



Against the Inveterate Obduracy of the Jews (Fathers of the Church Medieval Continuations)

Peter the Venerable

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Peter the Venerable (d. 1156), the powerful abbot of Cluny, left behind not only extensive letter collections, but also polemical treatises intended to refute contemporary challenges to Christianity. Perhaps the most important is *Against the Inveterate Obduracy of the Jews (Adversus Judeorum inveteratam duritiem)*, written between *Against the Saracens* (ca. 1150) and *Against the Petrobrusians* (ca. 1139-41).

Against the Inveterate Obduracy of the Jews represents a turning point in medieval anti-Jewish polemics. On the one hand, the polemic's intention?to bring about the conversion of the Jews?is predicated on an assumption that Jews are rational agents who may be persuaded of Christian truths by philosophical argument, empirical evidence, and proper biblical exegesis. On the other hand, Peter also introduced the notion that the Jews' enduring "blindness" stems from a persistent strain of bestial irrationality, for which they themselves are responsible. Peter traces this irrationality to the medieval Jews' commitment to the Talmud.

Peter is the first medieval Christian author to name the Talmud explicitly. The Jewish convert to Christianity, Petrus Alfonsi, had ridiculed Talmudic folklore in his *Dialogue Against the Jews*. Peter the Venerable borrowed from but also surpassed Alfonsi's critique, as even his use of the name Talmud indicates. By emphasizing the irrationality of the Jews, Peter cast doubt upon their essential humanity and paved the way toward an increasingly violent treatment of the Jewish minority in medieval Christendom. Perhaps for this reason, Peter's *Against the Inveterate Obduracy of the Jews* has been popular among modern anti-Semites as well.

With this translation, Irven M. Resnick makes the complete work available for the first time in English.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR:

Irven M. Resnick is professor of philosophy and religion, and Chair of Excellence in Judaic Studies at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He is a corresponding fellow at the Ingeborg Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies at Bar-Ilan University and a senior associate at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. His most recent

publications include translations of Albert the Great, Petrus Alfonsi, and Peter Damian in the Fathers of the Church Mediaeval Continuation Series, as well as the newly published *Marks of Distinction: Christian Perceptions of Jews in the High Middle Ages*.



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