

## ALEXANDROS PRESS

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### RUTH BARTAL THE BOOK OF RUTH AND BLANCHE OF CASTILE WOMEN WITH A HEART OF MEN

Although The Book of Ruth did not gain a remarkable status in the corps of the visual arts of the early centuries of the Christian era, it became a major theme in the works commissioned under the rule of the Capetian family in 13<sup>th</sup>-century France. It was Blanche of Castile who initiated the presentation of the Book of Ruth, assumingly, for two main reasons: As the Capetians considered themselves descendants of the Davidic dynasty and its legitimate heirs, it was only appropriate to manifest Ruth, the biblical heroine, the ancestor of King David. Furthermore, the exegesis of the Book of Ruth that emphasizes the dissemination of Christianity and the triumph of the Church over heresy and Judaism suited the Capetian political and religious ideology. Moreover, the presentation of the Book of Ruth on the stained windows in the Sainte Chapelle in Paris invokes the notion that the Book of Ruth also served as a typological representation of the Capetian royal family and the relations between its members. Ruth Bartal creates a fascinating analogy between the biblical figures of The Book of Ruth and The Capetian queens that were described as "*Women with a heart of men*" through examining four masterpieces of the 13<sup>th</sup> century: The Bibles moralisées, The Morgan Bible, The Saint Chapelle and The Arsenal Bible.

**CONTENTS:** Preface. Introduction. 1. The Book of Ruth – Text and Commentaries. 2. The Capetians – "The most Christian Kings." 3. The Book of Ruth – Early Imagery. 4. The Book of Ruth – Psalters and Bibles in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. 5. The Book of Ruth – Works of Art made for the Capetian Royal Family. 5a. The Bibles moralisées. 5b. The Morgan Bible. 5c. The Saint Chapelle. 5d. The Arsenal Bible. 6. Genealogy – Text and Image. 7. Pilgrimage and Crusade. 8. The Church and the Jews – Ruth and Orpha. Conclusive Remarks – The Question of Patronage. Bibliography. Index. List of Illustrations. Illustrations 1-85.

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Blanche of Castile and Louis IX, Toledo Bible Moralisée, M.240, fol. 8v. Paris 1227-1234, Morgan Library and Museum, New York



Debora leading the army, Morgan Bible, M.638, fol. 12r. Paris 1230-1238, Morgan Library and Museum, New York