

The Place of the Book of Ruth in the Canons of the Old Testament

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Various MSS, editions, and catalogues have shown that the Book of Ruth has taken two basic positions in the Christian Bible, namely, after the Book of Judges and among the Hagiographa. The latter is the most common position of the Hebrew Traditions. However, even among the Hagiographa, the Book of Ruth has taken two distinct positions. The formation of a complete Bible or the Canon (Jewish or Christian) is ascribed to a much later date. Even in the 2nd century CE, the books of the Bible were found in separate scrolls. Therefore it had been a very difficult task to determine the original place of the Book of Ruth. However it is logical to think that the book was originally placed among the Hagiographa although there are ample reasons to identify the book as a continuation of the Book of judges. The Christian Tradition was compelled to get their knowledge of the Old Testament from the Jews. Nevertheless, the early Church Fathers, as early as the 2nd century, have always placed the Book of Ruth after the Book of Judges. In this regard, both the Eastern and the Western Christian Traditions are univocal. The basis for such an arrangement is theological as well as historical. Thus, each of these different entries, whether it is in the Hebrew Tradition or of the Christian Tradition, has demonstrated a valid reason for their own cause. To speak of an original position for the book of Ruth is quite absurd. However, the study of the place of the Book of Ruth in the Canon, through the narrative and the historical methods, would invariably allow one to see the differences by reminding one of its universal recognition as an inspired book of God's revelation.