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The Bridge: A Yearbook of Judaeo-Christian
Studies Vol. III

The Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies

1958

Introduction

John M. Oesterreicher

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INTRODUCTION

BARUH HA-SHEM, Blessed be the Name! With these words the pious Jew praises the invisible Giver of visible gifts; the veiled God whose goodness is yet revealed on earth; the Lord whose name is above every name man's tongue can utter, and who is therefore called simply the Name. It is with these words, then, that I should like to express again, on behalf of all the editors, our gratitude for the response given to an undertaking as humble and daring as ours. In an age of massive appeals we seek those who still have patience to think and read, who still find the solitude necessary for an encounter with truth. And we are bold enough to believe that the essays printed in these volumes, all seeds sown in hope, will bear fruit in days to come; that the rethinking on the relationship of Christians and Jews done in these pages will enhance the glory of Him whose greatest name is Love.

This trust guided our first steps. And we were not disappointed: The appreciation of readers and the acclaim of critics from many lands have strengthened our confidence. So warm have been their comments that I should like to share at least some of them with our friends everywhere. *Revue Biblique*, published by the Dominican Fathers of the *École Biblique* in the Old City of Jerusalem, predicted in its January 1957 issue that *The Bridge* "will serve well the cause for which it was conceived: the *rapprochement* of Jews and Christians." The Roman quarterly *Unitas*, of Winter 1956, declared: "*The Bridge* is Jesus Christ. It is to Him that there has been dedicated this excellent symposium . . . so replete with variety and richness of content." Echoing *The Commonweal* of May 3, 1957, the Polish monthly *Znak* ("The Sign") said in its September 1957 issue that to bring out the harmonies of our Judaeo-Christian culture, to stress our common heritage and acknowledge the points of meeting is a task to which one cannot return too often. "This is what *The Bridge*, in a truly ecumenical, that is truly catholic, spirit, is trying to achieve and what it goes a long way toward accomplishing."

Salus ex Judaeis, "Salvation is from the Jews" (Jn 4:22)—this phrase with which St. John sums up Israel's place in the divine economy the Viennese weekly *Die Furche* ("The Furrow") took as title for its detailed and glowing review of October 5, 1957. In its Autumn 1957 issue, *The Downside Review*, published by English Benedictines, said that *The Bridge* "seeks with remarkable success to combine truth with charity and is, one feels, inspired on nearly every page by its editor's burning desire to promote enlightened and understanding love between Christians and Jews. One can but congratulate him on a great editorial achievement." *Sefarad*, the review of the Institute of Hebrew and Near Eastern Studies, Madrid, wrote in Winter 1957: "Two beautiful books, which are, no doubt, the mature fruit of love, understanding, and grace; they cannot but evoke sympathy in every noble heart." Comparing ours with similar undertakings, *Het mysterie van Israel* ("The Mystery of Israel"), published in Utrecht in 1957, cited it as of all these "the most momentous."

So I could continue listing the comments of foreign critics, happy at the kinship of spirit their praise bespeaks. There is for us, however, an even greater source of happiness: the favor shown our work by many bishops here and abroad. I shall give but one example, that of the Bishop of Worcester, Massachusetts. Writing in *America* of December 22, 1956, Bishop Wright was so kind as to say:

Father Oesterreicher has clearly conceived it to be his vocation, both as a scholar and as a priest, to explore and extend the bonds between the people who produced Jesus according to the flesh and those who have accepted Him as the Redeemer promised to all mankind.

The task he has thus taken upon himself is a gigantic one, yet it is an essential part of the work Christ Himself came to do and commanded His Church to continue. It demands at once priestly patience and a scholar's painstaking dedication to promote a work of reconciliation so necessary but so delicate as that of the Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies and its various publications.

This second volume . . . of *The Bridge* deserves a welcome not less warm than that which the widely acclaimed first volume has already received. . . . Here is a wealth of solid, inspiring erudition, rewarding for the individual reader and indispensable for the reference library.

A still deeper joy is ours because of the blessing and the loving attention given our efforts by Pope Pius XII. On the eve of the Jubilee

Year 1950, when opening the Holy Door and welcoming all men to Rome, he spoke of Jews as those who sincerely though vainly look for the One come as still to come. He saw them as men of waiting, counted them among those who adore Christ. On August first of last year, the day the Church celebrates the Feast of St. Peter in Chains and that of the Maccabean Martyrs, I was received by the Holy Father. Expressing our thanks for the inspiration we have drawn from his words of welcome that place the expectant shoulder to shoulder with the believing, and wishing to offer a token of our gratitude, I said: "Your Holiness, I beg to present to you the second volume of—" only to be interrupted gently: "Ah, *The Bridge*! I shall read it with great interest." What greater honor could come to us than to have among our readers the Pope of singular vision, who has made his own all the concerns of nature as well as of grace; who time and again has shown the new dimension given by Christ, God-made-man, to human dignity and to all human relationships; who has lived Christ's love for all.

Barukh ha-Shem, Blessed be the Name! for the many friends we have found among our Jewish readers. True, there are those who wish to bury us under a pall of silence, but there have also been sympathetic readers, rabbis and scholars among them, who have told us of their appreciation. One of the letters we cherish is from the Israeli writer Schalom Ben-Chorin, written shortly after publication of our second volume:

In a time when the world is torn and divided, every attempt truly to build bridges is of special significance. You say in your introduction that dialogue can take place even when but one party speaks, if only it seeks the other as a "thou" known in love, and I shall not close my mind to this insight. In speaking thus to Israel there may be more of true dialogue than there was in the ancient disputations, which often drifted into mere wrangling so contrary to genuine encounter. As one who stands at the opposite bridgehead I should like to tell you gratefully of my joy at the twice-wrought *Bridge*. . . .

In our day Israel again stands very much alone among the nations. Again and again the intricacies of her historic destiny drive her into that divinely willed isolation which Bileam's oracle predicted for all the days of history:

*Lo, it is a people that shall dwell alone,
And shall not be reckoned among the nations.*

(Num 23:9)

Now if the Church, who also knows herself to be alone, to be ultimately unhoused on earth (see 1 Cor 4:11), is building—in the name of the living God!—a bridge from loneliness to loneliness, it must be a sign to us that a new spring is astir, that hearts are alive with faith and awake with love. And where there are these two, faith and love, hope cannot be lacking, the common hope of the final overcoming of all loneliness in the union with God in His Kingdom.

Greetings to you from Jerusalem!

Also from the Holy City came an extensive and, for all its disagreements, most friendly review of Volume II by Sholom J. Kahn. He ends his comments in the *Jerusalem Post* of February 1, 1957:

We cannot conclude without returning the Editor's "word of thanks" to your reviewer: whatever his criticisms, he too is grateful, for this splendid exhibition of Catholic learning and humanity. . . .

In sum, this is another beautiful book, and we are happy to be promised a third . . . and a fourth. . . . The most sincere compliment we can pay to the Editor and his contributors is to say that we are looking forward eagerly to refreshing our acquaintance again, and renewing the dialogue—of criticism.

In a letter to the editor, on February 15, Abbot Leo A. Rudloff, O.S.B., took exception to the heading of Mr. Kahn's review, "One-Way Bridge":

May I say this: the bridge in question is neither a two-way nor a one-way street. It is not passable at all as yet. It is a-building. Perhaps the reviewer of *The Bridge* has observed how big bridges are built. One span is constructed first from each bank of the river. Then only, when spans are finished, the joining link is inserted which makes the bridge a thoroughfare, leading hither and thither. In the same way, Father Oesterreicher's *Bridge* is the effort to build the span from the Catholic bank, so to speak. May someone else construct the span from the opposite bank. Then, and then only, may the link be inserted which makes the bridge a way.

To this the reviewer answered in part:

I like the alternative image of a bridge a-building; in fact, that was the point of my suggestion that "a comparable group of Jewish scholars . . . join in the presentation of their own views on these fateful issues." (What the final "link" might be is another question. . . .)

That in the end God will be worshipped with one voice, one loving consent; that He will be served under one and the same yoke (see

Soph 3:9) is the hope of both Christians and Jews. But there is one Jewish scholar, Hans Joachim Schoeps, who has ventured to say that the one whose coming Jews long for, may well have the face of Him whose return Christians await. These are the words of Doctor Schoeps: The Christian Church has preserved no portrait of her Lord and Saviour. If Jesus were to return tomorrow, no Christian would be able to recognize him by his face. But it might well be that he who is to come at the end of days, he who is the expectation of the Synagogue and of the Church, will bear one and the same face. (*Die Erfüllung*, III, Vienna, 228; cf. *Commentary*, IX, February 1950, 132.)

OUR WORK has met with favor, but it has also been under fire. It would be less than candid to ignore this adverse response. There was, for instance, an attack by *The Point*, the organ of that excommunicated band gathered around poor Father Leonard Feeney, whose main "point" now seems to be that the Jews, but not he or his followers, are the "crucifiers of Christ." Sunday after Sunday, at the hour of Christ's death and at the foot of a crucifix, this band misuses the freedom of the Boston Common to defame the Jews. No wonder, then, that our efforts are not to its liking. In the February 1956 issue of its paper, I was accused of a "frenzied crusade" against anti-Semitism; of invoking "as authorities, both saints and sociologists, popes and psychiatrists"; of devising "arguments from demonology and anthropology, from scholastics and rationalists"; of "devotion to such unbaptized 'saints' as Jewish logician Edmund Husserl and Jewish intuitionist Henri Bergson"; of doing all my writing and speaking in the "passion of [my] Jewish blood" and at the bidding of such "sinister" forces as the "American Jewish Committee." I have no intention of answering these and other absurdities, but I wish to record them here, without rancor. They prove once more that hatred of Jews is one of several routes by which a troubled conscience seeks to flee from its own reality. Flouting the authority of the Church, avoiding repentance, this rebellious group is by an inner mechanism forced to accuse, indeed to vilify, others.

A more serious outburst, not so much against *The Bridge* as against the Church, came from Arthur Cohen, a young Jewish writer. In a review of our Yearbook, written for the *Jewish Frontier* of April 1956, he accused the Church first of "profound and unforgettable indifference" toward the Nazi massacre of Jews, then of "having countenanced

murder," and finally, of "complicity and guilt." Anyone not cold to human suffering will readily forgive the intemperate statement of a Jew tried by the slaughter of six million of his kinsmen. But Mr. Cohen's accusation is more than an intemperate statement. It completely ignores that Hitler was not a devil sprung up from nowhere but the offshoot of a disjointed world, of a generation that thought of man as little better than the beast, yet hailed him as his own lawgiver and judge, a master not to be restrained. In Hitler, the relativism of our age guttered into absurdity. Thus it was the spiritually uprooted, Jews and Gentiles alike, who unwittingly became Hitler's accomplices—not the Church. She fought what Hitler stood for long before there was a Hitler.

"The speeches of random cardinals," Mr. Cohen writes, "were nothing against the fury of the past decades." True, and how untrue! No human utterance could have halted the fury of the tyrant, no utterance ended the pains of his victims. But there were more than "speeches of random cardinals." When, for instance, on May 3, 1938, Hitler paid a state visit to Mussolini, Pius XI left Rome. For him the crooked cross flying over the Eternal City was a desecration; though he condemned Nazism on several occasions, no word of his could have spoken louder than this pointed departure. To diplomatic feelers as to whether he would receive the *Führer*, he answered that he would do so only if Hitler first confessed his crimes at the microphone of the Vatican radio. In Germany itself, Bishop von Galen of Münster declared in a sermon on September 6, 1936, that a state that tramples justice underfoot and scorns the dignity of man sinks to the level of banditry. (Cf. *De Civitate Dei* IV, 4, 15.) On June 26, 1941, a pastoral letter from all the bishops of Germany stated that certain duties do not bind under extreme hardship, but others admit of no exception, even to the sacrifice of life. Never, under any circumstances, they said, may a man blaspheme God; never hate his fellow; never kill the innocent. On December 13, 1942, Bishop von Preysing of Berlin wrote: "Whoever bears a human face has rights no earthly power can take from him. . . . These inalienable rights of man, the right to life, integrity, freedom, property, and marriage, in no way depend on the discretion of governments; they cannot and may not be denied to anyone, even though he be not of our blood nor speak our language." In a sermon on March 12, 1944, Archbishop Frings of Cologne demanded that

"no innocent man be robbed of his property, much less of his life, just because he belongs to an alien race. There would be no other word for it than 'injustice crying to heaven.'"

In quoting these condemnations of Hitler's inhumanity, I do not wish to imply that resistance to the Nazi crimes was everywhere what it should have been. Still, in the presence of so much evil and the failure of so many to oppose it, the witness of Christians must not be forgotten. How many know, for instance, of the courage of Monsignor Bernhard Lichtenberg, rector of the Berlin Cathedral? On November 8, 1938, the day on which Hitler's storm troopers set the synagogues of Germany on fire, he began to pray publicly for the Jews, adding this comment: "What happened yesterday, we know; what will happen tomorrow, we do not know; but what occurred today, this we have seen. Out there the temple is burning. This, too, is a house of God." When in the middle of October 1941 an inflammatory sheet against the Jews was brought to his rectory, he drafted an announcement to be read in the Cathedral at all the masses of the following Sunday: "An anonymous sheet, agitating against the Jews, has been distributed in the houses of Berlin. It states that a German who, out of so-called sentimentality, aids Jews in any way whatever, were it only by a show of friendliness, is a traitor to his people. Do not be led astray by this unchristian spirit; rather act according to the strict command of Jesus Christ: Love thy neighbor as thyself!" Before the announcement could be made public, Monsignor Lichtenberg was arrested. Later he was sentenced to two years in prison. Having served his term, he wished to go to the ghetto of Łódź in order to share in the suffering of the deported Jews. Instead he was sent to Dachau but, made ill by the starvation diet of the prison, he died on his way to the concentration camp. (See Alfons Erb, *Bernhard Lichtenberg*, pp. 43, 51, 60, 63.)

"There is excommunication for heresy. Is there no excommunication for murderers?" Mr. Cohen asks. There was, I think, as little need for the Church to exclude Hitler and his Catholic henchmen from the communion of the faithful as there was for the Synagogue to excommunicate Stalin's Jewish underlings, responsible with him for the oppression, deportation, and murder of countless innocent people in Russia and her satellites. Before Synagogue or Church could speak, Stalin's underlings had deserted Judaism, as Hitler's henchmen had

severed themselves from the Church. Christian apostates, the latter hated the Jews not because they detested their blood but for the same reason that they despised the Church: defiance of divine mercy, resentment of Christ, of His spirit and of His flesh.

Be that as it may, I do not object to the question: "Is there no excommunication for murderers?" What disturbs me is the spirit in which it is asked: "At this moment there are no prophets among us. We must be both our own and the world's prosecutors. There is, on this account, savor in the Psalmist's plea for revenge—a savor which, though I do not wish to enjoy it, results nevertheless from such vital passion, such uncompromising delight in justice that it impels us to seek judgment; on occasion, to force it from heaven." There are today many reasons for the need of modesty—above all, the one given by Jewish tradition. A Jewish legend has it that when God was about to give the Ten Commandments, the mountains vied with each other for the honor of becoming the place of His revelation. Then a voice from heaven declared that the Shekinah would rest on Sinai, small and insignificant, and not on the high mountains, proud, quarrelsome, and contemptuous of others. (See Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, III, 83.)

To arrogate, then, to the community of Israel the role of prosecutor and thus to increase the poison of bitterness in the world, is not only against the spirit of Christ but also against what is deepest in Israel. Her true mind is best shown, I think, in Philip Friedman's book, *Their Brothers' Keepers*. Though he suffered all the anguish the Nazis could bring upon him, he—a man of blessing—seeks to rescue from oblivion the love of those who defied Hitler's hatred. Hence I wonder whether Mr. Cohen really meant what he said or was fully aware of the consequences of his outcry. To speak of "savor in the Psalmist's plea for revenge," of forcing judgment "from heaven," is to misuse the dreadful agony of Hitler's victims. It can only result in new discord between Christians and Jews and in a fatal self-righteousness on the part of the survivors—it reverses Hitler's defeat.

I have not spoken because I seek controversy. "For Sion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for the sake of Jerusalem, I will not rest . . ." (Is 62:1). I fully agree with those who like to remind us that traffic on a bridge moves in two directions, but I wonder whether these critics realize that unless they themselves act in accordance with

their reminder, they pronounce their own judgment. Justice and kindness are virtues owed not only by Christians to Jews, but also by Jews to Christians. The Golden Rule does not command us to claim for ourselves the understanding and respect we desire. In the words of Hillel, it reads: "What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbor" (Shab. 31a); in the words of Jesus: "All things whatever you would that men should do to you, even so do you also to them" (Mt 7:12).

ON FEBRUARY 8, 1958, Martin Buber, of all modern interpreters of Judaism the most widely known and revered, completed eighty years of his pilgrimage. It was with this day in mind that this volume was conceived: All its essays, not only those dealing expressly with his thought but also those not mentioning his name, take up themes that have engaged him at some time or other during his long life. Thus we hope to honor him by our dissent as well as by our respect.

We offer our respect, not to a prophet, as he has often been hailed against his will, but to a searcher after truth. Certain of his ideas have quickened much of modern thought. Along with other thinkers, Christian and Jewish, he has reminded us that man is basically fellow man, that he is what he ought to be only within the community. Or as the early Scheler, Scheler the Christian, would have put it: Truth cannot be found and held on a solitary road, but only on the bridge of brotherly love; salvation is reached not in isolation but in communion, in the "we" of the faithful, together believing, loving, and worshipping God. Buber has spared no effort to remind us that in Scripture God speaks and man is addressed. Calling men by name, He says to Abram: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield"; to Moses: "Moses, Moses. . . . I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people out of Egypt"; to Jeremiah: "What do you see, Jeremiah?" (Gen 15:1; Ex 3:4, 10; Jer 1:11). Spoken to, man may and must answer; to be a response-ive and response-ible being is his distinction. Buber's discovery is not new, but he speaks of the encounter between God and man with a freshness that has compelled many to listen who would not otherwise have done so. To Christians in particular, some of his work is a challenging reminder that the earth is not merely a forecourt to heaven, that the kingship of God must be established here and now.

For this and more we are grateful. But, however deep our appreciation, we cannot withhold our disagreement. In a public conversation

with the Protestant theologian Karl Ludwig Schmidt in 1933, Buber stated:

The Church rests on faith in Christ's having come as God's redemption of mankind. We, Israel, are *unable* to believe this. . . . We do see the Christology of Christianity as an event by all means essential between the Above and the Below. We see Christianity as something the mystery of whose coming to the nations we cannot penetrate. But we know also . . . that the world is still unredeemed. . . . We cannot hold God to any one of His revelations. . . . Of all the revelations within our knowledge we can declare nothing absolute. We do not say: God cannot reveal Himself thus. But we accord none of His revelations finality, the character of the Incarnation. (*Theologische Blätter*, XII, 9, September 1933, p. 267.)

Striking though Buber's declaration is, in that it grants belief in the Christ to be, for the nations at least, a true encounter with God, it nevertheless perpetuates the rift between Jews and Gentiles that Jesus came to heal. If the world is not fully redeemed, if its redemption is largely hidden, the fault lies not with Christ's work but with man's response. Moreover, to deny that there is an ultimate disclosure of God's love for man, that in Christ speaks the Word—the Word substantial, universal, and unsurpassable—is precisely to impose a limit upon God. No doubt, the Lord of revelation is not the prisoner of His revelation, but He is the God of fidelity. To fear His fidelity is truly to arrest His dialogue with man. Buber says: "We, Israel," but is he Israel's spokesman when he sees all divine revelations only as relative symbols of the Unconditioned?

It is to be expected that we should differ with Buber on the person and office of Jesus, but our disagreement goes further. Born in Vienna, Buber was brought up in Lemberg by his paternal grandfather, a man who combined in himself apparent opposites: A son of the Jewish enlightenment, an editor of great rabbinical texts, Salomon Buber liked to worship in a Hasidic *klaus*. Through him the young Buber discovered Hasidism; in the stimulating atmosphere of that many-sided home he absorbed some of the subtlety of rabbinical thought and, no doubt, experienced the stern beauty of Jewish piety. Still, not long after his *bar mitzvah*, assailed by metaphysical problems, he ceased putting on the *tefillin*, those leather straps that mark arm and forehead, and with them the whole man, as in the bondage of God. Once he abandoned the age-old religious practices, his mind opened more and

more to influences that were not part of the Jewish tradition. During his university years, teachers like Wilhelm Dilthey and Georg Simmel held his attention. Then and later, he was drawn to such thinkers as Spinoza and Nietzsche, captivated by Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme, preoccupied with the myths and ecstatic outpourings of the past, and absorbed in the wisdom of China and India.

When some sixty years ago Buber returned to Judaism, it was not as a convert but almost as a conqueror, that is, not on its but on his terms. Strangely enough, it seems to have been his concern with certain mystical speculations of the West and his rejection of modern positivism that made him enter the Zionist movement. It was the German mystics who sent him back to Hasidism, and it was, in the main, non-Jewish thinkers who helped him find his I-Thou philosophy.

Thus the many and varied influences of his youth led Buber to a novel interpretation of Israel's heritage. Perhaps it was also his compassion for the religious plight of modern man, and particularly that of the modern Jew, which moved him to pare down Judaism to what he considers its core. "Contemporary Judaism," he wrote to Mahatma Gandhi as late as 1939, "is in the throes of a serious religious crisis. It seems to me that the lack of faith of present-day humanity, its inability truly to believe in God, finds its concentrated expression in this crisis of Jewry; here all is darker, more fraught with danger, more fateful than anywhere else in the world." (*Israel and the World*, p. 230.)

Striking in this regard is a story Buber uses as a prologue to his *Kampf um Israel*, a collection of essays in which he struggles for the realization of the inner Israel within Jewry.

When Rabbi Yehezkel Landau came to Prague, he preached, Sabbath after Sabbath, only on the bitter misery of the poor. The congregation had expected a show of learning but the rabbi pleaded again and again: "Help the poor! This very night go to them and help!" To the people this cry was just a sermon, and they remained as they were. Then, one market day, the rabbi appeared amid the buyers and sellers, as if he, too, had wares to offer. At first no one dared inquire why he had come. Finally, one of the people ventured to ask: "What is our rabbi doing here?" To this the rabbi answered:

"When a table has three legs and one breaks, what does one do? One props it up, and the table stands. But if a second leg breaks, no prop will

help. What then? One shortens the third leg, and again the table stands. Our sages say: 'The world stands on three things: on the Torah, the service, and the deeds of love.' When the sanctuary was destroyed, the leg of service broke. To support it, our sages taught: 'By service of the heart prayer is meant.' Now, when the deeds of love shrink and the second leg suffers damage, how can the world endure? Therefore I left the house of study and have come to the fair. We must shorten the leg of Torah so that the table of the world may again be firm."

Could it be that this story is more than a prologue to just one of Buber's books?

Buber shortened the leg of Torah, not as Rabbi Landau did by leaving the house of study, but by discarding, except for occasional talmudic references, the oral tradition and by radically applying the principles of higher criticism to the Bible, so as to disengage what he considered saga from history. Moreover, in his interpretation of Judaism, ritual and law have no part. "God is not a law-giver," he once wrote to Franz Rosenzweig; it is only man who in his self-contradiction transforms revelation into commandment. Feeling the division between revelation and law as a thorn and trial, Buber knows only one "law," to hold himself ready "for the unmediated word of God directed to a specific hour of life." To him the "lived moment" is everything. So unspecified is the word of God addressing him that he writes: "If there is anything that I can call without reservation a *Mitzvah* [a commandment] within my own sphere, it is just this that I act as I do." (See Franz Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning*, pp. 111-115.) With this, I cannot help saying, the leg of Torah is not only shortened but cut to the little stump of an inward call. Hence, faced with the thorny and trying obligation to forgive the callous torturers of his people under Hitler, Buber denies any but a formal human bond with them, and thus, consistent with his teaching, considers it presumptuous to offer them forgiveness. (See *Pointing the Way*, p. 232.) Here as there, the Christian must part ways with Buber. He cannot escape into a world where criminals are neither hated nor loved but ignored. He must regard as his neighbor the good and the evil, all those upon whom God makes His sun to shine (see Mt 5:45) —such is his cross, and he must bear it.

For Buber, the core of Judaism is Israel's meeting with God: God's call and Israel's trust. But this trust, too, he empties of content. He

never tires of declaring that he knows nothing certain about God. "It is not necessary," he writes, "to know something about God in order really to believe in Him: many true believers know how to talk to God but not *about* Him. If one dares to turn toward the unknown God, to go to meet Him, to call to Him, Reality is present." (*Eclipse of God*, p. 40.) Buber thinks it legitimate for the believer to turn to God as one turns to a person, but again, he has no certainty. He considers it "even permissible for the believer to believe that God *became* [*italics mine*] a person for love of him. . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 127.)

A God who is only possibly a person, a God who first was not but is now a person, a God who is wholly unknown is not the God of Israel! It may well be that Buber wishes to say no more than that God can be called personal only if personality is stripped of the finite; that He is personal superabundantly, as He is all that He is. (See *Summa Theol.* I, q. 29, a. 3.) It may well be that his aversion to doctrinal statements is no more than his justified fear that men may say "God is merciful" in the manner they say "This tea is good." If so, he has not made himself clear. As his words stand, his biblical humanism is neither true to the Bible nor true to the real human situation. Man cannot merely "trust," he must know whom he trusts. The men of the Bible know to whom they have given their faith, hence they never hesitate to speak and sing of Him. All-powerful is Yahweh; thus they profess that He is a warrior, Israel's shield, a rock forever. Since He is the Absolute, He is called King, the most High, the Awesome, "Holy is He" (Ps 98:3). Changeless, He does not revoke His words; omnipresent, He watches every place. "Merciful and gracious, . . . rich in kindness and fidelity," Moses calls Him (Ex 3:6), while the psalmist declares of Him for all to hear: "Yahweh is my shepherd" (22:1).

These are sure statements about God, and the Old Testament abounds in them. Full of ardor and lavish in their imagery, they are also dogmatic. When Elijah cries out that Yahweh, the God of Israel, lives (see 3 Kg 17:1), he speaks as a witness but no less as a theologian. Indeed all the biblical books, whether their genre is historical or poetic or both, are an ordered profession of faith by their inspired writers. There is no enmity, then, between fervor and dogma, nor is there a dichotomy, as Buber maintains, between *emunah*, Israel's bold trust in God, and *pistis*, the Christian's steadfast belief in revealed

truths. Far from destroying the mysteriousness of God, dogmas confirm it. The Vatican Council declared: "The divine mysteries by their very nature so transcend the created mind, that even when handed down by revelation and accepted by faith, they nevertheless remain covered by the veil of faith itself and wrapped, as it were, in a cloud." (Denziger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 1796.)

What frightens modern man about dogmas is that in their solidity they are like stones. They are indeed, but not like the stones of a cemetery wall that guards dead bones, rather like the rocks of a tower that dominates a vast landscape and grants unhampered vision. Or, to use a simile closer to Jewish tradition: Dogmas are like the tablets of the Commandments. Having quoted the verse from Exodus: "And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God graven upon the tables" (32:16), Rabbi Jehoshua ben Levi commented: "Read not *ḥarut*, graven, but *ḥerut*, freedom." (*Pirke Abot* VI, 2.)

All in all, there is no rupture, there is only continuity between Israel's trust based on the faith that God spoke and gave His promise to Abraham, that He made His covenant with Moses, and the Christian's faith that in Jesus God has spoken again and more abundantly, has fulfilled His promise and made His covenant with all the earth—a faith that calls for a trust serene and burning like Abraham's.

Whatever our differences, they cannot impair our respect for Martin Buber, much less our good wishes. On *Rosh ha-Shanah* and *Yom Kippur* Jews pray: Our Father, our King, write us, seal us, in the book of life, the book of mercy, of salvation, and of redemption. Hence letters written between the two Holy Days usually end with the greeting: May you be sealed for a life of happiness! We should like to make this greeting our own and wish Buber that he be sealed for a good life, indeed for everlasting life.

JOHN M. OESTERREICHER