

(The English translation used is that of Norman P. Goldhawk, and the edition that of Collier Books, Macmillan, New York 1951. Buber wrote the German original, *Zwei Glaubensweisen*, in Jerusalem; the foreword is dated January 1950.)

Summary

There are two types of faith: one is trust in someone, the other is belief that something is true. Judaism and Christianity, especially in their early periods, represent respectively these two types. The first is expressed in the Hebrew word '*emunah*', conveying the idea of "a perseverance in trust in the guiding and covenanting Lord" (p.10). This perseverance in trust is related to a sense of the continuity of the nation of which one is a member and with which God is believed to have covenanted. The second type of faith, expressed in the Greek word '*pistis*', especially as used by Paul, requires conversion rather than continuity, conversion to a body of beliefs concerning the one called Christ, and is linked to the idea of the Church as the transnational company of individuals thus converted rather than to any sense of perseverance within a nation. [The Hebrew and the Greek words are juxtaposed in the final chapter.] "The Pauline doctrine of faith" (p.14) may be contrasted with "the teaching of Jesus himself", in which "the genuine Jewish principle is manifest" (p.12). Jesus is "a great son of Israel" (p.9), but "The summons of Jesus to turn into the Kingship of God which has 'come near' was transformed into the act of conversion" (p.10).

Jesus stands substantially within Pharisaic Judaism, whereas Paul and John introduce what is alien not only to Pharisaic Judaism but also to Jesus. Paul antithesizes faith in Jesus Christ and living by the law: in doing so he wrests scripture (Chs V and VI), and loses the personal note of teaching and guidance which is missed in the translation of '*Torah*' by '*nomos*' (Ch.VII). Paul thinks of the law as given in order that it might convince its recipients of their sinfulness, and so frustrate any reliance upon it (Ch.VIII). He actually describes as enemies of God himself and other human beings so far as they have been without faith in Jesus Christ, and he has little to say of any love on the part of man for God (Ch.XIII). Jesus had spoken of sonship to God as open to all (Ch.VII), emphasized the need for a radical obedience to the commandments (Ch.XI), preserved, as in the "Our Father", the immediacy which is fundamental to Israel's conception of its relation to God (Chs XIV & XV), and, though calling for followers, warded off any tendency to exalt him (Chs IX & XI). The writer of John seems to have drawn on a tradition concerning Jesus's own baptism and sense of special vocation, along with a belief that "water and the spirit" were available to all, and turned it into an affirmation of Jesus as the Son of God, in whom one must believe (Ch.XI).

The question of the "self-consciousness" of Jesus cannot be answered with any certainty, but it seems likely that he related himself to the tradition in Deutero-Isaiah concerning the anointed but suffering servant, and did not know when the imminent kingly rule of God would be revealed. But this tradition concerning the Messiah was of a faithful one who arose from humanity, not of one who "came down to the world". Paul, with his emphasis on both resurrection and pre-existence, so presented Jesus as to make deification only a step away (Ch.X). We can, however, see his attempts to avoid misstatements in that presentation (Ch.XII). His insistence on Christ as the one through whom those alone who believe in him receive "the power of God unto salvation" leaves no room for immediacy (Ch.XV).

Analysis

[Apart from Buber's expression of gratitude for what he has learnt from the work of the Christian scholars Rudolf Bultmann, Albert Schweitzer, Rudolf Otto and Leonhard Ragaz, and his personal contact with them, the Foreword may be summarized as in the first paragraph of the summary above, except for the explicit mention of the words '*emunah*' and '*pistis*'.]

Chapter I

"All through the Old Testament to believe means to follow in the will of God", and in that light we should understand and may link Isaiah's "He that believeth will not make haste" (xxviii.16) and Jesus's "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mk ix.23).

Chapter II

Jesus's "Turn and believe in the message" (Mk i.15), like Isaiah's "If you do not trust you will not remain entrusted" (vii.9), calls for the "realization" of faith "in the totality of life". There is here both *Teshuvah*, "turning of the whole person", and *Emunah*.

Chapter III

Comparing Mk viii.27-30 and John vi.66-69, we find only in the former that Jesus is "open to attacks of self-questioning" and only in the latter that there is great emphasis on the disciples' attainment of a state in which they "have believed, and have come to know" that Jesus is "the Holy One of God". John's Jesus "belongs to a spiritual realm rather than to our human one" (p.32).

Chapter IV

In Israel there is a contrast between "those who realize their faith, who make it effective, and those who do not", and not between faith and unbelief, but in the letter to the Hebrews and in John there is an emphasis on believing as being convinced that something is true (Heb. xi.1,6; John vi.28f).

Chapter V

"The transformation of Israel's conception of faith by Paul" (p.48), "whom we must regard as the real originator of the Christian conception of faith" (p.44), is discernible in his account of Abraham and in his use of a verse from Habakkuk. Whereas Gen. xv.6 says "of Abraham that he 'continued to trust' God ..., and of God that He 'deemed' this 'as the proving true' of him", Paul in Romans iv and Galatians iii uses his reading of the Septuagint [the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures] to present Abraham as an example of the faith which, as distinct from good works, can alone enable a human being to be "justified", i.e., to be "in that state in which he can stand the judgement of God" (pp.44-48). Similarly, the description by Habakkuk (ii.4) of "the man proved true [who] will live in his trust" is used by Paul in Galatians iii and Romans i to antithesize faith, which becomes faith in Christ, of whom Paul says that he has freed us from the curse of the law, and any reliance on attempts to obey that law (pp.48-50).

Chapter VI

Another text used strangely by Paul is Deuteronomy xxx.14: "[Paul omits] the last word of the sentence. The text runs: 'For the word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, *to do it.*'" That word is the commandment (v.11); but Paul at Romans x.8f wants it to be taken to refer to the word of faith he and others preach, i.e., in Jesus as the risen Lord, that word whose acceptance is said to bring salvation. "[Paul] regards the outward fulfilment [of the whole law] as impossible,

without of course his indicating what makes it so. Here not merely the Old Testament belief and the living faith of post-Biblical Judaism are opposed to Paul, but also the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount ...” (p.55).

Chapter VII [This chapter, with its 23 pages, is much the longest in the book, and gives a major part of Buber’s view of Jesus in relation to Judaism, partly by contrast with Paul’s presentation of him.]

“Paul’s critical attitude to the Torah” is in conflict with both Judaism and Jesus. In both there is a call for “fulfilment of the divine commandment”, though Jesus calls for “the readiness ... to enter into the kingdom of God which draws near” (p.56; cf. pp.59-61). The word ‘Torah’ is used here because its Greek translation as ‘*nomos*’ (‘law’) was so misleading. “In the Hebrew Bible Torah does not mean law, but direction, instruction, information” (p.57). It is more than the laws which are its objectivisations; there is always the idea of the directing voice. The move to ‘*nomos*’ made possible “the Pauline dualism of law and faith, life from works and life from grace” (p.57).

Jesus and the Pharisees are alike in this fundamental respect: they see fulfilment of the Torah as meaning hearing the Word in such a way that, across the whole range of one’s human life, one’s heart is truly directed, and therefore directed to God (pp. 58, 63). In that light we can see the similarity between Jesus’s “Ye ... shall be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect” and the commandment in Leviticus “Ye shall be holy, for I am holy” (p.59). Jesus’s command to love the enemy should be related to the commandment “Love thy neighbour” (thy *re’ah*), which means “Be lovingly disposed towards men with whom thou hast to do at any time in the course of thy life” (p.70). That is incompatible with hatred of the enemy, as Jewish thought at its best realized. “The saying of Jesus about love for the enemy derives its light from the world of Judaism in which he stands and which he seems to contest; and he outshines it. ... But one should not fail to appreciate the bearers of the plain light below from amongst whom he arose ...” (p.75).

The connection made in Matthew (v.44f), “Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors, **so that** you may become the sons of your Father in heaven” implies the paradox that “men become what they are, sons of God, by becoming what they are, brothers of their brothers” (p.75). This making of “love to man ... the presupposition of the realized sonship to God”, implying that there is “open entrance for everyone who really loves”, is “unheard-of”, and yet, though it “originat[es] from the enthusiasm of eschatological actuality”, i.e., from within Jesus’s conviction of the imminent Kingdom of heaven, it is a daring and apt supplement to Israel’s faith (p.76). In the Hasidic movement there have been some sayings that may be related to it. In the gospel of John (i.12), however, those who become children of God are “those who believe on his name” (i.e., the name of the Word made flesh), and Paul says to converted Gentiles (Galatians iii.26) “Ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (p.77).

Chapter VIII

By contrast with both Pharisaic Judaism and Jesus, Paul holds that the law cannot be fulfilled in its entirety, and was given, not to be fulfilled, but to call forth sin that would be seen as sin and so prepare the way for an abundant grace (Romans v.20, vii.5-13*; p.80f). He either did not realize that he was here contradicting Jesus or, resolving to think of him no more in terms of his human life [2 Cor. v.16], considered that now a new orientation was needed (p.80). In Paul’s world-view, which was of a Gnostic kind, human beings, Jew and Gentile, are, for so long as they are without faith in Christ, doubly enslaved: to “the rulers” or even “the god” of “this age” (1 Cor. ii.8; 2 Cor. iv.4) or “the elemental spirits of the cosmos” (Gal. iv.3), and to “another law”, a law of sin and death within us (Rom. vii.21-viii.2*; pp.81-83). Though in the Old Testament there is, in situations of extreme wickedness, talk of God’s hardening a man’s heart, Paul extends it (Romans ix-xi) to cover Israel in its reliance on the law and its refusal as yet, except for a few, to

have faith in Christ, and holds that God “gave [Israel] the law in order to cause them to be frustrated by the fact of it being incapable of fulfilment” and has shut up all into their disobedient state so as to have mercy on all (ix.30-33*, and references in the first sentence above; xi.32; pp.83-89). “When I contemplate this God I no longer recognize the God of Jesus, nor his world in this world of Paul’s” (p.89). Jesus does not see the world as ruled by evil, but offers to everyone the possibility of turning and being forgiven, as for the lost son in the parable. [* At the points asterisked I have given more specific references than those supplied by Buber.]

Chapter IX

To the question how one could get to a true life in the revealed will of God, the Pharisees answered that one should “fulfil the commandment for its own sake and not for its advantageous consequences”, and that “everything should be done truly for God’s sake, from love to Him and in love to Him” (p.92f). The counterpart answer in Jesus’s teaching is “the summons to follow himself” in relation to “the rule of God which is come near”, and to free oneself from whatever attachments would hold one back (p.94f). But that answer could not be given by anyone other than Jesus himself. Paul’s answer was “the summons to have faith in Christ” (whereas “Jesus ... does not desire that a man should hold him to be anyone in particular”), and that faith is based on belief in his resurrection: “if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain and your faith is also in vain” (1 Cor. xv.14; pp.96-98). “The apostolate, which ... demanded from the Jews an act of faith [in the resurrection of an individual] hardly capable of being effected, decided, without desiring it, for the Gentiles” (p. 101).

Chapter X

We should now consider the enigma, perhaps insoluble, of the so-called “self-consciousness” of Jesus (p.102). He was sure, on the one hand, that he was “the prophet of the coming Basileia [kingly rule of God] and ... its appointed human centre”, but on the other he was “in the state of concealment”. How would the transition be made? He did not know (p.103f). It seems likely that “Jesus understood himself, under the influence of the conception of Deutero-Isaiah [the part of the book of Isaiah written after Isaiah’s death by one who regarded himself as his disciple], to be a bearer of the Messianic hiddenness” (p.107). It may be that Mark xiv.62 is evidence for an actually expressed belief of Jesus, near the end of his life, that this concealment was about to be dramatically ended; and that the memory of that belief of his made possible, “after the death of Jesus and the visions of the disciples”, the emergence of “the new binitarian God-image” (p.108f). In Deutero-Isaiah the idea of the Messiah’s concealment had been given the image of the arrow in the quiver (xlix.2): “the one appointed for public recognition remains in the ‘quiver’ until he is drawn out, i.e., this his special Messianic vocation can be surmised indeed beforehand, but not actually known” (pp. 106, 111). “The Messianic man”, in pre-Christian Jewish thought, whether conceived of as kingly or as a servant, “is an ascending and not a descending one. He steps forth from the crowd of men and is ‘chosen’ by God” (pp.109-11). But especially in the thought of Paul, and later of John, both emphasizing a unique resurrection and pre-existence, that Messianic figure is replaced by “one substantially different: a heavenly being, who came down to the world, sojourned in it, left it, ascended to heaven and now enters upon the dominion of the world which originally belonged to him”. “Only one step had to be taken from this to deification” (p.113).

Chapter XI

In Jesus’s conversation with the rich man (Mark x.17-21) his faithfulness (*Emunah*) is evident in three themes in his reply: he begins it by saying that he does not want even to be called good, for “none is good except God alone”; “man only needs to grasp the original intention of the commandments of God”; and the rich man can learn what that means by following him, which

will entail, in that man's case, giving up his wealth (p.114f). Jesus's opening remark "continue[s] the great line of the Old Testament proclamation of the non-humanity of God and the non-divinity of man". "It is ... as if, for the sake of the faith-immediacy to God in which he stands and to which he wants to help man, he warded off [the] belief in himself [as a divine being]" (p.115f). The authenticity of the passage is virtually ensured by the fact that it appears "in spite of the Christology opposed to it" (p.116).

How are we to understand the way from what Jesus says here to "his apotheosis" [his being regarded as divine]? One part of the answer lies in the account in John iii of a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, which is likely to preserve a genuine tradition concerning Jesus's own experience at his baptism. Nicodemus asks Jesus about the nature of his empowerment (p.117f), and in Jesus's answers are the only uses in John of the expression 'the kingship of God'. In the original version Jesus probably spoke of "people being created anew by water and spirit" (p.119f), and so able to see and proclaim the imminent kingship (p.118). On the one hand Jesus speaks of the action of the spirit, like a wind (the one word '*pneuma*', rendering the Hebrew '*ruach*', is used for both), as inscrutable; on the other "the great faith is taught by the personal experience of great faith: submit to the Spirit of God and you will have to give yourself up to it" (p.124). "[Jesus] says, from his experience of faith, what it means to become a son of God: to be created anew by Him, to be 'begotten' by him, as he has experienced it. But this personal experience he expresses as open to men in general" (vv. 3, 5, and especially 8; p.124f). This doctrine, however, is transferred by the writer of John's gospel into "his theological language and world": the power to become children of God is given to all who receive the one who is called the Word and the only-begotten from the Father (i.12, 14; p.125).

Chapter XII

When we consider what is attributed in John (xx.38) to Thomas, that he says to the risen Jesus "My Lord and my God", we can say that "the presence of the One who cannot be represented ... is replaced [in early Christianity] by the binitarian image of God, one aspect of which, turned towards the man, shows him a human face" (p.127f). The unrepresentable God of Israel is "the One to Whom it is related by ... an exclusive immediate Emunah", but "The God of the Christian is both imageless and imaged, but imageless rather in the religious idea and imaged rather in actual experience. The image conceals the imageless One" (p.130f). In one aspect of Christian experience it is the name of Christ, rather than that of God, which is prominent, especially in times of great stress, as is illustrated in some works of Dostoevski (p.132f). We discern the tension in early Christian thought concerning what is and what is not to be said of Jesus Christ if we juxtapose in their probable chronological order three Pauline texts (1 Cor. viii.6, Romans xi.36, Colossians i.15-20): the second may be intended to guard against "the danger of a ditheism" in the first, and in the third Paul "seeks to preserve the unity and at the same time to extol the heavenly Christ" (p.133f).

Chapter XIII

The love of men to God, prescribed in the daily "Hear, O Israel" in a commandment given first place by Jesus, is very little mentioned by Paul (p.135). "The depreciation of man is foreign to genuine Judaism", and so is any suggestion that man is incapable of a spontaneous love of God (p.136f). How did Paul come to a different view? We have a clue in Romans v.8-10, especially in the mention of having been enemies of God. "When the love of God had not been proved to him [through the death of Jesus], he was God's enemy. He was the enemy of a loveless God — One who seemed to him loveless. From hence I understand his path ..." (p.137f). "To Pharisaic Judaism the creation of man and the revelation are works of the divine love. Paul tells us almost nothing about this primeval, historic and everlasting love of God for His creation" (p.138).

The wrath of God, for Paul, “has nothing fatherly about it”, whereas it is portrayed in the Old Testament as “a fatherly anger towards the disobedient child” (p.139). “Paul’s ‘wrath’ is obviously of the same nature as that fate called by the Greeks *heimarmene*”; he shows here the influence upon him, before he became a Christian, of a popular form of Hellenistic Judaism (p.140). Consider again Romans xi.32 [see Chapter VIII above]. “God alone is to be perceived in the work of ‘shutting up’; in the work of deliverance He almost disappears behind Christ, who only at the end of the ages will hand over the rule to his Father (1 Cor. xv.24). The Highest Beings stand out from one another as dark omnipotence and shining goodness, not as later with Marcion in dogma and creed, but in the actual experience of the poor soul of man; the one cast it into bonds and the other frees it from them” (p.141).

Chapter XIV

In many places in Israel’s scriptures there is questioning of the justice of God in view of the continued suffering of the righteous (p.143f). Three main responses may be distinguished within Hellenistic Judaism: God is associated with a power of fate, there are “powers” which occupy an intermediate position between God and men, and (the despairing answer apparent in the Ezra-Apocalypse, dated about a decade after the letter to the Romans) “God ... put [human] freedom to too difficult a test” (p.145f).

Both the influence of that third kind of response upon him and his own bitter struggle late in his pre-Christian period are apparent in Romans vii.7-25. There Paul, in using ‘I’, “means at the same time ‘I Paul’ and ‘I Adam’, and then ‘I, a Jew of the Law’” (p.147). His earlier condition, as he now sees it, was one in which the law, though good in itself, has “increased the trespass” (vii.7-13, v.20) and led to bondage to sin, and only through believing in Christ and his atoning death can he or anyone else be delivered from that bondage (p.148f). “In this way Paul laid the foundation for the doctrine, which to be sure first arises after him ..., ... in which Christ is declared a Person of the Godhead: God suffers as the Son in order to save the world, which He as the Father created and prepared as one which needs salvation” (p.149f).

By contrast Pharisaic Judaism seeks “to preserve the immediacy of the Israelite relationship to God”, and guards against two ideas, both that of fate and that of a mediator (p.150). It developed the idea of the *middot*, the different modes of God’s action towards the world and man. There is the *middah* of judgement and the *middah* of grace or compassion; and the latter is the stronger (pp.152-4). “The dynamic unity of justice and grace stands opposed in this instance to the Pauline division of the justice of God in this aeon and His saving grace at the End. ... Pharisaic Judaism by its doctrine of the *middot* renewed the Old Testament Emunah, the great trust in God as He is, in God be He as He may. It excludes the two great *imagines* [mental images] which the Pauline world-view set over against the immediate Emunah; the demonocracy, to which this aeon is given over, and the mediatorship of a Christ at the threshold of that which is to come” (p.154).

Chapter XV

In the “Our Father”, so characteristic of Jesus, “he speaks from [the disciples’] situation and from their minds, but at the same time from the depths of the Jewish tradition of prayer” (pp.155-7). In that tradition, “the turning to God is accomplished in a peculiar direct way” (p.157): “Prayer takes place in the immediacy and for the sake of the increase of the immediacy” (p. 159). God is first addressed as Father, and only then in relation to His kingly rule; and the understanding of sin and forgiveness is that “everyone sins, but everyone may turn back”, “he sins as Adam sins and not because Adam sinned”, and “turning, provided the individual exerts his whole soul to accomplish it, is not prevented by anything” (p.157f). But “Paul is almost completely silent in his letters about the turning to which Jesus, like the prophets and the Pharisees, had summoned men; he is

only acquainted with that joining with Christ through which alone the fundamental relationship may be restored. ... there is a power of God unto salvation, but only for those who believe in the message of Christ (Rom. i.16); ... those who believe, they alone, are 'freely justified' (iii.24), to them alone are their sins forgiven (v.26). Immediacy is abolished" (p.160). Nor do we find in Paul "[the] teaching of Jesus about immediacy in prayer", but rather, as in Rom. viii.26 and 2 Cor. xii.7-9*, "statements of the Christian man of the Spirit, which are of incomparable significance as witnesses for a faith-intercourse with mediating powers", but "are outside immediacy" (p.161).

Chapter XVI

In the first half of the twentieth century there is a Christian Paulinism, most directly represented by Emil Brunner's *The Mediator*, but also "a Paulinism of the unredeemed", without grace, represented in Franz Kafka's novel *The Castle* (p.162f). Brunner's remark "God would cease to be God if He allowed His honour to be impugned" could not be made within Jewish interpretations of God, and is "unimaginable from the lips of Jesus as I believe I know him" (p.163f). In Kafka it seems that "this world is handed over to a maze of intermediate beings", who are cruel and also "disorderly and stupid": "it is a Pauline world, except that God is removed into the impenetrable darkness and that there is no place for a mediator" (p.165f). The genuinely Pauline Christian "clings with Pauline tenacity to the abundant grace of the mediator", and opposes the Marcionite view that severs the Creator from the Saviour, the God of the Old Testament from the God of the New; "but ... Marcion is not to be overcome by Paul" (p.167). With Deutero-Isaiah (xlv.15), the present-day Jew cries, "in face of the suffering peoples of the world", that God is One who hides Himself; but "that He hides Himself does not diminish the immediacy" (p.169).

Chapter XVII

Both the Jewish Emunah and the Christian Pistis are in a time of crisis. "... the personal Emunah of every individual [within historic Israel] remains embodied in that of the nation", but in the recent and present period of Jewish emancipation there has arisen a division between a religious community and a nation: "in the secular nation Emunah has no longer a psychological foundation nor in the isolated religion a vital one" (p.170f). The Christian community "by its nature is not a nation", but arises on the basis of individuals' believing, by "the accepting and recognizing as true of a proposition pronounced about the object of faith". There has arisen for the Christian a "disparity between the sanctification of the individual and the accepted unholiness of his [national] community" (p.172f). We can say that "there is a way which leads from rigid Paulinism to another form of Pistis nearer to Emunah" (p.173), and that, though the combination can hardly yet be conceived, there could be, with mutual help thereby, "an Israel striving after the renewal of its faith through the rebirth of the person and a Christianity striving for the renewal of its faith through the rebirth of nations" (p.173f).

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