

Eight Homilies Against the Jews by Saint John Chrysostom Quotes (Early Church Antisemitism)

Intro (Quotes Below)

Rabbi Tovia Singer:

All the church fathers, every one of them was a virulent antisemite; who made David Duke look like he's the president of Hadassah. I mean, I'm talking about the people that are venerated, like Tertullian, they literally wrote books called, "Against the Jews." Luther, Martin Bucer (who was his contemporary), these people hated Jews. They despised them. All of them; Origen, all these people that you have a great respect for, they couldn't stand the Jews.¹

They also saw the Jews as completely blind. They all said that. Look, and if what I said to you sounds like I'm stretching, I'm overstating it, you think I'm anti-Christian, go online. They have the writings of the church fathers for free, the copyright and trademarks are all way over. So just Control F, do a search for the word "Jew" and see what they said. And this is how Christian children were raised. Jews are blinded and they just can't see what is obvious to everybody

¹ Tovia Singer, 'Prof. Craig Evans Debates Rabbi Tovia Singer: Is Jesus the Promised Jewish Messiah?', (YouTube, 12/1/2017, 46:59) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGVochFzup4>>.

else. There are scales over their eyes, as Paul says. And that's how Christians are thinking.²

Overview:

Saint John Chrysostom (c. 349–407 AD) was an influential early Church Father and Archbishop of Constantinople, renowned for his eloquent preaching and public speaking, which earned him the nickname "Chrysostomos," meaning "golden-mouthed" in Greek. He is recognized as a Doctor of the Church in both Eastern Orthodox and Western Christianity.

Chrysostom's sermons and writings had a significant impact on Christian theology, particularly in the areas of the interpretation of the Bible, Christian ethics, and liturgical practices. He is particularly noted for his expositions of the New Testament and his approach to applying Christian teachings to everyday life. His eloquence and persuasive style made his works widely read and respected.

However, Chrysostom's legacy is also marked by controversy, particularly his series of eight homilies known as "Against the Jews." These writings are often cited as an early example of Christian antisemitism, containing harsh rhetoric and negative

² TeNaK Talk (TaNaCh), '337) 98 - Let's Get Biblical Q&A with Rabbi Tovia Singer', (YouTube, 3/7/2017, 40:05)
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLOaoRfNxYg&t=5427s>>.

stereotypes about Jews and Judaism. These homilies have been the subject of much scholarly debate and criticism, especially in light of contemporary interfaith dialogue and efforts to address historical antisemitism within the Christian tradition.

Despite these controversies, Chrysostom remains a venerated figure in Christian history. He is commemorated as a saint in the Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran churches. His contributions to Christian liturgy, particularly the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, widely used in the Eastern Orthodox Church, have cemented his status as a key figure in the development of Christian worship.³

Quotes:

Another very serious illness calls for any cure my words can bring, an illness which has become implanted in the body of the Church. We must first root this ailment out and then take thought for matters outside; we must first cure our own and then be concerned for others who are strangers. What is this disease? The festivals of the pitiful and miserable Jews are soon to march upon us one after the other and in quick succession: the feast of Trumpets, the feast of Tabernacles, the fasts. There are many in our ranks who say they

³ Description provided by ChatGPT.

think as we do. Yet some of these are going to watch the festivals and others will join the Jews in keeping their feasts and observing their fasts. I wish to drive this perverse custom from the Church right now. My homilies against the Anomians can be put off to another time, and the postponement would cause no harm. But now that the Jewish festivals are close by and at the very door, if I should fail to cure those who are sick with the Judaizing disease. I am afraid that, because of their illsuited association and deep ignorance, some Christians may partake in the Jews' transgressions; once they have done so, I fear my homilies on these transgressions will be in vain. For if they hear no word from me today, they will then join the Jews in their fasts; once they have committed this sin it will be useless for me to apply the remedy. And so it is that I hasten to anticipate this danger and prevent it. This is what physicians do. They first check the diseases which are most urgent and acute.

From their childhood they read the prophets, but they crucified him whom the prophets had foretold.

Just so the Jewish people were driven by their drunkenness and plumpness to the ultimate evil; they kicked about, they failed to accept the yoke of Christ, nor did they pull the plow of his teaching. Another prophet hinted at this when he said: "Israel is as obstinate

as a stubborn heifer". And still another called the Jews "an untamed calf". Although such beasts are unfit for work, they are fit for killing. And this is what happened to the Jews: while they were making themselves unfit for work, they grew fit for slaughter. This is why Christ said: "But as for these my enemies, who did not want me to be king over them, bring them here and slay them". [Luke 19:27] You Jews should have fasted then, when drunkenness was doing those terrible things to you, when your gluttony was giving birth to your ungodliness—not now. Now your fasting is untimely and an abomination. Who said so? Isaiah himself when he called out in a loud voice: "I did not choose this fast, say the Lord". Why? "You quarrel and squabble when you fast and strike those subject to you with your fists". But if your fasting was an abomination when you were striking your fellow slaves, does it become acceptable now that you have slain your Master? How could that be right?

[RU.org highlights observations from two different books that are relevant to the previously mentioned quote:

Jews in Medieval Christendom: Slay Them Not:

Augustine did not develop his doctrine in a vacuum. The fourth century had seen Christianity grow from a persecuted minority sect to the official religion of empire. Though its actual enemy at that time was less Judaism than it was the threat posed by

paganism, heresy, and schism, the problem of the appeal of Judaizing—the maintaining or adopting of Jewish practices by Christian converts—that had confronted Paul remained real, and churchmen like John Chrysostom did not hesitate to attack both Jews and Judaizing in violent and uncompromising rhetoric. For Chrysostom, Jews are equally godless as pagans, and their impiety has turned them into ungovernable animals, fit only for slaughter "Although such beasts are unfit for work, they are fit for killing. And this is what happened to the Jews: while they were making themselves unfit for work, they grew fit for slaughter. This is why Christ said: But as for these my enemies, who did not want me to be king over them, bring them here and slay them." Despite the violence of his rhetoric, Chrysostom does not appear to be calling for the literal death of Jews; he wished merely to "stitch shut the mouths of the Jews" and to convert them to Christianity.⁴

Augustine and World Religions:

In his Discourses, Chrysostom combines several of the stock images of early Christian anti-Judaism (e.g., Jewish carnality, blindness, obduracy; deicide; divine rejection and replacement by the church) with novel and more scathing accusations to produce what has been described as "the most vituperative and vindictive attack on the Jews from Christian antiquity." Reminiscent of Melito's *On the Passover*, Chrysostom calls the Jews "pitiable and

⁴ Utterback, Kristine T., and Merrall Llewelyn Price, eds. "Jews in Medieval Christendom: Slay Them Not." Leiden: Brill, 2013, p. 2.

miserable" because, after having received so many blessings from heaven, they rejected the very source of these gifts, Christ himself. They are a stiff-necked people who refused to take up the easy yoke of Christ. Instead, like "brute animals," the carnal Jews ate and drank so much that they became obstinate, failing to accept Christ's yoke or pull the plow of his teaching. In response, Chrysostom elevates anti-Jewish polemic to an unprecedented height (or nadir, more properly) when he explains that the sub-human Jews ought to be murdered: "Although such beasts are unfit for work, they are fit for killing. And this is what happened to the Jews: while they were making themselves unfit for work [through gluttony and drunkenness], they grew fit for slaughter. This is why Christ said: 'But as for these my enemies, who did not want me to be king over them, bring them here and slay them' [Lk 19:27] Chrysostom also rails against those Christians who are "sick with the Judaizing disease." Struggling to understand why followers of Christ would share customs and practices with those who killed him, Chrysostom declares: "Consider, then, with whom they are sharing their fasts. It is with those who shouted: 'Crucify him, Crucify him' [Lk 23:21], with those who said: 'His blood be upon us and upon our children' [Mt 27:25]. . . . Is it not strange that those who worship the Crucified keep common festival with those who crucified him? Is it not a sign of folly and the worst madness?" These words make clear that Chrysostom, like most ancient and medieval Christian exegetes, understands the statement of blood-guilt in Mt 27:25 as

evidence that all Jews of all times and places, not simply certain ones in first-century Jerusalem, are responsible for killing Christ.^{5]}

Many, I know, respect the Jews and think that their present way of life is a venerable one. This is why I hasten to uproot and tear out this deadly opinion. I said that the synagogue is no better than a theater and I bring forward a prophet as my witness. Surely the Jews are not more deserving of belief than their prophets. "You had a harlot's brow; you became shameless before all". Where a harlot has set herself up, that place is a brothel. But the synagogue is not only a brothel and a theater; it also is a den of robbers and a lodging for wild beasts. Jeremiah said: "Your house has become for me the den of a hyena". He does not simply say "of wild beast", but "of a filthy wild beast", and again: "I have abandoned my house, I have cast off my inheritance". But when God forsakes a people, what hope of salvation is left? When God forsakes a place, that place becomes the dwelling of demons. But at any rate the Jews say that they, too, adore God. God forbid that I say that. No Jew adores God! Who say so? The Son of God say so. For he said: "If you were to know my Father, you would also know me. But you neither know me nor do you know my Father". Could I produce a witness more trustworthy than the Son of God?

⁵ Paffenroth, Kim, Brian Brown, and John Doody, eds. "Augustine and World Religions." Lexington Books, 2008, pp. 43-44.

If, then, the Jews fail to know the Father, if they crucified the Son, if they thrust off the help of the Spirit, who should not make bold to declare plainly that the synagogue is a dwelling of demons? God is not worshipped there. Heaven forbid! From now on it remains a place of idolatry. But still some people pay it honor as a holy place.

Our churches are not like that; they are truly frightening and filled with fear. God's presence makes a place frightening because he has power over life and death. In our churches we hear countless homilies on eternal punishments, on rivers of fire, on the venomous worm, on bonds that cannot be burst, or exterior darkness. But the Jews neither know nor dream of these things. They live for their bellies, they gape for the things of this world, their condition is not better than that of pigs or goats because of their wanton ways and excessive gluttony. They know but one thing: to fill their bellies and be drunk, to get all cut and bruised, to be hurt and wounded while fighting for their favorite charioteers.

Tell me this. If a man were to have slain your son, would you endure to look upon him, or accept his greeting? Would you not shun him as a wicked demon, as the devil himself? They slew the Son of your Lord; do you have the boldness to enter with them under the same roof? After he was slain he heaped such honor upon you that he made you his brother and coheir. But you dishonor him so much

that you pay honor to those who slew him on the cross, that you observe with them the fellowship of the festivals, that you go to their profane places, enter their unclean doors, and share in the tables of demons. For I am persuaded to call the fasting of the Jews a table of demons because they slew God. If the Jews are acting against God, must they not be serving the demons? Are you looking for demons to cure you? When Christ allowed the demons to enter into the swine, straightway they plunged into the sea. Will these demons spare the bodies of men? I wish they would not kill men's bodies, that they would not plot against them. But they will. The demons cast men from Paradise and deprived them the honor from above. Will they cure their bodies? That is ridiculous, mere stories. The demons know how to plot and do harm, not to cure. They do not spare souls. Tell me, then, will they spare bodies? They try to drive men from the Kingdom. Will they choose to free them from disease?

Read online: <https://archive.org/details/chrysostom-john-eight-homilies-against-the-jews>