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WHO IS RUTH, WHAT IS SHE?

D.R.G. BEATTIE

If the reader will construe the proper noun and personal pronoun in the whimsical title of this paper as referring to the biblical book rather than to the heroine thereof, he will understand that the object of the exercise is to explore the question of the nature of the book of Ruth. That it tells a story goes without saying, a story which is so well-known that it is unnecessary here to summarize it. /1 But is there more to it than that? Did its author have in mind, when he composed it, a motive other than that of telling a story and, if he did, what was that motive?

It might be thought that it is well established that the origin of the book should be located in post-exilic Judah and that the author's purpose in writing it was to oppose the rigid attitude displayed by Ezra and Nehemiah in their policy of opposition to intermarriage between the people of Judah and those of neighbouring territories; that the story of Ruth offers a counterblast to this policy by submitting quietly that the Davidic dynasty originated in just such a mixed marriage as the reformers have outlawed. This opinion has found its way into the school textbooks and popular handbooks 2/, but although it has been widely recorded it has by no means been as widely held as this might appear to imply. A glance at the literature available in commentaries and introductions will show that, when it is not actually opposed, it is often cited simply as a received opinion, while even those few who adhere to it offer little or no argument in support of the conclusion.

The main drawback to the theory is not just that the story contains no trace of polemic or propaganda but that it is essential to the argument that Ruth should be regarded as a foreigner, yet early in the story in the book's most famous passage, she avows her adherence to the religion of her mother-in-law and invokes the name of Yahweh. If Ruth is seen as a convert, her story, far from being understood as a polemic against the stringency of Ezra and Nehemiah, could be read as propaganda in support of their cause, saying in effect that marriage with foreigners is permissible if they first become proselytes.

This objection to the theory was put forward by

H.H.Rowley thirty odd years ago 3/ but,curiously, the very same argument was advanced to the opposite effect some one hundred and fifty years earlier. L.Bertholdt 4/ put it forward in 1816 as a modification to the suggestion of T.A. Dereser that it might have been a secondary motive 5/ of the author of Ruth to censure the intolerant attitude of his contemporaries towards foreigners. Bertholdt applied this idea specifically to the period of Ezra and Nehemiah, suggesting that the story could be read as teaching that marriage with foreigners is permissible if they first adopt the religion of Judah. Bertholdt thus seems to have presumed that Ezra would not even have tolerated marriages with proselytes,while Rowley presumed the opposite.

Throughout the period since Bertholdt's time both pro- and anti-Ezra theories, with variations on each theme, have been propounded from time to time. Lists may be drawn up of scholars who have opted for one or other of the possibilities open to those who assume that the book of Ruth was intended by its author to say something on the issue of mixed marriages; but the conflict between the two explanations is not to be decided by a majority vote. To one faced with the dilemma of deciding on which side of the debate the author's sympathies lay, the only safe solution is to doubt whether he had any involvement in the issue at all; to doubt,that is,whether the book was written as a tract for that particular time. This policy may have been present already in the mind of Bertholdt who -ironically,since he has been credited with the invention of the"anti-Ezra"theory-turned aside from the suggestion which we have already noted to offer as his own opinion that the book's purpose was to extend the obligation to marry a childless widow 6/ to kinsmen other than the nearest and the rights to such marriage to foreign women, even poor ones, who had embraced the Israelite religion.

Similar ideas have been expressed since Bertholdt's time 7/ but such an understanding of the purpose of the book is open to criticism on the grounds that it is extremely doubtful whether any element of obligation was involved in Ruth's second marriage. 8/ The present writer has elsewhere argued that no such obligation existed and other scholars have recently expressed similar views 9/, but even if the levirate principle is believed to be at work in the case of Ruth's second marriage it does not follow easily that the book must have been written for the express purpose of registering a legal precedent.

Here we touch on the fundamental problem which arises in connection with nearly all the explanations of the book's purpose which rely on the assumption that it was composed to serve a specific function at the time of its composition. The problem is that of demonstrating that the book was designed to serve some tractarian purpose for even though it may appear to the individual reader that the story teaches this or that lesson, or that it says something relevant to some historical situation or about some legal or moral issue, unless the point is explicitly made in the narrative it must remain questionable whether it was in the author's mind.

It is quite possible, for example, to compare the heroine of Ruth with another famous or infamous foreign widow of the OT, Athaliah. It may even be quite useful to do this as a homiletic exercise, but the conclusion drawn by Margaret B. Brook 10/, on the basis of such a comparison, that the story of Ruth as we have it 11/, was written, possibly by Jehoiada the priest, for the purpose of showing up Athaliah's wicked ways, is totally without warrant. Or, to return to an earlier topic, it is possible, perhaps even profitable, to compare the attitude of the book of Ruth and therefore of its author with that of Ezra and Nehemiah on the matter of mixed marriage, but this does not require that Ruth must necessarily have been written as a comment, whether favourable or unfavourable, on the policy of post-exilic extremists. If millions of readers have been able to read Ruth without a thought of Ezra or Athaliah or any of the various other presumed targets of the story there must remain a distinct possibility that its author wrote it without any such thought either.

There is perhaps one explanation of the purpose of Ruth which is able to evade the challenge presented above. This is that the writer's objective was the historical one of imparting information about the ancestry of King David. This explanation differs from the others which have been mentioned in that the story can be seen clearly to fulfil this objective; it can only be prevented from doing so by damage to its fabric. However it is not easy to demonstrate that the author's overriding concern was with history. I am inclined indeed to think that it was not.

I say this first of all because Ruth and Boaz are fairly remote ancestors of David, three generations back. If our author set out to record the history of David's family we might have expected him to have told us something

of David's parents and grandparents instead of dealing only with one pair(out of four)of his great-grandparents. Of course this suggestion may be countered by the supposition that our author had no information about the intervening generations. Such a supposition however might in itself lead one to doubt whether the writer had historical information to communicate and whether his interest was primarily historical. One might ask whether it is realistic to presume that at some point in the history there would be surviving traditions about one pair of remote ancestors of king David when nothing was remembered about his parents or grandparents, especially when those remote ancestors appear not to have done anything sufficiently remarkable to warrant the preservation of their memory.

This line of reasoning may be speculative but there are firmer grounds for doubting the historicity of the story of Ruth, which is what the suggestion of an historical intention on the part of its author amounts to. The story is simply not made of the stuff of history. The doings of obscure country folk going about their daily lives do not normally concern the historian. Further, the story consists of a series of private conversations which cannot be considered historical even on the supposition that the book was written by one of its characters(a thesis which perhaps surprisingly has never been propounded), since none of them was party to all the conversations.

Perhaps the strongest indication that we are not dealing with history is the fact that the names of the various characters in the story may be taken as indicating literary artifice. To say this is not to dispute the plausibility or even the authenticity 12/ of these names as genuine personal names of the period in which the story is set. They are nowhere near as obviously artificial as are, say, those of Bunyan's characters. But the fact that the name of every actor in the story (including, if we may so put it, the man with no name) is capable of an interpretation which reflects the part played by its bearer - regardless of whether such interpretations represent truly the etymology of the names- suggests strongly that we are dealing with fiction and not history.

It remains possible however that some of the characters are historical while others are the invention of the story-teller and so each must be investigated. Mahlon, Chilion and Orpah can be easily dismissed as can the man

with no name. The two brothers whose names may be connected respectively with roots meaning "to be sick" and "to come to an end", are mentioned only in order that they, like their father, may die and leave widows. Orpah whose name is reminiscent of the word for "neck", turns back or, in Semitic idiom, turns her neck and goes home to Moab. The man with no name is not a real character but a man of straw introduced as a foil to Boaz; if the story had been composed in English he might have been named Jack Straw; the Hebrew story-teller has chosen to leave him nameless.

This leaves the two couples, Elimelech and Naomi, and Boaz and Ruth. The former couple I am inclined to treat as belonging to the story rather than to history. That is to say, I think they are fictitious characters. Elimelech's function in the story is simply to set it in motion and then to die leaving a widow. His name, which is well attested as an actual personal name although it does not appear elsewhere in the OT, has been described as "the one name in the Ruth story that seems incapable of being explained as having a symbolic meaning pertinent to the narrative", 13/ but I have suggested that it does indeed have relevance to the story. 14/ The man who bears a name meaning "My God is king" stands as a representative of the period when the only king of the people of Judah was Yahweh but, at the end of the tale, he is shown to have been an ancestor of the founder of their dynasty of human kings. Naomi, a one woman sub-plot in her progression from sweet to bitter and back again, is the one character the significance of whose name is explicitly drawn to the reader's attention even in translation. When Naomi remarks to the women of Bethlehem that her name is inappropriate to her circumstances and that Mara would be a better one, the translator is forced to point out to his readership that Naomi means "sweet" and Mara "bitter". Is it possible that the writer, by making this play of names, is quietly inviting his audience to look carefully at the other names too? Whatever answer the reader of the present paper may give to this question, we must move on to consider the central characters, Boaz and Ruth.

In the third and fourth chapters of Ruth where he conceives and carries out the plan which results in the anonymous kinsman's abdication of his rights to Ruth's and Naomi's property, Boaz displays the characteristics inherent in his name which, on the basis of the Arabic cognate, may be taken to mean "shrewd, sharp-witted"; he might thus be judged to be a fictitious character. He appears again

briefly, in 1 Chronicles ii 11f., in David's genealogy, and might on that account be judged historical. Here, for the first time, we are confronted directly with the problem of deciding on the historicity of the characters in the story. While the general principle enunciated above—that it would appear unlikely that all the characters were historical individuals—holds good, it is not impossible that the author has woven his tale around some historical persons—say, Ruth and Boaz, or even Boaz alone—capitalizing on the meanings apparent in their names and surrounding them with other characters of his own invention.

Whatever the case, the problem of procedure may be reduced to a choice between presuming all the characters to be historical unless grounds for thinking otherwise can be found and presuming them fictitious in the absence of any reason for judging them historical. Since the former possibility has already been breached by the observation that it seems unlikely that an entire family should have existed with names which lent themselves so easily to the formation of the story, the present writer would opt for the second choice. In any event, since the work is obviously a story, this seems the more sensible policy. Only in the case of Boaz, amongst the characters considered so far, has any reason been found for thinking that he might be historical, and that is the appearance of his name in 1 Chronicles ii 11f. This however I do not find to be compelling evidence. It is possible that the name Boaz was borrowed, so to speak, from Chronicles but the character is still the creation of the author of Ruth. There is also another possibility, which cannot be excluded and which certainly should not be overlooked: that the Chronicler obtained the name from the story of Ruth. 15/ The only possible conclusion on Boaz is that while a case may be presented for his historicity, the verdict must be "Not Proven".

What of Ruth herself? Her name—even if it is a Moabite name we may expect that its etymology will be apparent to the Hebraist—seems clearly to be based on the root rwh, which conveys the idea of "satiation"; in the story she may be said to "satisfy" Naomi and Boaz with her kindness and generosity, but is she historical? On the basis of the principle I have espoused, I am inclined towards treating her as fictitious, if only be-

cause I do not see any evidence for seeing her as historical. In this I dissent from the widely held opinion 16/ that Ruth's name and nationality, at least, must be held as historical data on the grounds that no writer would have attributed to David a Moabite ancestress unless there was a tradition to that effect, which is to say, unless it was true. This opinion is rarely explained but, as far as I can see, it is based on a supposition derived from Deuteronomy xxiii 4 (v3 in the English versions). But to infer from this text that Moabite ancestry carried a stigma and that David's Moabite ancestry must therefore be fact seems to me unsound.

Any argument about the historicity of Ruth as an ancestress of David, based on Deuteronomy xxiii 4 would be valid only if Deuteronomy xxiii 4 can be understood as a genuine law excluding Ammonites and Moabites from the Jerusalem cult and antedating the composition of Ruth. Quite regardless of the date of composition of Ruth—a question which unfortunately cannot be opened in the context of the present essay—it is in my judgment doubtful whether the verse can be so understood. Leaving Ruth out of consideration there is still an Ammonite woman in the Davidic dynasty, Naamah, mother of Rehoboam (1 Kings xiv 21). So, if Deuteronomy xxiii 4 is taken seriously as a law, it is implied that at the least all the members of the Davidic dynasty from Rehoboam to Hzziah 17/ inclusive were not legitimate members of the religious community of Judah. The very notion is so ludicrous that it may confidently be asserted that, whatever its original significance, Deuteronomy xxiii 4 cannot be a Judaeian law from the period of the monarchy. Enquiry into the origin of the passage is beyond the scope of the present paper and is for our present purpose immaterial. If it is not a genuine law of the Jerusalem-centred cult, no argument can be based on it about Ruth's historicity. So she, too, must be pronounced fictitious for lack of any evidence to the contrary.

It must be admitted that two undoubtedly historical personages—Jesse and David—are named in the book, although the genuineness of the Davidic genealogy as an integral part of the story has been questioned. The long genealogy from Perez to David which brings the text of Ruth to its conclusion is almost universally regarded as not properly belonging to the book. These last five verses add nothing of value to the story (the descent of David from Boaz has already been stated: if Boaz is

a descendant of Perez, so what?) and, with their dry recitation of one generation after another, are so markedly different in mood from the rest of the book that they can be easily isolated as an appendix which has been constructed from 1 Chronicles ii 5-12 and included here as supporting evidence for the statement of v17.

But it is not this concluding genealogy which prompts the question of the integrity of the Davidic connection. This is raised by iv 17, where it might be thought that the name Obed does not sit easily in the sequence "the neighbours gave him a name, saying, 'A son has been born to Naomi'; they called him Obed", inasmuch as there seems to be no connection between the two parts of the sentence. It might be thought, on the basis of the structure of the verse and a comparison of it with similar passages elsewhere 18/, that the words of the women ought to be reflected somehow in the name they gave to the child; that their words, in fact, should provide an explanation for the child's name. Since this is patently not so, many have concluded that Obed cannot have been the name of Ruth's child in the original form of the story. A masculine form of Naomi, such as Naaman, or something like Ben Noam, it has been suggested, would be necessary to satisfy the requirements of the context, and it is supposed that at one time the story ended with the child's being given some such name, the substitution of the name Obed and the addition of the words "he was the father of Jesse, the father of David" being a secondary development designed solely to identify the characters of the story with David's ancestors. On this view then Obed is the actual name of David's grandfather while all the characters in the story proper are fictitious.

On the other hand, the argument from the structure of iv 17 is not conclusive. The verse is not precisely identical in form with any of the other verses in the OT where a child's name is explained by a saying of the person who bestows the name. It is not necessary, therefore, to presume that the purpose of Ruth iv 17 was to explain the name Obed. Rather might the verse be interpreted as explaining why it was the women of the neighbourhood who gave the child his name: because they were rejoicing at the implications for their old friend Naomi of the birth of the child. The significance of the name Obed("server" 19/) is already given obliquely in v15 in the wishes expressed by these same women to Naomi, "May he bring back life to you and sustain you in your

old age".

That the name Obed is of significance in the story is a positive argument in favour of seeing the name as an integral part of the story and not a secondary insertion. Now we must ask the question, Is Obed an historical figure? On the face of it he should stand in company with Boaz as potentially historical because of his appearance in the genealogy of Chronicles. He is widely accepted as historical on that basis, but the same caveat must be entered here as was entered with respect to Boaz. Indeed the present writer must confess he is even more suspicious of Obed's historicity than he was of that of Boaz. This suspicion is founded on the feeling- it is no more than that- that the function of Obed in the story is to serve as a buffer or damper to ease the transition in the narrative from the fictitious characters of the story proper to the historical ones, Jesse and David. My conclusion therefore is that Obed, like the actors in the story, is most likely to be fictitious.

The Davidic connection which is made by means of Obed I take to be an integral part of the story for two reasons. The first I have already expressed above when I suggested that the name Elimelech contains a hint of how the story will end. To put it the other way round, the mention of David at the end gives some point to having Elimelech at the beginning 20/. The second, and perhaps more substantial, reason is that the naming of David in the very last word makes a fine strong ending to the story. Just imagine the feeling of anti-climax which would be produced if the story ended with the birth of some totally inconsequential character called Ben Noam, or whatever!

Not the least important aspect of the quiet concluding sentence, with its air of being almost an after-thought, a postscript to the story, is that it guarantees the truth of the story to its audience by its naming, its bringing into itself, this important historical personage. This is not to say that the assurance thus offered should satisfy the scientific enquirer, for the truth of the historian and that of the story-teller are two different things. We learn somewhere early in childhood that a "true" story is in some mysterious way vastly superior to one that is "just made up". A little later we learn that even a "true" story is rarely true. The point

can perhaps be illustrated by citing a specimen from our own folklore. The story of how Finn McCool created Lough Neagh and the Isle of Man simultaneously by scooping up a sod and throwing it at a rival giant in England, ends with the assurance that "if you could put the Isle of Man back into Lough Neagh it would be a powerful fit". It would be nothing of the kind, but the knowledge that the assertion is not true does not detract from the impact which is created in the story by this apparent appeal to objective fact as testimony to the truth of the tale.

Perhaps a better example, certainly a closer analogy to Ruth, may be found in John Buchan's novel The Path of the King, in which the descendants of a Norse chieftain, who are themselves ignorant of their ancestry, are identified to the reader at various periods of history by the possession of a gold ring passed down through the generations. The end of the "Path" is marked by the loss of the ring while it is being used to weight a fishing-line by the young Abraham Lincoln. Thus the yarn proclaims itself a "true story", although no one would accept it as history. So, I would suggest, the genealogy from Ruth and Boaz to David assures the reader that the story of Ruth is a true story, but whether he accepts that assurance is entirely up to him.

In discussing the historicity of the story of Ruth and its characters we may appear to have diverged a little from our main theme. But this discussion is germane to the question of the author's motive in composing the story for if there are no grounds for thinking the story to be essentially historical, it can hardly be said that it was written for an historical purpose, unless the word historical in this context be understood as meaning nothing more than story-telling.

We have been unable to move very far from our starting-point. That the book of Ruth is a story is indisputable. That it is something more, whether that something be history or propaganda or even both, is an assumption which has often been made but for which there is no evidence. In the last hundred years or so a number of scholars have been content to accept it as a story told for its own sake. Gunkel and Gressmann are usually acknowledged as the leaders of this trend but W. Robertson Smith had already expressed similar sentiments in 1886 21/.

This view of the story does not mean that it

should be considered devoid of other than literary value. Many lessons have been read into it, from the rules of conduct- like the wearing of the Sunday(or, properly, Sabbath) suit, for example /22 for which ancient Rabbis here found scriptural authority to the warning, suggested by Gunkel, that men should be "on their guard against beautiful, clever women who are set on carrying out their designs". 23/ We may also mention here the theological interpretations of recent years which find the story to be concerned with the workings of divine providence. 24/

Such lessons may certainly be derived from the story, with greater or lesser degrees of exegetical integrity in any particular instance, but it cannot reasonably be said that the author's sole purpose in creating the story was to advocate any or all of them, or even that he had any of them in mind. It can, on the contrary, be said with assurance that he never thought of some of them. There is however one moral theme which, it seems to me, it is impossible to separate from the warp and woof of the story and which must have been in the author's mind. Here we may recall what is probably the oldest answer of all to the question of the purpose of the book of Ruth.

"R. Zeira said: This scroll tells us nothing of cleanliness or of uncleanness, either of prohibition or permission. For what purpose then was it written? To teach how great is the reward of those who do deeds of kindness". 25/

R. Zeira who lived in the third century clearly perceived that the theme of unselfishness and generosity is one which pervades the book. These qualities are found in all three major characters, who might be said to vie with one another in their attempts to outdo each other's generosity. First Naomi insists that her daughters-in-law should not share her misfortune, but Ruth resists with the declaration of love for which she has been immortalized. Not only this, but she works in the fields to support her mother-in-law who in turn lays plans for Ruth's security and happiness in marriage to Boaz. Boaz welcomes Ruth to his land and goes beyond what might reasonably have been expected of him in allowing her to glean by making sure that his harvesters leave plenty of grain behind for her. Ruth responds to this generous treatment by offering herself to Boaz at the threshing-floor. Boaz not only marries Ruth but ensures through his activity in the public forum that the property of her previous husband is not

lost to her. Finally the son of Ruth and Boaz is dedicated to the support of Naomi in her old age.

As a set of illustrations for a sermon on going the second mile the book of Ruth is unsurpassable, but I do not go all the way with R. Zeira. I stop short of suggesting that the story was written purely for the purpose of preaching. The author was no mere moralist and his composition no dry didactic tale. The gentle unostentatious way in which the virtue of the characters is allowed to emerge from the report, without comment by the narrator, of their words and actions is just one of the features which mark the story as literature and its author as an artist.

Notes

1. It may be said here that the received version of the story as it is found in the English versions of the Bible and indeed in all except the consonantal Hebrew text and one obscure Arabic version- is flawed at one point. In Ruth iv 5 where Boaz is commonly presented as informing the anonymous relative of his duty to marry Ruth, he should rather, as the present writer has argued elsewhere, be understood to inform the other man of his intention of marrying Ruth. See D.R.G. Beattie, "Kethibh and Qere in Ruth iv 5," VT XXI (1971) pp.490-494, and below, note 8.
2. See, for example, William Neill, Can we trust the OT? (1979), p94f.
3. H.H. Rowley, The Servant of the Lord² (1905), p.173. His paper "The marriage of Ruth" was first published in Harvard Theological Review XL (1947)
4. L. Bertholdt, Historisch-kritische Einleitung in die sämtlichen kanonischen und apokryphischen Schriften des Alten und Neuen Testaments (1812-19), V.2, p.2356f.
5. I have been unable to locate a copy of Dereser's work-cited by Bertholdt as Die heilige Schrift des AT von Brentano fortgesetzt von Dereser, Thl.2, 1, B., S.232- so do not know what he thought was the primary purpose of Ruth.
6. Bertholdt spoke of "obligatory marriage" (Pflichtehe), doubtless in order to avoid producing the self-contradictory proposition that the levirate obligation, which by definition is a duty falling on a brother-in-law (Latin levir)

could ever be applied to anyone else.

7. S.R.Driver, Introduction to the Literature of the OT² (1951), p.426, thought it not impossible that it was "a collateral didactic aim of the author to inculcate the duty of marriage on the part of the next of kin with a widow left childless".

8. The obligation which is commonly thought to have been imposed on the anonymous kinsman depends on the reading of the verb in Ruth iv 5b as second person singular ("You must take", or the like) following the gere of the Masoretic text, but the kethibh is first person singular. A choice obviously has to be made between the two readings thus provided in the Hebrew text. I have found several reasons for preferring the kethibh as the original reading (see the article cited in note 1, above); no one has ever given any reason for preferring the gere and I have not been able to find one. The reading of the kethibh has been accepted for different, though as yet unspecified, reasons by J.W.Sasson, "Ruth III:A Response", JSSOT 5(1970)p.49.

9. At least insofar as they deny the presence of levirate marriage in Ruth. See R.Gordis, "Love, Marriage and Business in the book of Ruth", in H.W.Cream et al.(eds), A Light Unto my Path: OT Studies in honor of Jacob M.Myers(1974), p.246; J.W.Sasson, "The Issue of Ge'ullah in Ruth", JSSOT 5 (1970)p.52; A.A.Anderson, "The Marriage of Ruth", JSS 23 (1970)p.163.

10. Margaret B.Crook, "The Book of Ruth:A New Solution", Journal of Bible and Religion 16, pp.155-160.

11. She saw the book as having been composed in two stages. An "Old Story" from the time of the judges "registers the precedent allowing the next of kin, in case of financial incapacity, to pass on his heavy duty to a wealthier kinsman". The second version is the story we know.

12. E.F.Campbell, Jr, Ruth, Anchor Bible 7(1975), p.59, insists that the names are authentic early Northwest Semitic names.

13. Campbell, op.cit. p.52

14. D.R.G.Beattie, "Ruth III", JSSOT 5(1970)p.46.

15. It will be suggested below that the long genealogy of Ruth iv 10-22 was taken from Chronicles but this borrowing would have taken place at a date much later than the

composition of Ruth and the thesis does not affect the possibility that the second half of it was built, in the first place, from material in Ruth.

16. Most recently expressed by A.A.Anderson,op.cit.p.172
17. That is, if the expression"tenth generation", in the first half of the verse, is taken at its literal value. If it should be understood as an idiomatic term meaning"in perpetuity"-and the second half of the verse explicitly excludes Ammonites and Moabites"for ever", in any case-then all the Davidic kings after Solomon must be viewed as excommunicates.
18. J.Gray, Joshua, Judges and Ruth (1967),p.403, refers to the birth narratives of Gen.xxv and xxxviii. O.Eissfeldt, The OT:An Introduction (1965)p.479, compares the naming of the sons of Jacob, Genesis xxix and xxx. Eissfeldt later argued that the name of Obed is an integral part of the book of Ruth(Wahrheit und Dichtung in der Ruth-Erzählung,"Sitzungsbericht der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Phil.-hist.Kl.,110,4 (1965),23-28).
19. I choose this word rather than the more usual"servant"to indicate the distinction between the personal name, or participle, obed, and the common noun ebed, "servant, slave".
20. Campbell, op.cit.p.169, offers a similar reason for taking v.17b as an integral part of the story.
21. W.Robertson Smith,"Ruth",Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th edition.
22. Shab.113b. For further examples see D.R.G.Beattie, Jewish Exegesis of the book of Ruth (1977),pp.203-210.
23. H.Gunkel, Reden und Aufsätze (1913),p.89
24. R.M.Hals, The theology of the book of Ruth(1969) p.74f.;Wesley J.Fuerst, The Books of Ruth, Esther...etc., (1975),p.30
25. Ruth Rabbah II 14. The translation is that of L. Rabinowitz, The Midrash(1939).