

An open letter to Jay Lintner, commenting on his pamphlet, "God's Unbroken Covenant with the Jews: Context for the Theological Panel on Jewish Christian Relations within the United Church of Christ," UCC/OCIS, May/89, in the light of yesterday's hearing meeting of the Panel at ANTS. (Jay is, says the pamphlet, "one of the [UCC national] staff serving the...Panel.")

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LET'S HAVE IT BOTH WAYS IN THE NAME OF LOVE AT THE EXPENSE OF LOGIC

Dear Jay,

I repeat what I said to you after the afternoon session: I praise you for your courage and competence. And I write this commentary (1) to relate my remarks of yesterday to the sections of your pamphlet (the sixfold "task given to the Theological Panel") & (2) both to clarify & to extend those remarks.

1. Thanks for a third "c," candor, both in the pamphlet and orally yesterday, in admitting that the Synod Resolution triggered an explosion of anger, distress, and confusion. (I should add, from conversations with rabbi friends, hilarity--as one I quoted, but did not name, who said on the phone "I see by today's NEW YORK TIMES that your church is the first one to give up the Christian religion.") Gabe Fackre's prophecy (p.6) has come to sad fulfilment....Not that there was enough candor. Tom rightly said that the Resolution went through all the hoops, but was not a Pronouncement since it didn't go through the Executive Council hoop. Why did the Panel not admit that it was a dumb idea to bypass the Executive Council on a matter of such importance that it dominated the media's reporting of Synod? (Four members of the Executive Council spoke to me of their anger at this bypass, no matter how innocent it may have been.)

2. As is true of any ingroup's lexicon, the Panel talks in code. After the meeting, a prominent UCC leader said to me, "Willis, what the hell is 'supersession'?" At your third and final hearing, a bit of attention to definitions, please.

3. This commentary is on your pamphlet, which has the advantage of coming out 21 months after Synod adopted the Resolution. I hope the Resolution is dead, that you'll make a fresh start. From the standpoint of democracy, you made a bad start on the Resolution, anyway: first I saw it was after Synod. The Presbyterians were wiser, turning the issue over to the churches for broad discussion, then concluding against (your p.3) "speaking [officially] in this controversial area." Any chance that your Panel will ask for a withdrawal of the Resolution with no "supersession," ie no substitute Resolution or Pronouncement? I'd like to see a substitute--more honest, balanced, & savvy about repercussions. (This commentary is not on the Resolution except insofar as you adduce it in your pamphlet.) The title of this Thinksheet suggests what I think the pitch and tone of a substitution should be.

4. You mention (pp.2f) the distress of "Black pastors and lay leaders....Constituents and staff of the United Church Board for World Ministries....Middle East Christians....liberal church leaders and leaders of the People for Biblical Witness." I'm in another category of the distressed: I've labored for decades for improved Jewish/Christian relations and for joint theologizing and social action based on (the phrase I used yesterday) "one faith taking the form of two religions." Instead of putting the emphasis on the "one faith," the Resolution spent itself on confusing the two religions, if not fusing them. Your pamphlet, on this point, is no improvement.

5. Though I'm not privy to the Panel's deliberations, judging from the Resolution and your pamphlet it seems you've proceeded with a battery of flawed assumptions, some of which I'll mention at this point....(1) That church assemblies' be-kind-to-Jews resolutions will accomplish something good other than making Christian feels better, if that's something good....(2) That fumigating the antiJudaism in early Christian texts & (with the Panel's products as guidelines) producing bugless church-school literature will, in the long run, decrease antiJudaism. (Ineluctably, if the two religions are to remain separate, the spiritual formation of the young must be over against. Eg, "the Jews deny that God in Jesus came among us as a human being," and "the Christians believe that Jesus is God having become a human being, but we Jews believe that God never has, and never would, become a human being." Let's admit, not conceal, that our two religions are interdefined by negations: "we" are different from "them," thus.)

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Christians are **inherently** antiJudaic ("antiSemitic," if you prefer): Jews are **inherently** antiChristian. [On this, herewith is my #2249, "Mutual blasphemers, love one another!"](3) That Shoah-Holocaust is so incomparable a horror that no recoiling from it can be excessive. (When I warned against "overreacting" to the Holocaust, Panel member André immediately exempted it from that possibility, putting it in the irrational category of what-we-cannot-react-too-much-to. Besides being stupid, this "thinking" is dangerous and is a new root of antiSemitism. If they want to, let the Jews make this event into Wailing Wall #2 even to the extent of chasing Christian nuns away from an Auschwitz wall. Properly, they want the world to remember; but if the mnemonic word is heard by nonJews as "Remember how bad you nonJews, gentiles, Christians were," Shoah-Holocaust will be remembered by nonJews *against* the Jews, who are more and more being accused of using S-H as an all purpose excuse/weapon/[skeleton]key. I tremble at what the Jews, with the collusion of some Christians, are doing to themselves....As for S-H being "incomparable," that leads to endless arguments that nowise advance the cause of improved Jew/nonJew relations. Eg, a 9th-c. Chinese emperor swore to kill all Christians in China, & did (leaving only a few gravestones): Hitler threatened to kill all Jews in Europe, & didn't; both that emperor & Hitler intended to eliminate the whole category, but the emperor couldn't reach all Christians & Hitler couldn't reach all Jews. In short, I for one reject & resent the category of incomparability, as I deride & fear the category of an event-one-can't-overreact-to. (4) That Christians should have a greater fear of offending Jews than vice versa. (I fault this not only as patronizing and therefore subtly demeaning while, ironically, straining to avoid being demeaning, but also because Jews, being human beings, take advantage of their openings. Panel member Michael Wyschograd, an excellent Jewish scholar, had no fear (but should have) of offending Christians by calling for "a new form of Christianity" but neglecting to call for a new form of Judaism. He should be informed of the grumbling among nonPanel participants after the session in which he said that. As for the Panel members, I fear they've so brainwashed themselves to what's passing for Jewish/Christian "dialog" as not to feel the offense.)....(5) That "the Land" is essential to Judaism. (See "IV. LAND," below.)....(6) That Jews were 100% innocent victims of S-H, so any attempt at nuanced interpretation (such as all honest historians must engage in) is antiSemitic. (It was refreshing to hear one Panel member, Armenian Peter, express puzzlement that no Jew he knows of has applied to S-H that superb Jewish gift to humanity, self-critical ["We must have been doing something wrong," or at least "Were we doing something wrong?"] prophetism. But he honorably confessed that so far, he hasn't had the guts to confront his own people, vis-a-vis their 1917+ holocaust, with prophetic questioning.). (7) That the heart of Jewish-Christian "dialog" should be to give the Jews opportunity to inform-accuse Christians in order to give the latter occasion and opportunity to repent and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. (In the many such I've participated in, with almost no exceptions the Christians have played the game of guiltier-than-thou ["I'm so guilty, you haven't been hitting me hard enough. Hit me again!"--a bathos savvy Jews have learned to be suspicion of, and rightly so].)....(8) That (as you said in your speech) "AntiSemitism flows from [Christian] theology,...is rooted in Christian theology." Your slippery verbs are showing. (a) "is rooted": seed or transplant? Today I've been potting-on, transplanting, in our greenhouse, preparatory to winter. The Jews having been expelled from Rome more than $\frac{1}{4}$ c before Peter & Paul got there, I take it that Christian theology can't be the seed of antiJudaism--so a pagan seed, sprouted in paganism, got transplanted into Christianity. But you may be speaking of another seed, the one inherent in Christian existence, parallel with the antiChristian seed inherent in postSecondTemple Judaism; in which case you've not said much, & what you've said is unfair (in your accusative context). (b) "flows from": of course it does as one source, just as antiChristianism flows from Jewish theology as one source; but do you really think you "do justice" by the lopsided accusation? (The metaphor of the source is even more invidious than the metaphor of the seed/plant, which has the advantage of being vague.) Speech should be honest to fact, & we should be honest to language. "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (to make a good use of a bad KJV rendition & take it out of context). Justice cannot flow from unfairness....But it's time I got to the "six doctrinal areas":

I. SUPERSESSION

7. Since the overwhelming witness of the NT is that Christianity transcends all rivals including Judaism, which culminates in Jesus Christ come & to come, those who want to deny this teaching (as does the Resolution) must put great weight on the few passages (chiefly in Mt. & Paul) which can be read as at least qualifying it. (Gabe's Letter No.27 masterfully catalogs the five ways to affirm the teaching & seven ways to deny it.) Most Panel members (I judge from yesterday, my only experience of the Panel) deny the teaching, Gabe & Martin both affirm it ("no other name") & (using Ro.9-11) deny it, asking that we Christians live in the tension of this mystery (as, I would add, Paul did & I do). I failed to identify even one member who supports the teaching unqualifiedly: is there even one?

2. Since on this matter the Resolution stands clearly outside of classical-historic-orthodox Christianity, have Jews made some equally radical concession modifying traditional Judaism? To use the rubberband I used yesterday: has the Jewish end of the stretch held steady while the UCC end has gone flabby, with the result that the two are close together? I have that impression. It was not the case with my NYTSeminary classes in which I had all varieties of rabbi, priest, monk, nun, & minister: we had real dialog, with concessions from all parties. Has the Panel had authentic dialog? No indication of it in the Resolution or your pamphlet.* Your enterprise seems not to have conceived itself as what it calls itself, viz (GS16/87) "The Relationship between the UCC & the Jewish Community"--understood as based on Christian/Jewish dialog (speaking, negotiating, conceding from both sides)....Also making me doubt that you're a dialog group was Michael Wyschograd's speech yesterday (which I dealt with, above). Or is the Panel of the opinion that only Christianity, not also Judaism, needs reconception? I have seen embarrassingly, unnecessarily, "anti" Sunday school materials in both church & synagogue: Christians & Jews should repent of it. Jews ask you to repent, & you properly do: do you ask Jews to repent? If so, you're the only Jewish/Christian forum I've ever heard of that has! Dialog is not just something more, it's something other than attacks on one side and concessions on the other. If UCCers get the impression the Panel is unfair to Christianity, you're dead in the water. And I for one do have that impression.

3. To come at the same problem from another angle: Unless Christians can help Jews to a different form of Judaism while Jews are helping Christians to a different form of Christianity, there's not going to be any significant diminution of antiJudaism. Has the Panel shown any responsibility for this ministry to the Jews? Certainly there's none of it in the Resolution or in your pamphlet. The only thing any Panel member said yesterday that came close to it was Armenian Peter's suggestion that Jews should use their prophetic-historic capability for self-examination to study the roots of Shoah-Holocaust (as I mentioned above).

4. On the antisupersessionist side, you may remember my emphasis: "We are one faith taking the form of two religions, and we should give more time to studying and acting together on our one faith than we should to examining our differences." If that were not my emphasis, I'd never have been privileged to preach in even one synagogue.

5. It troubles me: The Nazi "German Christians" & the Resolution hold that the gospel is Good News to everybody except the Jews--the former, because Jews shouldn't exist; the latter, because they have their own way of salvation (which, according to the one denomination to the left of us, the UUs, does every people-culture-religion: the Resolution is one spirit with humanist universalism, which is the position [I think] of most UCCers, so why wouldn't they support the Resolution?). Is the Resolution's tolerant spirit more positive (from growing "ecumenical" conviction) or negative (from UCCers' growing feeling that "denominational differences," including between Jews and Christians, are [in the media sense] "theological," ie muddy and unimportant)? We are a weak, flaccid, dying church (except in social action): the Jews aren't getting much out of this marriage except propaganda values, are they? ("Dying," but I think not terminal: in the UCC right now are intimations of newness of life, including some postliberal theologizing & postliberationistic spirituality. God grant that we "supersede" what we have been! My favorite church, broad enough to include even contrarian me yet not so broad as to have surrendered the awkward gospel that encourages us (as

*Falling to distinguish itself from the body responsible for the Resolution, the Panel left me--and how many others?--free to assume identity. By giving the date of the setting up of your Panel (p.3), you could have decreased the possibility of this confusion. Further, I suggest you give the next hearing time to read your pamphlet, which participants won't have seen till they arrive--as was the case with us.

I say in this Thinksheet's title) to "have it both ways in the name of love at the expense of logic" (but not of intelligence & wisdom).

6. [Your reff. to Ro.9-II are under this first "issue area"; I'm treating it under "II. COVENANT."]

7. The negative opposite of supersession being antisupersession, is there a positive opposite? Is it equality, two equal religions expressing one faith? Christian Arab Ivonne found "frightening" this (as she called it) "judaizing Christianity," along with the increasing church-&-media (not synagogue!) use of "Judeo-Christian." We two religions are of one Source of faith but not of one type of faith (a distinction Paul lays out, albeit overneatly, in Ro.4); & each religion (with almost no exceptions among its members) considers itself superior to the other. Jews may consider it convenient for them to have Christians around (as Wyschograd said), but Judaism (as antesession and as a simpler, purer monotheism) has no need of Christianity. Nor, since "Christ has brought the Law to an end" (Ro.10⁴), does Christianity (as postsession and as a richer, fuller religion) see any need of Judaism. But since we both exist, we should seek together how we as one faith may serve God in the world; and we should enjoy the secondary benefits of our dialog that (1) Judaism helps keep Christianity from drifting off into gnosticism and (2) Christianity helps keep Judaism from hunkering down into tribalism....Martin Duffy (Biblical Witness Fellowship) bracketed in the two religions with the formula "spiritual Israel."

8. It's in connection with this first "doctrinal area" that you mention Rome's 1965 "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions." You say, "Rome directly disavowed supersessionism, causing other churches to rethink this issue." That text, in its nuancing and politics, bears close looking into: its easy to overread. I was working in the Vatican at the time, and Cardinal Bea (whom Jn.XXIII had appointed to head this new post) took me into his office--completely bare, no furniture having yet been moved in--and said, "Here you behold what the Vatican really thinks about dialog with the non-Christian religions!" (The Pope's close friend, Bea was the cardinals' humorist as well as saint.) My main complaint against the Resolution is that it overreads a single Pauline text (on which see "II. COVENANT").

II. COVENANT

1. Before the Resolution disaster struck, I'd read stacks of pro-semitic (as anti-anti-semitic) books (by Christians mainly, some by Jews) victimizing truth. It was inevitable that this academic tradition would surface ecclesiastically, and the Resolution is an instance of this.... My #853 analyzes this one of the "two classes of lying": "Jewish/ Christian Relations: TRUTH as Victim of Anti/Philo-Semitism." Paul Kirsch's WE CHRISTIANS AND JEWS (Fortress/75) is so typical of this distortive sort of lying that I spell out the lies: (1) Christianity, in the light of these NT reff., should not evangelize Jews--then the few texts are used as proof-texts "as outrageously as fundamentalists" [the Resolution so using Ro.9-II]; (2) "One is left with the impression that Christians invented antisemitism," & we're not informed that antisemitism preceded Christianity; (3) "Holocaust should lead Christians to repentance (nothing said about Jews, though the biblical prophets would have used the event to call Jews to repentance)"; (4) "Church-education materials are to be scrutinized for antisemitism (nothing said about the need to scrutinize synagogue-education materials for antichristianism)"; (5) "Nothing said about the needs of human communities to have both positive and negative images of themselves and each other: Christians are supposed to clean up the NT and eliminate from themselves all negative images of Jews --dangerous, romantic, psychosocial nonsense."....Why didn't Christian scholars attack this intellectual pollution? Hit-me-again masochism; and fear of feeling, and being called, antisemitic. (I except myself: without the masochism or the fear, I attacked it with a dozen Thinksheets, & elsehow. I, now, am ashamed of my church for producing the Resolution, & of myself for not attacking more energetically. In #2330 I say I'm "enthusiastic" that UCC make a sound statement on Christian/Jewish relations, but "worried: so far as I have seen [meaning the Resolution; the Thinksheet is dated 5 June 89], what's happened is the standing of antijudaism on its head: an excessive criticism of Christianity in the interest of an overeagerness for dialog & for pluralistic

respectability.")

2. The Resolution mentions God's covenant with the Jews eight times, & once God's covenant with the Christians ("affirmed and embodied in Jesus as the Christ"). Many biblical scholars now hold that "covenant theology" is a less important biblical theme than the Resolution's extensive use of the concept would give one to believe. I believe it more accurate to speak of the covenantal process (of God's taking the initiative, time & again, to decree for a part of humanity, setting that part [with obligations & privileges] apart from the rest of humanity) than it is to speak of covenants--unless the covenants (with Adam, Noah, Moses, David, Jeremiah's "new covenant" people [Qumran, Christianity]) are seen as iterative (a series of cumulative events) rather than as punctiliar (discrete events whose interconnection is problematic). God "made his covenants" (pl. in critical text of Ro.9⁴) with the people Paul calls (v.3) "my own flesh and blood."

3. When this process is seen from above, it reflects God's "faithfulness" or "leal love" of his people, in consequence of which no dot ("covenant," s.) in the line of dots ever is canceled by invalidation. As the Resolution puts it (your p.1), God's covenant [process] with the Jewish people has not been rescinded or abrogated by God, but remains in full force, inasmuch as 'the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable' [Ro.11²⁹]. Two communities we know of claimed to be on this line, in this tradition, through Jeremiah's version, "new covenant" (31²¹⁻²², 31³⁴): one died (Qumran), the other is still alive (Christianity). God did forsake his people (12⁷), the covenant process has died--but will be resurrected, the relationship with Israel restored! (Cf. the death/resurrection of Jesus in communal perspective.) Says Jeremiah, you got smug about that "everlasting covenant" (Gn.17, Ps.105, et al) & the covenant didn't last (though God found another way to be faithful to his promise). My point is that the concept & its history are too complex for the literalistic, almost fundamentalistic reading the Resolution gives "irrevocable." Consider Ro.9⁶: "I'm not saying God's promise has failed; for not all the people of Israel are the people of God....[v.24] For we are the people he called, not only from among the Jews but also from among the Gentiles." Christian existence proves the covenant process is still alive and well, & the proof is even individual (Paul's Christian existence, 11¹: "Did God reject his own people? Certainly not! I myself am an Israelite.") But the Resolution's strange doctrine that Jewish existence can be ratified by the biblical doctrine of covenantal irrevocability can take no comfort in this Pauline vision of the continuous covenantal flow from the community of the First Adam to the community of Christ as Second Adam.

4. Again, the Resolution woodenly fails to distinguish, in Ro., between Paul's idealized-eschatological "salvation" of "all Israel" (11²⁶) & his teaching that contemporary Jews are not saved (9²⁷, qt.l.s.; 10^{1,9-13}, 11¹⁴; else why preach the gospel to them, indeed give them priority in hearing it [11¹⁶]?).

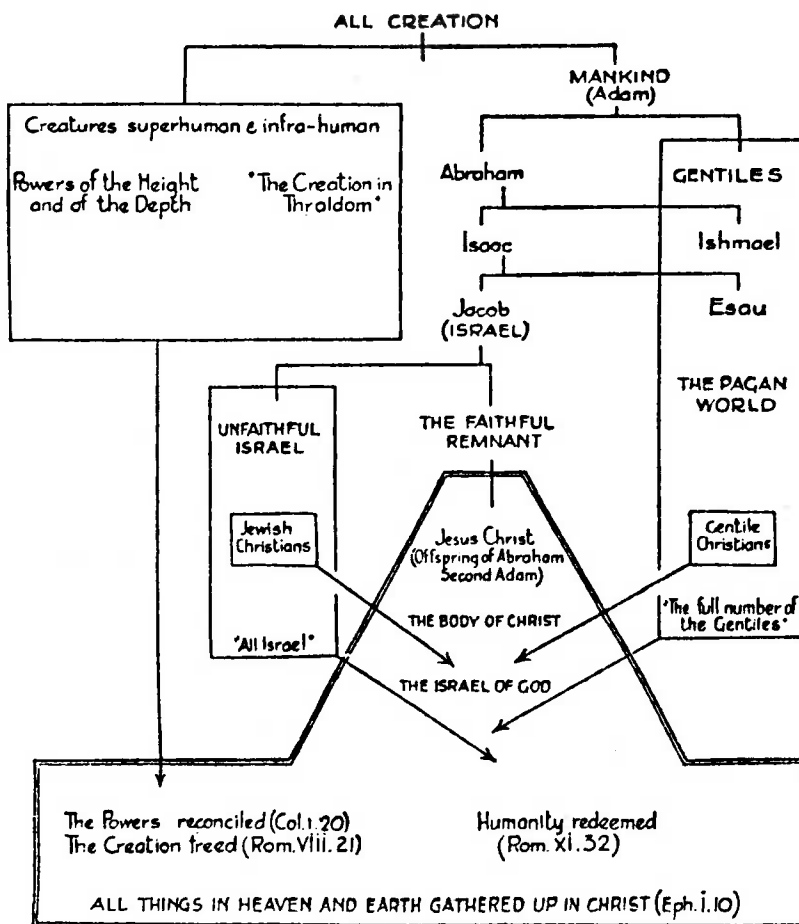
5. Again, the Resolution speaks what it considers an open, public, factual truth when it uses "irrevocable." But Paul's context is "a secret truth" (4 vv. earlier). It's only in this "mystic" context that Paul is a universalist, love overwhelming logic (as in this Thinksheet's title, & in Buber's turning of Augustine's "I believe that I may know" into "I love that I may know"). Appropriately, the mystic passage has (vv.33-36) a doxological ending. To turn this ecstatic passage into cool doctrine, as the Resolution does, is a hermeneutic violation of genre & thus an intellectual disgrace to the UCC, whose Synod approved the blunder....Note also that the ecstatic ending of Ro.9-11 concludes a radically deterministic reading of history: who in the UCC believes Ro.9-11's radical double predestination? We can and should believe it's God's world, God's in charge & will defeat evil in the long run if not always in the short; but we must transpose from the illiberalism of the text's pawnlike treatment of individuals and groups. How, then, are we to lift out a text, viz 11²⁹, and read it as though it were a systematic-propositional divine revelation, not to be questioned? Indeed, to read it in such wise as to make nonsense of preaching the gospel to the Jews, a task on which Paul's heart was set?....Note that universalism, God's saving everybody, is nonsense unless everybody's lost, including Jews. Well, Ro.1-3 says everybody's lost, (11³²) "so that God might show mercy to them all," including (v.26) "all Israel." And the gospel is God's way of doing that: Jews have no non-Jesus way to glory, as Paul sees it. Yet precisely the reverse is what the Resolution teaches, modernizing Paul beyond

recognition....While universalism lacks historical & moral seriousness, it has theological & devotional values. I agree with Paul that the best way to have it both ways is a devotional appeal to mystery (vv.33-36: "How great...! How deep...!....For all things were created by....and exist through Him & for Him. To God be the glory forever! Amen"). But Paul would not abide an anti-evangelism overreading of this teaching.

6. Jeremiah's "new" covenant is appropriated by the early Christians as both descriptive of & normative for their movement &, later, its primary sacred literary products (The "New" Covenant [Latin, "Testament"]). The Christian Passover naturally came to use "new covenant,"* probably from the event of the Last Supper, the nonJesus Passover thus as naturally being of the old covenant, & thus "The Old [what André calls the 'Prime'] Testament." [* 1Cor.11²⁵; cf.2Cor.3⁶.]

7. While "new covenant" is fairly common elsewhere in NT & other early Christian literature, it's esp. important in Hebrews, where the old covenant-testament is only a (Platonic) shadow of the reality (contrast of prophets & Son in 1¹⁻²; & see another mode of contrasting, in the Jn. writings of NT). To call the Hebrew sacred books OT means you read them through NT, ie through Christian eyes or at least with Christian specs: to stop saying "OT"--& use Tanakh, the Hebrew Scriptures, or the Hebrew Bible--means that to some extent you've cut "the Bible" (in English, the Christian Bible, OT+NT) apart, & you read (as best you can) the Hebrew-&-Aramaic with Jewish eyes. (As I taught both Hebrew & Greek, I urge that Christians read the pre-NT scriptures with both Jewish & Christian eyes, so continue to say "OT." Drop "OT" and the Testaments drift slowly away from each other, and the consequences are dire. Without that alienation, the Resolution would not have come up with its novel distortion of Ro.9-11. It's sad, even ominous, that some liberal Christian seminaries have given up "OT.")

8. For Paul, it's only a question of *when* Jews, Israel, will to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ. Who's the Resolution fooling in quoting Paul to another end? Many, that's who. Christian imperialism (Jesus Kyrios-Imperator) is a constitutive element in Christianity & a permanent "occasion of stumbling" & blasphemy for un-submissive Jews. Since the Resolution has surrendered this Christian essential, the rabbi was right who phoned me the day the NEW YORK TIMES reported the Resolution: "Willis, I see your church has given up the Christian religion." Judaism's Adonai is Lord of all: Christianity's Adonai-Kyrios-Jesus is Lord of all (except, so goes the Resolution, Jews). A visual of C.H.Dodd (THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, Harper/35, p.187) accurately presents Paul's mind, his philosophy of history (on which my #1296). It's the NT's locus classicus (Ro.9-11)--trying to explain why most Jews did not become Christians--for the eyeballs. To enter into the spiritual as well as the intellectual mood & mode of 9-11, get a running start by reading 8: the Spirit "groans" us all, including nature, unto unity in Jesus Christ.



9. FACT: Human, God-blessed covenants do exist between Jews & Christians. A rabbi & I know each other's hearts so well each thinks, time & again, "I wonder what _____ would say about this?" I knew both Reinhold Niebuhr & Ab. Heschel & can well understand the former's rejection of Christian imperialism under the influence of the latter. Further, Christians & Jews are together in most American communities & have, many of them, thank God, growing openness to and fondness for one another. Many at the hearing hoped that the Panel would see to the production of materials helpful in church/synagogue relations. Said one: "When our church annually meets with the synagogue in the temple, the rabbi changes nothing in the shabbat service; but when the Jews meet with us in our church, I make the service 'ecumenical,' meaning that I leave Jesus out. Should the rabbi be leaving something out, or should I be keeping Jesus in?" The Resolution is no help to mutual Christian/Jewish honesty: it isn't even honest to Paul! Jews & Christians are cobelievers, but the "co-" is sick if Christians, in the presence of Jews, pretend to not being Christian. More darkly, such "Christian" timidity feeds antisemitism: wouldn't it be nice if the Jews weren't around to keep us from naming Jesus? (As though it were the Jews doing it!)

10. No matter Paul's speculations about Israel/Church, his bottomline faith-confession-salvation affirmation is "there's no difference between Jews and Gentiles" (Ro.10¹²). But the very purpose of the Resolution is to establish a difference! How could this pernicious distortion slip through Synod? Because our liberal church doesn't teach us to witness to our Jewish neighbors, & that they have a covenant (way of salvation) of their own is a simple way to rationalize & ratify the nonwitness. Weakened plants are more subject to disease: the UCC is theologically weak & nondescript, though its founding documents are not.

11. Both Christians & Jews, when not in communion (not just communication) with each other, are diminished & subject to diseases each inoculates the other against. (My #1012 is a "dynamostatic image" of this mutual ministry of Judaism & Christianity. The ministry is most fruitful when both religions are in good health.)....Christianity became possible because of the preservation of Judaism in spite of centuries of assault against it....Jews & Christians are (my #1913) "bound--historically & spiritually--to each other as neither of us is bound to any other people. So may God deliver us both from the arrogances with which we have afflicted each other."

12. Inherent in the covenant concept are promises/threats, rewards/punishments. Without this full range, covenant talk is sentimental & (as in the Resolution) vague. But are we to read "covenant" so strictly? Is not Paul theologizing in particular (for a church with a mix of Judaizing & Torah-free believers), situationally (rather than generally), as argues A.J.M. Wedderburn (THE REASONS FOR ROMANS, T.&T.Clark/89)? In that case, Romans is an instance of pacification theology, a pastoral-speculative letter rather than a speculative-intellectual treatise. As I think this the case, again I think the Resolution leans too heavily on Ro.9-11.

III. CONVERSION

Face it: both religions have inclusive-imperialist eschatologies--all nations going up to Jerusalem, all people falling at Jesus' feet. Judaism and Christianity are inherently evangelistic, conversional, though the missionary drive is sometimes quiescent & sometimes (as implicitly in the Resolution) denied, though such denial cuts at the root of the particular religion (as my rabbi friend said, of the Resolution, "Willis, yours is the first church to give up the Christian religion").

1. What would Paul think of the twisting of his words (Ro.11²⁵⁻²⁹) to condemn efforts (eg, Jews for Jesus) to convert Jews? Just to mention two other reff. in the same Letter, he puts converting Jews above converting nonJews (1¹⁶), & he uses some choice OT curses against Jews who refused to convert (11⁷⁻¹⁰).

2. Increasing numbers of Jews are actively trying to convert Christians, but I--unlike Paul--am quiescent about trying to convert Jews. Honestly quiescent, not antisupersessionistically quiescent: like Judaism, my religion is supersessionist, & I'm not about to conceal or deny it, & am sad the Resolution is dishonest.

3. In "Torah is [Ro.2²⁰) 'the Paradigm of Knowledge and Truth'" (2330), I put it in the form of three refusals (§1): "No imperialism: I refuse to construe my religion's mission as inclusive of the elimination of Judaism. No sentimentality: I refuse to merge my religion into Judaism. No antimissionism: I refuse to condemn Christian missions to the Jews. And I can sustain all three refusals through a careful, honest exegesis of Romans 1-9." Any further UCC Resolution should be explicit about the third refusal. The absence of this in the present Resolution led to the widespread assumption that UCC was saying Christianity is not for Jews. That was the opinion of some ancient heretics, and of the (Nazi) "German Christians."

4. Your pamphlet's "III. Conversion" is one-way, viz Christianizing (converting) Jews. Why no mention of Judaizing (converting) Christians? I find this grid helpful in considering the possibilities:

I resist the temptation to talk about the four boxes! For both humanistic & religious reasons I'm "yes" (ie, AB). (In 567, I've dealt with the seven possible perspectives as to

	christinize Jews?	judaize Christians?
yes	A	B
no	C	D

"JEWISH/CHRISTIAN DIALOG: Which of the two is the right/true religion?" Pertinent also to the conversion question is 2269, "The Three Levels of 'the Jewish Problem' for Christian/Jewish Dialog.")

5. More serious is secular & New Age conversion away from the biblical (Jewish & Christian) God. Against that, & for "justice & peace," we Christians & Jews should join ranks. Arab saying: "Brothers fight each other, but brothers fight together against cousins." Bush saying (to Gorbys): "We'd drop our arguments & get together on earth if faced with an extraterrestrial invasion." Primary converting should be the joint witness of Jews & Christians; secondary converting should be reciprocal, Christians & Jews converting each other.

6. The more strongly one feels one's religion, the greater the impulse to share it & the deeper the feeling of blasphemy when one perceives one's religion as violated. But cool religion is insensitive to blasphemy & disinclined to witness. Therefore, cool religion is more open to dialog: partners in dialog are usually weak representatives of their respective religions or (which amounts to the same thing) strong representatives of weak forms of their respective religions. This doleful fact I illustrated by stretching a rubberband, then relaxing it from either side & both sides. Jewish/Christian dialog has trouble being either vital or honest, & the Resolution betrays both defects.

IV. LAND

While **nonhistorical** religions (eg, Buddhism, Taoism) have land roots, **historical** religions eg, Judaism, Islam) make land claims, take both time & space-place more seriously than do nonhistorical religions. Christianity is an intermediate case: it's rooted in time, in a specific history it holds to be salvific, but its center is everywhere Christian faith occurs, & its circumference, its geographical boundary, is nowhere.

1. The distinction is too stark, but a good startingpoint: Judaism is **locative** (place-oriented, "the promised land" inseparable from the promise-covenant), a religion of descent, its aim sanctification: Christian is **u-topian** (Greek, "no-place"), a religion of assent, its aim salvation.

2. Typically, a tribal people (eg the Amerinds) in losing their land lose their religion (present Amerind religion being largely an artificial revival, much of it courtesy of the U.S.Treasury). Exception: Israel, losing its land but (thanks to its unique prophets, who explained the land loss as punishment for unfaithfulness to the God) not its religion. Put it this way: While Christianity is land-**transcendent**, Judaism has the inherent power to be land-**independent** while remaining "a people" (in the broad sense, tribe, nation).

3. But not all forms of Judaism make the traditional **land claim**. Reconstructionists, & quite a few in Reform, take "land" as a metaphor of shalom: "milk & honey" is of the heart & circumstance, wherever whenever. Several Jewish leaders have said to me that since Shoah, the State of Israel is the best thing that's happened to Jews & the worst thing that's happened to the Jewish religion. For most Israelis & many in the diaspora, sacrality has been sucked out of the Book & into the Land.

4. The primitive notion of a god "giving" real estate to a people is inherently unjust. You commit an oxymoron: "The gift of the land must always be seen in the context of the mandate for justice." The Tell Aviv portmaster's wife was gushing that "Wherever we dig we find our ancestors!" I was not a courteous dinnerguest: "How do you feel when you dig deeper & come upon Canaanites?" The UN's part in establishing the State of Israel was necessarily unjust to the Palestinians; but, say I, tough luck for the Palestinians.* You rightly say "God wants all people to have land," but what does "have" mean? does it include military sovereignty (as Arafat insists)? I'm for the Third Jewish Commonwealth, but not by divine right. Torah replaced Temple: let's take more seriously the Jewish world-cultural contribution that to be "a people," you don't have to have "a land." Your "geotheology" may be metaphorical and (as in Hasidism & Cabala) mystical. Besides, Christianity lifted up the universal element in Judaism (as Buddhism, in Hinduism)....Divine-right land-claims can have, today & tomorrow, nothing but a pernicious effect, as in fundamentalist Islam's "Once under the scimitar, always under the scimitar" (as Khomeini argued even before coming to power: the State of Israel is, in its very existence, blasphemous; Arafat agrees). ...But even in some very liberal Jews there's a residue of land/sacrality: "Bitburg" is profane, "Auschwitz" is sacred. Jews did themselves no credit by complaining against our president in B. and a cross adjacent to A. Anyway, "God bless America."

V. SCRIPTURE

The NT preaches supercessionism, either **accomplished**

(eg, Hebrews) or **delayed** (eg, Paul; cf. Barth & Rahner). The latter qualified Christianity's basic saved/lost division of humanity by an earlier division, viz un/chosen, the qualification being theodically defended by eschatological deferral (with various explanations as to why, in the interim, most Jews are conversion-resistant). Pious Christian affirmative thought-action for the Jews suffers effects of special pleading: (1) Paul's own doctrine of God's impartiality is compromised, as are (2) human solidarity, the indivisibility of our humanity under God over against racism, sexism, classism, & both religions & political chauvinism, & (3) the theoanthropological doctrines of human freedom & dignity, the freedom to escape from God & the dignity of being damned for one's choice (ie, ethical seriousness: Jews are placed in a transexistential category as, among the nations, the only people who'll be saved no matter what--paradoxically, a root of antisemitism)....Judaism & Christianity are prescriptural, their scriptures being expegetic, their primary realities being (for Judaism) a people & (for Christianity) the gospel. For Christians, TANAKH must be "OT": if it's "the Hebrew Bible," the gospel disappears, & Christianity with it, as it does unless NT remains antisemitic in the sense of antagonistic to Judaism vis-a-vis Jesus & the disciple-apostles. Efforts to obscure these uncomfortable realities are disingenuous & doomed. Our two religions are necessarily mutually offensive & mutually blasphemous, & God calls us to love each other & work together through, not only in spite of, this painful reality.

VI. CHRISTOLOGY

What you say under this head fails to address the main problem, which is that Jews say it's blasphemous to believe (as Christians do) that God has come among us as a human being, & Christianity says it's blasphemous to deny it (as Jews do). After the hearing, I learned that some failed to hear my point because I used the hot category of blasphemy: said one, "In that category, people can't listen to reason." But that may be the nub of the problem: If we obscure this relevant category, won't our reasoning be only **peripheral** to authentic Christian/Jewish dialog? Dipko was right: "If we have failed to listen, we have failed." But suppose what is said is only platitudes & peripheral euphemisms, as the Resolution would indicate? In that case, why waste time & increase confusion by listening? Better to go back to square one & start with honest, plain speech....Your text here is limited to a peripheral issue (in comparison with incarnation & trinity), viz the messiah idea-title. "Messianic Jews" bloat it, & Rosemary Reuther dessicates it, & scholars have it as a permanent playing-field. Since no view can be established, none can be rejected, & claim/counterclaim will continue....Both Christianity & Judaism, & both together, have their weaknesses and strengths. Lets rejoice in the strengths, & use them to God's glory.

*JUSTICE is only one among many values. Even God can't observe all of them at once. In giving Canaan to the patriarchs & Joshua, God acted unjustly toward the inhabitants. Life isn't fair, but good.