickness), and the other was called ‘Chilion’ meaning (desolation). Elimelech’s migration was therefore, not by chance, nor the result of quick thinking, but because of the barren kind of life he lived for long years, even in Bethlehem.

As for his wife ‘Naomi’ meaning (the body seeking pleasure); when she returned home, and intended to bear a contrary name, she chose to be called ‘Mara’, because she was bitter in her soul. The name ‘Naomi’ is the feminine version of ‘Naaman’ (Genesis 46: 21; Numbers 26: 40; 2 Kings 5: 1); a name of the god of fertility in the Canaanite literature.

‘Elimelech’ therefore set forth, to seek a king to satisfy him, other than God; and took with him his wife ‘Naomi’, representing (the body seeking pleasures); and his two sons, his spiritual fruition, thye (sickness and desolation); Namely he represented someone who bears the name, and not the life of Christ; who set forth from Bethlehem of Judah, to live by his body an enjoyable life, with the fruition of corruption, instead of the living spiritual fruition.

2-THE RETURN TO THE LAND OF JUDAH:

If Elimelech and his family have forsaken the land of their inheritance, to take refuge in a foreign land, despite the warning of God against mixing with the pagan peoples, lest they may divert from the truth (Deuteronomy 6); his wrong decision ended up by Naomi losing her man, her sons got married to Moabite women to settle down there,

contrary to the statutes of the law (Deuteronomy 7: 3, 4; Exodus 34: 15, 16); and the two sons eventually died without a heir.

Naomi, therefore, whose name means (the body seeking pleasure), lost everything: her man, her talents, and her spiritual and physical energies; and her name was to be changed from 'Naomi' to 'Mara'. Completely helpless, and perceiving her need to return to the land of Judah, as though to the church where the true satisfaction, and the enjoyment of God's care for humanity are; *"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 that the Lord had visited His people by giving them bread"* (6)

3- NAOMI SHOWS COMPASSION TOWARD HER DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW:

Even though Naomi, by her name, represented (the body seeking pleasure), yet, on another aspect, she bore compassion and gentility of dealing with others, particularly with her two daughters-in-law; for which they held fast to her, and had it in their hearts to forsake their people, gods, and families, and to go with her to where she intends to go, seeking nothing in return; other than paying her love back with love.

She asked them to go back to their homeland, proclaiming that she seeks for them more than she does for herself. And with love for them she said:

"Turn back my daughters, why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn back my daughters, go – for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, If I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me" (11 – 13).

Here, Naomi did not refer to the possibility of them to get married to the next close relatives; probably because, having left her family for so many years, she does not know how would be the attitude of those two next close relatives toward those foreign two daughters-in-law.

Anyway, the first daughter-in-law 'Oprah', even though she behaved honorably; with the spirit of true love she kept company with her mother-in-law along the way back, with the intention to do that until the end; but under the insistence of the latter, she tearfully kissed her and bid farewell from her. She was a human example, even though bearing true loyalty, she eventually gave her the back and returned to Moab. Her name probably explained her behavior, for 'Oprah' means (behind the neck).

As to 'Ruth', the second daughter-in-law, she not only presented a magnificent human example, but, by faith what surpassed the human limits, and what was beyond the human thought. Bearing the faith of Abraham who crossed over from Haran to Canaan to follow God, to enjoy fatherhood to the holy nation of Israel. by faith, Ruth set forth from Moab to Canaan to worship the living God, to provide this nation with the line of kings And from her descendants the King of kings will come incarnate.

While 'Naomi' presented what she has got: her old age, barrenness, and helplessness; representing the law of Moses, which became old, and proclaimed its inability to produce children who would bring gladness to the hearts The faith of Ruth, on the other hand, was greater! What the law could not provide, we, who were before among the Gentiles, have got through faith in the Lord Christ. And as Ruth did not remain a widow for long; nor had children from the womb of Naomi, but accepted 'Boaz' a groom; So it is with us; God did not leave us long in

our widowhood, nor granted us a groom through the womb of the law, but, by faith, we accepted the Lord Christ – the true Boaz – as our Groom.

4-RUTH INSISTS ON RETURNING TO BETHLEHEM TOGETHER WITH HER MOTHER-IN-LAW :

Naomi bore love toward her two daughters-in-law; and has been a living example of a role model of a mother-in-law to them. But, representing the literality of the law, she, having closed the door of hope before them, 'Oprah' returned to her homeland, whereas 'Ruth' by faith, opened the door that the letter of the law has closed, and insisted on going all the way, saying to her mother-in-law: *"Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God"* (16, 17).

As love soars above the letter, and brings the soul beyond every limit, even to death, Ruth insisted to die together with her mother-in-law, and there to be buried.

Anyway, according to St. Jerome, Ruth's behavior has been a lesson to Naomi, who, when her husband and her two sons died, and had no one to sustain her, lost hope in everyone and everything. But now, the Lord provides her with this young widow of a foreign race to be her support. And according to St. Ambrose, Ruth's behavior was a divine reward to Naomi's pious life; the love she sowed, she reaped in her last days; as comfort in her sorrow, and help in her need.

We, as believers, stand in awe before both Naomi and Ruth. For Naomi, a mother-in-law, by love, could draw her daughter-in-law away from her people and pagan gods, to bind with her, with her people, and her God, for no apparent hope for anything in return..... It so seems that Ruth saw in Naomi's life a testimony of true love and an exalted godly life, that drew her heart, mind, and all her energies away from the corrupt Moabite life! What she said to her mother-in-law (16, 17) will remain eternally alive, revealing a loving heart even to death I wonder if we love our Christ, and if we long to die and be buried with Him, the way Ruth did toward her mother-in-law?!

5- NAOMI AND RUTH IN BETHLEHEM:

"Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, "Is this Naomi?"" (19).

The entrance of Naomi and Ruth into Bethlehem caused the whole city to be excited. All expected to see Naomi, together with her husband, children, and grandchildren, with sheep and an abundance of goods but were astonished to see her coming back completely empty, except for her daughter-in-law, who, in their eyes, represented a burden and a responsibility, rather than help.

Whoever gets attached to God to transfigure in him, will have the divine splendor reflect even on his outer features; whereas whoever forsakes God to seek the satisfaction of the world, will lose even his natural peace, the tranquility of his heart, and his apparent cheerfulness.

As Naomi and Ruth entered into Bethlehem after such a long absence, *"She said to them, 'Do not call me Naomi, call me 'Mara', for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me 'Naomi', since the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?!"* (20, 21).

Naomi counted what happened to her, not only a sign of God's anger on her, but a proclamation of her sins, not just by chance, nor merely a natural calamity; but the hand of the Almighty extended to break her and to expose her weakness for the sake of her edification.

Beside what Naomi's words bore of bitterness, for falling under the divine chastisement; they also presented thanksgiving to God who brought her back home, however empty.

Naomi returned during the time of harvest (22) to find the fields of Bethlehem full of fruits Even though God brought her empty, but He will satisfy her from the harvest of Bethlehem (the church). If she became 'Mara', it will eventually be that the divine newborn of Bethlehem, alone, will be able to take away her bitterness, to grant her His peace and joy. According to father John of Kronstadt: [As Christ dwells in the heart by faith, peace and joy will dwell in it; for it is not for a lack of reason to call God is Holy, and feels comfort in His saints]; and he says: [By the eyes of my heart I can mentally see how Christ enters into it to grant it peace and joy. Do not let me, I pray, dwell alone without You, O Grantor of life, my peace, and my joy].

CHAPTER 2

RUTH IN THE FIELD OF BOAZ

Having come to Bethlehem in the company of Naomi, Ruth entered into the field of Boaz, to glean the fallen heads of grain; as though she represents the congregation of the Gentiles who entered into faith and received the membership of the church (Bethlehem), even though spiritually attached to the law (Naomi) Yet she did not come slothful, but entered into the field of the Lord Christ (the true Boaz), at the end of time, to glean what the fathers and the prophets have previous labored in.

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| 1- Boaz, a mighty man of valor | 1 |
| 2- Ruth in Boaz' field | 2 - 7 |
| 3- A friendly conversation in the field | 8 - 16 |
| 4- Ruth in Naomi's house | 17 – 23 |

1- BOAZ, A MIGHTY MAN OF VALOR:

"There was a relative of Naomi's husband a man of great wealth (A mighty man of valor) of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz" (1)

As Ruth came to Bethlehem, a man called 'Boaz' appeared as her relative. It is as though a believer who enters into the membership of the church (Bethlehem), to find the Lord Himself as his relative; for in Him he gets sonship of the heavenly Father through the water of baptism. According to St. Jacob Al-Serougi:[Baptism is the womb that gives birth daily to beloved children, and sanctifies them to become brothers of the only-begotten Son Come, O you far off, and become near; for the house of God is open before all who come to it].

He is called 'Boaz' meaning (one of great wealth and power), or (Jehovah is wealth or power). In Christ Jesus we perceive that God is our wealth and power, we carry Him in us to lift us from the humility of the pit, up to the power and the glory of the heavenly life.

He is also called "*a mighty man of valor*", which means, not only mighty in war, but one of authority and awe. The Lord Christ is "A Mighty Man of Valor", not in the sense of acting violently and cruelly against men; but to grant the frail soul a support in Him; to lift her up above affliction and suffering, and to grant her the life of conquest. According to the apostle Paul: "*Now, thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place*" (2 Corinthians 2: 14). And according to the scholar Origen: [As long as the Savior is the righteousness, the truth, and the holiness And He is the endurance as well; it is not possible for anyone to become righteous or a saint without Him; and no one can endure labors without Him].

2- RUTH IN BOAZ' FIELD:

"So Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, 'Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after him, in whose sight I may find favor. And she said to her, 'Go, my daughter'" (2)

According to the statute, the heads of grain fallen after the reapers, should be left to the stranger and the poor (Deuteronomy 24: 19-22; Leviticus 19: 9, 10; 23: 22). Ruth a young woman of foreign race asked her mother-in-law to allow her to do such a work. She was always ready to do any work, and not to get any rest doing it, as testified

by the reapers to Boaz, saying: *"She continued to work from morning until now, she rarely rested in the house"* (7).. She came early in the morning, and neither rest nor slothfulness had a place in her.

Ruth represented the congregation of the Gentiles, who spiritually received the law (Naomi); yet, at the same time, while those of the law (Naomi) stayed at home, doing nothing, they set forth to the field of the true Boaz after the reapers, to gather every fallen head of grain to the account of Christ. Even though she did not plow the land, nor sowed the seeds, yet she came to reap the harvest, in which the early fathers and the prophets labored in the old; according to the Words of the Lord to His disciples: *"I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors"* (John 4: 38).

Ruth was not a spoiled woman, but a striving one who has forsaken the easy life in Moab among her family and her gods; and came to work hard in Boaz' field in Bethlehem, the land of Judah, from morning until evening without rest Came to gather from the harvest in which others labored to sow before her.

Through her strife, she was worthy of Boaz inquiring about her identity from the reapers, saying: *"Whose young woman is this?"* (5). He did not say: *"Who is this young woman?"*, but said: *"Whose young woman is this?"*. For, in the East, it was the custom for every girl or woman to belong to a certain man, as a wife, daughter, or a maidservant. Not knowing whose this woman was, the reapers said: *"It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab"* (6) . This is the case of the church of the Gentiles that has forsaken her old father, and came to Judah without a man , of foreign race, and in need of a groom to embrace her and to refer her to himself.

Ruth lived together with Naomi, as though spiritually with the law; yet without a man, anticipating Christ Jesus as her Groom, listening to the divine saying: *"Listen, O daughter; consider and incline your ear; forget your own people also, and your father's house. So the king will desire your beauty; Because He is Your Lord, worship Him"* (Psalm 45: 10, 11). She rejected her whole past, her past experience, and her past belonging to the devil, to receive the heavenly Groom. As according to St. Augustine: [The Gentiles came from their father the devil denying their sonhood to him]; and also according to him:[Your God is your King; and your King is your Groom as well]. You are betrothed to your King, your God, to Him you are married, and by Him you are adorned, saved, and healed. Everything you have of what make Him glad, are His].

3- A FRIENDLY CONVERSATION IN THE FIELD:

Having set forth to Boaz' field, as though to the ecclesiastical work, she became worthy, not only to inquire about by the owner of the field, but to enter into a true friendly conversation with him. In his field amid the true spiritual strife, we encounter by faith, the Lord, to hear Him say to us: *"You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close to my young women"* (8)

He calls the soul, that belonged before to a foreign race (my daughter), asking her not to leave his field, and not to go from there, but to be always in the circle of his love to receive the kisses of his mouth (Song 1: 2), and to give her whole life to him. The sign of his company is *"to stay close to his young women"*; namely to have fellowship with his saints, to enjoy their spiritual experience, to follow their lead, and to have with them a bond of love. He says to her: *"If you do not know, O fairest among women, Follow in the footsteps of the flock"* (Song 1: 8).

Asking her to stay close to his young women who follow the reapers to tie the sheaves ,namely to change her status from a needy stranger to a worker in the field, like a daughter of the owner, or one of his relatives; he says to her: *"Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn"* (9)

He seeks from her to let her eyes be on the field, as though her own; and commanded his young men not to touch her; and perceiving that, with her strife and labor, she would be in need water to drink, he asked her to go to the vessel and drink from what the young men have drawn.

What is this vessel that bears water to the thirsty during their strife, but the living church, which has in her midst the Lord Jesus Christ, the Fountain of living water, who says: *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink"* (John 7: 37); *"The water that I shall give him, will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life"*. The Lord Christ pours His Holy Spirit on the world through His church, to satisfy every soul that receives Him, and to grant her the everlasting life.

Before such overflowing love, having presented to her the life-giving water, *"Ruth fell on her face; bowed down to the ground, and said to him: 'Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?'"* (10). The gift of the Holy Spirit poured by the Lord Christ through His church, grants the spirit of humility to the human soul, to bow down to the ground, in appreciation of His favor, and as a sign of her thanksgiving which she feels she does not deserve..

Ruth's admission with humility that, being a foreigner, she is not worthy of such generosity, increased her beauty in Boaz' eyes. He answered her: *"It has been fully reported to me, all you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before"* (11).

Having shown humility before him, he acknowledges her love, and how she left her former father, namely the devil, her former mother, namely the evil life, in which she was raised; and the land of her birth, namely her love for the world, and got spiritually attached to Naomi, namely to the law, and came to a people she did not know before, namely to the fellowship of the heavenlies who were foreign to her; but now, having borne the heavenly nature, she entered into their fellowship.

Boaz ended his talk to her by saying: *"The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge"* (12). Having left her land, her people, and her father's household, and come to have refuge in the living God, to let Him be her Father, riches, and everything for her; she became worthy of enjoying a full reward. She bore the practical faith of Abraham, he who left Haran and set forth, led by the divine care toward Canaan, to hear the divine voice, saying: *"Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield, your reward is exceedingly great"* (Genesis 15: 1). What is this exceedingly great reward for Abram, or the full reward for Ruth, but the enjoyment of the true Boaz, to have Him a Groom of their soul, to get united with Him, and attached to His heavenly church forever.

Before that great gift, Ruth was so crushed in her depth, to say humbly to Boaz: *"Let me find favor in your sight my Lord, for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants"* (12). As our Boaz embraces us a bride united to Him, and members in His holy body; it is befitting of us to present our whole life as a sacrifice of thanksgiving, perceiving how He comforted our hearts, and lifted us, who are unworthy to be counted as his wage laborers or servants.

As a sign of His union with her, God sought from her to partake of His heavenly food and His eternal drink, to sit together with His angels (the reapers), to get satisfied and keep some back. Boaz said to her: *"At meal time, come here and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar; so she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched grain to her, and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back"* (14). What is that meal time but the great Thursday of the covenant, in which the church came, not to eat bread from His hands, but His Holy Body; and not to dip her piece of bread in vinegar, but to enjoy His precious blood. By that she sat, not beside

earthly reapers but beside the angels, reapers of heaven who anticipate the ultimate day of harvest, to come together with the Great Judge on the clouds to reap the holy souls to the account of His kingdom, for all to live as one heavenly church, to praise the Redeemer forever.

This heavenly bread which we enjoy, supports us to work in His vineyard, so as not to fail along the way. He grants us His holy body and blood to enjoy His life in us, working in His harvest. Boaz commands His young men: *“Let her glean, even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. Also let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her, leave it that she may glean, and do not rebuke her”* (15, 16).

In short, we may say that the friendly conversation that took place between Boaz and Ruth revealed the exalted love of the Lord Christ for His bride, whom He called His daughter, asked her to stay in His field, as though her own, and to stay close to His young women, as though her sisters; to eat His holy body and to drink His precious blood; He granted her Himself as a full wage to bring gladness to her heart. In turn, she paid this exalted love, back with humility, and feeling unworthiness of those divine graces.

4- RUTH IN NAOMI’S HOUSE:

“So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. Then she took it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied” (16, 17).

After a long day of work from morning until evening, without giving rest to her body, Ruth gathered an abundance of fallen sheaves, beat them with a rod to separate the grains from the straw, then set forth to the city to give to her mother-in-law about an ephah of barley, to cover their need for five days. But, above all, it has been a happy day in which she encountered Boaz, and enjoyed his friendly talk and gentle deeds.

It is a living portrait of the striving soul all the days of her sojourn, not giving rest to the body; but what truly gives her joy is her encounter in the midst of work, with her Groom, getting to know Him, and listening to His words, and receiving His divine graces.Here, at the end of the day, it is befitting of her to beat what she strived to glean with the rod of the cross to separate the good grains from the worthless straw that is fit to burn with fire; then to set forth with her spiritual harvest to her inner heart, as though to the city, to present to Naomi, namely to the commandment or the divine statute, to sit together to give an accounts of her long day; and to glorify God working in her.

What brought gladness to the heart of Naomi, was not the ephah of barley brought back by Ruth at the end of the day after being satisfied, as much as what she noticed on her face of signs of joy and gladness of heart; which Naomi perceived as blessing she hasd got; hence she said to her: *“Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you”* (19). Seeing on Ruth no signs of intense exhaustion, nor of grumbling or complaint, but a spirit of joy, Naomi said to her: *“Blessed be he of the Lord, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead”, ‘This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives’”* (20)

Who is Boaz in whom the blessing of the Lord is proclaimed to the living and to the dead. Who is counted as a relation of ours, our closest relatives, but the Person of the Lord Christ, in whom all were blessed, the dead set forth from hell to paradise; and the living come to be filled with hope in Him. He who bonded with us, and bore our nature, as our firstborn Brother; came forward as our closest second Relative, after the Law, our first closest relative grew old, and came to be unable to satisfy us.

Naomi's advice (the law) to Ruth confirms that of Boaz, which was to stay close to his young women; As though the law we have spiritually received, confirms what the Lord Christ presents to us, to stay close to His saints, and to live together with them as one church, holy in Him.

The Holy Book says: *"So she stayed close to the young women of Boaz to glean until the end of the barley harvest and wheat harvest, and she dwelt with her mother-in-law" (23).*

It is befitting of us, therefore to dwell together with the spiritual law, in which we enjoy the Lord Christ, not through the deadly letter and the dry text, but through the living spirit; and, in our strife on earth, to stay close to the young women of Boaz, namely to the wise virgins in the unity of the practical faith, the unity of the spirit and work, until the end of the harvest of the old covenant (the barley); and even until the end of the harvest of the new covenant (the wheat), for all of us to encounter the true Boaz on the clouds as the Groom of the catholic (the collective) church.

CHAPTER 3

RUTH IN BOAZ' HOUSE

Naomi counseled Ruth to go forth to the threshing floor to encounter Boaz in his secret place, to seek from him to cover her with His blood, and to receive her united with Him, after being so long widowed, and living without a man.

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 1- Naomi's guidance to Ruth | 1 - 5 |
| 2- Ruth encounters Boaz | 6 - 13 |
| 3- Ruth goes back to her mother-in-law | 14 – 18 |

1- NAOMI'S COUNSELS TO RUTH:

On her first day of work, Ruth brought one ephah of barley to her mother-in-law; which increased day after day. But Naomi, seeking what is for her daughter-in-law more than what is for herself; wished to see her united in lawful matrimony to raise descendants to the dead. To Naomi, that was more important than any material benefit. Therefore, at the end of the barley and the wheat harvest she said to her: *"My daughter, Shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you?"* (1). It is as though by the law, whose end is Christ (Romans 10: 4), she desires for every soul to set forth to unite with Boaz.

Ruth has previously encountered with Boaz in the field during her strife, springing from her living faith. Now she intends to encounter with him by night in his secret place, namely through a secret life of meditation. She previously heard his voice and listened to his promises in the field. Now she wishes to enjoy his person, and to be in his bosom in his secret place it is the one portrait of the life of faith, in which she recognizes the Lord, and receive Him a Groom, through both the work and the meditation together, being one integral life of faith.

Naomi's counsel to Ruth was: *"Wash yourself, and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshold floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. Then it shall be, when he lies down, you shall notice the place where he lies; and then you shall go in, uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what you should do"* (3, 4). She revealed to her the royal way by which the soul sets forth to the Groom to unite with Him; whose features are:

- (1) **"Wash yourself"**; No entrance to the Groom except through the waters of baptism, in which we enjoy the inner washing of our consciences, and the power of the resurrection of our Groom. 'Ananias' said to 'Saul of Tarsus': *"Now, why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22: 16). And according to the scholar Tertullian: [Blessed is the secret of the water for us. It washes away the sin of blindness that dwelt on us early; from which we are to be set free to enter into the eternal life]. And according to St. John Chrysostom: [Through baptism we received the forgiveness of our sins, the sanctification, the fellowship of the Spirit, and the eternal life. What more do you need?].
- (2) **"Anoint yourself"**; Washing herself in the water of baptism, she receives membership in the body of Christ, as a Groom for the Head. Now, she receives the ointment of 'Meron' to have His Holy Spirit dwell in her; who, alone, would sanctify her, prepare her for the eternal wedding; and lift her up from glory to glory, until she bears the feature of her Groom, and be worthy of fellowship of His eternal glories. The

apostle Paul says: *“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee”* (2 Corinthians 1: 21, 22). And according to St. (Mar) Ephraim the Syrian: [All your hearts are sealed with the seal of the Holy Spirit..... And the King put on you His message, sealing it with a seal of fire (Luke 3: 16), lest strangers would read and divert it].

- (3) ***“Put on your best garment”***; Having washed herself from her sins, and received His Spirit in her, He prepared her to receive the Lord Christ as a garment of righteousness to cover all her weaknesses, or to hide her in Him, to appear before God the Father, bearing His features, to become the subject of His gladness; as is said by the apostle Paul: *“you have put on Christ”* (Galatians 3: 27); and according to St. John Chrysostom: [He who is baptized for Christ, is not only born from God, but would put on Christ as well. We should not take this in the literal meaning, as a work of love, but as an actual fact; For the incarnation made our union with Christ, and our fellowship in the divinity, a matter of fact].
- (4) ***“Go down to the threshold floor”***; On the threshold floor, the grains are separated from the straw; referring to the ultimate judgment, when the righteous are separated from the wicked. Therefore, it is befitting of us to go down there with the spirit of humility to encounter the divine Judge. Let us get preoccupied with Him as a Judge, until the moments we see His hands stretched to receive us as a loving Groom.
- (5) ***“Do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking”***; It is befitting of us to wait until all the servants depart, to encounter Him alone, and to enter with Him into a conversation of love.
- (6) ***“Then you shall go in, uncover his feet and lie down”***; She counsels her to *“go in”* Going in to the Lord carries in itself *“coming out”* from the love of the world. In other words, let us come out of caring for, and worrying about this world to enter into the circle of the love of God; There we *“uncover His feet”*, namely recognize His divine secrets, as much as we can endure as humans. As long as we are still in the world, we cannot uncover except His feet; whereas in the age to come, we shall see Him face to face, to recognize deeper secrets, and perceive things that we were not able to perceive in this world.

As to *“lying down”*, it means partaking of His sufferings even to death and burial with Him No receiving of the crucified Groom except through the circle of the cross; nor there is resurrection for us together with him, except by being buried with Him as well.

2- RUTH ENCOUNTERS BOAZ:

Ruth *“uncovered Boaz’ feet”*, to proclaim to him that she is his close relative, bare as his feet, and is in need for a man to cover her; by saying to him: *“I am Ruth, your maidservant; Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative”* (9)

God responded to the voice of Ruth; saying: *“You were naked and bare; When I passed by you, and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you, and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you, and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine, says the Lord God”* (Ezekiel 16: 7, 8)..

And Boaz blessed her wisdom and love, by saying: *“Blessed are you from the Lord, my daughter; for you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter do not fear, I will do for you all that you request; for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman”* (10, 11). He commended her first, on account of that she has shown kindness at the beginning, when she was faithful to her man, and loving to her mother-in-law; and when her man died; she consummated her love by a greater love, by not going after young men, whether rich or poor; and not seeking the desires of the body; but came to her second closest relative, despite his advanced age. Before such faithfulness, testified by all, he promised to do to her the right of a close relative, by marrying her to perpetuate the name of the dead; in case her first close relative refuse to do it.

Ruth enjoyed the encounter with Boaz at midnight, as though she encounters God in His secret place; but she would not have enjoyed Boaz in his secret place, and enjoyed his blessing, if she did not happen to encounter him before in the field while she worked behind his reapers all day long. We therefore, in order to enjoy the vision of God, and to enjoy His secrets, it is befitting of us to strive our entire day to the account of His kingdom, and encounter Him in our secret place through prayers and reading the word of God.

In his praise of the infant of Bethlehem, and commenting on how Ruth laid down beside Boaz, St. (Mar)Ephraim the Syrian says: [Ruth laid down beside some man on the threshing floor for your sake! Her love gave her the daring; You give to all those who repent! Her ears refused to listen to any voice, for the sake of listening to your voice! The live coal ascended to Boaz’ bed, there to lie; and saw the High Priest on His cross hidden like fire for her incense].

3- RUTH GOES BACK TO HER MOTHER-IN-LAW:

Very early in the morning, Boaz sent Ruth back to her mother-in-law, not empty-handed, but he measured 6 ephas of barley and laid it on her. In a day’s work, after so much labor Ruth took back only one epha of barley, but in this encounter full of love, she took back double as much, because she sought Boaz himself, and not his goods. She would not be able to encounter him on the threshold floor, if she had not recognized him in the field; namely she would not enjoy the life of meditation unless she has a life of spiritual work.

When she came to her mother-in-law, she said: *“IS that you, my daughter?”*(16). She probably could not recognize her, because her features changed with joy; or she might intended to ask her: {Are you Ruth, the poor foreign widow?! Or you are Ruth Boaz’ bride to be?!

I wish we encounter our Lord Jesus Christ, and our features change through our joy by Him, and for belonging to Him.

CHAPTER 4

RUTH AND THE HEAVENLY WEDDING

Boaz sat at the gate of the city to work on acquiring Ruth as his bride, by putting in order the matter of redeeming Ruth from her first closest relative – namely the law – and buying back all that was Elimelech’s, and all that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s from the hand of Naomi.

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 1- Boaz acquires what was Elimelech’s | 1 -- 8 |
| 2- Boaz acquires Ruth | 9 - 12 |
| 3- Ruth gives birth to Obed | 13 - 17 |
| 4- David’s genealogy goes back to Ruth | 18 – 22 |

1-BOAZ ACQUIRES ALL WHAT WAS ELIMELECH’S:

Intending to acquire Ruth as his bride, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance; he was committed first to ask the closest relative, whether he is ready to redeem, himself, or he would rather waive his right to redeem to Boaz, being the next closest relative. The book describes to us the procedure of setting a gathering of elders to decide the issue; saying: *“Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold the close relative of whom Boaz has spoken came by. So Boaz said, ‘Come aside, friend, sit down here’, so he came aside and sat. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, ‘Sit down here’, So they sat down”* (1, 2).

According to the old custom of the Jews in those days, Boaz held an assembly of elders to decide the matter; the figure 10 probably referring to the law, means that the assembly is canonical, and has the right to issue a decision in the matter before them. The figure 10 may also probably refers to the law which would decide the inability of the first closest relative to redeem the human soul from the authority of the devil, to acquire her as his bride, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance.

The book disregarded the name of the first closest relative, for he is not worthy to be mentioned, on account of that, while he was ready to redeem Elimelech’s field, and pay its price to add to his own inheritance; once he knew that he is also committed to marry Ruth to perpetuate the name of the dead, and that Elimelech’s field which he paid its price, would eventually get back to her son, he declined, for he counted it a loss deal. He was ready to redeem the land, but did not care to perpetuate the name of the dead; he had the intention to acquire the dust, but not the souls which are of no value in his eyes.

The first closest relative said: *“I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance; you redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it”* (6). The word “redeem” here, means (to save), The first closest relative, namely the law, that had the authority on man, being not able to save, he delivers the authority to the divine grace; for it is only the Lord Christ who can save man and redeem him from the bitter bondage.

As to the old custom of taking off the sandal and giving it to the second in line who consented to redeem for himself what was dead’s, it refers to that the first one will have no right to tread on the land of the dead, as he has delivered his right to someone else, to tread and to possess to perpetuate the name of the dead

2- BOAZ ACQUIRES RUTH:

Boaz' heart was not on Elimelech's land, but on acquiring Ruth as his wife to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren (10). All the people blessed such a giving spirit, full of love; and asked the Lord to bless Ruth for him, and to make her like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel, to give him a name in Ephrathah, and to make his descendants like Perez born by Tamar to Judah.

- (1) They asked the Lord to bless his wife as He blessed Jacob's two wives Rachel and Leah, to come to be the mother, not only of the nation of Israel, but of a series of kings (David and his descendants), until the time comes for the King of kings to come incarnate from her daughter – St. Mary.
- (2) Asking the Lord to give Boaz a great name in Ephrathah; what would be more exalted for Boaz than to be a symbol of the Person of the Lord Christ?!
- (3) Asking the Lord to make his descendants like Perez born by Tamar to Judah, who, by breaking his way through from his mother's womb, breached his twin brother Zerah So did Boaz by breaching the first closest relative, and taking the blessing away from him.

3-RUTH GIVES BIRTH TO OBED:

"The Lord gave Ruth conception, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi: 'Blessed be the Lord who has not left you this day without a close relative, and may his name be famous in Israel. And may he be to you a restorer of life, and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him'" (13 – 15).

In the Holy Book the child is referred to the father; while here, he is referred to Ruth; being said: *"The Lord gave her", and not "gave him"*; because he was given to her, to be legally referred to her dead husband Having been the fruit of her faith in God, who is capable of granting life after death; the women said to Naomi: *"May he be to you a restorer of life"*; having restored a name to his dead father, to be as though alive.

*"Obed" (17), meaning (a bond servant) refers to the Lord Christ, who, for our sake became a bond servant, (Philippians 2: 7), granted to the believing soul to bear Him in her womb, the way Ruth bore Obed, and to come to be to Naomi a restorer of life; to let her have a name after the death that for so long reigned on her; and a nourisher of her old age; bringing her back to her spiritual youth, and taking away from her the weakness and despair..... By that, once Ruth gave birth to Obed, it was said about her to Naomi: *"She is better to you than seven sons"* (15).*

If 7 sons refer to the blessing of the Lord (1 Samuel 2: 5), we bearing "the true Obed" in us, we bear the Word of God who became a bond servant and will be counted as better than seven sons.

"Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him" (16). If the child was the fruit of love of Ruth , namely of the church of the Gentiles; Naomi, referring to the law and the prophecies, would rejoice to see her work consummated by such an exalted fruit.

5- DAVID'S GENEALOGY GOES BACK TO RUTH:

The book comes to an end by the proclamation that David will come as a fruit from his grandmother Ruth; and the royal root started to grow in the Jewish nation, to become a tree which will eventually give the unique Fruit "The Son of David" the true spiritual King.

So the book started by the famine, because of which Elimelech and his family migrated from Judah to Moab; and ends by the true satisfaction, when the whole world enjoy the Son of David "*The desire of the nations*" (Haggai 2: 7).

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

A preface by the author

An introduction

The author of the book of Ruth

The importance and features of the book of Ruth

The divisions of the book of Ruth

CHAPTER 1: THE WORLD AND THE VOID

The migration of Elimelech and his family; Their return to the land of Judah; Naomi shows compassion toward her two daughters-in-law; Ruth insists on returning to Bethlehem together with her mother-in-law; Naomi and Ruth in Bethlehem.

CHAPTER 2: RUTH IN BOAZ' FIELD

Boaz, a mighty man of valor; Ruth in Boaz' field; A friendly conversation in the field; Ruth in Naomi's house.

CHAPTER 3: RUTH IN BOAZ' HOUSE:

Naomi's counsel to Ruth; Ruth encounters Boaz; Ruth goes back to her mother-in-law.

CHAPTER 4: RUTH AND THE HEAVENLY WEDDING:

Boaz acquires what was Elimelech's; Boaz acquires Ruth; Ruth gives birth to Obed; King David's genealogy goes back to Ruth.