Yet our circumstance is not, to his mind, a hopeless one. The poet must do what he can to fulfill his vocation and test the possibilities of his art. Muir's closing paragraph provides as clear and profound a statement of the modern poet's job, his temptations and the genuine opportunities available to him, as can be found in our criticism. I hope, that by quoting it in full, this passage will linger in the reader's memory and compel him to investigate the pleasure and wisdom of this small book.

> There remains the temptation for poets to turn inward into poetry, to lock themselves into a hygienic prison where they speak only to one another, and to the critic, their stern warder. In the end a poet must create his audience, and to do that he must turn outward. Even if he is conscious of having no audience, he must imagine one. That may be the way to conjure it out of the public void. Yeats, who had to wait for it long, declared that you must have an audience, and that he could not write without one. Anyone reading his poetry must feel that his audience was an imaginary one long before it became real. To imagine an audience, one must hold up before himself the variety of human life, for from that diversity the audience will be drawn. The poet need not think of the public — its vastness and impersonality would daunt anyone; he should reflect instead that in no other age than ours — I mean the last hundred years or so — has a poet had to deal with it. He has to see past it, or through it, to the men and women, with their individual lives, who in some strange way and without their choice are part of it, and yet are hidden by it. (pp. 109-110)

Heresy — or Academic Orthodoxy ?

ROGER L. SHINN

The Faith of a Heretic by Walter Kaufmann. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1961. 432 pages, $4.95.

John Clellon Holmes of the Beat Generation has commented, "Everybody is somebody's square, and somebody's hippy too." Similarly one might say, "Everybody is somebody's image of orthodoxy, and somebody's heretic, too."

So it is, certainly, with Walter Kaufmann. When a scholar of Nietzsche claims the mantle of heretic, a reader expects something exciting and disturbing. Kaufmann turns out to be pretty tame because his proud heresy is the academic orthodoxy of our time. It is roughly the common version of humanism that we

hear in every university — with occasional minor variations (e.g., Kaufmann does not like Erich Fromm).

When Kaufmann attacks superstition, dogmatism, segregation, and Senator McCarthy, almost all of us in the scholarly world approve. His praise of the four virtues of humbition (his word for the fusion of humility and ambition), love, courage, and honesty is as conventional in academic circles as is the tribute to country, mother, and geniality in luncheon clubs. I do not complain. I rather like both sets of virtues. But it would never have occurred to me to call them heretical.

Kaufmann himself is highly self-conscious ("If even I do not speak up, who will?"), but his "heresy" is designed to court applause, not persecution. He writes with enough touches of both amiable and vituperative rhetoric to produce a successful popularization. His publisher has advertised the fourth printing of the book with an enthusiastic blurb from *Life*. To this I do not object. I admire good popularization — provided it is accurate. Unfortunately, in this case, the careless scholarship results in an emotionally hot but intellectually tepid work.

Before touching on details I should like to commend the general orientation of Kaufmann's thought. He defines his stance in relation to the two contemporary philosophies of linguistic analysis and existentialism, both of which have merits that he acknowledges. He appreciates the drive for precision in linguistic analysis, but refuses to limit philosophy to the semantic and logical preoccupations that outlaw the great traditional concerns of philosophers. As for existentialism, on which he has published some valuable work, Kaufmann wants to deal with its problems and to think existentially without making uncritical leaps of faith. In this dual assessment of the two most publicized philosophical movements of our day, Kaufmann joins the many theologians who have marked out a similar direction of thought.

In another respect Kaufmann's thought is congenial to that of the Christian scholar or theologian. Kaufmann candidly recognizes that his position represents a faith. There is no pretending that science or logic produces humanistic attitudes or confirm democratic values. "Faith means intense, usually confident, belief that is not based on evidence sufficient to command assent from every reasonable person" (p. 17). But it need not be a blind faith unwilling to look at evidence or objections.

Within this promising context of thought Kaufmann performs some surprisingly feeble operations. As one of the animals in the theological zoo (Kaufmann's figure of speech), I perhaps should resent his diatribes against religion and theology. But from such theological giants as Buber, Maritain, Berdyaev, and Tillich I have learned a profound appreciation for some of the great atheistic thinkers of modern times. I do not scorn an argument simply because it criticizes

theology. The problem with Kaufmann is that there is so much fury and so little argument.

Consider, for example, his discussion of biblical interpretation. Since nobody is likely to take this book seriously as a contribution to biblical scholarship, I shall skip some of the vulnerable details in order to comment on the basic method.

Kaufmann goes to great effort to establish the obvious points that Christians often disagree with each other about the meaning of the Bible and that every interpreter of Scripture emphasizes some themes and subordinates or rejects others. The most rigid fundamentalist, I should think, would agree with those contentions; the critical scholar takes them for his stock in trade. Kaufmann seems to think this procedure is dishonest. He calls it gerrymandering. I would assume that every interpreter of a document, including the patriot reading the Declaration of Independence or the Supreme Court unfolding the meaning of the Constitution, must make decisions about the relative importance and the continuing meaning of various texts within the literature. Why Kaufmann should consider the process sordid or absurd, especially when Christian interpreters of the Bible are usually quite clear as to what they are doing, is a puzzle.

The puzzle becomes more baffling when Kaufmann begins his own biblical interpretation. He is eager to show that the Old Testament is superior to the New — as he has every right to argue, if that is his belief. His technique is to interpret the Old Testament along the lines of a liberal democratic humanism. Obviously some of the texts — the demands for justice, the concern for the poor, the denunciations of cruelty — can be used to support such an interpretation. Kaufmann largely ignores other motifs: the vivid anthropomorphism, the confession of guilt, the overpowering sense of a God of judgment and mercy. His interpretation, therefore, is strained and pallid, if sometimes attractive to the modern mind. When he dislikes a section of the Old Testament (e.g., Joshua), he says that it does not express "the spirit of the religion of the Old Testament." This is exactly the device that, in the hands of Christians, he calls gerrymandering. He uses this method with such innocence and freedom from scholarly canons of interpretation that one can hardly resent it. But when Kaufmann turns his scorn on Christian interpreters, one must ask whether he is incapable of any adherence to standards of consistency.

When Kaufmann moves from the Bible to his attacks upon theology, the gerrymandering (to use for the last time his word) is something to behold. There is little innocence in his carving up of Luther. The most devoted theological interpreters of Luther are ready to acknowledge that the tempestuous German reformer gave his opponents plenty of opportunities for attack. But a scholarly criticism pays some attention to understanding Luther's sentences in context. With Luther as with Kierkegaard one must sometimes wonder whether Kaufmann has read his author or is using a book of quotations.

The entire attack upon theology and organized religion offers some enjoyment and scores some easy points. The object of the attack is a mélange of popular religion and fragments of various theologies from the centuries. One might similarly deliver an all-out blast against science by attacking the errors of Pythagoras, Copernicus, Newton, Lysenko, a few astrologers, and the political judgments of Russian nuclear physicists. Or against philosophy by assembling all the nonsense that can be found in Descartes, Hegel, Marx and Lenin, Dale Carnegie, and Kaufmann.

More amusing are the number of Kaufmann's brave heretical blasts that are merely echoes of the most familiar theological judgments. He quotes with approval H. Richard Niebuhr's criticisms of the church, never mentioning how characteristic of contemporary theology the citations are. His attacks on the current "revival of religion," for which he claims some originality, are indistinguishable from the most common grist of current theology. His criticism of Eisenhower's blend of piety and political philosophy may be new to a few citizens of the Republic but not to any who read theology. His moderate approval of ritual in religion and his attacks on legal and moral absolutism could have been borrowed from hundreds of theologians. His comments on the moral failure of organized religion sound like those in thousands of sermons, although the judgment that the Soviet Union and Hitler's Germany are monuments to the moral failure of Christianity represents a rather simple view of historical causation. Kaufmann is never so righteously happy as when beating a dead horse, e.g., the notion that "the only sin is indifference," as if anybody were teaching that. Perhaps I should be happy that this self-styled heretic has come through his travail to so many agreements with major tendencies of recent theology. But thanks had better be deferred until the argument becomes more informed and intellectually cogent.

The book might gain in lucidity if the author could remember his own advice that "fuming . . . is a smoke screen that covers up a lack of clarity." The author offers the recommendation: "try not to call people or actions 'immoral'." For his own moral judgments he prefers words like falsehood, hypocrisy, self-deception, sloth, slander, tyranny, suppression, and violence — to sample a single page of his rhetoric. I think I'll go on calling some acts immoral.

Every theologian I know is grateful to some of the magnificent modern heretics who have challenged Christian faith to self-searching and to revision of past formulations of belief. Theology gladly acknowledges debts to the non-apostolic succession that includes Hume, Nietzsche, Dewey, Russell, Sartre, and Camus. Heresy helps the church when it shows more rigor and less breast-beating, more grandeur and less peevishness than the present example.

This is not to pronounce Kaufmann's book worthless. Anybody who slashes widely with a sword sometimes hits a target sharply. Kaufmann's scholarship, though uneven, is occasionally penetrating. Now and then his wit is perceptive.

He is, to steal one of his own neat phrases, an "exceptional blend of ham and egghead."

The Light Falls on Today's Theologians

JACOB SACKMANN

Searchlights on Contemporary Theology by Nels F. S. Ferré. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961.. 241 pages, $4.50.

The term "searchlights" significantly indicates the nature of this recent book by Ferré. The preface indicates that common themes appear several times throughout this book consisting basically of lectures and articles composed by Dr. Ferré during recent years. This adds diversity to the subject matter, but perhaps readers will feel that some themes lack full and systematic development in the context of Ferré's total thought. It seems best here to call attention to selected issues upon which Dr. Ferré casts his searchlight.

Readers will variously react to the considerable attention devoted to Paul Tillich's and Rudolf Bultmann's use of "myth" and "symbol." Ferré insists that a symbol is legitimately used only when there is a common understanding regarding the nature and reality of that which is symbolized (p. 4). Myth stands for an historical event which is fictitious and may thus "involve historical reference with more than human actors or dimensions" (p. 5). What matters is that it is properly used, linguistically, only in accordance with custom and convention.

Having attempted these definitions, Ferré points out that integrity requires the clarification of what a Christian theologian does and does not literally mean to convey when he uses the terms. Bultmann and Tillich, Ferré feels, have not thus clarified their usage of the terms so that general readers have not always realized, as experts have, that their use of symbol and myth refers not to a "separate uncreate, divine realm centering in a personal God who is creator, ruler, judge and fulfiller of earthly and human history, but rather (only) to the conditions, categorical or existential, for human life and authentic existence" (p. 8).

Elsewhere in the book Ferré concludes that Tillich renders a grave disservice to Christian theology by granting ultimate status to the impersonal category, over the personal, when God is impersonally spoken of as the "Ground of Being." According to Ferré, Christian theology can and should clearly emphasize that God is personal and trans-personal because he is a personal Spirit "both having ultimate self-being and capable of self-manifestation in different forms for different purposes although always present everywhere in some sense" (p. 124). Ferré questions whether we should "start with Being and define God in its terms, or whether we