
THE FORUM

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR BIBLICAL STUDIES

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 2

October 2015

America Paved the Way for ISIS

Prof. Noam Chomsky

An interesting interview with Graham Fuller appeared a couple of days ago. Fuller is a former CIA officer, one of the leading intelligence and mainstream analysts of the Middle East. The title of the interview is *The United States Created ISIS*. This is a source at the heart of the US establishment. Fuller hastens to point out that he doesn't mean the US decided to put ISIS into existence and then funded it. His point is that the US created the background out of which ISIS grew and developed. In 2003, the US and Britain invaded Iraq. Just this afternoon the British parliament granted the government the authority to bomb Iraq again. The invasion was devastating to Iraq. Iraq had already been virtually destroyed, first of all by the decade-long war with Iran in which Iraq was backed by the US, and then the decade of sanctions. The sanctions were described

as "genocidal" by the respected international diplomats who administered them and both resigned in protest for that reason. They devastated the civilian society, they strengthened the dictator, compelled the population to rely on him for survival. That's probably the reason he wasn't overthrown. Finally, the U.S. decided to attack Iraq in 2003. The attack is compared by many Iraqis to the Mongol invasion of a thousand years earlier. Very destructive. Hundreds of thousands of people killed, millions of refugees, millions of other displaced persons, destruction of the archeological richness and wealth of the country back to Sumeria.

One of the effects of the invasion was immediately to institute sectarian divisions. Within a couple of years, there was a major, brutal sectarian conflict incited by the invasion. If you take a map of Baghdad in 2002, it's a mixed city: Sunni and Shi'a are living in the same

neighborhoods, they're intermarried. In fact, sometimes they didn't even know who was Sunni and who was Shi'a. It's like knowing whether your friends are in one Protestant group or another Protestant group. There were differences but it was not hostile. In fact, for a couple of years both sides were saying: there will never be Sunni-Shi'a conflicts. We're too intermingled in the nature of our lives. By 2006 there was a raging war. That conflict spread to the whole region. By now, the whole region is being torn apart by Sunni-Shi'a conflicts.

The natural dynamics of a conflict like that is that the most extreme elements begin to take over. Their roots are in the major US ally, Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has been the major US ally in the region as long as the US has been seriously involved there, in fact, since the foundation of the Saudi state. Saudi Arabia is a kind of a

(Continued on page 4)

Time for a Jewish Reformation?

Dr. Mark Braverman

In August 1982, a delegation of nine South African colored and black pastors traveled to Ottawa, Canada for the meeting of the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The world body of churches in 107 countries, with some 75 million members, had no idea that an earthquake was about to shake their church fellowship and indeed the global church. Soon after the opening of the meeting, the South African delegates staged a history-changing demonstration in

quietly refusing to take communion with their white colleagues. We will not sit at the Lord's table with you, they announced, because in Apartheid South Africa, by law and by practice, white and black cannot receive the Eucharist together.

The World Alliance got the message. It suspended the South African member churches and declared the international fellowship to be in *status confessionis*: nothing else moves for our church until this betrayal of the core values of our faith is addressed. The global church on an ecumenical basis took the cue, supporting the South African resistance movements —

armed and nonviolent — and the economic sanctions against South Africa, and in little more than a decade South African Apartheid was brought down.

In 1963, writing from a jail cell in response to a letter from fellow clergy urging him to abandon his campaign of sit-ins, marches, and boycotts, Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. called the church to its mission. "There was a time," he wrote, "when...Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the

(Continued on page 3)

The Biblical Academy and Christian Anti-Semitism

The Rev. Peter J. Miano

The Society for Biblical Studies is a non-profit (IRC 501c3) organization. Our mission is to reform biblical scholarship by making it accessible, relevant and useful to the broader Church; to redeem the tradition of pilgrimage from commercial tourism; and to renew the mission of the church. We design and deliver journeys of contextual study of the Bible in the lands of the Bible. We are ecumenical, interfaith and inclusive. We invite you to participate in a ministry of reconciliation, to reach out across geographical, religious, ethnic, and cultural boundaries. We are dedicated to socially responsible travel.

It has been said that an expert is someone who knows more and more about less and less until he/she knows absolutely everything about absolutely nothing. This old aphorism is particularly applicable in the biblical academy—the dominant paradigm for studying, teaching and learning the Bible—where the pressure to specialize, i.e., to learn more and more about less and less, has had dubious, unintended and even tragic consequences. More often than not the members of the academy focus on minutiae and ignore moral relevance in a collective preoccupation with answering questions no one ever asked. For example, instead of addressing the moral challenges of our day, the flagship journal of the field, the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, features essays like “*Sansinnāyw*; Song of Songs 7:9 and the *Palpal* Noun Pattern,” and “*Μόνο* or *μονών*? Reading 1 John 2:2c from the *Edictio Critica Maior*.”

No one should begrudge anyone their academic interests, but I should think there would be a little more self examination among the members of the academy, especially when it comes to the academy’s role in one of today’s most pressing moral concerns, namely the re-emergence of Christian anti-Semitism. Words matter. Biblical interpretation matters. Bad biblical interpretation employing careless language over genera-

tions has had the appalling effect of promoting and perpetuating anti-Semitic stereotypes. Real life anti-Semites appeal to stereotypes rooted in biblical translation and interpretation to reinforce anti-Semitic attitudes and actions.

Like measles, anti-Semitism was thought to have been largely eradicated, but we are currently witnessing a disturbing resurgence of this tenacious social virus. Lately, a surge of anti Jewish vandalism and violence has captured popular attention and earned well deserved moral opprobrium—violent attacks on Jews in Denmark and France, vandalism of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues and anti Jewish slogans and chants during political demonstrations in Germany, Greece, the U.K. and the

United States. Anti-Semitism is particularly prevalent among ultra nationalist groups in Europe and the United States. In the U.S., white supremacist groups, a notorious example being the Ku Klux Klan, blend ultra-nationalism with anti-Semitism. Notwithstanding prodigious Christian efforts among church professionals and also within the biblical academy to examine and root out anti-Semitism, especially in the wake of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism has re-emerged as a frontline issue. It is a meat and potatoes issue and deserves a place on the

moral table of every Christian.

Christian anti-Semitism is deeply rooted in Christian history. The full grown tree bears the poisoned fruits of nationalism, bad racial science and perverse moral theology. John Hagee,

(Continued on page 6)

Biblical interpretation matters. Bad biblical interpretation over generations has had the appalling effect of promoting and perpetuating anti-Semitic stereotypes

Time for a Jewish Reformation, cont'd

(Continued from page 1)

ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society. But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century." For King and his followers, the gospels provided the blueprint for the Civil Rights movement's strategy of nonviolent direct action.

In 1939, heartbroken over how the German church (with notable exceptions) had supported Nazism, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote that absent a "reformation crisis," the church was in danger of becoming worse than irrelevant. Not only the pulpits but the departments of theology, he wrote to a friend, existed for the purpose of supporting state tyranny. He returned to Germany from the safety of New York City, called his "Confessing Church" together, and ultimately paid the ultimate price for faithfulness to his principles and to the church that he loved.

Judaism is facing a crisis today on the level of the reformation called for by Bonhoeffer in its confrontation with Nazism, on the level of the challenge that King threw down in the struggle to end legalized racism in this country, and on the level of the *status confessionis* faced by the global church in its recognition of the evil of Apartheid. The crisis for the Jewish establishment has arrived with the growing awareness that all is not right with our Jewish homeland project in historic Palestine.

In the fall of 2006, I had just returned from Israel and the West Bank. Speaking at a church in Washington, D.C., I expressed my horror over Israel's violations of international law and the human rights of the Palestinians, the damage done to Israeli society, and my heartbreak and fear for my people. I charted my "conversion"

from a Jew critical of some of Israel's policies but supportive of the Zionist vision to someone willing to cast doubt on the Zionist project itself. I said that I saw the dispossession of the Palestinians in 1948 and its continuation since the 1967 occupation of remaining Palestinian lands as the cause for Palestinian resistance, and that I was committed to seeking justice for the Palestinian people as the only path to peace.

After the presentation, the pastor approached me and said that while he agreed with much of what I had said, he felt that in talking about the Israel-Palestine conflict, we had to be sensitive to the feelings of Jews. "I

Judaism is facing a crisis today ...The crisis for the Jewish establishment has arrived with the growing awareness that all is not right with our Jewish homeland project in historic Palestine.

have to tell you that as a Christian I feel personally responsible for the evil of anti-Semitism and indeed for the Nazi Holocaust. I have been working for social justice for my entire career, including years spent working with an interfaith group of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish clergy. When the issue of the Presbyterian Church's divestment from companies involved in the Israeli occupation was raised in 2004, I decided not to push the issue out of sensitivity for the rabbis in the group who were opposing divestment."

My Jewish pedigree must be impeccable; I looked at him and, with what can only be described as *chutzpah* (Yiddish, from the Hebrew: supreme self-confidence; nerve, gall), replied, "Pastor, you need to do something else with your Christian guilt.

The rabbis who will not engage with you about Israel and Zionism are not acting as friends of Israel. We Jews are in great peril, and Israel is rapidly descending into fascism. We need your help as a Christian leader and as a worker for justice. Holding back from engagement in this struggle is not what Jesus would want you to do." That encounter was my "Road to Damascus" moment, and the time when I found my voice to speak to the core issue in the discussion about Israel and Palestine.

The crisis for Jews in confronting our crimes toward the Palestinians interlocks with a crisis for Christians still struggling with the horror of Christian sins against Jews. Catholic theologian Gregory Baum has written about the church's effort to reconcile with the Jewish people. The problem, states Baum, is that "if the Church wants to clear itself of the anti-Jewish trends built into its teachings... it must examine the very center of its proclamation and reinterpret the meaning of the gospel for our times.... Auschwitz summons us to face up to the negative side of our religious and cultural heritage."

Support for the State of Israel has been central to the Christian effort to atone for anti-Semitism. But the horrific consequences of our Jewish homeland project now pose a challenge to Christians committed to human rights. Ironically, political Zionism owes its success in part to the Nazi Holocaust, the same catastrophe that spurred a radical reevaluation of the foundations of Christianity. Historians have also noted the influence of a deeply rooted Zionism in Western Christianity in the support for what amounts to the illegal colonization of Palestine by the Zionist movement.

So there are two strains within Christianity: one conservative (Christian Zionism) and one liberal/progressive (interfaith reconciliation). Both support the concept and the reality of Jewish hegemony in Palestine. Both act powerfully to stifle criticism

(Continued on page 4)

America Paved the Way for ISIS, cont'd.

(Continued from page 1)

family dictatorship. The reason is it has a huge amount of oil.

Britain, before the US, had typically preferred radical Islamism to secular nationalism. When the US took over, it essentially took the same stand. Radical Islam is centered in Saudi Arabia, which is the most extremist, radical Islamic state in the world. By comparison, it makes Iran look like a tolerant, modern country. It's not only directed by an extremist version of Islam, the Wahhabi Salafi version, but it's also a missionary state. So it uses its huge oil resources to promulgate these doctrines throughout the region. It establishes schools, mosques, clerics from Pakistan to North Africa.

An extremist version of Saudi extremism is the doctrine that was picked up by ISIS. So it grew ideologically out of the most extremist form of Islam—the Saudi version. Saudi Arabia not only provides the ideological core that led to the ISIS radical extremism, but it also funds them. Not the Saudi government, but wealthy Saudis, wealthy Kuwaitis, and others provide the funding and the ideological support for these jihadi groups that are springing up. This attack on the region by the US and Britain is the source, where this thing originates.

You can be pretty confident that as conflicts develop, they will become more extremist. The most brutal, harshest groups will take over. That's what happens when violence becomes the means of interaction. It's almost automatic. It's true in neighborhoods. It's true in international affairs. If they manage to destroy ISIS, they will have something more extreme on their hands.

Dr. Noam Chomsky, professor emeritus Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is keynote speaker for our National Conference. He is a prolific author and one of the most cited academics in America.

Jewish Reformation, cont'd

(Continued from page 3)

of Israel. This helps explain the extreme reluctance of most Christians to call Israel to account for its human rights abuses. We are presented with a tragic irony: Christians, attempting to atone for the crimes committed *against* the Jews, are by this very fact blocked from confronting the crimes committed *by* the Jews.

Where does this leave Christians, committed to working for justice and equality at home and abroad? Where does this leave Jews who find themselves torn between their commitment to religious and racial equality and their loyalty and attachment to the State of Israel? And what must we do as a Jewish community as we become increasingly aware of the human rights catastrophe we have created in our quest for freedom and dignity? What is the future we want to create for ourselves?

This parallel crisis presents challenges and opportunities for both faith communities. Christians must indeed, as Baum states, re-interpret the meaning of the gospel for our times, but today this means standing up for justice for Palestine, even when this creates tension and division within the churches and for many an agonizing disruption in Christian-Jewish relations. And Jews have a chance to redo the crisis of having lost the Temple and Jerusalem in the first century when in self-defense we retreated into a brittle exceptionalism and ultimately a misguided quest for a return to ethnic nationalism that has resulted in our embrace, in theologian Walter Wink's terms, of the "myth of redemptive violence."

The problem, as I pointed out in my 2011 blog post about Peter Beinart and

his brand of "progressive Zionism," is not the occupation, nor is it the religiously-based racism of fundamentalist Jewish settler-colonists; the problem is a state founded on an ethnic nationalist ideology. "The late and deeply mourned Tony Judt," I wrote then, "got it exactly right in his NYRB piece back in 2003: 'The problem with Israel [is that]...it has imported a characteristically late-nineteenth-century separatist project into a world that has moved on, a world of individual rights, open frontiers, and international law. The very idea of a 'Jewish state' — a state in

which Jews and the Jewish religion have exclusive privileges from which non-Jewish citizens are forever excluded — is rooted in another time and place.'"

When the history of this time is written, church leaders will be held accountable for their actions, as they are now with respect to black liberation in this country and in South Africa. Someday, when we look back on this period in our history, we Jews will be in deep mourning. We will be on our knees in contrition for what we have done in the name of our own

survival and our own redemption. We must honor the memory of the Jewish community of Europe that perished by committing ourselves to "never again" for all peoples. If we are to be true to our prophetic tradition and our demonstrated commitment as a community to human rights, we must come to the realization — and soon — that today, it is the Palestinian story that is our story.

Dr. Mark Braverman is Executive Director of Kairos USA. He is the author of *Fatal Embrace: Christians, Jews, and the Search for Peace in the Holy Land*, 2010.

Support for the State of Israel has been central to the Christian effort to atone for anti-Semitism. But the horrific consequences of our Jewish homeland project now pose a challenge to Christians committed to human rights.

Socially Responsible Travel

The Rev. Peter J. Miano

Sometimes well meaning travelers support harmful endeavors without realizing it. Sometimes the effect of high volume tourism on a local environment and local people is inconsistent with the traveler's own value systems. This is why we have developed our leading edge standard of socially responsible travel. Fundamental to our mission, we seek to redeem the concept of pilgrimage from the corrosive effects of commercial tourism. More often than not, commercial tourism is uninterested in the moral and political dimensions of travel. This means that the interests of commercial tourism are inconsistent with the ambitions of Christian pilgrimage which, historically, has always involved relationship with local people and engagement of social issues. We seek to enable our travelers to experience authentic pilgrimage. We believe that the biblical faith is spiritually redemptive only when it is socially responsible.

All journeys with The Society for Biblical Studies feature its unique blend of historical, biblical and contemporary studies. We want our travelers to experience the satisfaction of walking in the places associated with biblical history, i.e., to walk where Jesus walked. We also want them to walk where Jesus is walking right now. Socially responsible travel is a faith experience, because there is no holiness without social holiness.

For The Society for Biblical Studies, socially responsible travel is primarily a posture of faith. We believe that sincerity to the biblical faith has moral, social, political, economic and environmental dimensions, especially when we are traveling in conflict bound regions, such as Israel/Palestine or regions in which economic disparities are enormous, such as Brazil. In the course of planning our journeys, we are deliberate in investing monies in financially challenged environments, such as the Palestinian economy. We encourage

and facilitate establishing of ongoing relationships between our travelers and the new friends and partners they meet along the way of their pilgrimages. We lodge in locally owned and operated hotels wherever possible, rather than corporate hotel chains. We are particularly interested in supporting stressed communities such as Christian communities in Palestine, Egypt and Jordan. We do not lodge in hotels that are built in occupied territories by occupying

We believe that the biblical faith is spiritually redemptive only when it is socially responsible... Socially responsible travel is a faith experience, because there is no holiness without social holiness.

powers, such as Israeli hotels in East Jerusalem. We utilize local travel services. We do not engage in anti-competitive business practices like making profitable business arrangements with restaurants and souvenir shops. Nor do we force our staff, neither guides nor drivers, to seek to enrich themselves by earning commissions by shopping and the selling of various services, as typical travel companies routinely do. We seek to work with environmentally sustainable vendors of tourist services. In every case, our itineraries illuminate the dynamics of the contemporary contexts in which we travel. We educate our travelers about the backgrounds, history and continuing dimensions of political conflict and economic injustice and especially

Christian obligations to engage these issues responsibly. We introduce our travelers to local partners who are engaged in church work, human rights work, social justice work, peacemaking and interfaith relationship building.

The Society for Biblical Studies is second to none in pioneering and promoting socially responsible travel. Our standards are far higher than those of any other educational travel organization. The Christian Science Monitor (25 September 2006) took special note of our distinctive approach to socially responsible travel. We exceed the prescribed standards of any church's position on socially responsible travel.

The Society for Biblical Studies pioneered its distinctive programs that blend historical and contemporary studies. We continue to lead in the field of Holy Land and biblically based travel. Not only do we introduce our travelers to authentic spiritual pilgrimage and leading edge biblical and historical studies, we believe that all biblical exploration requires us to apply the biblical faith in and for the world. This means that we are also committed to introducing our travelers to the relevance and relevance of the Bible and the biblical faith. Especially in the context of travel in the conflict bound Holy Land, but elsewhere, too, we believe that it is morally irresponsible to ignore pressing social and political issues. Our experience has shown us that our travelers are enriched and rewarded when they learn that their pilgrimage is not only an historical tour, but a matter of contemporary import as well.

The Society for Biblical Studies promotes socially responsible travel, not because it is "politically correct" or because some churches encourage it, but because it is consistent with the best traditions of Christian pilgrimage, because it is enriching for our travelers and because it makes no sense to us to "walk where Jesus walked" 2,000 years ago, if we do not also walk where Jesus is walking today.

Christian Anti-Semitism, cont'd.

(Continued from page 2)

the pastor of a mega church in Texas and a televangelist whose broadcasts can reach 150 million households, states that Jews brought the holocaust on themselves by angering God. I have heard this same twisted theology from Jewish fundamentalists in Israel, but it is appalling, particularly to me as a Christian minister, when a Christian pastor promotes such a sinister theology.

The tangled roots of Christian anti-Semitism include both triumphalist or supercessionist theology and bad biblical interpretation. Biblical interpretation is not the armchair exercise it would appear to be from the pages of *The Journal of Biblical Literature*. Interpretation matters. Words matter. Nowhere is this more obvious than in reckless, unnecessary translations of the Bible that give birth to, nurture and perpetuate Christian anti-Semitism.

My interest in this issue is not new. It began with my earliest serious biblical study with Raymond E. Brown at Union Theological Seminary and it became more poignant when I studied with John Strugnell at Harvard. Prof. Strugnell was pilloried as anti-Semitic, arguably unfairly, in the sensationalist magazine *Biblical Archaeology Review*. That rather public spectacle drove home to me the awareness that anti-Semitism is alive and well in spite of the biblical academy and several generations of post Holocaust Christian contrition. Prof. Brown had pointed out over and over again that in contrast to the so-called synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), which rarely refer to "Jews," the Gospel of John makes more than 60 references to Jews almost all of which are pejorative. In John's Gospel, the enemies and opponents of Jesus are Jews. They confront him. They seek to trap him. At the heart of the passion narratives, common to all the Gospels, is the idea that Jesus is betrayed by a fellow Jew. The Jews frame him. They display their complicity with the ruling powers when they

falsely accuse him before the Roman governor. They help manipulate the crowds who call for Jesus' crucifixion. They are consistently portrayed negatively as conspiratorial, conniving and disloyal, i.e., Jews in the Gospels embody the most fundamental stereotypes and display the most notorious canards of contemporary Christian anti-Semitism. Or do they?

I am often astonished to realize how much we take for granted in our Bibles. For example, almost everyone assumes that in the popular story of Jesus encountering Zacchaeus in Jericho (Luke 19: 1-3) that Zacchaeus climbs the sycamore tree, because he, i.e., Zacchaeus, is short. Credit the persuasiveness of our Sunday school

songs for that one, because the Greek text does not specifically say so. If we had only the Greek text to base our impressions on, we could just as easily interpret the text as Jesus being short. The pronouns in the text do not specify who was short. We take it for granted that Zacchaeus was the short one.

Similarly, in Mark's Gospel (2:15), according to the New Revised Standard Version, Jesus has dinner at Levi's house, even though our best manuscripts do not specify that it was Levi's house at all. The text says that Jesus reclined (he did not sit to eat a meal) at dinner at *his house* (v.15), but it does not specify that the house belonged to Levi. The term Levi does not occur at all in the oldest manuscripts. It might as well have been Jesus' house. That it was Levi's house in the NRSV is purely the translator's invention. The translator did not want to upset the traditional apple cart. The translation is

not based on any requirement of interpretation. Inserting the word *Levi's* when it is not in the original text is pure ideology and pure fantasy and pure liberty on the part of the translators. Interpretation matters. Words not only describe reality, they also condition our perceptions of it.

Once we begin to concentrate on what the texts actually say, as opposed to what we are told they say or what we want them to say, once we begin to examine some of our cherished Sunday school ideas with a willingness to reassess our primitive understandings, wonderful things begin to happen. New possibilities of meaning emerge. Sometimes these new possibilities are troubling like when one suggests that perhaps Jesus, rather than Zacchaeus, was short. Other times the possibilities are exciting and refreshing,

as when one suggests, as I do right now, that the English translation of *Ioudaios/Ioudaioi* as *Jew/Jews* in our English versions of the Bible is not only incorrect and unnecessary, but that it causes damage.

Certainly, such a translation is not required. Notwithstanding the astonishing preference of sensitive, brilliant biblical scholars to translate *Ioudaios/Ioudaioi* as *Jew/Jews*, there is neither any interpretive requirement nor historical reason to do so. To equate the Greek words *Ioudaios/Ioudaioi* in our Greek manuscripts, which are known to have at least five different meanings in the New Testament, uniformly as *Jew/Jews*, which have distinct contemporary meanings, is purely the translators' preference, pure interpretive liberty and mechanical instinct ingrained over generations of uncritical repetition. This preference is anything but benign or inconsequential. It causes damage. It

The Gospel of John makes more than 60 references to Jews almost all of which are pejorative

Christian Anti-Semitism, cont'd.

(Continued from page 6)

helps perpetuate negative stereotypes about Jews that real life anti-Semites utilize to spread hate.

It is symptomatic of weak historical thinking to employ modern terms with contemporary referent to ancient people. This is called anachronism. It occurs, for example, when we refer to Jesus and Paul as *Christians*, because there were no *Christians* at the time of Jesus and Paul and the contemporary term *Christian* carries with it a raft of associations and meanings that it could not have had among the first followers of Jesus.

By the same token, anachronistic thinking occurs when we refer to Jesus or Jesus' disciples or Jesus' enemies or Jesus' betrayer or Jesus' accusers as *Jews*, because it equates an ancient group with a modern people. When that ancient people is cast in a negative light, that same light extends to the modern people. There is no interpretive requirement for such a translation and such repetitive association perpetuates negative stereotypes about modern Jews as conspiratorial, conniving, etc.

There is no indication that Jesus and Paul ever referred to themselves as *Jews*. I do not know any contemporary Jews who practice animal sacrifice or even want to. I do not know any contemporary Jews who trace their lineage through their father's blood line, but Jesus and his contemporaries did both. On the other hand, Jesus and Paul never heard of the Mishnah or the Talmuds, but the Talmud is normative for contemporary Judaism. Not only do we have no warrant whatsoever to translate *Ioudaios/Ioudaioi* as *Jew/Jews*, that default translation is forced. We have to work hard to make it work. Then, once we force the modern reading on the ancient text, we are faced with the dubious and immoral result that the *Jews* were Jesus' enemies,

(Continued on page 8)

National Conference

17, 18, 19 September 2015
Lexington, Mass.

Christians and the Holy Land: What Does the Lord Require?

Keynote speaker:

Prof. Noam Chomsky
Massachusetts Institute
of Technology

Other Speakers:

Prof. Stephen Walt
Harvard University

Prof. Ilan Pappé
University of Exeter

Mrs. Jean Zaru
Ramallah Friends Meeting
Quakers

Dr. Sara Roy
Harvard University

Dr. Mark Braverman
Kairos USA

The Rev. Peter Miano
The Society for Biblical Studies

781.641.4453
sbsadmin@sbsedu.org



THE SOCIETY
FOR BIBLICAL STUDIES

**846 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 1a
Arlington, MA 02476**

For information, call The Society for Biblical Studies
781.641.4453

OR email us: sbsadmin@sbsedu.org

www.sbsedu.org

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BOSTON, MA
PERMIT NO. 54493

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

THE FORUM

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR BIBLICAL STUDIES

Christian Anti-Semitism, cont'd.

that the *Jews* were conspiratorial, that the *Jews* framed Jesus, and that a *Jew* betrayed him. What is so great about that? How is such translation helpful or desirable?

By default, the vast majority of biblical scholars succumb to the intellectual laziness of anachronistic historical thinking. It is epidemic in biblical scholarship. Some do so, because they are distracted by the pressures within the academy to specialize and they do not have the time to examine their own preconceptions. Others do so, because, after too many years of the Church rejecting Jesus' Jewishness, they understand themselves deliberately as supplying a long overdue corrective. However, they accomplish this corrective at the cost of perpetuating stereotypes about Jews that are employed more and more in our world with catastrophic result. Interpretation matters and appropriate biblical interpretation must factor in the moral consequences of translation.

The Rev. Peter J. Miano is a United Methodist minister. He is the founder and Executive director of The Society for Biblical Studies.

**FIND US ON
FACEBOOK**

SEARCH FOR

**THE SOCIETY
FOR
BIBLICAL STUDIES**