

I. NAOMI AND RUTH. 14. They lifted up their voice.—The two daughters-in-law wept as if instead of two voices there had been but one. (Hervey). Wept again—See verse 9. Ruth, at first proposed to return with Naomi. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law. She did not wait to hear Ruth's decision, or perhaps she knew what it would be. She may have felt that, after all, two of them would be a burden upon Naomi. She loved her country and her gods better than the land of Israel and Jehovah. "Orpah's kiss shewed that she had an affection for Naomi, and was loth to part from her, yet she did not love her well enough to leave her country for her sake. Thus many have value and affection for Christ, and yet fall short of salvation by him, because they cannot find it in their hearts to forsake other things for him. They love him and yet leave him, because they do not love him enough, but love other things better. Thus the young man that went away from Christ went away sorrowful (Matt. 19: 22)." (Henry). Ruth clave unto her—No arguments or entreaties could move her. Her decision was irrevocably made and it was not the creature of the moment. To go back was to renounce the God of her husband and plunge again into the abyss of heathenism out of which Naomi's piety had raised her. Every pure and holy affection of her nature conspired to strengthen her resolve. She lost nothing that she wished to keep. Her people, her country and her God were to be found where Naomi dwelt (Prov. 17: 17; 18: 24).

15. Her people and her gods—No reproach is intended in these words. "Her daughters-in-law had said to her 'we will go with thee to thy people.' It grieves Naomi to be obliged to tell them, with all possible tenderness, that in the sense in which they mean it, this is altogether impossible. It was necessary to intimate to them that a deeper than merely national distinction compels their present parting: that what her sons had done in Moab, was not customary in Israel, that her personal love for them was indeed so great, that she would gladly give them other sons, if she had them, but that the people of Israel was separated from all other nations by the God of Israel. Orpah understood this. Strong as her affection for Naomi was, her natural desire for another resting-place in a husband's house was yet stronger; and as she could not hope for this in Israel, she took leave and went back. For the same reason Naomi speaks more plainly to Ruth: thy sister-in-law returned home to her people and to her god. It is not that we belong to different nations, but that we worship different God's, that separates us here at the gates of Israel." (Cassel). "God wrestled with Jacob with desire to be conquered; so Naomi, no doubt, opposed Ruth, hoping and wishing that she herself might be foiled." (Fuller). Naomi wastesting Ruth. Com. Luke 14: 26-33. (Josh 24: 15, 19; 2 Kings 2: 2; Luke 24: 28).

16. Entreat me not to leave thee—A

beautiful and touching appeal of a brave and loving daughter. She had counted the cost and her heart's desire was to live and die a worshipper of the true God. The piety of Naomi had won her affections and commended to her the God whom she worshipped. "Like David's lament over Jonathan Ruth's words have sunk deep into the human heart. As an expression of the tenderness and most faithful friendship they are univalued. The simple dignity of the iteration in varying phrase till the climax is reached beyond which no promise could go, the quiet fervor of the feeling, the thought which seems to have almost a Christian depth—all are beautiful pathetic, noble. From this moment a charm lingers about Ruth and she becomes dearer to us than any woman of whom the Hebrew records tell." (Watson). "Ruth's passionate burst of tenderness is immortal. It has put into fitting words for all generations the deepest thoughts of loving hearts, and comes to us over all the centuries between as warm and living as when it welled up from that gentle heroic soul." (MacLaren). Thy God my God—"Since the God of Israel is the true ground of all the love which she felt for her Israelitish friends, it follows that her confession of him is the keystone of her vow." (Cassel). (Matt. 5: 16; 2 Cor. 3: 2, 3; 1 Cor. 11: 1; Phil. 3: 17; 4: 9; 1 Pet. 2: 12).

17. There will I be buried—She abandoned even the tombs of her ancestors. No oriental is indifferent regarding his place of burial. All desire to lie beside their kindred. Compare Jacob's wish (Gen. 49: 29-32) and Joseph's (Gen. 50: 25, 26). See also 1 Kings 13: 22. She gives herself up wholly and forever to the people of God. The Lord do so to me—This is the first occurrence of the Hebrew form of a solemn oath (1 Sam. 3: 17; 14: 44; 2 Sam. 3: 9, 35). It is equivalent to "I swear that death, and nothing but death, shall part us." "She puts herself on oath, and invokes his severest penal displeasure if she should suffer anything less uncontrollable than death to part her from her mother-in-law. "So" stands in misty indefiniteness, as a cloudy veil, two-thirds concealing, and one-third revealing, whatever horrid infliction could by dramatic sign be represented or hinted." (Hervey). And more also—Lit. "and so may he add to do." There was first of all a full imprecation and then an additional 'bittock' to lend intensity to the asseveration." (Hervey). By using these words Ruth shews that she was already a worshipper of Jehovah.

18. Steadfastly minded—Ruth was "a fixed star." She had made a deep and calm resolve that would not be repented of (Rom. 14: 7, 8; Isa. 44: 5). Naomi gladly "gave in" and urged her no more. In religion there is no escape from personal decision; no one can drift to salvation with companions or with a church. In art, in literature, in ordinary morality it is possible to possess something without any special effort. We gain it unconsciously by association with the cultured