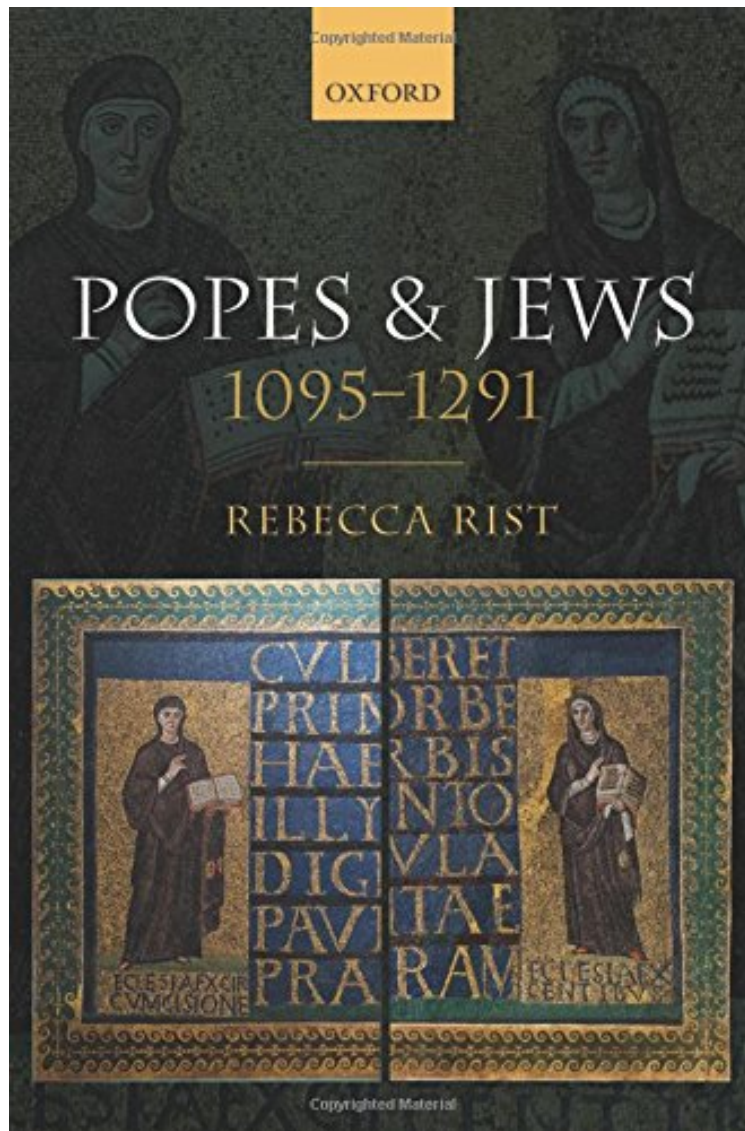


## Popes and Jews, 1095-1291

Rebecca Rist

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#2388760 in Books 2016-03-07Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 6.50 x 1.10 x 9.30l, .0 #File Name: 0198717989336 pages | File size: 56.Mb

**Rebecca Rist : Popes and Jews, 1095-1291** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Popes and Jews, 1095-1291:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Church law treated Jews like an ineradicable infection that could only be managedBy Bryan J. FarrellThe thorny relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jews during the high Middle Ages was not unlike that of step parent and unwanted step child: a mix of loveless, obligatory tolerance, protection and regulation. The Church reluctantly accepted the Jews as the chosen, though stubborn, people of God,

and the Old Testament was the accepted foundation of Christianity, as it foretold the coming of the Messiah. That, however, was where the common runway ended. Christian theology mandated the protection of the Jews, but their rejection of Christ relegated them to a subservient position within Christian society. This, then, is the theme that emerges in the Church's governance throughout the period of the Crusades. The delicateness of this distinction often proved difficult in the execution, and sometimes disastrous for the Jewish people. In *Popes and Jews: 1095-1291*, Rebecca Rist seeks to reassess the evidence of the relationship between the Church and the Jews in light of the papacy's wider attempt to shape and direct European society during the Crusades, and to correct, in her view, the notion that Papal policy toward the Jews was static during this period. Rist also seeks to determine whether there is a common thread that binds together papal pronouncements, canonical law, and councilor legislation in an underlying belief that contact between Jews and Christians would ultimately weaken Christian society. Rist concludes that papal policy toward the Jews hardened during this period, no doubt affected by the Church's active role in promoting the Crusades, but also as a result of its attempt to maintain the supremacy of Christians within Christian society by restricting the activities of Jews. Rist disputes the notion, however, that papal protection, the overarching theme of this book, was consistently employed as a policy, noting that papal pronouncements that Jews were to be protected were issued almost exclusively in response to petitions from Christians and Jews. In the case of the former, petitions typically questioned the propriety of Jewish actions, while in the latter, Jews sought protection during dangerous times. Rist searches for a common, connecting theme throughout Church law during this period and finds it not a difficult one. Church law treated Jews like an ineradicable infection that could only be managed. To protect the faithful, the Church legislatively sought to identify, isolate and fence them in, except when they might serve larger Church interests such as fundraising. Segregation and marginalization were themes that ran through Church law that sought to quash the voice of these internal heretics. But not all interaction could be eliminated if the Church was to stay faithful to its theological roots. Money lending at interest often brought the propriety of Christian-Jewish relations into focus, and here, the pope occasionally walked a fine line. On the one hand, he needed his subjects financially freed up so they could volunteer as crusaders, but on the other, he understood the preeminent role money lending played in a growing mercantile society. Limitations on money lending at interest had a theological basis, but the maintenance and growth of the Church treasury was at least equal in importance. Thus, apostolic relief from usurious interest had an ebb and flow to it. To support her thesis, Rist places side by side chronological analyses of the evolution of a number of themes during this period: 1) the theological basis for papal policy toward the Jews, 2) Jewish ideas about the Papacy, 3) the impact of the Crusades, 4) Jews and money, 5) papal claims of authority over the Jews, 6) the papacy and the place of Jews, 7) Jews in Rome, and 8) papal rhetoric. Whereas the view from the church is based on references to papal encyclicals, correspondence, and secondary sources, Rist, in her search for clues to Jewish thinking at the time, claims to break new ground by mining what she describes as an under-developed area--Jewish folktales, chronicles, rabbinic writings, legend, and disputational literature, though the sources for these appear to be secondary in nature. Rist readily acknowledges the imprecision they offer as sources, among them, the inability to identify authors and the time of the writing, the inability to discern whether the particular views represented the thinking of only very learned Jewish writers or the people at large, and whether some have any basis in fact at all. Conclusions drawn from some of these sources may sometimes be fairly described as grenade-like in their accuracy, rather than rifle shots, but they do provide a taste of Jewish thinking. On the Christian side, the Church consistently hewed to the theological underpinning of its relationship with the Jews. Pauline/Augustinian beliefs made clear that there was an unbreakable connection between the Old and New Testaments, that Jews were the children of God, and that they bore witness to the truth. Where the two most fundamentally diverged, of course, was in the recognition of Christ as the Messiah. The Old Testament foretold the coming of the Messiah and confirmed the truth of the New Testament. Paul believed that a remnant of the Jews would be reconciled to Christianity and converted at the end of days. Pauline/Augustinian teachings in this regard were reinforced in the Theodosian and Justinian Codes and in the statements of later popes. Still, the difficulty of dealing with heretics within, while warring with heretics without, persisted. Papal correspondence throughout the 12th and 13th centuries drew a clear distinction between Muslims and heretics, on the one hand, and Jews on the other. Only Jews in their role as witnesses held a special place in God's plan of salvation and therefore merited particular protection. However, papal pronouncements of protection began much earlier, under Gregory in the 6th century, with the issuance of the *Sicut Iudaeis*, which mandated that Jews were to be protected in their person and property. The same document was reissued many times in the next seven centuries under the name of the *Constitutio Pro Iudaeis*, although, as discussed, mostly in response to petitions from Christians and Jews. These pronouncements had varying degrees of success, however, and did not prevent pogroms, expulsions and confiscations from occurring in the Eleventh and Twelfth centuries in parts of what is now Germany, and in France. These events might be understood in light of the rhetoric employed by the Popes to recruit crusaders. The call to the Cross would have made it difficult for less discriminating crusaders to separate external crusaders from an internal group which had long been identified as guilty of blood libel, host desecration, and as the killers of Christ. Indeed, the term crusades is derived from the French word *crois* or cross. Rist's account of Hebrew writings during this time, even if accepted as more of a sampling or overview--- depicts a people who acknowledged the role of the popes as leaders of society and their importance in

Jewish life. They express gratitude for the Popes protection, but that did not cause them to refrain from referring to the Pope as Satan in an 11th Century text, or from engaging in a tit for tat with Christians on the theological basis for many touchy subjects, which suggests that some Jews felt quite comfortable with the popes promise of protection. For example, Jews disputed that Christ was the Messiah on the basis of Old Testament scripture in which God said that no man would see Me [when I return as Messiah]. They even disputed the notion of apostolic succession, and the power of popes and clergy to grant penance, saying that the pope was under God and that not even Moses had the power to forgive. Reminiscent of the story of latter, some Jews contended that the Messiah, when he came, would order the release of the Jews from papal control. One Jewish legend, believed to be derived from an Old Testament passage, is particularly illustrative of these perceptions. The legend of Elhanan is the story of the son of a famous German rabbi who is stolen by a Christian servant, baptized and raised by priests. He ultimately ascends to the papacy. Although he remembers his Jewish roots, he elected to remain Christian for a time. In order to bring his father to Rome, he issues a letter to the Bishop of Mainz, barring Jews from observing the Sabbath, circumcising their sons, and denying Jewish women the right to take ritual baths. As expected, a petition soon reaches his father who in turn petitions his son. Once Elhanan sees his father, he withdraws the papal letter. More importantly, Elhanan successfully challenges his father to a game of chess. Upon his victory, Elhanan returns to Judaism. The lesson that the son is the father of the man, coupled with Elhanans ultimate return to Judaism, demonstrate that Judaism is the father of Christianity and the true religion. The Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries saw a rise of anti-Jewish legislation and pronouncements that Rist argues may have corresponded with a perceived increase in Jewish wealth. Increasing wealth is usually associated with increased political power, and the Church, in order to maintain Jews in their marginalized role, responded with renewed vigor in prohibiting them from holding political office and from employing Christians in subservient roles. Tightening the screws further, Lateran IV barred converted Jews from converting back to Judaism, and Jews who converted Christians were punished. Although forced conversion was avoided, Mendicant Friars, in the second half of the Thirteenth Century, sought to require Jews to attend Franciscan sermons. The Church even offered tax abatements to Jews who converted. These Church actions, along with canons that required Jews to wear identifying insignia and remain in their homes during Easter, support Rists conviction that, fundamentally, the Church believed that interaction between Christians and Jews would weaken Christian society. But a bigger event crystallized in 1240, one that threatened the theological basis for papal protection. The Talmuda collection of rabbinic teachings-- was gaining wide distribution and prominence among European Jews. If the Jews followed Talmud teachings that were outside of, or conflicted with, the Old Testament, as was argued by Christians, how were the internal and external heretics to be distinguished? And if the Jews departed from the teachings of the Old Testament, what theological basis remained for the immunity they enjoyed from charges of heresy? Gregory IX responded with the Paris Disputation of 1240. Gregory ordered the collection of all copies of the Talmud in France so they could be examined for heresies, which would be established if differences from the Old Testament could be proven. So the Talmud itself went on trial. Heresies were found, at least to the satisfaction of an ecclesiastic jury, and copies of the Talmud were burned. The extension of papal jurisdiction to include determinations of Jewish adherence to the Old Testament was confirmed by Gregory IXs successor, Innocent IV. Now, if Jews strayed from the Old Testament, the pope could brand and punish them as heretics. Overall, Rist is successful in establishing her modest objectives. Papal policy was not really policy at all, but a reaction to petitions and varying social conditions. Part of this may be due to the fact that Jews made up only about 1% of Christian society at the time and were not at the top of the popes priority list. The canons of Lateran IV mandating the wearing of identifying insignia by the Jews, along with the prohibitions against mixing, sexual relations, and employment, make clear that the Church believed that Christian interaction with Jews was corrosive and needed to be limited. Only conversion would improve the station of Jews within Christian society, and that too was a one way street. In addition, to the extent her research into Jewish thinking at the time is in fact groundbreaking and can be credited, she has added to the scholarship of the period. Although this book is rich in facts and easy to read, it could have been shorter. The selected themes were too similar and resulted in some repetition. It would have been helpful if the author had woven the various themes into a single narrative in the conclusion, but she did not. The conclusion is disappointingly brief. To her credit, the author successfully and refreshingly avoided the use of the overly esoteric language that only burdens a text and interrupts the reader. Rist states that the book was written for historians and academics, but I think its audience could be wider. With a little introduction to the period, I think early students of history and others interested in the period would profit from its reading.

In *Popes and Jews, 1095-1291*, Rebecca Rist explores the nature and scope of the relationship of the medieval papacy to the Jewish communities of western Europe. Rist analyses papal pronouncements in the context of the substantial and on-going social, political, and economic changes of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, as well the characters and preoccupations of individual pontiffs and the development of Christian theology. She breaks new ground in exploring the other side of the story - Jewish perceptions of both individual popes and the papacy as an institution - through analysis of a wide range of contemporary Hebrew and Latin documents. The author engages with the works of recent scholars in the field of Christian-Jewish relations to examine the social and legal status of Jewish

communities in light of the papacy's authorisation of crusading, prohibitions against money lending, and condemnation of the Talmud, as well as increasing charges of ritual murder and host desecration, the growth of both Christian and Jewish polemical literature, and the advent of the Mendicant Orders. *Popes and Jews, 1095-1291* is an important addition to recent work on medieval Christian-Jewish relations. Furthermore, its subject matter - religious and cultural exchange between Jews and Christians during a period crucial for our understanding of the growth of the Western world, the rise of nation states, and the development of relations between East and West - makes it extremely relevant to today's multi-cultural and multi-faith society.

Rist's preface - like the book as a whole - is thoughtful, nuanced and necessary \* Benedict Wiedemann, s in History \*About the Author Rebecca Rist's research interests include the history of crusading, Jewish-Christian relations, the medieval Church, the papacy, religious belief, and political ideas in the Central Middle Ages. Her book *The Papacy and Crusading in Europe, 1198-1245* (2009) examined the papacy's authorization of crusades against heretics and political enemies in Europe during the first half of the thirteenth century. Her co-authored book *The Cathars and the Albigensian Crusade: A Sourcebook* with C. Leglu and C. Taylor (2014) brought together a rich and diverse range of medieval sources to examine key aspects of the growth of heresy and dissent in southern France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Recent articles have explored aspects of papal policy with regard to crusading and the papacy's treatment of heretics and Jews in the High Middle Ages.