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who are trapped in a theology of rivalry that has to defame and sometimes physically attack another people to legitimize their own existence. As God's children, both communities deserve better.

I do not share Maccoby's somewhat gloomy view of the various Christian statements, guidelines, resolutions, and pronouncements that condemn and repudiate anti-Semitism. He regards them as being of limited value. But just as anti-Semitism was transmitted to believing Christians through a series of earlier negative teachings and manifestos, so too, positive and authoritative teachings can be effectively employed in the war against Christian anti-Semitism.

Our generation has a rare opportunity to be remembered in future history as the generation that finally brought Christian anti-Semitism to an end. Using scholarship, albeit incomplete, using the powerful and compelling mandates of the Second Vatican Council and various Protestant resolutions and statements as driving forces for positive change, sustained by the magnificent achievements of religious pluralism in this country, and above all, driven by a fierce commitment to truth and to rectifying the bloody persecutions of the past, we should leave here today strengthened and enriched. Although Professor Maccoby has not finished the task for us, he has, with his probing mind and his searching spirit, goaded us to do more, much more. Can we do anything less than accept his challenge?

### *A Response to Professor Maccoby's Thesis*

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum

I am pleased to be here because I believe that Professor Hyam Maccoby's provocative thesis represents the beginning of an exceedingly important debate. Let me locate myself by saying that I find myself, both in terms of examination of history—religious, cultural and ideological history—as well as theological issues, somewhere squarely in the middle between Dr. Maccoby and Dr. Eugene Fisher. And that's not because I have a need to plant both of my feet squarely in the middle of the air, but rather because I think the dialectic which began here today is of real consequence.

This dialectic involves an examination of the whole question of the relationship of certain traditions in Christian teaching to Jews and Judaism, as well as an examination of more recent developments of profound importance, especially since Vatican Council II.

I think Dr. Fisher rightly said that these developments have not been adequately taken into account by Dr. Maccoby. Having said that, let me state at the outset what I appreciate in what Dr. Maccoby has done in this study. In this work, *The Sacred Executioner*, and in his earlier books he has raised up central issues to the level of public consciousness. In *The Judean Revolution*, among others, he has faced the centrality of the question of demonology which must be confronted more adequately, more profoundly than, I believe, most Jews and Christians engaged in the Jewish-Christian dialogue have been prepared to deal with thus far. And I am not sure that we have adequately dealt with these conceptions because we are far more creatures of the twentieth century enlightenment and its preoccupation with rationalism, social science and other categories. This rationalist mindset is inadequate to deal with the power of fanaticism, the power of demonology, the



power of diabolizing, of dehumanizing which has dominated the greater part of the past 1900 years.

Now I want to address that demonological tradition and its power which continues to this day. And, in fact, I want to suggest that unless we find some way of recognizing the power of that diabolic appeal to human consciousness, its capacity to elicit fanatic responses which lead to the dehumanization of the other, and its capacity for creating a justification for destroying the other, we will not make progress on the deepest levels in relationships between Jews and Christians. Unless we are able to define the sources of that fanatic demonological world-view, we will simply not develop the categories and the basic conceptions which are essential for a method and technique for dealing with what is today the central threat in international law and order.

The Shi'ite Moslems—as a dramatic example—are operating on such a demonology and find all kinds of justification for destroying the other. Thus, Shi'ite Islamic theology assures that one may enter Heaven by being prepared to commit suicide in destroying “the enemy,” “the Great Satan.”

Dr. Fisher's statement, I think, is an important corrective in terms of articulating the ambivalences and ambiguities of Christian theological tradition regarding Jews and Judaism, and does require a far greater resonance in Dr. MacCoby's presentation of his thesis.

I had occasion to write a paper after Vatican Council II which appeared in a large volume issued by the University of Notre Dame, which shortly will be reissued. As I review the materials on the emergence of the Christian ambivalence of love-and-hate to Jews and Judaism, I was struck by the power of those affirmations which exist in Christian tradition even down into the Middle Ages which most Jews have simply screened out of their consciousness. That is probably due to the fact that the history of Jews and Christians has been for the greater part of the past 2,000 years so overwhelmingly an experience of oppression and denial. There is not enough moral energy left even to want to hold

out the possibility that there were some important Christian affirmations about Jews and Judaism.

I believe that the Nazi Holocaust and all that has meant for the Christian conscience, as well as the tremendous needs of a new world of the twentieth century in which Christians and Jews together find themselves increasingly a minority in relation to a non-white, non-Judeo-Christian world, are compelling us to confront the deep realities of the relationship between Christians and Jews. Fundamentally, Christianity had never made up its mind as to where it stands in terms of its common patrimony with Judaism and its daily attitudes and relationships and behavior toward Jews. We find as we look into the history of the Christian-Jewish encounter for the greater part of the past two millenia that there have been teachings and episodes betokening the greatest of mutual respect and esteem between Christians and Jews. Thus, we find St. Athanasius, one of the early Church Fathers at the beginning of the fourth century, who said that “the Jews are the great school of the knowledge of God and the spiritual life of all mankind.” St. Jerome, who lived in the fifth century and who spent forty years in Palestine where in Caesarea with Jewish scholars and biblical authorities he studied the Holy Scriptures and the Masoretic traditions—and from whom he obtained insights on which he based his translation of the Scriptures into the Vulgate—declared that “the Jews were divinely preserved for a purpose worthy of God.”

This side of the affirmative attitude of the Church toward the Jews reflected the tradition of St. Paul in *Romans* 9 to 11, which speaks of Christians being engrafted onto the olive tree of Israel (11:17) planted by God. This tradition also found expression in positive behavior of popes even in the Middle Ages. Thus Callixtus II issued a bull in 1120 beginning with the words “Sicut Judaeis” in which he strongly condemned the forced baptism of Jews, acts of violence against their lives and property, and the desecration of synagogues and Jewish cemeteries. Gregory IX issued the bull “Etsi Judeorum” in 1233 in which he demanded



that the Jews in Christian countries should be treated with the same humanity as with which Christians desire to be treated in heathen lands.

Side by side with that tradition there existed a tradition of hostility and contempt which the late French historian, Professor Jules Isaac, has written about in his various studies.<sup>1</sup> This tradition was perhaps most explicitly embodied in the eight sermons of St. John Chrysostom, who in the year 387 spoke from the pulpits of the city of Antioch to the first congregations of early Gentiles who became Christians, saying:

I know that a certain number of the faithful have for the Jews a certain respect and hold their ceremonies in reverence. This provokes me to eradicate completely such a disastrous opinion. I have already brought forward that the synagogue is worth no more than the theatre. . . it is a place of prostitution. It is a den of thieves and a hiding place of wild animals. . . not simply of animals but of impure beasts. . . God has abandoned them. What hope of salvation have they left?

They say that they too worship God but this is not so. None of the Jews, not one of them is a worshipper of God. . . Since they have disowned the Father, crucified the Son and rejected the Spirit's help, who would dare to assert that the synagogue is not a home of demons! God is not worshipped there. It is simply a house of idolatry. . . The Jews live for their bellies, they crave for the goods of this world. In shamelessness and greed they surpass even pigs and goats. . . The Jews are possessed by demons, they are handed over to impure spirits. . . Instead of greeting them and addressing them as much as a word, you should turn away from them as from a pest and a plague of the human race.<sup>2</sup>

Now, if one enters into the historic background and the context within which St. John Chrysostom made these remarks, perhaps one can understand a little better—one can explain but certainly not excuse—what led St. John Chrysostom to make these anti-Jewish polemics. It may be useful

to take a moment to observe that the Church in the first four centuries of this era was struggling for its existence as an autonomous, independent faith community. In the minds of the Roman Empire the early Christians represented another Jewish sect. Judaism was the *religio licita* (a favored religion), and for early Christians to achieve any status, including the right to conduct Christian ceremonies, they had to come as Jews to achieve recognition by the Romans.<sup>3</sup> And so the early Church fathers found it necessary to separate Christians from the Jews. The early Christians felt very close to Jews; observed their Sabbath on the Jewish Sabbath, their Easter on the Jewish Passover. At the time of the Council of Elvira (ca. 300) many Christians in Spain thought the Jews had a special charisma as the People of God and therefore invited them to bless their fields so that they would be fruitful. To separate Christians from their associations with Judaism, to create a sense of autonomy and independence for Christianity, apparently in the wisdom of the early Church fathers it became necessary to embark on a drastic effort to break the bonds between church and synagogue and to give Christians a consciousness of difference from the Jews. In the process of this disidentification, however, the pattern of anti-Jewish attitudes and of anti-Jewish behavior became so entrenched, that by the time the Church became the established religion of the Roman Empire, these attitudes were reflected increasingly in ecclesiastical legislation. These laws subsequently led to the establishment of ghettos, the forcing of Jews to wear yellow hats and badges, and in general, this legislation reduced Jews to the status of pariahs throughout the Roman Empire. As the Church became the major institution integrating the whole of medieval society, the perception of the Jew within medieval Christendom became the perception of the Jew within Western culture and civilization.

The magnitude, the weight, the burden of that demonological conception of the Jews begins with Judas and becomes incorporated in the secular culture—and everything derives from that. As one faces the magnitude of that one



realizes the need of the massive response to that demonology. And it will take more than minor modifications.

That is why the audience of Pope John Paul II in 1980, and again now,\* is of such supreme importance. Only the power, the mystical power of the authority of the Holy Father of the Roman Catholic Church who has the capacity to say to more than 800,000,000 Roman Catholics throughout the world that the Church rejects this tradition. It is of another time, another culture, another history. We are in a new time and a new place. As the Pope declared in the statement to us, the new attitude in terms of the Catholic Church toward the Jewish people is one of respect, indeed, as he declares, of love which is profound and which the New Testament inherited from the Old Testament. The relationship today must be a break with the history of that past and a whole new series of responses are required to one another.

I must say to you the work of Dr. Eugene Fisher—which is based on earlier work with a dear friend and colleague with whom I was associated in Vatican Council II, Father Edward Flannery—has been monumental. Their profound commitment and dedication to facing every residue of anti-Jewish defamation, whatever its source, throughout the whole of the Roman Catholic Church in this country, in textbooks, in liturgy, in sermons, in providing adult education and audio-visual aids, are the hope of the future. We are enormously in their debt for their willingness, honesty, and candor as American Christians, who had nothing to do with the European experience, to face the full weight of those 2,000 years. They search for truth and justice to seek to bring about a new attitude, as the Vatican Council Declaration declared 20 years ago, of “mutual respect based on fraternal dialogue” and working together for the benefit of an ailing, broken and fragmented world by a common service to humanity.

\*Ed. note: Rabbi Tanenbaum was a member of the American Jewish Committee delegation that had an extraordinary audience with Pope John Paul II on February 15, 1985.

## NOTES

1. Jules Isaac, *Jesus and Israel*. Edited, and with a foreword, by Claire Huchet Bishop. Translated by Sally Gran. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Has Anti-Semitism Roots in Christianity?* Translated from the French by Dorothy and James Parkes. New York: National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1961.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Teaching of Contempt. Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism*. Translated by Helen Weaver. Biographical introduction by Claire Huchet Bishop. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964.

2. Martin Luther appropriated these anti-Jewish polemics and incorporated both the images and rhetoric in his “The Jews and Their Lies.” See Eric W. Gritsch and Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, *Luther and the Jews*. New York: The Lutheran Council in the U. S. A.

3. See James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*. London: Soncino Press, 1934.