

## THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

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## A JURY'S VERDICT

There are many states and counties in the south which do not allow Negroes to serve on juries, and where they are allowed to serve the attorneys have the last say in selecting them. Heretofore, where cases involved a white person committing a felony, the attorney for the white usually excluded all Negroes from serving as jurors. An example of this was exhibited in a case which was tried about five years ago when two white sailors went into a Negro business establishment and were involved in an affray with some of the customers there. Upon their departure, they saw an innocent man on a nearby street whom they shot and killed. When they were tried for this incident, their attorney excused all Negro jurymen, which left a panel of 12 white men who brought in a verdict of 'not guilty' in Guilford County Superior Court.

Since that time Negroes have begun to put up a fight for their rights in the courts, on jobs, and in the schools. Young attorneys, both Negro and white, have begun to fight for justice according to law.

In many cases that are tried, when the jury renders a verdict, many of the spectators and persons who are concerned are dissatisfied with the verdict. They say that the jury used partiality in its decision. Certain laws have been abandoned, according to the jury's decision.

The North Carolina Legislature passes upon the law by which a defendant is tried, and I haven't read or heard that the legislature has abandoned use of the gas chamber for capital punishment. In most felony cases there are several elements of law. The judge charges a jury to decide upon the evidence in making its decision. For example, in a first degree murder case the judge charges the jury that it may bring in a verdict of first degree murder without mercy, whereupon the defendant is executed, or guilty of first degree murder with a recommendation for mercy, guilty of second degree murder, or the defendant may be acquitted.

The judge further instructs the jury that it is the sole judge of the case. It may believe all that the witnesses say, part, or none. That means that the jury uses its own discretion in rendering a verdict of 'guilty' or 'not guilty,' according to the elements of the case.

The citizens of Greensboro are disturbed about the verdict rendered in the case of Joseph D. Herring, who killed Cpl. Joe R. Massey, a 12-year veteran of the police force. There were more than 80 jurymen who stood before the bar to answer questions about their conception of the N. C. law in trying Herring before a jury was finally selected. Many of them did not believe in capital punishment. The 12 who were accepted pledged that they did believe in capital punishment by law, but the defense further asked if in this particular case they found any elements which would justify mercy, if they would recommend mercy.

Herring was given a \$1.50 ticket by Cpl. Massey on May 31 while driving a taxi. He later went home, got his revolver, and came back to a service station and waited until everyone near the service station was off the street and the manager of the service station was closing up. He then walked to the door of the service station where Cpl. Massey was writing his report, and called his name. Upon Cpl. Massey's answering, Herring shot him six times.

The defense did not call any witnesses to rebut the state's evidence. They argued to the jury that the defendant was deranged. They further stated that the defendant had never before committed any crime; he had only committed a few traffic violations. He was progressive, had two jobs, and owned his home. His wife and children were present in the courtroom during every day of the trial.

The defense attorney used examples from the Bible, showing where many Biblical characters had committed such offenses as Herring, and had been forgiven.

Many of my acquaintances have said that the Negro jurists should have persuaded the other jurists to return a verdict of guilty without a recommendation for mercy. Such a verdict would indicate that Negroes are thinking in terms of justice in the courtroom regardless of race, creed, or color.

One of Herring's attorneys who was appointed by the court did a good job in pleading to preserve the life of his client. When an attorney is appointed by the state to render service for a defendant, he has no alternative but to

## THIS WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

### FRIENDLINESS FOR NEWCOMERS

#### PURPOSE OF OUR STUDY

To stress the fact that true religion breaks the barriers of race, nationality, and culture, and to point out that all persons are precious in the sight of God.

#### SCRIPTURE

Read the lesson from your Bible: Ruth.

You will find selected verses printed in the lesson.

**Memory Selection:** He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner therefore; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

—Deuteronomy 10: 18-19

#### LESSON INTERPRETED

In the Hebrew Bible the Book of Ruth appears among five rolls read in synagogues on festival occasions. The other four rolls include the Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther. These books appear among the Writings, the last division of Hebrew Scripture. This fact indicates that they were written after the Babylonian Exile—probably around 400 B.C.

In the Christian Bible the Book of Ruth appears between Judges and First Samuel. This arrangement corresponds to its historical setting, which portrays life late in the period of the judges, immediately preceding the times of Samuel and David. This setting would date the events sometime around 1075 B.C.

**Naomi Returns With a Stranger**  
Naomi returned to Judah after a long life in Moab, where she had gone with her husband. But now her husband and her two sons were dead. Orpah, one daughter-in-law, had chosen to remain in Moab. But Ruth, the widow of the other son, was sincerely attached to her mother-in-law. Therefore, she accompanied her back to Judah.

Ruth 1:19-21

19 So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them; and the women said, "Is this Na'omi?" 20 She said to them, "Do not call me Na'omi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 21 I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi when the Lord has afflicted me and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?"

Bethlehem and Moab were not separated by many miles. In fact Ruth could have stood on the hill of Bethlehem and looked across the Dead Sea to the plains of Moab without difficulty. But the two lands were separated by barriers of bitter enmity. Because of this fact a marriage between a Jew and a Moabite could legally make the descendants Jewish outcasts for ten generations or three hundred years. (See Deuteronomy 23:3-4.)

Ruth was bound to Naomi by strong ties of affection. The natural hostility of Jews to Moabites would put many strains on

those ties in the months ahead, however.

Naomi herself returned under conditions especially sorrowful. Her name meant quite literally "My joy." Once—when her husband and her sons were alive and all went well with them—this name had been appropriate. But now she was a widow, bereft of both husband and sons. Therefore, she indicated that "Mara" or "Bitterness" would be a better name for her. This does not mean that she was bitter but that a difficult lot had fallen upon her. The one mitigating fact in her situation was the loyalty and love of Ruth—her foreign daughter-in-law.

#### A Stranger in Boaz' Field

Early in the story we begin to suspect that Naomi is moving by design. Because she does not expect Ruth's loyalty to go unrewarded, she makes plans concerning a kinsman of her husband, a man both wealthy and generous.

Ruth 1:22 through 2:2

22 So Na'omi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

1 Now Na'omi had a kinsman of her husband's, a man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. 2 And Ruth the Moabitess said to Na'omi, "Let me go to the field, and glean among the ears of grain after him in whose sight I shall find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

The right to glean was a humanitarian provision made by Jewish law for the benefit of widows, orphans, and others who were poor. (See Deuteronomy 24:19-21.) Gathering grain in the wake of the harvesters in this manner was, of course, hard work. It meant long hours of backbreaking labor with little to show at the end of the day. But for an attractive, unattended young woman it could also mean indignities—especially when that young woman was a foreigner.

From our reading of the complete Book of Ruth we know that Boaz took a special interest in the Moabitess from the beginning and that he made sure that she would not be insulted or molested. Naomi's estimate of his character had been correct. He was generous, indeed.

The bitterness that existed between Moabites and Jews is comparable to the modern hostility between Arabs and Jews. Some months ago an Arab guide said to me, "There is not a single Jew living in the Kingdom of Jordan; if one were found, he would be killed instantly."

Friendship between Arabs and Jews in such a setting would be rare indeed. Brutality and maltreatment would be the rule. Boaz was an exceptional Israelite with broad sympathies.

#### Love and Marriages

The story moves like any satisfying love story. Boaz falls in love with Ruth and marries her.

serve, and no one should criticize the attorney, whether he is paid by the defendant or appointed by the state for doing his duty to the best of his ability.

Neither should one pin all the blame upon the jury. I understand that when they went into the jury room with objective minds and discussed the case pro and con, and rendered a verdict of guilty in the first degree with a mercy recommendation. They went home with clear consciences. All the jurists except one reside in High Point.

Cpl. Massey was slain. Herring escaped the gas chamber only by the mercy of the jury. He was sentenced by Judge Walter E. Crissman on July 9, 1959, to serve a life term in prison.

Ruth 4:13-17

13 So Bo'az took Ruth and she became his wife; and he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son. 14 Then the women said to Na'omi, "Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next of kin; and may his name be renowned in Israel! 14 He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him." 16 Then Na'omi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. 17 And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Na'omi." They named him Obed; he was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

There was one obstacle to the marriage. This was the levirate law of Deuteronomy 25: 5-6, which provided that a deceased Jew's next of kin should marry his widow. Another Israelite stood ahead of Boaz. In Ruth 4:1-10 we learn how Boaz met this situation by using for his benefit an ancient custom.

In this account we get the distinct impression that though Boaz was doing his duty his motivation was considerably deeper and more tender than duty. He was in love with Ruth and was clearing the barriers to their marriage.

To get the full impact of this marriage of a Jew to a foreigner—and a hated Moabite foreigner at that—we must read the law by Ezra and Nehemiah in the period after the Exile. (See Ezra 9 and 10 and Nehemiah 13.) If we assume that the Book of Ruth was written right at the time when Ezra and Nehemiah were actually breaking up families created by Moabite and Jewish marriages, we get something of the impact of the book.

The jolt comes when we read the ending. This is the whole point of the book. The son who was born to this marriage was the grandfather of King David, the ideal Israelite. If the strict view of Deuteronomy 23:3-4 and of Ezra and Nehemiah had been applied, not even King David could be called a true Israelite. In the light of this fact the law was an absurdity.

The Book of Ruth is one of two or three dissenting voices lifted in a time of narrow, nationalistic particularism. The other voices were those of the authors of the Book of Jonah and of Isaiah 56:1-7.

Here was a voice advocating a wider, more merciful, more open-hearted point of view. It did not prevail at the time, but later the Christian Church would break the barriers between Jew and Gentile and would unite both of them in the Church. (See Acts 10:34-35 and Galatians 3:28.)

The Book of Ruth gives us two love stories: that of Ruth and Naomi, which represents a sublime friendship, and that of Ruth and Boaz, a romance beautiful mainly because of its simplicity. Both friendship and romance broke the barriers of ancient prejudice.

#### LESSON PRAYER

O God, let us never forget that most of us in America are descended from foreigners. May we never be cruel or thoughtless toward any stranger; and help us deal with all persons in a spirit of good will. Make us ambassadors of thy love and mercy. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.