

## TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

recent sermons, lectures and studies. "Holiness (*kedushah*) is the heirloom of our individual and collective life," he states. This expresses not only the theme of the book, but in a sense the philosophy of its author.

*Kedushah* is "the key to Judaism and, in the distinctively Jewish scheme of life, it is composed of reverence, righteousness, and *rach-amanut*. Reverence includes not only reverence for God, but also a sense of reverence towards man. This must be coupled with righteousness that derives from *mish-pat*, the Jewish norms of justice that assure personal worth and human dignity. These must be crowned with the quality of *rach-amanut*, which the author defines as the kind of unselfish dedicated love that the mother has for her child.

*Kedushah* is the unifying force of Jewish life rendering the Jewish

religion co-extensive with the whole of life. Holiness is not an abstract principle. Expressed in the eternal laws of the Torah it is "a pervading direction, a never silent challenge to move both upward and forward." It can be achieved only through a life in accord with the *mitzvot*, a life attuned to the divine commands.

Dr. Jung continues to weave his philosophy of life from the concept of social justice, as envisioned in the Torah, through the traditional Jewish view on love and marriage. The book concludes with a revised version of his comprehensive essay on Jewish Foundations, wherein he defines the position of Judaism in its confrontation with the new world order.

"Heirloom" is a fine presentation of the ripe and measured sagacity of a distinguished expositor of Torah Judaism.

*The Faith of a Heretic*, by WALTER KAUFMANN (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1961).

*Reviewed by* J. DAVID BLEICH

Contemporary trends in secular existentialist thought show a marked lack of concern with the traditional claims and assertions of the religions of the Western world. The general attitude seems to be that by maintaining literary silence questions of doctrine and dogma can be ignored. Subtly the message is conveyed that such issues are unworthy of discussion,

much less of rebuttal. Far more exasperating is the attempt of so-called "religious existentialists" to introduce novel definitions of classic phrases, to redefine theological terms in a way which robs them of any real meaning. Actual beliefs are left undefined and clouded by verbiage which serves only to confuse rather than to clarify. In Walter Kaufmann's book, however, we have a clear and forthright attempt on the part of a philosopher

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to come to grips with the problems of religious faith. His own beliefs are presented forcefully and unequivocally. *The Faith of a Heretic* deals with both faiths and heresies in a lively, provocative manner. In doing so, Kaufmann makes use of his vast philosophic training and broad study of religion in a way which is always both learned and witty, though at times exasperating.

Always aimed at the Achilles' heel, Kaufmann's arrows never fail to sting the most sensitive areas of Protestant theology. He quotes the most eminent of Protestant teachers to show that they themselves considered Scripture to be self-contradictory to such a degree that it is impossible for them to establish religious dogma on the basis of biblical exegesis. Since the *multiplex intelligentia* of Scripture has enabled theology to turn itself into a "continual attempt to force new wine into old skins," Kaufmann feels justified in shedding these antiquated skins completely, in order that he may replace them with modern vessels more readily adaptable to the preservation of the philosopher's faith. He states that the rival claims of religionists cancel each other out. Thus, he argues, the philosopher is forced to formulate his creed solely by means of introspection and must define his faith without recourse to textual props.

But underlying Kaufmann's thesis is a much more formidable attack on organized religion. He questions the integrity of its exponents and practitioners. Denom-

inational differences are dismissed by Kaufmann as the end-products of fraud and dishonesty. This deception is manifest both in the derivation of doctrine and in its transmission to the layman. New concepts are dishonestly derived by "gerrymandering" Scripture to make it prove that which is being sought. These innovations of faith are then made palatable by being dressed in the cloak of traditional phraseology. Kaufmann calls this camouflage "conversion by definition." He accuses modern theologians of reiterating ancient creeds, all the while qualifying them and reinterpreting them until finally they are unrecognizable either to the non-believer or to the faithful. "At this point the creed becomes a way of saying what the infidel next door believes" and a means "of glossing over some of life's most crucial issues by escaping into hallowed formulas." Having drawn up this indictment, Kaufmann pronounces these men guilty of *doublespeak* — an epithet he applies to a term or phrase designed to communicate one message to one group and a contradictory message to another. In a parallel charge, Kaufmann, criticizes the motives of the clergy who employ *doublespeak* to perpetuate movements as well as to safeguard their own livelihood. Many in this group freely confess their intellectual dishonesty, granting in private what they do not dare to admit in public. If moral emulation of the religious leaders of humanity constitutes a defense, then these men may plead that

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they merely follow in the footsteps of their illustrious teachers whom Kaufmann accuses not only of generally being "richer in passion than in justice or fairness" and of having had standards of honesty which "have been far from exemplary" but also of being "so obsessed by some features of the positions they opposed that they thoroughly misunderstood and misrepresented the religion they denounced."

Kaufmann speaks regretfully about the casualness with which our generation glosses over lost beliefs. He notes that, while lack of faith is widespread, open avowal of heretical views is extremely rare. His own faith Kaufmann defines as a sense of intense care and concern with the issues, facts, and arguments having vital bearing on beliefs.

On this crucial point Kaufmann lays himself open to precisely the same charge which he levels against the religious existentialists whose views he disparagingly rejects. For what is Kaufmann's own definition of faith if not "new wine poured into old skins"? Certainly "intense care" in distinction to the wistfulness he deprecates in his contemporaries is not a sufficient criterion of faith; in itself it cannot be employed to define faith in a meaningful manner. Faith is something more than mere emotion. We understand faith, at its very minimum, to be an intellectual acceptance of a certain set of beliefs, or perhaps even disbeliefs. If it is true that a heretic "wants no articles of faith," is it not an

anomaly to speak of *The Faith of a Heretic*? To define faith as mental disquiet and unrest is merely to apply an ancient label to a novel concept. Here Kaufmann is himself guilty of "dishonesty" and *doublespeak*.

In general, Kaufmann displays an accurate and erudite knowledge of theological teachings extending even to the nuances and delicate shades of meaning which separate various creeds. It is regrettable that in his brief discussion of immortality of the soul and resurrection of the dead he gives the impression that the two are contradictory and mutually exclusive. While it is perhaps unfortunately true that "religious people who disdain all disbelief in an afterlife have for the most part thought so little about the whole question that they do not even know which of these two claims they themselves believe," it is not true that these two claims form an unresolvable dichotomy. Equally unfortunate, though perhaps more understandable in a person lacking a thorough foundation in Jewish scholarship, is the fact that Kaufmann is under the impression that biblical exegesis, even as pursued by the early Talmudists, is some sort of erratic and arbitrary game. He fails to understand that this activity was carried out in accordance with, and in conformity to, a very precise and rigid set of rules and that the principles of exegesis are invariably applied with meticulous care.

*The Faith of a Heretic* gives evidence of the author's profound

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understanding of the importance of ritual in religion. In fact, Kaufmann's writing is generally permeated by richness of feeling and depth of perception — ingredients so often absent in the works of contemporary scholars. Although he declines to recognize that commandments and precepts have an intrinsic validity of their own, Kaufmann is keenly aware that the ethical and moral moment of religious experience can seldom be preserved without them. He realizes that in the case of Judaism rite and ritual served not only to safeguard moral teaching but also to preserve Jewry as a people. We may heartily agree that it was "only through their ritual and organized religion that the Jews survived to bear perennial witness of the ethic of the prophets." But we must nonetheless take issue with a viewpoint which depicts ritual as "almost the least objectionable element" of religions. It is difficult to understand how a rite credited by the author as helping "to preserve traditions that are worth preserving" may in the same breath be described as "approximately humbug." Nor is it at all correct to say that the central concern of the Old Testament is with a way of life rather than beliefs. Such a statement can be based only on a case of "gerrymandering" as serious as those the proponents of institutionalized religions are accused of perpetrating. A true understanding of Judaism could not fail to grasp its emphasis on the duality of belief and action, of faith and works. The duties of the

heart and mind are stressed in the Old Testament tradition no less than the moral code. Kaufmann is guilty of reading into the Bible what he expected to find there. His prejudice may be unintentional, but the errors of well-meaning men are errors nonetheless.

One must have wholehearted admiration for Kaufmann's sincerity throughout years of painful and searing soul-searching. Walter Kaufmann was raised as a Lutheran. Finding that he could not sincerely accede to far-fetched assertions of Christian dogma, he rejected Lutheranism in favor of the *emunah p'shutah* — simple belief — of Judaism. (Only later upon being made a victim of Hitler's persecution did he realize that both his parents were of Jewish extraction.) The high degree of moral honesty inherent in such a step is readily apparent to all. Certainly an even greater degree of moral courage was requisite for such a step in the Germany of the nineteen thirties. But what makes this step phenomenal is that it was the firm commitment of an eleven year old child. His subsequent rejection of orthodox beliefs has a ring of thoughtful sincerity. But together with so many rationalists he is guilty of attempting to retain the valued emotions of institutional religion while polemizing against the very intellectual assertions which are the basis of these emotions. Kaufmann is undoubtedly a seeker of truth and one whose identity of purpose arouses sympathy. But to seek for truth alone is insufficient; the quest

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must lead to an adequate formulation of faith. The faith of a heretic, all his sincerity notwithstanding, is heresy.

Maimonides, in the third chapter of *Hilkhot Teshuvah* writes that one who denies the non-anthropomorphic nature of God is a heretic. Whereupon the *Ravad* takes issue with him, arguing, "Why should this person be called a heretic? Many greater and more worthy men [than Maimonides] held this [erroneous] opinion." Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz, of sainted memory, was wont to say that even though men greater and more worthy than Maimonides had false beliefs they are nevertheless to be considered heretics because "*nebach an apikoires, iz ober aich an apikoires.*" Sincerity and piety are

in themselves insufficient if they do not lead to true beliefs.

From the pages of this book there emerges the image of a man torn between the opposing forces of modern philosophic thought and the deep emotion of a sensitive personality. Kaufmann is intellectually committed to the atheistic findings of his contemporaries, but he can muster little feeling for this sentiment. He cannot believe what he feels, nor can he feel what he believes. *The Faith of a Heretic* is an attempt to force emotion into an arid and barren system of thought. If he has failed, it is because these two — religious feeling and atheistic philosophy — are, by their very nature, inherently incompatible.

*Rabbi Elchanan Spektor*, by EPHRAIM SHIMOFF (Jerusalem: Sura Institute for Research; New York: Yeshiva University, 1961).

*Reviewed by*  
Louis M. Tuchman

We, in our generation, are extremely fortunate that the lives of contemporary *gedolim* have been given consideration by many students. We are deeply indebted to Yeshiva University and to Rabbi Ephraim Shimoff for bringing to light, perhaps for the first time, the life and influence of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spektor. This *Gaon* was not only a religious leader in the city of Kovno, to which he brought fame for

more than three decades, but, in the words of Dr. Samuel Belkin, he was "probably the Torah giant of his generation, who exercised the most profound influence upon the religious life of Russian Jewry. In his later years his fame and authority were spread and felt in almost every community where Jews resided" (Foreword, p. 9). Indeed, his fame as the recognized *Posek* spread even to American shores, and his opinions were sought in all Jewish circles.

Although biographical material is not readily available, Rabbi Shi-