

**NEO-JUDAIZERS IN THE MAINLINE CHURCHES**  
**THE UNWITTING COACTION OF THE WIMP & EGO FACTORS**  
**IN THE CURRENT SUBTLE SUPPRESSION OF CHRISTIANITY**

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....a Thinksheet reflecting on my experience, yesterday, of **two pastors**, whom I'll call A & B. On a clergy retreat in the morning, Pastor A proudly described his transcedence of the Jewish/Christian divide, having led his UCC congregation into becoming a "synakirk" (contraction of "synagogue-church"). At a seminary in the afternoon, Pastor B spoke of her quandary as to how to respond to rabbis who criticize her for being explicitly Christian. Pastor A is not, I think, a tyrant, though he has enough ego for it. Pastor B is not a wimp, but is in danger of being one, or at least is suffering from aggressive Jewish efforts to lay guilt trips on Christianity in general & on her in particular ("Are you aware that we Jews are offended when you....?")....Jews & Christians are undoubtedly in a transition time toward happier & more creative interrelations. Such a time is inevitably experimental--as in a new courtship, or a reconciliation after separation/divorce. Accordingly, I feel generous toward both sides. Also critical, which need not be--I hope is not--opposite to generous. Let's see....

1 The president of BU is humping to become gov. of MA & has some chance, but probably won't make it: the people of our state prefer wimps. Wimps are in, the sharp edge of truth & confrontation is out. This **anticonfrontationalism** runs clear through middle-&-upper-class America--in politics, religion, education, the arts, everything but (of course!) sports (& to a lesser extent) other media of entertainment. Movements produce wimps. The Jewish (remember-the-Holocaust) movement produces goy wimps. The black movement produces white wimps. The women's movement produces male wimps. The sexual-freedom movement produces old-morality wimps. The gay movement produces straight wimps. What's next? Some new social movement with its wimpish penumbra.

2 **Wimpism** is 1 part empathy & 2 parts timidity (including the fear of being called an "-ist"). It's doubly pathological, sickening the wimps by stifling their healthful urge to truth, justice, honor; sickening the attack dogs by encouraging them to excesses of "righteous indignation" & offenses against fact, truth, & justice. A further pathological dimension is this: the wimp's self-&-truth suppression builds up rage, which then breaks forth in some form(s) of violence. (On the wider cultural horizon, one sees this outbreking of violence in **antisimism** [less aggressive peoples breaking out against, eg, Chinese business personnel] & **antisemitism** [less aggressive peoples breaking out against Jewish & Arab business personnel].)....I'm worried. In my own country I see a rise in hatred of Jews, blacks, women, babyboomers, gays. And I know that one of the roots of all this hatred is wimps' feelings of being overwhelmed, of being squelched, constricted....What's to do? Certainly not regress from the movements' gains. Rather, help the boy-wimps become men & the girl-wimps become women: help them grow up into the courage & dignity of "speaking the truth (as they see it) in love (as they understand it)."

3 But hatred is not the only late form of wimpism. Submission is another: "if you can't lick 'em, join 'em." Pastor B is not so wimpish as to be in danger of either hate or submission. In our denomination, the UCC, I know of no pastor who's degenerated into hate in active form (but some in passive form: if they defend "the oppressed," they now do so with lessened enthusiasm--call this also passive submission). As for Pastor A, he's passed over into active submission, his church no longer requiring baptism for membership, which is open to Jews & pagans (= neither Christians nor Jews). He loves the UCC Synodical statement affirming, on the basis of Romans 9-11, that the Jews have their own way of being saved & need not bother their heads about the Chirstian gospel (this, despite Romans 1, 3, 5, 8! Fundamentalist-like, the statement takes a text [9-11], rips it out of context, & makes a liberal live-&-let-live pretext of it--to such effect that of the statement, a rabbi said to me "I see that your church is the first one to give up Christianity"). Yes, in the statement Pastor A finds confirmation of his conviction that christology should not longer keep Jews & Christians apart ("the Christ-doctrine has been to Jewish/Christian relations what a

'virus' is in a computer network"). "Jesus says 'Love your neighbor,' & we should eliminate everything hindering us from doing that--including any such ideas about Jesus." "Thesis/antithesis/synthesis = Judaism/Christianity/synakirk." "Our son married a Jew; & in our synakirk, their children are not identified with either religion instead of the other."

4 Pastor A & his synakirk fail the Shinn test of "faithful freedom": they're free, but not faithful to the Christian heritage, but rather are--to my knowledge--the most radical expression of the current judaizing tendency in liberal churches ("neo-judaizing" I call it, to distinguish it from the judaizing tendency the NT condemns). I recall that Roger Shinn had more to do with the composition of the UCC Statement of Faith than anyone else. A conservative-progressive theologian, he's hard both on those unopen to change (he likes H.Rich.Niebuhr's translation of "metanoia" [repentance] as "permanent revolution") & on those, eg Pastor A, who are so pro-change as to abandon the heart of their heritage: sometimes "opinions become idolatries and heresies to which we must object" (p.189, THEOLOGY AND IDENTITY: TRADITION, MOVEMENTS, AND POLITY, edd. D.L.Johnson & C.Hambrick-Stowe [Pilgrim/90]--the edd. saying [p.xiv] "relevance to the present does not mean neglect of the past").

5 Whatever attraction there may be to Pastor A's synakirk comes from (1) liberalism's pride in being "inclusive" & "nonjudgmental," (2) the mainline churches' distaste for conversion from/to Christianity/Judaism, & (3) the anticommittment mindset of our middle & upper classes. But "not to decide is to decide," & both Jews & Christians not in his synakirk will see his folk as having slid into a decision for an idiosyncratic religious community outside/beyond both religions. Jews will see it as one more leak in the ethnic bucket, other leaks being (1) deracinated secularism, (2) UU (Unitarian-Universalist), (3) Ethical Culture, (4) Moonism, (5) Easternism (Hare Krishna et al), (6) Jews for Jesus, & (7) the Messianic-Christians movement. Some of us Christians will see it as (1) one more way to dilute foundational Christian doctrine (ie, such doctrine as the Church would not have come into existence, nor remained in existence, without) & (2) one more way of post-Holocaust be-kind-to-Jews sentimentality. The reasons are not all the same, but Jews will have at least as dim of view of the synakirk as Christians. Both Jews & Christians will sense backsliding from, betrayal of, the faith. In synakirk worship, the use of Jesus is too high for Jews & too low for Christians. The former would be uncomfortable with prayers ending "In Jesus name, Amen"; the latter, with the disappearance of the Trinity.

6 It's the time of year when I become a bud-watcher: which bud will die, which develop into a branch?....Will Pastor's A way of rejecting supersessionism (the orthodox Christian doctrine that Christianity is God's replacement for Judaism ["the old Israel": the Church is "the new Israel"]) die a budding, or become a branch on the tree of Western religious history? We can't know, but we can study earlier forms of this rejection, & what happened to them. American Unitarianism, eg. If they survive, they tend to become first **neo-Jewish** & then **neo-pagan**. Neo-Jewish: To the extent that Judaism is the spiritual base of Christianity, the church that lowers its christology becomes a sort of synagogue for gentiles & Jews. Neo-pagan: The Jewish base of such a church-synagogue (or [Pastor A's neologism] "synakirk") then weakens, & pagans (those whose background is neither Jewish nor Christian) are welcomed into membership. (I'm using "neo-pagan" about as does Peter Gay "modern pagan" ["emancipated from classical thought as much as from Christian dogma," p.xi of his THE ENLIGHTENMENT: AN INTRODUCTION, Norton/66/77, 555pp.--a masterful work].) "New Age" is currently the livest spiritual form of neo- or modern-paganism. For a brilliant attack on it, see Martin Gardiner, THE NEW AGE: NOTES OF A FRINGE-WATCHER (Prometheus/88). (MG is an all-purpose skeptic in the best prophetic-hellenic sense. Till him, "PK" meant only preacher's kid; now it means also psychokrap.)

7 How much latitude in belief should UCC churches be permitted? Our Constitution's ¶15, politically necessary to include congregations strong on autonomy, gives much doctrinal latitude; but, I happily report, ¶8 squarely identifies the UCC with the apostolic faith (in, says G.Fackre, p.139 of Johnson/Hambrick-Stowe, our histories, decisions, & texts [including the Basis of Unity]).