

BOOK REVIEWS

Paths to Jewish Belief, by EMIL L. FACKENHEIM (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1960)

With Mind and Heart, by HOWARD SINGER (New York: United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education, 1960)

Reviewed by Sol Roth

Both of these volumes are projected by their authors as textbooks on Jewish philosophy for the young student in his middle "teens."

The need for these volumes cannot be questioned. The motive that prompted their authors to produce them is a real and genuine problem which must be tackled by all who are concerned with Jewish education. The problem is the vast gap that separates the child's training in Hebrew School from the young adult's education in college. The child is introduced to the fundamental concepts and principles of Judaism in a simple and unsophisticated form. If a clearer and a logically more accurate exposition is not offered to him prior to his college years, his intellectually underdeveloped beliefs may become prey for cynical instructors of science

and skeptical professors of comparative religion. It is the belief of both these authors that a student's power to resist such attacks will be strengthened by means of a more mature and intellectually more elaborate study of the fundamentals of Judaism. Their texts are offered as a response to that need.

The task which Drs. Fackenheim and Singer set for themselves is a very difficult one and they recognize the handicaps under which they labor. They are addressing the youthful mind. The high school student obviously does not possess the logical power, the conceptual tools, and the knowledge of the college man; and the methods of exposition must be appropriate to the mentality of the pupil. The authors are therefore compelled to simplify, to elaborate by illustration, to reason by analogy, and to

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offer an emotional appeal in the garb of a rational argument.

It is at this point that the crucial question arises. To what extent can these volumes accomplish the intended objective? Almost all of Dr. Fackenheim's book and the larger portion of Dr. Singer's volume are devoted to an exposition of the concepts and principles of Jewish faith in a manner that is accessible and acceptable to the youthful Jewish American mind. This reviewer does not agree with all the points made by either of the authors, though he agrees with them on many of their views. This is the fate of all philosophic texts, whether written for the old or for the young. But insofar as these volumes expound, with a great deal of clarity and in a manner approaching maturity, the fundamentals of Judaism, they are of considerable value. "Knowledge is power." Familiarity with the foundations of the Jewish religion will provide the student the strength to withstand attacks directed against his spiritual armor. The teacher, however, should take the needed precaution of studying the volumes carefully before distributing either of them as texts or assigning chapters for study.

Nevertheless, certain errors are committed by both our authors which might have been avoided. Dr. Fackenheim's fault may be formulated as an exaggerated use of the element of emotional appeal. For example, he writes, "The reasoning behind belief in God must be unusually convincing. It has been accepted by the vast major-

ity of men at all times, including most of the greatest philosophers from Plato to Einstein." This assertion is obviously intended to elicit the response, "Anything good enough for Plato and Einstein is good enough for me." But Dr. Fackenheim is surely aware of the fact that Plato's concept of God is far from clear — some philosophers have even identified it with the Idea of the Good as expounded in *The Republic* — and Einstein's concept is more consistent with pantheism than with monotheism. One might almost say, with a bit of exaggeration, that what Plato's and Einstein's God have in common with the God of Judaism is nothing but the name. When the student who takes Fackenheim's course in Jewish thought will enter a university and expose himself to the writings of these great masters, it is doubtful that the claim that Plato and Einstein also believed in God, will save him from the menace of atheism or agnosticism.

Consider another illustration. Fackenheim writes, "Religion is the deepest possible relation between man and God, *a relation of love*" (italics mine). That Judaism recommends the sentiment of love in urging upon man a certain relation towards God is well known. We need merely recall the very popular verse, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." But Prof. Fackenheim is surely familiar with the biblical precept, "Thou shalt fear thy God" (Leviticus 19:14). Man must, therefore, combine the emotion of fear with that of love in his approach to

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God. Stressing the ingredient of love appears justified only in view of its emotional appeal. It is fashionable for religions to be concerned with love.

Yet, however glaring these faults may be, they do not detract from the positive value of the book which affords an excellent basis for discussing with teenagers the problems of Jewish thought.

The weakness in Singer's volume appears in those sections on science which he regards as "absolutely vital to our approach." Cognizant of the fact that, in the mind of the student, a vast logical gap separates science from religion, i.e., the student regards the affirmations of religion as undemonstrable and the assertions of science as demonstrable, Dr. Singer sets out to prove that the propositions of science are also afflicted with unverifiability. In the attempt to display the *uncertainty* of science, he uses two arguments: a) Science is based on sense perception which is an inadequate source of truth; and b) Science ultimately depends on the principle of uniformity of nature, and that principle does not yield to proof.

I do not wish to contest either of these assertions, but when the arguments adduced in their favor are examined, it becomes doubtful that the student will accept the implied conclusion that science and religion are equally uncertain.

In support of the argument of the fallibility of the senses, he offers, among many illustrations, the following: "Your eyes may tell you that a stick bends in water

when it enters at an angle, but it doesn't. Your eyes have tricked you." I do not know whether the student will grant that this is trickery. He has studied in high school physics the conditions under which light rays bend. He accepts the bent appearance of the stick in water as part of the order of nature. The bright student may even suggest that it is just this fact that the bent stick in the water appears straight when out of the water that has led to increased knowledge concerning the nature of light. I am not convinced that such an argument can protect the student from religious scepticism during his college years.

The second argument is designed to show that the principle of uniformity of nature is merely an assumption. I will grant this doctrine. All proof must begin with unproved premises.

According to J. S. Mill, inductive science begins with the principle of uniformity of nature. It is that principle which justifies the inductive process. Obviously, the principle is itself undemonstrable. But there is still a great difference between the undemonstrated principle of uniformity and the precepts of faith. The principle of uniformity has pragmatic cogency. Every time the principle of uniformity was applied, e.g., in the prediction that the sun will rise the following day, it was verified by subsequent events. At a minimum, the fact that the principle of uniformity makes possible successful predictions justifies it to the scientist. But can this be asserted of the principles of religion? The young student may not

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be able to formulate this difference precisely but I think he will sense it. I doubt that the attempt to reduce science to indemonstrability is a valid approach to the justification of Judaism as a religion.

The reviewer would not, therefore, recommend the sections on science in Dr. Singer's book. The remaining sections, however, which constitute the greater portion of the volume and which are devoted to a clarification of the principles of Judaism, will be found extremely suggestive, useful, and applicable to a classroom.

It should also be noted that Dr. Fackenheim, while he represents Reform ideology, is very sympathetic in the book under review towards the traditional viewpoint. This may be a result of the fact that the issues he raises for discussion are not those upon which the different denominations of Ju-

daism display vehement disagreement. Dr. Singer's volume, on the other hand, though he writes for the youth of the Conservative denomination of Judaism, attempts, to the extent that it is possible for him to do so, to describe the points of view of the various religious segments in Judaism. However, since it is obviously not possible in a book of this kind to combine all points of view into a coherent unity or to give each point of view equal treatment and consideration, the Conservative doctrines which he represents emerge strongly in his treatment and exposition of the precepts of Judaism.

Both Professor Fackenheim and Dr. Singer are to be commended and congratulated for making a significant contribution towards the solution of a serious problem in Jewish tradition.

Judaism, A Portrait, by Leon Roth (New York: The Viking Press, 1961)

Reviewed by Shubert Spero

The author in his preface points out quite correctly that "a portrait is not a photograph or a systematic survey." True to his word, the book consists of a series of almost self-contained essays in Jewish thought following now a chronological, now a topical order. The thin thread of continuity is a search for the essence or defining characteristics of Judaism and an excessive regard for Maimonides. Professor Roth indeed writes "tersely and with

vigor." His prose is lean, shorn of all excess verbiage, precise and pungent. The work is sprinkled almost too liberally with chains of quotations from classic works, with lengthy illustrations from infrequently quoted sources such as Josephus, Philo, and the Letter of Aristeas.

Professor Roth's grasp of many of the fundamental concepts of Judaism are profoundly perceptive: the universality of the doctrine as compared to the particularity of its transmitters; that Judaism is not a

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product but a programme and the Jews are the instruments of its fulfillment; that the community of Judaism is neither race nor blood but root loyalty to a teaching. After delineating the Jewish concept of God, Roth notes that the way of God leaves nothing for improvisation but is expressed in concrete specification, in definite rules for life, in a vision of divine holiness to refine human nature. The author includes an excellent discussion of the concept of the Jewish people as "witnesses for God" and the significance of the Kingdom of God. His analysis of the relationship between Halakhah and Aggadah and between the Oral and Written Law is quite adequate. His observations on the prayer book are incisive and sympathetic and his treatment of Mendelssohn, Ahad Ha-Am and Krochmal, properly critical.

In his discussion of certain key issues, however, Professor Roth appears to be on the verge of saying something decisive but then peters out in a cloud of evasiveness. On the question of Dogmas in Judaism, for example, the author, with great precision and clarity, sets forth the issue: "(a) Are there beliefs which are fundamental to Judaism in the sense that if they are accepted, Judaism is affirmed, if they are rejected, Judaism is denied? (b) If there are such fundamental beliefs, have they been put into words and formulated authoritatively?" Responds Roth, "A summary answer to both questions would have to be no." But instead of defending his answer, Roth

turns around and explains that in reality both the question and the answer need "modification" because the terms "belief," "fundamental," and "authoritative" are not at home in Judaism. Roth then goes on to (1) give a long quotation showing that Hinduism seems to suffer from a similar disability, (2) point out that the ancient Hebrew "believed in" rather than "believed that" (trust in God and belief that He exists are two different, distinct things) and (3) say that Judaism requires something more than Dogma, i.e., positive action. Putting all these together would appear to support a "summary yes" rather than a "summary no" to Roth's opening question. As Roth himself admits, even Maimonides was interested in the thirteen principles primarily from the point of view of their "practical consequences." In short, there are implicit in Judaism certain theoretical principles which can be abstracted by analytic reason, the consequences of which lead to the positive actions required by Judaism. Surely, one cannot trust in God without also believing that He exists! One cannot enter into a "covenant of holiness with God" unless God communicates with man. It is also likely that one going to his death in "Sanctification of the Name" might wish to have something "authoritative" on the Jewish concept of immortality! Admittedly, biblical man was not aware of these principles as such nor did he articulate them in so many words. Yet this was precisely the contribution of the medieval Jew-

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ish philosophers as seen by Roth himself (p. 45). Judaism became reflective and was brought to disentangle the root conceptions underlying the complex known as Tradition. Roth is quite right that affirmation of these beliefs alone is not yet Judaism, yet on the other hand, rejection of these beliefs surely leaves nothing to build on. J. Albo has asserted that there are three fundamental principles of Judaism in the sense that the removal of one will collapse the entire structure. The three are: existence of God, revelation, and reward and punishment. If Professor Roth disagrees with this, he should say so clearly and show how the Judaism he describes can persist in the absence of any one of these principles.

In his discussion of the reasons for the commandments, Professor Roth applauds Maimonides' "appreciation of history" as indicated by his introducing historical reasons for many of the commandments without discussing the problem which arises when these "reasons" no longer apply. Here again, one feels that the author has not gone far enough. "The reason behind the very idea of the commandments," concludes Professor Roth, "is the need of our fallible humanity for moral education." Yet, the very question of reasons for the commandments, Professor Roth states amounts to, "Why should I be moral?" (p. 136). Indeed, this is still unanswered. One would like to inquire as Socrates did of Euthyphro, "Is something holy because it is desired by the

gods or is it desired by the gods because it is holy?" Does Professor Roth mean that our rational faculty can intuit the right and the wrong, the moral and the immoral independently of the Bible (see p. 171) or does our entire concept of right and wrong stem only from the nature of God's commands?

On the subject of immortality, the author makes some fence straddling statements and concludes with the vague assertion, "But on the whole there is very little and that is imprecise" (p. 83). And yet, it is Maimonides who clearly teaches that the natural consequence of performance of the commandments is the actualization of a portion of the rational soul and immortality. So that the answer to the question of "why should I be moral" can be pushed at least one step further. It may be said that in addition to its beneficial social consequences, morality leads in the individual to immortality of the soul. What is most strange is the absence of any treatment of the problem of evil. This is perhaps not unrelated to the author's inadequate evaluation of the concept of immortality.

Roth sees the significant contribution of Judaism in the area of morality in its insistence upon "serving God out of love" with its ultimate rejection of self-interest or utilitarian motivations. In spite of all the quotes, however, Roth succeeds in showing only that God should not be served for material rewards or on condition of rewards. If acting righteously is meeting "the claims of our rational fac-

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ulty," then surely there can be nothing wrong with serving God in order that the purpose of the commandments may be realized, which purpose is nothing but the perfection of our soul. Here man serves God in order to perfect his soul, which is a form of what G. E. Moore has called "Egoistic Hedonism," a doctrine of an ultimate end. This is an inescapable conclusion for the rationalist who rejects the self-transcending significance of the commandments offered by the Kabbalah and should be accepted as such, as does Isaac Abarbanel in his commentary on *Avot* 1. People in rational houses, should not throw stones against "interest moralities."

What the reviewer found most puzzling, however, is the fact that Professor Roth has managed to write an entire book on Judaism containing a chapter entitled "Revelation, Metaphysics and History" without giving a clear explication of his view of revelation. There are statements in the book which lend themselves to opposite and conflicting conclusions. On the one hand we are told, "It is by our intelligence that we are linked to God." "Human thinking is part of a process initiated by the thought of God." "The wonder of Abraham is that by the use of reason man can find God . . . It is thus regular order of nature which is the door to religion. . . But God is also manifested in the order of morals . . . Creation, Abraham and Sinai are wondrous events which as a fact took place in nature." These assertions put together seem

to point to a sort of humanism in which God's revelation to man is His gift of reason. Yet, Professor Roth repeatedly states that Judaism is not the product of the Jews; that Judaism is not man's image of God but God's image of man! Indeed, our author goes further and states that Judaism rests on certain minimal data which are not metaphysical, i.e., deducible from first principles, but historical; that religion though consonant with human nature is not a manifestation of human nature but rather of a divine nature (p. 154). As Professor Roth puts it in his earlier work on Maimonides, "Religious truth arises in the heart. All that the rationalist asks is that it should come out through the head." ("Guide For the Perplexed: Moses Maimonides" p. 130). In these latter statements our author appears to be pointing to an intuitive or prophetic source of religious truth.

However, if in the basic data of Judaism such as the theophany at Sinai, "God is breaking into our lives," if information is being revealed from above, then certainly this is not an event in the natural order but rather the intersection of the eternal and the temporal. In short, on the most crucial question of all — how should or could modern man apprehend the Bible as the word of God — Professor Roth is unclear and ambiguous.

In his treatment of Zohar mysticism, Professor Roth is true to his rationalistic bias and sees it as a "revolt" which runs "counter to the basic assumptions of Judaism." Although he quotes Profes-

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sor Scholem's work on the subject, Professor Roth has evidently been unimpressed by Scholem's attempts to show that in terms of establishing a satisfactory and intimate relationship to the Halakhah the Aggada and the Liturgy, the outstanding manifestations of rabbinic Judaism, the Kabbalah succeeded where the philosophers failed.

Professor Roth is strangely silent on the entire question of the land of Israel, mentioning it only periph-

erally in connection with Yehudah Halevi and Achad Ha-Am. He makes no attempt to show its place in the scheme of Judaism or the challenge the State of Israel poses for the Jew in Galut today.

We could only wish that Professor Roth leave portrait painting to the artist and give us next a systematic account of the philosophical issues involved in a personal commitment to Judaism today.

On Sexual Intercourse, by MOSES MAIMONIDES, translated from the Arabic with introduction and commentary, edited by Morris Gorlin (Brooklyn: Rambash Publishing Co., 1961)

Reviewed by Jacob I. Dienstag

Among the many books by Maimonides on medicine is one entitled "On Sexual Intercourse." The book, originally written in Arabic at the request of a nephew of Saladin, the Sultan al-Muzaffer, was published by Rabbi H. Kroner with a German translation, followed by a commentary and Hebrew translation.

The work before us contains an English translation from the German of Kroner, though the claim on the title page is that it was "translated from the Arabic." We are at a loss to understand the purpose of this publication in which the editor admits that "no attempt has been made to set up a scholarly apparatus of various versions, translations, etc." (p. 22), the procedure followed by the leading scholar in the field, Dr. S. Munt-

ner. If this work is for the general reader, why was it necessary to interpolate the text with a "commentary" in which the editor displays overabundant erudition in aphrodisiac literature? The title page carries the presumptuous caption "Medical Historical Studies of Medieval Jewish Medical Works" of which this is volume I. One would expect that such a work, prominently advertised in the New York Times under this caption and selling for ten dollars, should at least be written in a coherent manner. The following is an example of the style: "He [Maimonides] fell ill in 1200 and probably was unable to appear at the court until his death in 1204" (pp. 11-12). Similar examples are found in the entire volume.

The translation, the introduction, including the editor's rather erudite commentary, and the ex-

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cerpts from Maimonides and the Talmud occupy ninety pages. In order to make the volume more bulky, he has added an appendix entitled "source material" in which he quotes from aphrodisiac and related literature. This appendix is irrelevant and the manner in which it was added to a work by Maimonides is in bad taste, to say the least. Muntner, if he had included it at all, would have synthesized the material in a more aesthetic manner. The editor, apparently, was trying to attract a certain clientele which is neither interested in Maimonides nor in the history of medicine.

The editor's critique of Graetz's and Baron's evaluation of Maimonides the physician serves no purpose. No one expects great historians of the Jewish people also to be steeped in the history of medicine. They depended upon the evaluation of the specialists in the field.

The work, which was poorly

edited, and its bibliography, which was sloppily arranged, could have remained unpublished pending the time when the editor could avail himself of the edition being prepared by Professor Muntner.

I am sorry if I sound too harsh. But the editor in the preface promises a continuation of this series with volumes two and three. If the volume before us is a sample of what is to follow, it is our duty to caution the learned editor that he refrain from this course. With a more proper attitude toward Jewish scholarship and with the erudition which is definitely at his command, Mr. Gorlin is equipped to make a contribution to the field. But the approach he adopted in the volume before us is definitely a *chillul ha-Shem* levelled against the second Moses, *uvemakom she-yesh chillul ha-Shem, ein cholekim kavod larav* (where there is a desecration of the Name, one cannot concern oneself with the honor due a scholar).

Heirloom: Sermons, Lectures, and Studies, by LEO JUNG (New York: Philipp Feldheim Inc., 1961)

Reviewed by Gersion Appel

Dr. Leo Jung was among the first to recognize the need for an exposition of Orthodox Judaism on the American scene. His many volumes of essays, sermons and studies, written in English over a period of four decades, have served an entire generation of Jews in America as a source of knowledge

of the basic tenets and teachings of Judaism. Convinced that Orthodox Judaism must reach out to the modern enlightened mind, he has, in his works, sought to re-state classic concepts of Torah Judaism in modern terms, as well as to approach current problems in the light of Torah.

"Heirloom," Dr. Jung's latest volume, is a collection of his more

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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 *rachamanut*. Reverence includes not only reverence for God, but also a sense of reverence towards man. This must be coupled with righteousness that derives from *mishpat*, the Jewish norms of justice that assure personal worth and human dignity. These must be crowned with the quality of *rachamanut*, 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-

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moff has succeeded in piecing together an interesting account of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan's early years, his early rabbinic posts, and, of course, his more than thirty years' ministry and communal leadership in the city of Kovno. In addition, we find chapters dealing with his responsa, his attitude to colonization in Israel, his role as arbitrator in disputes, his attitude to the poor and a fine but brief evaluation of this great sage. All of these point up the interests and the humaneness of this giant of the nineteenth century.

At a tender age, he already displayed his depth and intensity in learning and study. After his ordination, he took his first post, at the age of twenty, in the city of Sabelin. But, it was while in Nishvez, to which he was called in 1846, that his fame as an expert in Halakhah began to grow (p. 135). His fame and regard continued to grow amongst such recognized scholars as Rabbi Naphtali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, Rabbi Samuel Mohilever, and Rabbi Chayyim Soloveitchik, the Rabbi of Brisk, so that the latter remarked at one point, "Reasons or argumentations I may be able to refute, but I am willing to accept Rabbi Isaac Elchanan as authority on rabbinic law" (p. 85).

As a *Posek* he tried, whenever possible, to be lenient, especially where individuals were concerned. However, where no alternative was left to him, he followed a strict interpretation of Halakhah. This is ably demonstrated by Rabbi Shimoff, who writes, ". . . his lib-

eral interpretation of the law which was a result of his high humane qualities was one of his most outstanding characteristics" (p. 141). Especially in the case of an *Agunah*, he "invariably searched for legal permission for the woman in question to remarry." But "the permission had to be on firm grounds" (p. 99). "Before he rendered a decision concerning an *Agunah*, he often shed many a tear, because he realized full well that his decision would affect the future life of a poor forsaken woman" (Dr. Belkin in his foreword, p. 10).

Although ill in his later years, he continually interested himself in *halakhic* responsa and in Jewish causes throughout the world, until his death on March 6, 1896.

Today's generation is quite disturbed at the scant attendance at the rabbis' lectures and classes. In the days of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan, too, a "draft system" had to be adopted. Rabbi Shimoff notes that in 1832, the *Chevra Lomdei Torah* was organized, so that the rabbi can lecture daily and on Shabbat afternoon between *Minchah* and *Ma'ariv*. "Now, however, we note that the rabbi sits and learns between *Minha* (sic!) and *Maarib* (sic!) but no one of our group comes to listen. The rabbi sits and learns by himself . . . We, therefore, unanimously decided to draw lots so that every day one-fifth of our membership should attend the rabbi's lectures . . . An individual whose name is drawn and cannot come because of another engagement must pay a fine of three

