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THE FORUM THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR BIBLICAL STUDIES

Was Paul a Christian?, *cont'd.*

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Supper, is anachronistic in that it depicts Jesus and the disciples seated around a table. Why does Leonardo depict Jesus and the disciples sitting at a table when the Gospels consistently state that Jesus *reclined at table* in the manner of everyone in the Hellenistic/Romanistic world? Anachronism abounds, not only in popular thinking, but in scholarly thinking as well. It is rarely challenged.

Similarly, when we use the contemporary term *Christian* to describe the first generations of Jesus' followers, we are using a term that the first generations of Jesus' followers did not use for themselves. Furthermore, we are using it with nuances drawn from our own time period that it could not possibly have had in the 1st Century. In New Testament studies, when anachronistic thinking remains unchallenged misleading interpretations result. What happens when we 21st Century believers think of the first century in terms of our own is that we get too cozy with Jesus and in our faith and we persuade ourselves of a sort of spiritual presumptuousness. We end up taking liberties with our faith when it would be much healthier to adopt more of an attitude of humility.

Words not only describe reality, they condition our understanding of it. There is no evidence that either Jesus or Paul ever used the term *Christian* or understood themselves as such. Our Christian faith and the faith of the Apostle Paul are not nearly identical to each other. We would do well to endeavor to

understand the first followers of Jesus on their own terms, instead of imposing our terms upon them.

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR BIBLICAL STUDIES

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Encountering Peace

Gershon Baskin

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's maximum offer to the Palestinians falls way short of something any Palestinian leader could accept. With that in mind, both sides have found a way of exiting from the negotiations. Even if they resume for another short period, it seems unlikely they will reach an agreement. The Palestinians have little to give and Israel has no desire to give.

Even if US Secretary of State

John Kerry blames both Israel and the Palestinians for the current crisis, he must also admit that the United States has failed as a mediator.

The US did not present real bridging proposals and did not apply the necessary pressure that could lead to an agreement. Reports from the very few people who have actually seen the Kerry document indicate that the US did not depart from their pro-Israel, biased policy slant supporting the Israeli side on just about every issue. That is the bottom line of almost nine months of negotiations.

The US support behind the Israeli

positions is probably a shock to the Israeli public which has believed that it was Netanyahu who has been pushed by the Americans to make compromises. Even the latest laying of blame at Israel's doorstep for the collapse of the talks should not delude anyone into thinking the Americans were impartial or more supportive of the Palestinians than of Israel. The Americans probably did push Netanyahu on some issues, but the American "bridging" proposals apparently fall very short of even approaching what any Palestinian leader

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The Lost Church: the Parthenon on the Acropolis

Jesper Tae Jensen

This short essay, the first of a two part essay, gives a quick glimpse into the first 1200 years of the history of the Parthenon. Built as a pagan temple, its Classical sculptural *membra disiecta* can be found today in museums such as the Musée du Louvre in Paris, the Danish National Museum at Copenhagen, and the British Museum in London. Elements are also on display in the new Acropolis Museum of Athens where the empty spaces in the reconstruction of the sculptural decoration on the museums second floor show that the

Greeks want the remaining sculpture returned and put back in place. In the second part of the essay, we will look into its Christian period.

Today, on the rock of the Athenian Akropolis (Greek, *akro* = hill, *polis* = city), stands one of the most famous and fascinating temples of antiquity. On this very plateau of the city's acropolis, three main temples for Athena, the patron goddess of the city, were erected during the 5th century BC when the Athenians had reached the height of their civilization. The temples are the Erechtheion (the city protector), the Nike temple (the goddess of victory) and the Parthenon (the maiden goddess). However, the Parthenon was the

largest of all the buildings and, in fact, was the largest temple ever raised on the Greek mainland. The construction of the Parthenon can be followed very carefully, because some of the building records had been inscribed on stone and placed in front of the temple during antiquity. The work began in 447/446 BC and already in 433/432 BC the temple was finished.

Inside the temple stood the 4 ft. 10 in. high cult statue of Athena with helmet, shield and lance made in gold and ivory. It was designed by the famous sculptor, Pheidias, who was also in charge of planning the whole

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Difficult Conversations About Judaism, Anti-Semitism and Palestine

Duncan MacPherson

Christianity, Islam and Judaism share a great deal in terms of beliefs, ritual and ethics. Paradoxically, common ground has also been contested ground and relationships between all three of the Abrahamic faiths have frequently been problematic. In this essay, I will focus only on the problematic of the Christianity-Judaism relationship. It has been said that the preacher should prepare his or her sermon with the Scriptures in one hand and the newspaper—or today perhaps the iPad—in the other. However both the Bible and the Newspaper will highlight aspects of this problematic.

Consulting New Testament texts, the preacher finds that they speak

New Testament texts speak of ‘the Jews’ in ways that have been used to justify anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism and have produced a supercessionist theology that sees Judaism as the Old Israel now replaced by the new People of God, the Church.

of ‘the Jews’ in ways that have been used to justify anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism and have produced a supercessionist theology that sees Judaism as the Old Israel now replaced by the new People of God, the Church. Turning from

Bible to the news—through whatever medium—the preacher is frequently confronted by political and moral issues surrounding the modern State of Israel.

Following the full realization of the enormity of the crimes committed against the Jews in the Nazi extermination camps a number of Jewish and Christian thinkers began to discern the roots of anti-Semitism in allegedly anti-Judaic verses in the Gospels, particularly in Matthew and John, where the Jews seem to be represented as responsible for the Crucifixion.

The term ‘Jew’ (*Ioudaios*) in the New Testament refers primarily to an inhabitant of Judaea or to someone originating from Judaea.¹ By extension it also came to refer to those who identified with the temple cult in Jerusalem as opposed to the Samaritans whose focus of

worship was at Mount Gerizim.² However, the term came to refer to opponents of Jesus during his ministry. This is particularly the case in the Gospel of John where the ‘Jews’ (*Ioudaioi*), are referred

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The Lost Church, *cont’d*

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sculptural program of the temple. According to the ancient literary sources it was the two architects, Calicrates and Ictinos, who designed the Parthenon. A modern replica (copy of a copy) of the cult statue made by Alan LeQuire can be seen today in Nashville, Tennessee. It took him eight years to complete and was presented for the public on May 20, 1990. Today it stands inside a modern full-scale reproduction of the ancient Parthenon, constructed in concrete and inaugurated in 1997.

The Parthenon is a peripteral temple. The main building, the cella, measured 98 x 63 feet and was surrounded with a hall of columns in the Doric style that measured 228 x 101 feet and was 45 feet high. Its colonnade consisted of 17 columns on the sides and eight in front and rear.

The Parthenon was one of the ancient world’s most decorated temples with free standing statues of deities placed in each pediment showing the birth of Athena at the east end. It also depicts the contest between Athena and Poseidon (the god of the sea) to determine who would be protector of Athens on the west pediment. Above the columns a band was placed called a frieze. The frieze is made up of square panels divided by smaller rectangular panels called triglyphs, which literally means three vertical lines. The square panels between the triglyphs measured 4.32 x 4.79 ft. and were called metopes (literally means between the eyes [of the triglyphs]). There

were 32 on the north and south sides and 14 on the east and west sides. The 92 metopes have figures upon them that are cut almost in the round and some of the figures projected up to one foot from the surface of the panel. The themes of the metopes are different battle scenes between mythological beasts and figures such as Centaurs, Lapiths, Amazons, Greek deities, and Giants. They also depict cult rituals connected to Athena.

The inner building (cella) of the Parthenon was also decorated with a 524 feet long frieze of which 420 ft., or 80 per cent, is preserved

...the Parthenon was left practically untouched until Christianity took control of pagan Greece during the 5th century AD. Its conversion into a church probably insured its preservation.

today. The theme displayed on the frieze is probably highlights of the festival held in honor of Athena, the so called Panathenaic Festival. However, today scholars still argue about the general theme of the frieze and nobody has yet found

the its “true meaning.” The main parts of the temple, including its sculpture, were painted in bright and strong pigment colors like blue, red, green and black. When the sun was reflected in the marble and colors, it was a display of light that could be seen all over ancient Athens and was praised in many ancient literary sources in for its beauty.

Except for some repairs made after a fire during the Roman period around 4th century AD, the Parthenon was left practically untouched until Christianity took control of pagan Greece during the 5th century AD. Its con-

version into a church probably insured its preservation. In the next part of this essay, we will look closer into Parthenon’s transformation.

Jesper Tae Jensen is an archaeologist, an art historian and a member of the faculty of The Society for Biblical Studies. He is the Director of Diomedes, the Institute for Mediterranean Studies and resides in Copenhagen.

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Difficult Conversations, *cont'd.*

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Studies to feed hatred of Jews and Judaism. 13

So do we blame the text or its interpreters for the centuries of suffering inflicted on the Jews? Is the Bible a charter of liberation or of oppression? It will be evident from what I have written that I am opposed to interpretations of biblical texts which have been used to justify any kind of anti-Semitism, that I do not consider the any New Testament texts to be anti-Judaic and that although I consider that the Church is indeed the New Israel and that it is Christ, rather than the modern state of Israel that fulfils the law and the prophets. I also believe that this implies fulfilment rather than replacement of the Old Covenant.

Endnotes:

1 For example as in Acts 2:5 and 10.

2 See John 4:9 and 22,

3 E.g., John 7:1-9.

4 Section 4 of Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian religions, *Nostra Aetate*, October 28, 1965: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

5 John Dominic Crossman, *Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus*, (San Francisco: Harper, 1995).

6 'Karl Rahner, in his 'Meditations on St. Ignatius' Exercises,' states: 'The crucified Lord is betrayed and abandoned by his friends, rejected by his people, repudiated by the Church of the Old Testament'' cited in Charlotte Klein. *Anti-Judaism in Christian Theology* Edward Quinn, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

7 James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (New York: Meridian Books, 1961).

8 E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 247.

9 For example: 'The Talmud contains a few explicit references to Jesus.... These references are certainly not complimentary.... There seems little doubt that the

account of the execution of Jesus on the eve of Passover does refer to the Christian Jesus.... The passage in which Jesus' punishment in hell is described also seems to refer to the Christian Jesus. It is a piece of anti-Christian polemic dating from the post-70 CE period.' Hyam Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial* (London: Littman, 1982), 26-27. And David Kraemer, professor of Talmud and rabbinics at the Jewish Theological Seminary, calls for honesty about hostile Jewish texts about Jesus. Stephen Greenberg, 'Jesus Death Now Debated by Jews,' *The Jewish Week*, New York (10 March 2003).

10 There is a possible exception to this with the massacre of Christians by Jews in Jerusalem in 614 as alleged by the seventh century monk Antiochus Strategos.

11 Newman, J. H., *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels Collected Out of the Works of the Fathers by Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Volume 1, Saint Matthew, (Southampton: The Saint Austin Press, 1997, first published in English in 1941), 736.

12 Newman, J. H., *Catena Aurea... Volume 3, Saint Luke* (Southampton: The Saint Austin Press 1997), 659.

13 Robert P., Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emmanuel Hirsch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

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referred to themselves. Self reference is a valuable indicator.

Additional 1st Century references to *Christians* outside the canon of the New Testament are just as rare and more ambiguous. Josephus, the Judean chronicler, wrote voluminously for a Roman audience during the decade of the 80's, roughly contemporaneously with Matthew and Luke. In one verse, he makes a reference to "the tribe of Christians so named after him." (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.3) Tacitus, the Roman chronicler who wrote not earlier than the end of the 1st Century, but probably early in the 2nd Century, includes an interesting reference to *christians*. He identifies them as a class of people whose name derived from their leader, *Christus*, or *Chrestus* (*Annals* 15.44). Thus, in all, there are a total of five instances in all extant literature from the 1st Century of a word that can be even loosely translated as Christian. Another important early reference to *Christians* is in Pliny the Younger's letter to Trajan (10.96), dating from the first quarter of the 2nd Century. There he uses Latin words for Christian and Christianity. It seems likely, but hardly a sure thing that by the time of this correspondence, these terms were being used more widely.

Biblical studies involve historical studies. Careless historiography in the field of New Testament studies is rarely noticed. Nonetheless it is an affliction borne by even the most renowned scholars. It is one of the reasons why the popular and sensational *search for the historical Jesus* has become, according to John Domnic Crossan, something of a bad joke. (Crossan: *The Historical Jesus*, 1991)

Anachronism is the act of thinking of an historical event or era in contemporary terms. Literally, it means "out of time." Leonardo's iconic work, *The Last*

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Encountering Peace, *cont'd.*

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could accept. I have written those positions in this column many times over the past years and they include:

- A Palestinian state on 22 percent of the land between the river and the sea.
- Territorial swaps of a maximum of 4% on an equal basis with Israel getting the main settlement blocs and Palestine getting uninhabited territory adjacent to the Green Line.
- A Palestinian capital in east Jerusalem with Jerusalem remaining a united open city with two sovereigns within its boundaries.
- The end of Israeli control over Palestine's external borders and agreed

-to security arrangements.

- The refugee issue to be resolved by providing every refugee with a number of choices, including the right of return to Palestine, and for a limited symbolic number the option of settling in Israel, as well as fair compensation for all properties lost.
- Commitment to the end of the conflict and the end of all claims.

I believe that with proper security arrangements and robust implementation assistance and verification mechanisms all of these points could be accepted by a majority of Israelis and Palestinians. But this is far too much for Netanyahu to agree to and because of that, rather than making history as the Israeli leader

who resolves the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he will go down in history as the Israeli leader who failed to properly identify a crucial opportunity for genuine peace and security for his state and people.

Netanyahu will go down in history as the leader responsible for the isolation of the State of Israel and perhaps as the last leader in Israel who had the opportunity to negotiate a two-state solution.

Netanyahu may be popular today because of his decision not to make peace with the best Palestinian partner Israel could hope to have, but in the future he will be judged as a colossal failure who led his people

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Was Paul a Christian?

Peter J. Miano

One of my professors, Paula Fredriksen, captured my historical imagination with the comment, "Anachronism is the first and last enemy of the historian."

On a recent journey, I was made aware of how pervasive anachronistic thinking is in the popular imagination and how unchallenged it is even in academic environments. I made a casual remark that the Apostle Paul was not a Christian to a group of seminarians. The comment provoked more response, most of it incredulous, than any other comment I had made... and I wasn't even trying. Scholars, clergy and laity alike all too often use language casually and anachronistically.

Perhaps it seems innocuous and inconsequential, but anachronistic thinking pollutes most popular devotion and even scholarly discourse in biblical studies. If we use terms from the modern age to describe events in an ancient one, we are using terms anachronistically and

probably distorting our thinking of the past. For example, many think of the ancient Israelites as *monotheistic*. Yet, the term monotheism did not appear in

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any language until the 16th Century. Not only does the term *monotheism* not apply to the ancient Israelites, our use of that term twists our understanding of them.

Did either Jesus or Paul imagine themselves as starting a religion? Did either of them ever imagine such a thing as a Trinity? Transubstantiation? Did Jesus or Paul ever hear of a thing called a Bishop? Were the disciples Christians? Was Paul a Christian? Did either Jesus or Paul or the disciples ever hear of such a thing as a Christian? The simple answer to each of the preceding questions is, if not a resounding NO, then at least a more humble "probably not". An anachronism is the use of a word from one time period, with all its contemporary referent, to describe a phenomenon in another time period. If you answered any of these questions quickly, you are probably participating in anachronistic thinking.

Consider the word *Christian*. As much as it might surprise a group of seminarians or a contemporary reader, the unvarnished truth is that there is no evidence that either Paul or Jesus ever heard of one. Paul never used the term. Neither did Jesus.

In his own writings, the earliest of the New Testament writings, Paul refers to *Christ* or *the Lord Christ* or *Christ Jesus* many times. However,

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Was Paul a Christian?, *cont'd*

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he never uses a word that can be translated as *Christian*—not even loosely. Likewise in the Gospels, the term *Christ* occurs frequently, but Jesus is never depicted in the Gospels as using any word that can be translated as *Christian*. Neither do the Gospels contain any reference to anyone who is known as a *Christian*. Rather, the followers of Jesus are called *disciples*. Jesus refers to his followers as disciples 12 times.

The terms *disciple* or *disciples* occur about 250 times in the New Testament. By contrast, in the New Testament, there are only three occurrences of a Greek word that can be translated as *Christian*. Two are in the Book of Acts (11:26, 24:26) which scholars usually date to late in the 1st Century or even later. The third of the three references to *Christian* in the New Testament is 1 Peter 4:16. The dating and authorship of 1 Peter is particularly speculative. Even if its authorship is assigned to the Apostle Peter and the traditional assumptions of Peter's martyrdom are accepted—not entirely safe assumptions—this one reference certainly does not suggest that the term *Christian* was widely used or understood by the end of the 1st Century. A mere three references in the New Testament for the word *Christian* is hardly evidence of it being in common usage. More likely, the first followers of Jesus were called disciples or followers of *the way* or *Nazoreans*. This latter term is the root of the common term for Christians used by Muslim Arabs (Nasara). Christian Arabs refer to themselves as *Messiyahi* from the Hebrew word for *Messiah*. Rather than resort to questionable anachronisms, if you want to know how to refer to an ancient people, ask how that ancient people

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Encountering Peace, *cont'd*

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down a very dangerous path to the demise of the Zionist dream and perhaps another horrific, unnecessary round of violence.

Millions of Palestinian people will never agree to live devoid of political rights. They will not give up their national aspirations for a state of their own. They will be punished by Israel and the US for refusing to capitulate to Israeli and American demands. They will be forced to pay a heavy price for their resolve not to accept the meager offerings put on their table. Every step that Israel takes in the tit-for-tat retaliation against Palestinian unilateral decisions to gain their freedom and independence will hurt them, but by hurting them Israel will gain nothing, quite the opposite. In the end, Israel has nothing to gain by creating more suffering for its neighbors.

The Palestinian Authority's fiscal stability is already on the verge of collapse – a little push and it could easily go over the edge.

How will Israel deal with a bankrupt PA? With Israel still in control and the PA unable to pay its bills, who will provide for basic needs such as education, health and welfare? What will Israel do when the PA can no longer pay the salaries of its security forces? What will Israel do when the Palestinian security officers say to themselves “Why am I still protecting Israel's occupation of my people”? The only effective “retaliation” that Israel can implement that will serve its own interests is to support Palestinian actions which strengthen its ability to be an independent state, living in peace next to Israel. Drop the ridiculous demand that they recognize Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people – we don't need their intervention in a subject which is not even defined

among Israel's citizens. Encourage their economy and the building of state institutions. Encourage the Palestinians to sign onto international conventions and treaties, especially those such as the first 15 they've already signed onto, which obligate them to respect human rights, rights of diplomats, prevent torture in their prisons, etc.

The more the Palestinians grow accustomed to act in accordance with international law and normal international relations as a state, the better off Israel will be.

Palestinian statehood is in Israel's interest, and Israel should not put roadblocks up that will prevent its emergence. Israel has an interest in reaching an

understanding that Palestine will be non-militarized. Israel and Palestine – two states need agreements on issues concerning border management, electromagnetic spectrum, security arrangements, economic agreements, tourism cooperation and more. Israel should allow Palestine to exist and negotiate agreements on a state-to-state basis; two UN member states. This should not be seen as a threat to Israel; it is in fact the end goal of negotiations.

Rather than threaten the Palestinians for taking steps to achieve real statehood, Israel should encourage them and be a supporting partner to them.

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Even if US Secretary of State John Kerry blames both Israel and the Palestinians for the current crisis, he must also admit that the United States has failed as a mediator.

Difficult Conversations, *cont'd*.

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to no less than 39 times in a clearly pejorative sense.³

Rejecting anti-Judaic and replacement interpretations of Scripture, the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*, denied that the Jews were collectively cursed for the crucifixion of Christ and stated that blame could not be laid 'against all the Jews... Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures...' ⁴

Meanwhile some Jewish, Christian and post-Christian critics have identified the New Testament itself as the source of the problem, seeing the role ascribed to the Jews in the New Testament as part of a 'culture of contempt' leading directly from John's Gospel to the gas chambers. Among these critics, John Dominic Crossan, of De Paul University, Chicago, ex-Catholic priest and former co-chair of *The Jesus Seminar*, praised Raymond Brown's disavowal of anti-Semitism but expressed regret at his acceptance of the historicity of the passion stories, which Crossan believes fuelled centuries of Christian anti-Semitism.⁵

Summarizing the views of biblical scholars who identify an anti-Judaic tendency in modern historical-critical scholarship, Clark M. Williamson sees the root of this tendency in the way in which Jesus was depicted 'over-and-against' the Judaism(s) of his time. Williamson breaks this tendency down into four main areas. The first of these is the concept of 'late Judaism': a degenerated Judaism, 'preparatory for and inferior to Christianity.' The second is the characterization of late Judaism as blindly legalistic in its interpretation of the Scriptures so that only the Church can read the scriptures (Legalistic Jews were 'deaf to the gospel': Jeremias). The third area consists of the historical misrepresentation of the Pharisees as the enemies of Jesus. The final area is seen as an affirmation of guilt

for the death of Jesus by his Jewish contemporaries,⁶ and it was the radical difference between Jesus and the Pharisees that explains Jesus' tragic end.⁷ Against this anti-Judaic tendency among historical critical scholars Williamson urges the view of Sanders that first-century Judaism 'kept grace and works in the right perspective,'⁸ citing passages in first-century Jewish writings that emphasize grace as paramount. For Williamson, supercessionism has been responsible, directly or indirectly,

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for "too many unconscionable assaults upon Jews. History's slaughter-bench is drenched with the blood of those slain because they 'obstinately' refused in their 'blindness' to see that the Christian alternative was better."

Against this perspective it should be noticed that the polemical language used against 'the Jews' in the New Testament is no more ferocious than the language used by Old Testament prophets against the Israel of their own times and

that rabbinic Judaism provides many examples of an apologetic of contempt for Christianity. The Talmud apparently teaches that Jesus Christ was illegitimately conceived during menstruation, was a fool, a magician, a seducer; that he was crucified, buried in excrement in hell and worshipped as an idol by his followers. Although the identification of Jesus as the person referred to in these verses has been contested it is admitted by some Jewish scholars.⁹ However since it was the Christians who had the power, Jewish hatred of Christianity could not—with one possible exception—be translated into persecution.¹⁰

It is evident that, repeatedly down the centuries, the Gospel story was invoked to justify the persecution of those Jews who would not accept the Christian Gospel and that this played a part in the development of anti-Semitism. A key text that encouraged supercessionist or replacement theology hermeneutic is the parable of the tenants in the vineyard (Mark 12: 1-12, Matthew 21:33-46 and Luke 20:9-19).

When Jesus tells the parable, the temple priesthood realises that the parable is told against them (verse 45), but Saint Jerome is just one of the Church Fathers for whom it is 'the Jews' who are the wicked tenants: 'Hard as the hearts of the Jews were in unbelief, they yet perceived that he spake of them.' ¹¹ Centuries later, Luke 20: 18 ('every one who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces...') was interpreted as predicting the punishment and dispersal of the Jews.¹² This theme of vengeance developing directly that of replacement

reaches perhaps its most vitriolic with Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies* and *On the Holy Name and the Lineage of Christ*, published in 1543, a text exploited by the Nazis in their campaign of persecution and genocide against the Jewish people. However it was twentieth century New Testament scholars of the calibre of Gerhard Kittel, Professor of Evangelical Theology and New Testament at the University of Tübingen, who encouraged Christian acquiescence with Hitler's race laws, lending their considerable expertise in Biblical

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