

**THE PREACHER'S  
COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK  
OF RUTH: WITH CRITICAL AND  
EXEGETICAL NOTES**

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The Preacher's Commentary on the Book of Ruth: With Critical and Exegetical Notes by Walter Baxendale

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**WALTER BAXENDALE**

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EXEGETICAL NOTES**



THE  
Preacher's Complete Homiletical  
COMMENTARY

ON THE  
OLD TESTAMENT

*(ON AN ORIGINAL PLAN),*

With Critical and Explanatory Notes, Indices, &c., &c.

BY  
VARIOUS AUTHORS.

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London:  
RICHARD D. DICKINSON, 89, FARRINGTON STREET,  
1882.

THE  
PREACHER'S COMMENTARY

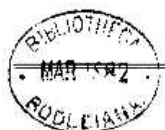
ON THE BOOK OF

R U T H .

*WITH CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL NOTES*

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from some other portion of God's Word. At the same time, themes and topics are continually suggested, the author taking it that his work draws to a close when the topic itself has been fairly launched.

In an age when so much has been written about so little, he has no apology to offer for this deference to what some would call "the mere verbiage of the Scriptures." The only apology that could be offered is that the work has not been done more completely and with somewhat more of the thoroughness, scholarship, ability, and enthusiasm, distinguishing the Commentaries on our great master-pieces of human genius. His work has been hindered and postponed by a long and tedious brain affection, but it has been all throughout a labour of love, oppressed only by this feeling that "one can do but little to gild refined gold," and he leaves it with a deepened and ever-deepening sense of the beauty, tenderness, truthfulness, simplicity, and dignity of the Divine Word, as well as of its fitness and its suggestiveness amid the perplexing walks of common and daily life.

To acknowledge obligations in any special instance, where has been so much indebtedness, would be invidious. The author's plan has rendered it necessary that he should avail himself, as far as possible, of the labours of all who have preceded him. Wherever practical the name has been given; and he hopes this plan may not be without its uses in directing attention to works which need only to be known to be appreciated.

That his labours may be useful to his brethren, who amid the pressure of modern ministerial duties find it difficult to appropriate time to either special or extensive acquaintance with the literature of the book of Ruth, is the earnest and sincere prayer of their well-wisher and brother in the ministry of Jesus Christ,

WALTER BAXENDALE.

## HOMILETIC COMMENTARY

ON

# RUTH.

### INTRODUCTION.

(1.) Formed a part of the book of Judges in the ancient Hebrew canon, supplementary to that book, like the last five chapters at present, according to Josephus, Origen, Jerome. The Septuagint, in harmony with Jewish tradition, places it there without a separate title, and Melito of Sardis says the Jews of his day counted them together. Keil questions this (see note, p. 467 Keil's Intro.). Like the book of Judges, a narrative. The contents contrast. At the close of the latter a dark eclipse has fallen upon Israel; the last five chapters a history of sinners and their sins. In the one, Israel seen as a declining nation; the other shews the Gentile hope as enlarging. A connecting link between the book of Judges and that of Samuel; yet a joyous transition from the former (Wordsworth). Carries the history of Israel into the house of David. Links the monarchy with a more simple and primitive form of government. What is of more importance, traces the descent of Israel's greatest king directly from Judah. Like Esther, takes its title from the heroine. Both books link Jew and Gentile histories. Its canonicity has never been questioned among the Jews. Has the superscription of Caesar, the stamp of the Holy Spirit (Fuller). Not in the Codex Sinaiticus. The Targum on Ruth only dates back as far as the seventh century. The Arabic version is generally considered to have been made from the Peshito Syriac.

(2.) According to modern Jews, Ruth holds a variable place among the Kethubim, or Hagiographa, that is, in the third class of O. T. writings, comprising the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. This owing to liturgical causes, as it was read from primitive times during the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost. Raschi and others connect this with the proclamation of the kingdom of God among the nations; and as the custom dates back earlier than the birth of our Lord, the fact is significant. Represents the O.T. aspect towards the Gentiles. The Midrash explains that the law was given on Sinai to *all nations*, only it was not accepted by them. In the letter the book of Ruth forms a suitable introduction to the prophecies, in spirit it stands like the Psalms at the gates of the Gospel.

(3.) Not quoted or referred to in the N.T., unless the genealogy in Matthew is taken from it (comp. ch. iv. 18—22 with Matt. i. 4—6). The language generally pure Hebrew, and that of a very simple type. So-called Chaldaisms ought rather to be called archaisms, and are signs of antiquity and authenticity—vestiges of the ancient colloquial language of Palestine (Wordsworth). One of them found in the book of Job, another in Judges (comp. Ruth i. 4, Judges xxxi. 28, Ruth i. 18, Job xxx. 24). They occur always in the dialogue, not in the



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narrative portions of the book. The narrative Hebrew is good (Dr. Pusey). Certain passages have a striking likeness to expression used in the book of Samuel. The quotations in Ruth are only taken from the earlier books of Scripture.

### CONTENTS.

**Matter, etc.**—(4.) Consists of four chapters, eighty-five verses. Too simple to admit of artificial divisions, the existing chapters supply a convenient method of arrangement (Grosor). May be divided into two parts: the first chapter shews that many are the troubles of the righteous; the three last, that God delivereth out of them all (Fuller). The four chapters may be called respectively, "The Famine," "The Harvest Field," "The Project," "The Result" (Binney). Like the book of Job, deals mainly with the history of an individual, and those associated with her life. In Job the afflictions prevail throughout the book. Not so here. With good reason the book is not called Naomi, or Boaz, or the Descent of David, but Ruth (Lange). She is the heroine. No prophetess like Deborah; not a queen like Esther; but a simple Moabitish maiden, a gleaner in the harvest fields, strong in her own simple purity. She is no saint, no devotee, no prophetess, but a very woman, and a woman.

"Not too bright and good  
For human nature's daily food"—*Wordsworth (quoted in Cox)*.

The book celebrates the piety and loving faithfulness of a proselyte. Its heroism is that of the home and family. Does not preach by means of mighty deeds like those of Gideon and Samson, but by acts of love (Lange). Contrasts as much with the book of Esther (the only other book to which a woman's name is attached) as does the heroine with Deborah. Bertholdt and other neological writers treat both books as fictions or parables.

**Character.**—(5.) A prose pastoral. Has some of the finest features of a pastoral poem. A romantic, yet historic, Hebrew idyl (Steel and Terry). No doubt a love story (Cox). A beautiful, because natural, representation of human life (Hunter). *Catholic in its spirit*. Sympathetic, not critical. A book of reconciliation for those aliens who accept the true and living God.

"The narrative displays no hatred towards foreigners, gives no prominence to the keen discriminations of the Mosaic law against them, notwithstanding that they form the background of the story: does not blame the really well-disposed Orpah, although she turns back; has not a word of reprehension for the anonymous relative who refuses to marry Ruth; but in contrast to these facts it causes the blessing which lights upon Ruth to become known."—*Lange*.

*Deeply religious, yet domestic.* A brief but exquisite story of hearth and home. Abounds with felicitous pictures of Oriental village life. Simplicity of rural manners beautifully depicted, not by a shadowy fiction, but in the homely records of affection and virtue (Eadie). Not the warrior or the king, but the farmer and householder, find their prototypes here (Lange). The reader finds himself now in the open field, now on the road, and anon among the assembly at the gate (Lange). *In style dramatic.* He makes his rustics talk in rustic fashion (Lange). Yet all this subdued, and with the finest moderation. A unique specimen of the art which conceals art. This prose idyl far exceeds those laboured songs and artificial delineations which grace the poetry of Greece and Rome (Eadie).

"The book of Ruth is like some beautiful landscape of Claude, with its soft mellow hues of quiet eventide, and the peaceful expanse of its calm lake, placed side by side with some stern picture of Salvator Rosa, exhibiting the stock of armies and the storm of war; and receiving

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more beauty from the chiaro-oscuro of the contrast. Or if we may adopt another comparison, derived from classical literature, the book of Ruth, coming next after the book of Judges, is like a transition from the dark, terrific scenes of a tragedy of Æschylus, to the fresh and beautiful landscapes of some pastoral idyl of Theocritus, transporting us to the rural Thalyria, or harvest-home under the shade of elms and poplars, on the banks of the Halia, or to the flowery meadows and sheep-walks on those of the Arethusa or Anapus."—*Wordsworth*.

Simple, sometimes sorrowful, always touching. We have known strong and rough voices break down with emotion in reading aloud some of the passages (Kitto).<sup>\*</sup> Occasionally becomes poetic in form as well as in substance. (See ch. i. 16, 17; iv. 11, 12, and 14, 15, in Wordsworth.) A most artless and inexpressibly charming picture of nature (Humboldt). The loveliest thing in the shape of an epic or idyl which has come to us (Goethe).

**Scope and Object.**—(1.) To teach the dignity and even sacredness of much we call secular and commonplace in life.

(2.) To afford a salutary example of virtue in times of trial (Theodoret). The moral encouraging to *unselfish* virtue (Speaker's Com.). It gives us a beautiful picture of *female* virtue, first shining in the midst of poverty, and then crowned with felicity (Lawson).

(3.) To shew how conversant God is as to the private affairs of His people. Lawson says, "We find here that private families are as much the objects of the Divine regard as the houses of princes."

(4.) To prove the watchful care of God over such as fear and trust Him, as well as His merciful providence towards the afflicted, the widow, and the fatherless (Eadie).

(5.) To portray the under-current of piety existing in households, even in times of great national wickedness (Wordsworth).

(6.) To set forth the power of love to overcome all the alienations, hostilities, and prejudices of nature, and of that second nature which we call habit (Cox). The story of a woman's love for a woman (Cox). Teaches that such love is valued before God (Lange).

(7.) To shew how a stranger, one of the hated house of Moab, may be exalted because of her trust in God (Umbreit).

(8.) To teach that when men and nations are falling away from God, missionary work is not at a standstill: a Ruth comes from Moab, and is joined to the church of God (Wordsworth).

(9.) To typify the calling of the Gentiles in Ruth the Moabitess (Fuller). To foretell that the Gentiles should be called in Christ (Topsell).

(10.) To exhibit the piety and faithfulness of David's ancestors (Keil). Written to do honour to David (Dr. Davidson).

(11.) To shew the pedigree of our Saviour, otherwise genealogists had been at a loss for four or five descents in the deducing thereof (Fuller). Supplies connecting links in the chain of evidence that Shiloh came of Judah.

(12.) To contain as it were the inner side, the moral background, of the genealogies which play so significant a part even in the Israelitish antiquity (Anberlen).

(13.) To typify in the marriage of Boaz and Ruth the espousal of the Church to Christ (Bede.) So Chrysos., "Ruth alienigena et Moabitiss veniens, sub lege Dei, ea egit quæ figuram gestarent Ecclesie venientis ex gentibus." So Jerome, "Christus est Sponsus, cui illa venit ex gentibus sponsa." (Quoted in Wordsworth.) Spiritual and typical (Professor Bush). No mystical or allegorical sense can be assigned to the history (Speaker's Com.).

(14.) To inculcate a man's duty of marrying his kinswoman (Berthold and

<sup>\*</sup> "It is said that Dr. Johnson once read the book of Ruth from MSS. to a company of fashionable people in London. Whereupon their admiration was so excited, that they requested to know where he had obtained so exquisite a story."—*Bradon*.

other neological writers). The fact that Ruth's descendants are represented as the children of Boaz rather than of Mahlon, her former husband, against this view.

#### AUTHORSHIP AND CHRONOLOGY.

**Authorship.**—(7.) Like many other of the inspired books, the author's name is not inscribed. So far the custom is against giving the name. The Talmud affirms that the book of Judges was written by Samuel, and treats this as an appendix. Samuel is described as an historian (1 Chron. xxix. 29). This opinion held among the rabbis, and adopted by Isidorus and other ancient commentators. Not so Eichhorn, De Wette, Ewald, and many of the German critics. Dr. Davidson agrees with the latter, and thinks it is impossible to discover who was the writer of the book. He that has a piece of gold of right weight, and stamped with the king's image, cares not to know who minted or coined it (Fuller).

**Date of Composition.**—(8.) Written *after the crowning of Saul* (chap. i. 1), at a period considerably later than the circumstances it relates (chap. iv. 7). *After the birth of David*, since he is mentioned twice. From internal evidence in a time of peace, and in days singularly free from the bigoted and narrow spirit which generally clings to Jewish history. Could not have been composed after the birth of Solomon, or his name would have been added to the genealogies. The prejudice against Moabitish women becomes so intense afterwards as to render it extremely improbable such a book would either have been written, or if written accepted in the canon of Hebrew Scriptures (see 1 Kings xi. 1; Ezra x. 10; Neh. xiii. 1). Yet Bertheau, Davidson, and others ascribe its composition to the days of Hezekiah, and even Ezra, because of what are thought to be Chaldaisms in the more colloquial parts. This is extremely improbable, and held upon insufficient data. The book breathes the tone of David's life and times (Cox). Is in keeping with his sending his father and mother for safety into the land of Moab (1 Sam. xxiii. 8), and with his whole history. Evidently David was an important personage to the writer; probably the most important in the realm. Keil thinks the book was not written before the culminating point of the reign of this great king. It would be sufficient to say before the anointing by Samuel. Such a book almost necessary to justify the act of the prophet in choosing the son of Jesse, to the exclusion of Saul's children. And what better justification than that of tracing David's descent from Judah? Tradition and internal evidence alike support this view, as well as the testimony of the rabbis and the early fathers. Worthy of notice, that no mention is made of David as *being king* in Ruth.

(9.) Keil puts an interval of 150 to 180 years between the events themselves and the writing of the book; Pusey, 100 years; and the former fancies the contents were not drawn from oral tradition, but that the author may have had the use of written documents. The reference to the custom of drawing off the shoe as belonging to the "former times" (iv. 7, 8) in favour of the longer period.

**Date of Events.**—(10.) Josephus relates the history of Ruth immediately after that of Samson, and even connects the narrative with the times of Eli. Cox accepts this, and says we may be reasonably sure that the story was enacted while Eli was judge. Bertheau places it in the latter part of the judges, and Keil advocated this view at first, but afterwards argued in favour of an earlier date, probably in the days of Gideon. Bishop Patrick, with Hengstenberg and others, inclines to this view, and points out that the only scarcity noticed in the book of Judges was in the time of Gideon (comp. Ruth i. 1 with Judges vi. 4—6). The generality of the Jews assign it to the period of Ibzan's government, the successor of Jephthah, conceiving Ibzan is another name for Boaz, as both belong to Bethlehem. (Wordsworth). Gantz adopts this, and notices the fact that Ibzan was the only judge born at Bethlehem. Vorstius says in the days of Deborah and Barak. Usher assigns