

"Feminism and Jewish-Christian Relations"

PRESENTED AT NCCJ ISRAEL STUDY GROUP BY ANNETTE DAUM, COORDINATOR, DEPARTMENT OF INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

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Interreligious Dialogue, as currently conducted, can best be described, metaphorically, as a Dance - a dance choreographed and performed by men - by men who control not only the steps but the process, the content, the form and the focus of the Dance.

Because men have a vested interest in exclusivity, both theologically and institutionally, the Dance, at best, takes the form of a Minuet in which each side approaches the other very delicately. They barely touch, back away as if burned by a poker, take two steps forward, one step backwards, do a fancy turn and try again. Dazzled by the footwork, the people in the pews watch and wait for the next turn, not perceiving the way the limitations inherent in the form control the interaction between Jews and Christians; between men and women.

The theme addressed here today, the necessity for a synthesis of Jewish-Christian Dialogue with feminist interpretations of Christianity and Judaism, is the subject of an article by Deborah McCauley and myself, "Jewish-Christian-Feminist Dialogue: A Wholistic Vision," which appears in the Union Seminary Quarterly Review. It may be discussed at the 8th National Workshop on Jewish-Christian Relations, depending on the decision of the men in control. This, incidentally, is a perfect example of the way men control the Dialogue Dance. Although I serve on the National Planning Committee and although the Seminar, titled, appropriately, Jewish-Christian-Feminist Dialogue WAS ACCEPTED by the Committee, with Deborah and myself as co-conductors - the title was changed, without consultation or consent, to:

Feminist Dialogue in Jewish-Christian Relations. The language change also changes the perception of prospective participants so that only feminists will be encouraged to attend - and we will be isolated from the mainstream again. Participants will be misled about the direction of the Seminar. When I called to insist on a change, I was informed that the title had been changed - indeed all titles examined - by two men (who shall be nameless) - that only they had the final power to revise titles. Basically, men were defining our work in terms they understood. In pressing the issue, we discovered that veto power actually rested in the hands of the Orthodox Jewish community, as members of the Synagogue Council of America - a community which is opposed to Dialogue on theological matters with Christians. With the best of intentions, the men who changed the title to accommodate the Orthodox really thought that the title accurately described the Seminar. Further, we have not yet been able to directly communicate our conviction that our Seminar, properly understood and presented, could enhance Jewish-Christian relations on many levels, including the elimination of anti-semitism which is now surfacing under new guise in the women's movement where Christian feminists blame misogyny in Christianity on Judaic heritage, precisely because feminist dialogue takes place separately from Jewish-Christian Dialogue. Precisely because of our concern regarding this development, Deborah and I became co-conveners of the Task Force on Jewish-Christian Feminist Dialogue of the Feminist Theological Institute.

Ironically, Orthodox Jewish men, anxious to prevent feminists from gaining a foothold in the development of the Dialogue Dance, may be responsible for perpetuating anti-semitism by preventing us from gaining a wider audience. The last words from the power-broker, who needed to appease the

Orthodox insistence on adhering to the changed language, was "I don't see what difference it makes." He could not, of course, (would not) say this to his Orthodox constituency. (Our offer of a compromise: Jewish-Christian-Feminist Relations, was also judged unacceptable.) The issue remains unresolved at this moment. The Orthodox Jews well understood the significance of language. So do we. That language is crucial for male Orthodox Jews is accepted, but not for feminists. Because we insist on being heard, I will speak directly to the Rabbi (male, of course) in charge, in the hope of resolving this problem satisfactorily. While this one man has veto power, very few Orthodox Jews attend the Workshop - but all titles are subject to the same scrutiny. It may well be that feminist involvement may challenge the Planning Committee to devise a more egalitarian method of reaching consensus.¹

The critique of culture in the light of sexism and misogyny² has startling and illuminating parallels to the critique of the historical relationship between Judaism and Christianity. How women and men are now struggling with their changing consciousness about their "roles" as human beings in relation to each other marks a dramatic course similar to the changing consciousness of Jews and Christians about their "roles" as people of faith in relation to each other that has been developing since World War II in Christian and Jewish theological reflection. Our recognition and understanding of these parallels are beginning to emerge only now....What the application of these parallels to inter-religious dialogue means and will mean for Jewish-Christian relations may be as profound as what feminism has meant and is still coming to mean for American society as a whole.

¹The title "Feminist Dialogue and Jewish-Christian Relations" was accepted after this presentation.

²"Jewish-Christian Feminist Dialogue: A Wholistic Vision," Deborah McCauley and Annette Daum, Union Seminary Quarterly Review, Vol. 38, No. 2 1983

...Jewish and Christian feminists who are committed to dialogue with each other about feminism and religion are not necessarily committed to interreligious dialogue about Jewish-Christian relations....The channels through which most Jewish-Christian dialogue now operates are very much part of an "old boys' network," excluding both women and feminist interpretations of Judaism and Christianity. The extent to which interreligious dialogue can benefit from--and needs--a feminist perspective and the involvement of feminists is certainly on a par with the benefits feminism brings to Judaism and Christianity. As such, Jewish-Christian feminist dialogue seeks to address what are, to date, two different constituencies: on the one hand, to bring a feminist perspective to interreligious dialogue about the relationship between Judaism and Christianity; on the other hand, to encourage interreligious dialogue between Jewish and Christian feminists.

The first question bringing together many Jewish and Christian feminists was (and still is), "How to survive as a feminist in a patriarchal religion?" From the encounters initiated by this question has developed the recognition for the need of Jewish-Christian feminist dialogue on interfaith relations. Feminists now turning their energies, commitment, and talent to such a dialogue process are at, what is best described as, the stage of the "incipient issue." We are straddling three hurdles that at the outset are conflictive: contemporary feminist scholarship on religion and culture, the abysmal history of Jewish-Christian relations, and the grist of Jewish-Christian dialogue as defined thus far by the men who have gone before us.

From the 1960s to the present, interreligious dialogue between Christians and Jews has been based on scholarship and theology and has been limited, for the most part, to clergy. Today, dialogue is still primarily in the hands of clergy--male clergy: neither the Roman Catholic Church nor Orthodox and Conservative Judaism ordain women. As a consequence, very few women today are involved in Jewish-Christian dialogue. In addition, the almost exclusive focus on scholarship in interreligious dialogue has precluded the participation of many women, although this exclusion is not consciously deliberate. Historically, scholarship has been reserved for men in both Christian and Jewish traditions. Because women have been excluded from the processes which have given normative shape to our religious traditions--and to the values and world views which our traditions express--women have not been able to challenge until now those elements in our traditions which foster anti-Judaism and misogyny.

Most feminists concerned with interfaith dialogue with other feminists do not possess the credentials necessary to gain access to and influence the dialogue process that has been established almost exclusively through the channels of academic and religious institutions.

Out of their experiences as feminists within their religious traditions, some Jewish and Christian feminists of faith are now working together to create a genre of interreligious dialogue that will help to refocus the issues dominating the history of Jewish-Christian relations. We are working to refocus these issues by bringing the heretofore "alien" factor of women's experiences, aspirations, and historical consciousness to interfaith dialogue and to examine, through feminist hermeneutics religious practices and theological concepts such as "covenant" that are of particular concern in interfaith dialogue.

Through their own interreligious dialogue process, Jewish and Christian feminists are choosing to emphasize the creative forces within religion, and especially within Judaism and Christianity, that are characterized by a prophetic realism which changes social factors rather than by a realism which is determined by social factors. We choose to present a collective challenge to our religious traditions to be the best that is within them and we try to offer the example of our own efforts in relationship with each other. By this strategy, we offer a challenge to much of current Jewish-Christian dialogue which is established on the back of the patriarchal self-projections of Christianity and Judaism and their history of mutual estrangement. By this strategy, we also attempt to apply creatively to interreligious dialogue the insights of feminist scholarship on religion.

Through Jewish-Christian feminist dialogue, we are beginning to see the corners into which our respective traditions have painted themselves and the factors which undercut the efforts of dialogue in interfaith relations. These same "corners"--the "theology" of religious triumphalism, for example--are those which feminists of faith see as major barriers to the equality and co-responsibility of women as actors and participants in their religious traditions. Jewish-Christian feminist dialogue has the potential of bringing a new dialectic to interfaith relations. This dialectic will/should illuminate more fully not only the prejudices, misinformation, ignorance, and historic mistrust of each other confounding Jewish-Christian relations, but which will/should bring new understanding about the issues dividing and the issues uniting us in a world which demands more from us than the bitter fruits of our estrangement.

In conversation with each other, Christian and Jewish feminists are beginning to apply the insights of feminist theory's "patriarchal morality of projection" to Jewish-Christian relations. This morality has been historically acted out as religious triumphalism, a destructive phenomenon operative in both traditions and which clearly shows up in the institutional dialogue process between Christian and Jewish men over key theological

male-centered concepts developed by men which impact heavily upon women's

roles within each faith tradition, but which are discussed largely if not solely by men. We used the issue of "covenant" and "election" as an example.

Whatever progress has been made on this issue, or in the field of inter-religious relationships in general, has taken place among a rather small elite of clergy, scholars and professional staff, while the people in the pews who make interfaith relations a living necessity remain ignorant about each other. The domination of such institutions by male clergy automatically sets up exclusivity as an operant power relationship both within institutions and between institutions. Triumphalism, which fosters an attitude of one-upmanship, making one class of people more important than, more powerful than the other, is the most important dynamic inherent in male-dominated institutions which has had impact not just on women, but on Jewish-Christian relations, setting up a system whereby one group feels more entitled to dominate than the other - clergy over laity, male over female, my religious tradition over yours, my relationship to God over your relationship to God. Religious triumphalism may be perpetuated only through the marginalization of Others. Interreligious Dialogue, taking place within this context, by its very nature as currently structured can, then, have only limited success.

For Jews and Christians, affirming each other's covenantal validity, mutuality, and autonomy is the most difficult and the most important theological issue in contemporary Jewish-Christian dialogue....

While affirming "in principle" the inclusiveness of Christianity's and Judaism's separate and distinct traditions about their covenant relationship with God (meaning that the one's covenant does not necessarily exclude the "Other's"), the exclusiveness of Jews' and Christians' historical self-understanding of their covenant with God dominates and undermines many recent efforts to engage in interreligious dialogue on "covenant."

Jewish and Christian feminists recognize the centrality of covenant in our religious traditions and the potential it has for

actuating a vision of humanness as theomorphic. Feminists of faith recognize that women have been peripheral in the development of the theology and symbol-system of the covenant traditions in both Christianity and Judaism. They recognize that covenant is a concept formulated by men in both traditions which has produced a history of male-dominating consciousness about "what is covenant" (in Scripture, tradition, and heritage) that eradicates all but the remnants of women's own religious consciousness about "what is covenant" and their part in the covenant relationship. Women, let alone men, have not yet dared to explore how covenantal theologies have emotional, experiential, and practical impact on women and men within their respective traditions. As a result, women's self-conscious understanding of covenant is thus far determined by what men tell us God has revealed to them about women in terms of the covenant relationships our traditions claim to embody. By raising the issue of covenant to the light of interreligious feminist hermeneutics, the question is posed, "Do those who implicitly/explicitly affirm patriarchy as the appropriate interpretive matrix for covenant want to know what God has revealed to us about them?"

Jewish and Christian feminists ask, "How do women see themselves as part of the covenant relationship between God and humanity? What are our experiences of covenant within our religious traditions? What insights can feminists bring to this concept that will help to make it possible for women to achieve equality as actors and mutual co-responsibility as participants in the covenant relationships affirmed by our religious traditions?" For to achieve equality in the covenant relationship means to achieve equality in our religious traditions which uphold this relationship as normative for human beings.

To begin exploring these questions through interreligious dialogue, Jewish and Christian feminists examine the scholarly, theological models of men's interfaith dialogue on covenant, since these are the only examples now available to us. We look at one interreligious approach to the question of covenant initiated in 1979 by the Los Angeles Priest-Rabbi Committee. The pamphlet's "Introduction" summarizes the problem of women's exclusion from participation in the institutional channels created for interreligious dialogue:

"We were most anxious for a strong and creative cross-sectional representation from both communities. This search created a committee with Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform presence among the Jewish constituency and a wide age and theological spread among the Catholic priests."

The cross-section, by its very structure, excluded at least half of the religious community. Not a single woman participated, presumably because there are no women Roman Catholic priests, while

only a few women rabbis were ordained at the time. Both Jewish and Catholic women scholars could have been part of such a dialogue had it been structured differently. We do not suggest that the exclusion was deliberate, but that the absence of women was not even noticed. Women were simply, as always, invisible. (Even the language was exclusive, especially the Jewish part.)

While professing to seek "greater mutual knowledge and awareness" of each other's covenant traditions and the place of the "Other" within the two traditions, both the pamphlet's Jewish and Catholic explanations of covenant focus on the issues of "election" and how "Judaism and Christianity deal with the exclusive nature of the covenant with God (*italics added*).¹ The pamphlet's "Conclusion" illustrates the dilemma created by the focus of much current interfaith dialogue on traditional interpretations about the "exclusivity" of the two covenant traditions:

"Each community envisions itself as uniquely bound to God and the bond manifests itself within the personal and communal lives of its members. Neither explanation of the covenantal bond completely excludes other covenants between God and humanity."

The irony of this summary statement is that its authors apparently think that they have said something quite positive about their mutual exploration. To Jewish and Christian feminists who are exploring together the question of covenant, it appears otherwise, as other statements in the pamphlet illustrate.

The section, "Covenant or Covenants: A Jewish Response," not only describes interpretations of the Noahide covenant in rabbinic tradition, but also the forward-looking interpretations of medieval scholars that

"...Christians qua Christians were ethical monotheists.... As such, Christians were righteous Gentiles by virtue of their adhering not simply to the basic Noahide laws, to which they remained obligated, but to the tenets of Christianity, which represents a more encompassing religious system."

This statement seems well to the good--a sign of hope for mutual affirmation. But we go on to read that the pamphlet's authors find it necessary to add the qualification, "It must be emphasized that the traditional Jew cannot conceive of God entering into a covenant with another special group of humans." The Catholic subsection, "The New Covenant Vis-A-Vis the Jewish Covenant," unselfconsciously reasserts the traditional Christian covenantal interpretation of Christian universalism versus Jewish particularism, and weakly suggests that

"Mosaic law...[makes] its own specific contribution to the slow creation of God's Kingdom. Today the Catholic Church is challenged...to deepen her spiritual understanding of Jewish particularism and of its specific mission in the Sanctification of the Name.

The pamphlet concludes with a series of questions representing "areas [which] produce fruitful discussion." All questions but one identify "election" and covenantal exclusiveness as the focus of "fruitful discussion." With the best of intentions, religious triumphalism triumphs in the pamphlet.

The pamphlet is an example of how even the best efforts at interreligious dialogue fail when delimited by the hierarchical structures of religious institutions. As long as the primary focus of interreligious dialogue occurs within the exalted province of scholarly, clerical, and theological circles, it will never touch the people who make the need for dialogue a living reality. The key question for feminists is, "Just what do these concepts and the religious reality they foster--concepts such as 'covenant'--mean in terms of human experience?" The interpretive experiences of women, historically and contemporaneously, will enrich and reformulate--and humanize--the religious concepts which express the self-understanding of our faith traditions far beyond the efforts and best hopes of those who now dominate the dialogue process.

Covenant or Covenants? is promoted as a model for interreligious theological reflection. So accepted, Jewish and Christian feminists recognize that we have our work cut out for us. Through our own interreligious dialogue, feminists of faith ask, "How is it that the attitudes and viewpoints which justify the marginalization of Jews and Christians in each other's covenant traditions are also those which justify the marginalization of women within our religious traditions?"

A large part of the case against women in our covenant traditions is the male-centered symbolism used to express the ratification of God's covenant relationship with Jews and Christians. As Jewish and Christian feminists, we need to rethink the challenge to feminism inherent in both traditions that a male figure will "save us" (although we understand this in quite different ways): how male-centered religious concepts, developed by men to be used by men, have been used to separate not only women from men, but Jews from Christians. Implicit in the symbolism of covenant is that men are more chosen/elect than women, Jews are more elect than Christians, Christians are more elect than Jews.

Within Judaism the act of affirming the individual's inclusion in the covenant community is the rite of circumcision. Rabbi Joan

Friedman discusses the place of circumcision in Jewish tradition and its psychological impact:

It is critical to remember that circumcision is in no way a sacramental act. It does not make one a Jew. One becomes a Jew by birth (or by conversion)....The covenant in Genesis 17 actually involves both Abraham and Sarah...yet the act of affirmation is restricted to men....The particular act of affirmation marks their bodies irrevocably...an operation performed on the genitals...that probably stirs emotions buried deep in our psyche.

It is not likely that Judaism ever would (or should) do away with the ancient rite of circumcision because only males can be circumcised. But because of the symbolic weight of circumcision as the physical sign of being in covenant with God, we must ask how can women develop a physical sign of their involvement in the covenant that is more than mere emulation and not simply "just one for women, too." Some women have suggested the ritual breaking of an infant female's hymen as a symbolic equivalent on a par with circumcision. Others suggest piercing the ear as a ritual symbol for covenant relationship, since the SHMA' (Dt. 6:4ff), central to both traditions, commands us to hear the word of God. Ear-piercing might also serve as a type of affirmative action program communicating to women that they, too, have full authority to interpret God's Torah "with understanding" (Neh.8:1-3) and without their dependence on the mediation of male authority figures. Ear-piercing also involves the shedding of blood which is a central factor in the ritual attached to covenants. Whatever physical sign is eventually chosen to affirm women's covenant relationship with God, it must reflect women's own understandings of the meaning and significance of covenant as experienced and interpreted by women, and not by men.

Within Christianity, the covenant binding Christians to God is mediated through the blood sacrifice of Jesus, a male human being. Many Christians will protest that the identification of Jesus as "a male human being" holds no symbolic significance in Christianity's normative understanding of covenant. Yet, the 1976 Vatican Declaration on the ordination of women argues not from Scripture, but from Catholic tradition, and concludes that the ordination of women is precluded by the fact that Jesus was a male and only men are equipped (sexually outfitted) to "imitate" Jesus' authority as high priest over the sacraments, over the symbolic expressions of Catholicism's faith content. The struggle for women's ordination and full ministerial participation in nearly all of Christianity's denominations indicates that the religious authority attached to Jesus' "maleness" is not beside the point. Indeed, much current feminist theology examines the problems created by male-centered Christology and the need to re-image Jesus in Christian interpretation. (Language is in the eye of the beholder.)

Theology and biblical scholarship understand that God's covenant with people (be they Jews or Christians) is a contractual relationship between two unequal parties, that covenant establishes an artificial blood kinship between the two, second only to the bond of blood, and that hesed--steadfast, loyal love--is the covenant's motive force incumbent on both parties, signifying the love of family members. While the normative values of Judaism and Christianity emphasize the covenant's activating component and fundamental obligation--that we are to love God and one another--what our religious traditions have embodied in their objectified faith constructs is a linear, hierarchical vision of covenant, between lessers and greater and in terms of who has authority over whom. People are "less" than God. Women are "less" than men. People are "subject" to God. What our religious traditions have told women about their part in the covenant relationship is that women are less than men, and men (representing "people" generically) are less than God. While each tradition believes that it bears greater responsibility than any "Other" in the scheme of God's covenantal purposes, our covenant traditions do not totally exclude the "Other." The "Other" is elect somehow, but "we," who are either born or baptized into greater responsibility, are closer to God.

The critique of the triumphalism which has come to dominate our traditions' theologies of covenant will go nowhere as long as feminist critiques of triumphalism--and feminists themselves--are excluded from the dialogue process. The focus on covenant as election and exclusiveness (which excludes women as well) is the focus on covenant from the perspective of triumphalism, and not from hesed.

Jewish-Christian feminist dialogue seeks to refocus interreligious dialogue on covenant from "election and exclusiveness" to "responsibility and inclusiveness." We are at the beginning of the process of shaping a feminist vision of what the covenant relationship between God and humanity is and should be and our responsibilities within that relationship. We come to this exploration from different faith traditions which have to be mutually understood and respected before we can move on to shape that vision about the covenant relationship. We need each other because we are both in a covenant relationship with God; we share the same focus and are a minority within our faith traditions. Our focus is feminist, and our purpose is to explore how women and men may equally honor the full integrity of their covenant relationship with God and with each other, beyond the impediments imposed by a sexist vision of reality which promotes the covenant relationship of one sex at the dehumanizing expense of the "Other's."

The word "responsibility" may be hyphenated to read "response-ability," the ability to respond. The covenant vision of reality means for Judaism, as it does for most of Christianity, that humans have the ability to respond to the covenant and are accountable for how they respond. The biblical vision of who God is and who human

beings are in relation to God and to each other assumes that the essence of humanness, that is, what makes us unique in the "order of creation," is our response-ability. If you strip people of their response-ability, you violate their humanness, their accountability for themselves and their relationships with others. As such, you strip them of the ability to be fully accountable for the Image in which they are made.

Under patriarchy, women have been stripped of the fullness of their humanity in relation to men by the negation of their potential (and obligation) to take full responsibility for themselves and for the world in which they live. The degree to which a person is stripped of her ability to take authority over her own life (biologically, politically, economically, religiously) and for the world in which she lives is the degree to which she has been stripped of the fullness of her humanity. Sexism sins against a woman's right to be a fully responsible human being in the same world she shares with men and for which, in the prescriptive aspect of the biblical tradition, she is told she is fully accountable with men: for the image of God is both female and male (Gen. 1:27) and to both has been given responsibility for the world in which we live (Gen. 1:28-31a), not just bits and pieces of that world according to sex and gender.

If we are going to accept equal responsibility in the covenant relationship, we have to be equal within our faith traditions as actors and participants.

I was reminded of those words we wrote when I was invited to participate in a Dialogue session between members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and a group of pre-millennial evangelicals. This was to be their second meeting. I had not been invited to participate in the first. Although I head the Department of Interreligious Affairs I was not invited to participate until the appointment of a new Chair of the CCAR Interreligious Committee who also serves on my Interreligious Committee and who automatically invited me to participate, as indeed, anyone in my position should. He was convinced that I had not been asked to serve previously solely because I am a woman. Sad to say, he was probably right. Since there are no women rabbis on the CCAR Committee, and since the fundamentalist preachers could not be expected to bring female participants, I was the only woman present. The Dialogue

began that evening with two presentations on covenant. Predictably, the discussion focused on election.

Most of the Rabbis present were well-aware of the fact that I am a feminist. Though I had no intention of making a public statement on sexist language in that setting, the Rabbis began stumbling over their terminology in awkward attempts to use inclusive language - acutely aware of my presence which served as instantaneous consciousness-raising. While appreciative of the effort, I cannot help thinking that they would automatically refrain from using racist language whether or not there were any Black participants. Both presentations on covenant made me acutely aware of how marginal I am as both a woman and a Jew - as a woman within Jewish tradition and as a Jew from the Fundamentalist perspective. In our article, Deborah and I focused on the symbolic role of circumcision in Biblical covenantal tradition. The Dialogue that evening focused on circumcision in Rabbinic tradition, in which circumcision became so important it is equated with the covenant itself. The Mishnah states (Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi) that Abraham was not called perfect until he was circumcised. Some passages from the Talmud state that circumcision, in importance, is equal to that of all the other commandments in the Torah. The late Professor Sidney B. Hoenig indicated that "the designation of circumcision as covenant is due to rabbinic reaction to Christian attacks on circumcision and particularly to Pauline teachings (Mishnah vs. Paul's statement in I Corinthians 7:19) that "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing." The following words, concluding the Jewish presentation, describing the importance of circumcision in Rabbinic tradition, went through me like a knife...."Perhaps circumcision is so important because it so aptly expresses the notion of partnership between man and God. Bereshit Rabbah 11:7 states that God's creations are

improved by man. Man upholds his part of the covenant by making God's creation ready for use. Circumcision symbolizes this teamwork as man's body only becomes perfect after circumcision improves it. Thus the world can only be improved, thought the Rabbis, if man works to improve it." Where does that leave me, as a devout Jewish woman, in relationship to God? In men's battle to differentiate themselves, theologically, the inevitable result was concentration on male ritual and symbolism, in which men have the normative relationship to God in a way that further marginalizes women. I was somewhat ameliorated by the thought that for Jews it is the Covenant at Sinai which is regarded as most crucial - a covenant in which women are specifically included, although clearly not yet on equal terms, until I heard the presentation from the Fundamentalist perspective which recognizes the Jews as being in^a a covenantal relationship with God only through the Abrahamic covenant. The Mosaic covenant crucial for Jews was, of course, abrogated by the new covenant through Jesus. As a Jewish woman I am marginalized by both traditions so that the men in both may maintain the unique relationship they claim to God.

The Rabbis, offended by the Fundamentalist theology, denounced it as anti-semitic, a charge rejected by the Fundamentalists who were hurt and puzzled. As a feminist, I was better able to understand how exclusivity marginalizes the "Other" (whether based on sex or creed) and the impact of that marginalization on the "Other," therefore better able to help Fundamentalist clergy understand that, while their theology may not, of itself, be anti-semitic, the failure to accept the Jews' own self-definition of the centrality of the Mosaic Covenant marginalizes the Jewish covenantal relationship with God, placing the Jew in the position of "Other", of being in a

lesser relationship with God. The Jew then becomes somehow less of a human being in the eyes of those following such theology, which in turn leads to anti-semitic attitudes. The same process also relegates women to second-class status.

"How do we, feminists, who see response-ability, not election, as a focus, assume responsibility sufficient enough to get Jews and Christians to stop fighting over whose covenant is better than whose?" Recent research in the field of psychology may provide some insight into the reasons why feminists are more likely to focus on responsibility than election, thus bringing new insight into the Dialogue process.

Carol Gilligan offers the following thesis in A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development, Harvard University Press, 1982 - (Professor of Harvard Graduate School of Education) - which did not come to our attention until after our article but reinforces our thesis. She describes her research on apparent differences in the moral perceptions of men and women. Her research was conducted to specifically include women, for she claims that recent psychological theories of moral development were developed with little or no involvement of women. Gilligan interviewed children, then men and women, re-interviewed the same people some years later in graduate school or professional and family life. She asked her subjects what they thought of themselves as being - how they defined themselves, then asked them to resolve a certain constructed moral dilemma. She found that boys defined themselves by exclusivity, by what separates them from others - what makes them unique and different; that they resolved moral situations by the application of articulated principles on an intellectual, scholarly level. Girls and women saw themselves in terms of human relationships. Gilligan

concludes that there is a special female moral mode which pays attention to human context and human responsibilities rather than separation of self and abstract principle. We must be careful to understand that Gilligan's research does not mean that women are innately different from men. Gilligan presents, rather, a challenge to theories that propose that man's experience, culturally-induced, is the highest moral level achievable. Women's experiences, also culturally induced, may also reflect the same High Level from a different perspective and must be included in the Dialogue process to make this a wholistic experience capable of creating better understanding among people of faith. Gilligan's research does not mean that women are incapable of abstract reasoning. Women, admitted to the Dialogue process, must, however, not be confined to abstract theological discussion. Men, who are certainly capable of considering human relationships, must expand the Dialogue to include women's experiences so that we can have a common witness to the rest of humanity that affirms the best that is within our religious tradition.

The reasons why Christianity and Judaism do not deal justly with each other are basically the same reasons why our religious traditions do not deal justly with women. The critique of triumphalistic interreligious dialogue on covenant and feminist critique of covenant in Judaism and Christianity illustrate that the parallels between the two are no mere coincidence, but a pattern deeply ingrained in our histories of interpreting the covenant relationship between God and humanity. Hesed, not hierarchy, needs to be our primary interpretive matrix for covenant.

Because of our covenantal relationship with God, we are called to join forces to move beyond theology; to address the problems pervasive in this interdependent world - problems of hunger and poverty - war and peace. This cannot be done while we are still engaged in a war dance with one another - as Jews and Christians or as men and women.