ASPECTS OF AN INQUIRY INTO
DUAL COVENANT THEOLOGY

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Introduction

A celebrated dialogist, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy is re-
ported to have had a motto, "Respondeo etsi mutabor!" (I re-
spond although I will be changed!). It was perhaps James
Parkes who was one of the earliest of contemporary scholars to
live out this process advocated by Rosenstock-Huessy, and was
by his own testimony quite changed in his approach to Judaism
and Christianity. He clearly espoused a form of dual-covenant
theology even if he did not quite call it that when he wrote,
"Both religions are true; but they are also different religions.
Neither is simply an incomplete form of the other; and I do not
desire to see either disappear, even by conversion to the
other." It is not necessary to agree with all of the sugges-
tive attitudes and conclusions Parkes reaches in his many
writings, but it is helpful to stand on his shoulders in rede-
velling and carrying further some of the themes with which he
dealt. While I was first attracted to the question of equal
theological space for Judaism and Christianity when as an under-
graduate I first read Parkes, the thrust for my seriously en-
gaging the theme did not arise until in recent years my New
Testament-rabbinics studies opened the whole question anew, and
pointed to plausible possibilities. As a consequence, I too
have been able to take the Rosenstock-Huessy route.

Harold Stahmer has appropriately indicated that such a
view as espoused by Rosenstock-Huessy, enunciates the real
risk in true dialogue. It also highlights the underlying
weakness of contemporary so-called "Jewish-Christian dialogue,"
which has been articulated by Malcolm L. Diamond in his state-
ment, "Jewish and Christian participants have both exploited
the word [dialogue]; they have misapplied it to superficial
efforts in the field of public relations..." The thrust of
Diamond's article is weakened by the inordinate emphasis he placed upon the political question of whether the Christian partner in dialogue has a proper appreciation of the State of Israel, but he correctly eschewed "the Chamber of Commerce level" of dialogue. And in parallel line with Rosenstock-Huessy, he averred that the authentic sense of dialogue implies that the dialogist "...realizes that the feedback from their interchange may alter some of his own cherished convictions.... It is an intensified form of empathy."7

Manfred Vogel concedes that for authentic dialogue the Christian hope of converting the Jew to an acceptance of Jesus cannot be excluded, but argues that in order not to vitiate the dialogue for the Jew this hope should not become the sole objective of the dialogue. But Vogel misapprehends a basic element that must be comprehended in dialogue. Christianity does not seek dialogue because it has a psychological need to grope toward its origin to present its apologia for breaking away from Judaism in order to secure its identity, as Vogel seems to emphasize. Christianity did not break away, but rather, was expelled by Judaism. Therefore, the psychological need that Christianity might express in dialogue, if indeed there is a psychological need, is to articulate its original innocence, and the lack of justification for Judaism's break with it.10

Neither Vogel nor Diamond alight upon the profoundest need for dialogue which inheres in both religions, and compels both, sometimes reluctantly, sometimes willingly, to confront one another on a serious theological level: the possibility of legitimizing 'dual covenant theology'.11 Vogel negatively skirts the periphery of this question when he asserts that from the Judaic standpoint everything that is new and distinctly Christian is utterly rejected by Judaism, and hence there is no openness to any dialogical content related to the christology.12 Nevertheless, he concedes that since the contemporary Jew is the product of Christian Western culture, the acculturated Jew must come to terms with Christianity, and toward this end a new openness to dialogue becomes evident.13 But at no point does he suggest that both religions may conceivably dialogue in order to clarify parameters for recognition of permanent mutual legitimacy.

The real challenge that has long been averted is the one suggested by Jakob Petuchowski, the need for "a Jewish theology of Christianity, and a Christian theology of Judaism."14 We have to build upon Petuchowski's assessment that we have to acknowledge and explore the profound difference between these two religious systems, and simultaneously penetrate into the mystery of the common elements of theology that arise from