

# Jerusalem Letters

## **Is Ahashverosh Jesus?**

By Yoram Hazony, December 8, 2015

While researching my new book *God and Politics in Esther*, I've come across repeated references to the Esther commentary of the medieval Christian theologian and Bible scholar Rabanus Maurus, known as "the teacher of Germany" in the decades after Charlemagne. The reason that this commentary is of interest is that, although it was not published until the year 836, it is apparently the first Christian commentary ever written about Esther.

In recent decades, we've witnessed a tidal wave of Christian writing on Esther. The Esther story is now the subject of perhaps four or five popular and scholarly Christian works a year, most of them enthusiastic about the Jewish heroine and the taut political story line that showcases her abilities and faith.

But some earlier Christians apparently had a harder time with this story of Jewish political intrigue, and sought to read the story allegorically. What especially caught my eye were references to the fact that Rabanus Maurus had regarded Ahashverosh—the reckless, drunken and generally amoral king of Persia in the Esther story—as prefiguring Jesus!

Could this possibly be true? I didn't want to be citing something wild like this without having read it. Not finding a translation, I started struggling with the Latin. When I looked at it, I came away with the impression that Rabanus Maurus also saw Haman—the Hitler-like prime minister in the story—as a representation of the Jews! So that when the Jews emerge

victorious at the end of the book of Esther, Rabanus Maurus reads the text as saying precisely the opposite: That Judaism is annihilated....

When I got to this point, I realized that this was too interesting to put down. I asked to have the commentary translated, and I now have a complete draft translation of Rabanus Maurus' text done by Peter Wyetzner, which I am hereby posting:

The draft translation into English of Rabanus Maurus' commentary on Esther is [here](#).

The Latin original of Rabanus Maurus' commentary on Esther is [here](#).

Given that some may find this material to be sensitive or controversial, I am posting the translation as a draft for now. I welcome proposed amendments or corrections to the translation if any are needed. You can send them to me at [yhazony@herzlinstitute.org](mailto:yhazony@herzlinstitute.org). Proposed corrections will be taken into account before publication of the final version of the translation.