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JUSTIFICATION & JUSTICE XXVII

SAVED BY TRUST=FAITHFULNESS (= "FAITH")

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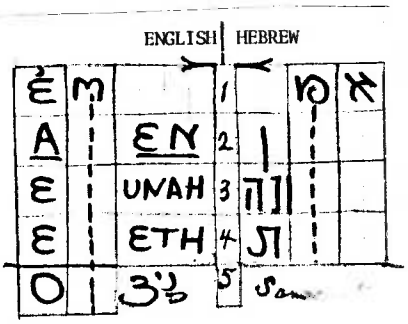
Yesterday a Jew told me (1) that he'd recently read, with a rabbi friend, the text of Is.7 & concluded "Jesus is not there" (eg, the "virgin" of v.14 is not in the Hebrew but in the Greek, the early Christian Bible being all Greek); (2) that Jesus' message was for Jews only; (3) that Jesus didn't intend to found the church; & (4) that the historical effect of Jesus was to extend to the rest of the world the blessing of Abraham, the Jewish prophetic vision & understanding. My response? "Your fourth statement nullifies your first three." But I was not harsh. Christians have no call, indeed no right, to be harsh with Jews in discussing the dis/continuities between our two religions--bound as we are in the mystery of covenant, separated though we be in conceptuality....This Thinksheet looks at what lies behind & within the means of **justification** by "faith," which I must quote so as to confine its meaning in the biblical concept.

1. Note that I said "nullifies," not denies: there's truth in everything he said (1)-(3). No OT prophesy specifically foresaw Jesus or was exhausted by his earthly life, though the NT's connecting of the prophecies with Jesus did not violate the contemporary Jewish canons of interpreting Scripture. Further, the bearing of prophetic utterances outran, was over the horizon of, the prophets--so what's it matter whether Jesus viewed his message as for Jews or also for Gentiles, or whether or not he intended to found the church? The data on the historical Jesus are only indirectly available, viz through his earliest followers & their assemblies ("churches"), to whom he continued to speak after the resurrection. In the Spirit he continues to build the church, so "I will build my church" is a given (Latin, "datum") whether he said it before or after the resurrection. Understandably, those who deny his resurrection & thus also his continuing Presence among & in his followers can make little sense of much of the NT & indeed must see not a little of it as perverse. Glory when you're on the inside, nonsense when you're not. True also of Judaism. And any other religion.

2. "Verbose is gross, concise is nice," my friend Mel Hartzler (sometimes, alas, after wrestling with a Thinksheet!). Well, Greek is verbose (in the sense of having a huge vocabulary, in the first century at least nine times that of Hebrew), Hebrew (Hebrew then, not Ivrit, Hebrew now, which is loaded with "loan" words from other languages, as is English, lexically history's richest language) is concise. The phenomenon relevant here is that the NT's Greek, which in/directly is Jewish Greek, often narrows the meaning of the underlying Hebrew. One instance is, indeed, Is.7[14]: Hebrew "young woman" is narrowed to Greek "virgin." Another--the nub of this Thinksheet--is the narrowing of Hebrew "trust-faithfulness" down to Greek "faith." In consequence of which, the NT reader (in the original or in any translation) must be on the alert: does the context of this particular instance indicate the broad meaning of Hebrew "emunah" (firm **trust**, **faithfulness**, stability, dependability, trustworthiness, truth[fulness]--meanings coverable also by the other n. on the root "amn" [yes, Amen!], viz "emeth," usu. rendered "truth"--these two words used as "comprehensive terms for true religion" [see the 24 columns on "Faith, Faithfulness" in IDB])? or the narrower meaning of the Greek πίστις *pistis*, confidence (have c. in, ie trust; have c. that, ie believe).

3. Impatient with all this rooting around in roots instead of going on to the fruit-ideas? Do you pass up a potato plant because you see no fruit? Of course not: you know the fruit is in the root. So I make bold to ask even further patience, to see, in the cases of our two primary biblical roots of "faith," "the rooting of roots in root-experiences, the basal human happenings that determine surviving/thriving" (in intro to #757, "Roots of the Roots: The Semitic Root 'M or EM"). Rooted in these happenings are sounds which, throughout our lives, resonate as image-borne feelings we depend on in sensing-making, ie sense-making as constellated weavings of sensations-perceptions-conceptions. "Speak comfortingly to Jerusalem" (Is.40[1f]) & the city will stop trembling. So will a child. So will a dog. What! In this are we not different from a dog? Not at all. Does that lower your opinion of humanity? Rather let it

raise your opinion of caninity. The right sounds, & (1) Jerusalem will trust God & (2) your dog will trust you....The most trust-producing sound? The back hum (MMMMM, not the front hum [NNNNN]). Yes, "mother" (indeed, in most languages' word for mother). Line 5 here shows it in the holiest syllable of religions originating in India (note: "M" throughout the second Eng. column). Lines 1-4 visualize what's in §2 (above). Line 1 is both the root & (with a vowel added) "mother." Line 2 is "Yes!" (Jesus is God's "Amen!"--2Cor.1, Rev.3). Line 3 is the word I'm translating "trust-faithfulness" (BDB "firmness, steadfastness, fidelity"; thus "emmah" means "foundation" or "support": yes, "How firm a foundation..." & [in "Lord, speak to me..."] "firm on the rock and strong in Thee" to reach out to "wrestlers with the troubled sea").



4. Are we saved by **trust-faithfulness** or by **faith** (in either case, by grace)? Two factors make the question possible: (1) the differences between Heb. "emunah" & Gk. "pistis," & (2) the difference between Judaism as a birth religion & Christianity as a choice religion. Let's take the second first. Jews had to choose whether to follow Jesus, Gentiles had to choose whether to countenance Paul's message & follow Jesus. "Faith" had to come first as passage from unbelief to belief, faith's first motion (an event implying the process of trust-faithfulness; eg Ro.10[9]). In grammatical categories: belief is inceptive, trust is constative, faithfulness is perfective (in the Jewish & Christian prophetic tradition, the whole process covered by "emunah"). But this was easy to truncate into magic (as in Buddhist Shinran's formulaic salvation by the repetition of one sacred sentence). Thus James' corrective (2[14-26]), from which Paul would not have demurred: Abraham's "faith and his actions worked together; his faith was completed through his actions" (v.22). Cf. Hab.2[4]: "The righteous will live because they are faithful to God" (TEV), "The righteous man is rewarded with life for his fidelity" (TANAKH, the 1985 Jewish translation), "The righteous will live by being faithful" (both NEB & its 1989 revision, REB; fn. in the former, on "emunah" here: "fidelity or loyalty to the deity rather than a belief-centered faith"; I must ad that Paul's was not a belief-**centered** faith but a belief-**initiated** faith--who, in Ro.1[17] & Gal.3[11], quotes our Hab. v. probably from the Hebrew (but without "his" before "faith," as also in Heb.10[38], where "my"--instead of modifying, as LXX, "faith(fulness)," modifies "righteous"). (The Latin [Vulg.] shows Jerome as knowing his Hebrew: *justus autem in vide sua vivet* ["but the just will live in/by his/her faith"].).. Note: Not a faith religion, but a faith-based religion. (Notice the note of continuity, of faithfulness, in the next verse of Hebrews: "We aren't the kind of people who turn back; we stick with it [ie have faith; endurance being this letter-essay's central virtue]."....You could no more make "emunah" mean faith separate from faithfulness than you could, in Is.7[14], make "'almah" (young woman) mean what LXX narrows down to, viz παρθένος *parthenos* (virgin). A young woman may or may not be a virgin: "emunah" is not (Luther's) *sola fidei* (salvation "by faith alone": he exaggerated in order to dissociate himself from "works MUST follow" & so be free to assert that "works WILL follow" (our Colloquy's "Good News & Good Deeds").

5. Now to the first factor in §4 (above), how πίστις *pistis* functions, in LXX & NT, as the non/equivalent of "emunah." In my architectural analogy, "emunah" is in the basement, "pistis" is on the ground floor, (Lat.) "fides" is on the second floor--& what's to put in the attic (Eng.)? "Faith" (on the same I-E root as the Gk. & the Lat., a root meaning to bind; cp. the sememe "to yoke" of the root of "justice") is what we're stuck with, though it lacks the richness of the Gk. (even more so of the Heb.) & has a pejorative connotation as "mere belief" contra both reason & knowledge. In (Roman Catholic) JB of our Hab. v., note this fn.: "In the LXX, where 'faithfulness' is rendered 'faith,' St Paul finds the doctrine of justification by faith." Rather, I find that Paul was not thinking LXX, but was constricted by Gk. to "pistis" as we are constricted by Eng. to "faith." Conservative Protestant versions NASB & NIV have "faith" in text & "faithfulness" in mg./fn. My point: annotated Bibles feel it necessary to make up, in text or mg./fn., for the inadequacy of "faith" to render "emunah." Ro.Cath. NAB

compensates by explaining, in a fn., that Hab. is talking about an enduring faith, a Churchillian "Never give up!" sticktoittiveness: "'The just man, because of his faith, shall live': the faith which here enables the virtuous man to survive the impending doom is both a confident belief in God's justice, and patience in awaiting its execution." But the other sentence in the fn. drops the continuity element: "St. Paul quotes these words to confirm his teaching that man receives justification and supernatural life through faith in Christ." The second sentence is not wrong, but inadequate; & at this point it makes the Jewish/Christian gap too wide. Also: for a Ro.Cath. tr., is sounds too Protestant!

6. Now let's look at "pistis" in lexical context, ie in relation to the synonyms. Baker Book House has just reprinted R.C.Trench's SYNONYMS OF THE NT (my 1906 copy has had it!): his one syn. is ἐλπίς *elpis* hope, expectation, waiting; & he concludes with a long Aug. qt. ending *fidei speique commune est* (which could be translated "Faith & hope are a continuum") (p.cvii; eg, says he, neither is a form of sight). Paul's usu. formula is "saved by faith," but he can say "saved by hope" (Ro.8[24]; for his close association of the two, see IThes.1[3] Ro.4[18] 1Cor.13[13] 1P.1[9,21]; +Heb.11[1]). I would add, to Aug., that faith & hope have in common that they fade together when "the righteous" unrighteously drift away from faithfulness: some say hopeless is due to chemistry, but then what is chemistry due to?....A second way to get at NT synonyms is by use of a "concordance of themes and words," Michael Darton's description of his very useful MODERN CONCORDANCE TO THE NT (Doubleday/76; unlike Trench, you don't have to be able to read Greek [or Latin]). It has 12 huge columns under "Believe--Faith." Under "Faith, Faithful, Faithfulness," the Eng. index refers you also to the themes of "Stay-Live," "Holy," "True-Amen."....And a third way is a further development of the thematic into the categorical: J.P.Louw & E.A.Nida's splendid & inexpensive (only $20) GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON OF THE NT BASED ON SEMANTIC DOMAINS (2 beautiful volumes, United Bible Societies/88). Combining thesaurus (synonymy) & lexicon, it enables you (whether or not you know Greek) to enter the meaning structure of the NT, to start (as authors do) with ideas-meanings & go on a word-hunt (as you'd do in Roget or other synonymies). "Domains" is uptodate linguistics, aware that word-meanings are not discrete but interrelated. Vol.1 is the 93 domains, which you can get at either by its "Table of Domains" (pp.xxivf) or by using Vol.2, the indices (Greek-English, 1ff; English, 269ff; Scripture, 335ff). On p.289 you find "faith/ful(ness)" & are sent to domain 31, which you discover to be titled "Hold a View, Believe, Trust" & to be broken down into ten subdomains, each one with subsubdomains, each illustrated by written-out NT quotations (in Gk., but trd. into Eng.). Here are the subdomains: Have an Opinion, Holy a View; Holy a Wrong View, Be Mistaken; Agree, Consent; Acknowledge; Suppose, Think Possible; Believe To Be True; Accept As True; Change an Opinion Concerning Truth; Trust, Rely; Be a Believer, Christian Faith. If you can use the Gk. index, 2.198 lays out the full spread of meanings of the six words on the root of "pistis." Let's look just at those under "pistis" itself, supplementing the meanings from use of Vol.1: believable, what can be believed, believied to be true (or evidence or proof); trust & reliance; faithfulness, trustworthiness, dependability; Christian faith, follower of Christ; doctrine as content (the Faith, the beliefs of Christians) & as act (believing the Good News); promise, pledge of faithfulness or loyalty (as broken: 1Tim.5[12])....Why did I bother to spell all this out? Because I believe word-study resources are of first importance after the NT text itself: commentaries, though valuable, are secondary. ...By Grimm's Law of interconversion of Gk.-Lat.-Eng. consonants, one can see at a glance that πίστις *fides* "faith" have the same root, "pit^{h}," meaning "bind" ("The Roots in 97 Groupings," §2 of my 758B, "ROOTS": REALITY-CLUSTERS IN THE GREEK LANGUAGE OF THE NT, which has also the chart of Grimm's Law). Bonding, covenant, commitment: note how this root idea runs through my list beginning a dozen lines above this one. (#758A has the same title but with "HEBREW" & "OT." Comparing the two shows how much richer, in body-language (body-action verbs & verbals) is the Hebrew than the Greek.) Faith gives con-**fid**-ence at both ends, the truster & the trusted, and the two are transposable: both God & we are both trusters & trusted. (Cp. legal contracts, such as estate trusts; & ancient Near Eastern politico-military covenants [as related, by

Geo.E.Mendenhall, to religious covenants)....Note the action-&-feeling similarity of the roots: OT, **be firm** [root of "emunah"]; NT, **bind*** [root of "pistis"]. The opposite of hanging loose, betraying, wandering off (emotionally, if not also bodily) & forgetting one's responsibilities, going with the flow, following your bliss, feeling-being-acting free. Biblical religion is against freedom, certain kinds of, including all kinds of licence (irresponsibility). Eg, I saw the suppressed astonishment in Mandela's eyes when most of the crowd booed him--during his first speach in Soweto, his home area--for saying "Education is your weapon; go back to school." Under the banner "Freedom first, then education," Soweto's children have been enjoying such freedom from school that only 17% of the seniors were graduated in '89. Again, freedom is an ambiguous value in Beirut & among "The Throwaway People" (as a current TV "Frontline" documentary calls the residents of the Shaw section of Wash. DC)....Why does the Bible have to be so moral(istic)?

7. Because God is. Atheist Christianity-basher Robt. Ingersoll (d.1900, shortly after my father enjoyed his oratorical brilliance) said "In nature there are neither rewards nor punishments; there are consequences." (Ignorantly, he used "nature" to encompass everything about & in human nature.) As I expounded in #1910, it's possible to make sense of the world without attributing to life any moral inherence, or making that attribution without theism. The Bible takes the third way--let's call it the first, the real: the world is alight with the "shook foil" (G.M.Hopkins) of God's presence and moral action in nature & history. Before his holiness we're all bad people, & bad things happen to bad people, who then should be surprised when good things happen to them. So bad we can't make it to goodness on our own (AA's first step) & need the help of "a higher power" (AA's second step)--1st step repentance, 2nd step faith, steps 3-12 faithfulness. You say that's only for addicts? I say, who's not an addict? Addicted to self, to worry (Jesus' antonym of faith), to fear-anxiety, to pain-avoidance, to pleasure-seeking, whatever....God's emotions are creative-redemptive love, anger, & pleasure (Heb.12[28bf] combines the last two: "Let's be grateful, & worship God in a way that will please him, with reverence & fear; because our God is a destroying fire"). Those who have no use for the middle emotion have no conscious need of the Cross, of the atonement, of **justification**, & little understanding of biblical **justice**, & no concept of evangelism other than churching the unchurched.

8. Love, righteousness, wrath, judgment, & both ends of faithfulness (God's & ours)--with all the great Hebrew words signaling them--appear in the first six **Psalms** of Book 4 (as well as elsewhere throughout the Pss.). Eg, **90**9-17 (Our days pass "under your wrath." May your grace "establish firmly" "all that we do."); **91**14 (God says "Because his love holds fast to me, I shall deliver him."); **92**1f ("It is good...to declare your love in the morning, and your faithfulness every night."); **93**5 ("Your decrees stand firm."); **94**15 ("Justice will again be joined to right."); **96**13 ("He will judge the world with justice and peoples by his faithfulness" [or, "truth," as many trs. here tr. "emunah"--all qtd. material in this §, REB 1989]).

9. It's an existential continuum: passively **waiting** for the Lord while actively **witnessing-working** for the Lord. The continuum of faith/fulness, or trust-faithfulness. Yet it profits soul & mind to study-feel-think the tensions in how the Bible puts it. For this, let's look again at Hab.**2**4, rendered §4&5 (above) thus: *The just will live by his/her faith. The righteous will live by being faithful. The righteous man is rewarded with life for his fidelity. The just man, because of his faith, shall live. The righteous will live because they are faithful to God.* The v. is antithetic parallelism: 1st line, bad news for the wicked (however the corrupt text's to be trd.); 2nd line, good news for the righteous described as the faithful (not that they are good, but that they are there, there for & with God). As the Lord here speaks to end the dialog with Hab., Hab. exhibits the desired grace-given character in a quiet joy transcending tragedy (**31**7-19). In this dialog, in our lives, in history, the last word is God's, & that word is good news for endurers....I believe the LXX rests on a better Heb. text, & I tr. thus: "Because of My faithfulness, the righteous will survive." That faithfulness involves vicarious suffering, the Cross, **justification**.

*The meaning, too, of the root of "**justice**" (Lat., "i[j]us"). Sam.Longfellow's "Holy Spirit, Truth Divine": "Be my law, and I shall be Firmly bound, forever free."