

TOMORROW'S AGE OF FAITH

UNLESS we mistake the signs, modern man is getting ready for a running jump into a new age of Faith. The tensions of unbelief are rapidly becoming more than ordinary human beings can bear, which means that they will soon devise for themselves some scheme of meaning to make life tolerable. In favoring circumstances, a man can get along without paying much attention to the question of who and what he really is, and what he is doing in the world, but when events and his environment turn against him, his bold scepticism becomes a terrible loneliness from which there is no escape except through some kind of faith. Life, in other words, has to make some kind of sense.

Every age of unbelief begins as an age of freedom. We throw out the old dogmas, we write declarations of independence from the rule of priests, and proclaim: "No meaning at all is better than these ancient lies." We repeat, after our scientific instructors: "The only explanation of things is that there is no explanation: the forces of nature are blind; the births of solar systems and men are mechanical, chemical and biological accidents; everything happens by chance. There is no cosmic purpose, no larger meaning, to anything. We're just here, that's all, so let's make the best of it."

And so we are "free"—for a while. But in the end we find this freedom from meaning becoming freedom from responsibility, freedom from hope, and finally, freedom from the human dignity which our unbelief was intended to support. The age of unbelief, of which we expected so much, is now a prison from which nearly all men long to escape.

What sort of man is the modern unbeliever? He is of course a *kind* of believer—he has to be. He believes in and is a great champion of "the facts." There is the fact that he is alive, and all the

"facts of life" which surround him. He has a job, or a business—which is a fact. He has certain desires, and knows some ways to satisfy them—more facts. He has an acquaintance, thorough or superficial, with prevailing scientific theories about the world and the things and beings in it. He has a lot of information and opinions about a lot of things—facts, or what pass for facts—which he uses in his business, his social and family life. His moral instincts are indistinguishably blended with the dying-out remains of the old moral code belonging to an earlier age of belief. He accepts as facts of a sort the various leftovers from that former period—the marriage customs, the judicial system, and the moralistic public arguments for the national policy of the country in which he lives. All these are his "working" facts. The others he can look up, when he wants to, in the proper catalogues provided by his civilization. For knowledge of the stars—should he be curious—he reads astronomers. Whole libraries of facts are easily available from elementary texts to microfilms of scientific data. Darwin informs him of man's origin, and man's end is too distant to be of any concern. Birth and death are commonplace facts dealt with by trained specialists—in one case the obstetrician, in the other, the funeral parlor.

So long as this world of facts remains engrossing, and in some measure enjoyable—so long, that is, as all the little meanings connected with the facts fill his days with a succession of little satisfactions—a man can successfully ignore the one great tragic fact of his unbelieving existence: that his life is essentially without meaning. We don't seem to require any serious explanation for our lives so long as they are pleasant, and hold out a reasonable hope for more and greater pleasures tomorrow. But when our

enjoyments are interrupted, our blessed security threatened, we want to know *why*.

Partly, therefore, the revival of faith is always a case of sour grapes. If we can't have our pleasures—if the typical American "success story" with its promise of a "happy ending" doesn't seem to be in store for us any more—we want to be sure that our sufferings and deprivations will at least have a "religious" value. "Faith" of this sort, of course, isn't worth much, but it is the kind of faith that usually inspires mass religious conversions in times of deep human uncertainty. It seems inevitable that a widespread development of this kind of faith is in prospect within the next twenty or thirty years, perhaps much sooner.

What are the factors of present-day despair, which may drive us to a new age of faith? Half a century ago, the impersonal circumstances of life which confronted a young American at the beginning of his career were at least "neutral" in relation to his personal ambitions. He could believe that hard work, judicious commercial honesty, and a sharp eye for the main chance would win him the success he coveted. He had no reason to think that anything—short of an improbable accident would interfere with his plans. It was an open world, and the odds, if anything, were on his side.

Today it is different. Nothing is certain any more. The institutions of our society no longer appear as fixed and friendly symbols of security. The Army, instead of a cheerful and romantic reminder of national prowess and our liberty-loving traditions, has become something that will get you, sooner or later. Taxes and rising costs threaten the small business man with extinction, and he sees no promise of relief in the future. Ravaging degenerative diseases and psychosomatic ills are eating away the wholesome health of the nation. A nervous and joyless dissipation has taken the place of normal play, while nameless mental disorders give recognizable shape to our once intangible fears and discontents. Even while wages remain high, and jobs plentiful,

memories of days and years of futile job-hunting haunt nearly every man of middle age. With pessimism born of experience, he *knows* that the Depression will come again, and worse than actual want will be that impotent wandering through dirty streets, from office to factory to relief check line, cringing at every No-Help-Wanted sign, at every slightest symbol of the inner defeat of the unemployed man. The circumstances, the "facts of life," are now malignant and threatening. There seems no way to get ahead. Savings don't last in times of inflation, and mounting real estate values have stolen away the "stake" of families who *had* to have a home. The family itself, as we have known it, according to William C. Menninger, may disintegrate by the end of the century, if present trends continue. He adds:

As evidence for this are the facts that 44% of our families have no children and an additional 22% have only one child. In 1945 there was one divorce for every two marriages in urban areas and one divorce for every three marriages in the country at large. In figures the divorces increased from approximately 250,000 in 1937 to over 500,000 in 1945.

Crime, Dr. Menninger reports, costs the nation between ten and eighteen billion dollars a year—six times what we spend on education. Alcoholism is steadily on the increase and between 1941 and 1946 the cases of a prevalent type of venereal disease were doubled.

We thought the facts would make us free, but now all they do is assert our failure and prophesy our doom. Other facts, subtler in implication, register the sterility of the closing years of an age of unbelief. Why are the *New Yorker* cartoons funny? The *New Yorker* delights because it confirms our distrust in nearly all the conventions which hold our society together. Deftly, exquisitely, the *New Yorker* exposes the trivial substitutes we have evolved to take the place of essential convictions and enduring purpose. The *New Yorker* gaily presides over a cycle of social and moral decay—an interlude in which sophistication has time to rail at every minor

egotism, including its own—before the final sag and crumbling of our culture.

The difficulty, of, course, is to formulate a scheme of meaning that can stand against the critical genius of the time—which achieves its greatest analytical skill a little before it undermines itself, and everything else. We have to find a middle course which is more deeply rooted in reality than any of the dull and unimaginative compromises between fact and faith, or science and religion.

We have to become capable of recognizing the difference between a faith we can live by in the modern world and the pretentious rhetoric of reviving dogma. We can find suggestions in the thinking of the undogmatic and unsceptical men of the past, but many of their convictions have too great a generality to serve the particular problems of this particular hour. It seems that what we have to do is to find a scheme of meaning that will coordinate, organize and impart moral significance to the mountains of facts that we have accumulated; or, we have at least to discover basic principles which give promise of penetrating all these facts in the progress of time.

This, indeed, is the virtue of a principle—that it can and does illuminate the facts of experience. Dogmas and all other forms of emotional belief ignore or excommunicate the facts, whereas our great need is to understand them.

A faith explored and developed with principle is difficult to attain because it will accept none of the sacred nonsense of the past. It wants unity and brotherhood without coerced uniformity, effective moral law without administration of a personal God, and immortality, or some sense of spiritual permanence, without benefit of clergy. A faith of this sort would violate no scientific canon, although it would necessarily mean the end of a large collection of scientific assumptions. It would involve no vested interests in religion, for no church could capitalize on ideas such as these. It would entertain the ideas and welcome the discipline of metaphysical thinking as the only

available safeguards against superstition. It would reject abstractions of merely intellectual origin and demand confirmation of every leading idea in the testing ground of daily life.

But a faith of this sort would most of all take courage—courage, in the first place, to leave the small certainties of scepticism for the uncharted sea of moral philosophy. Courage, again, to discuss one's beliefs before a fearful and scornful world. And courage, finally, to stand firm against the waves of feeling that will surely come, in the days that are ahead, and which will sweep into the pews of orthodoxy and pious conformity all those who have not found a new faith, and a new strength, within themselves.

Letter from **GERMANY**

BERLIN.—During this very mild winter of 1947-48, one fact can easily be observed in the whole of Germany: in some ways things move more and more to the normal, while in others our standard of life shows a trend of steady decline. We have, therefore, contradictory trends of life in Germany today: (1) normalization of traffic, mail, theater performances, safety on the streets, etc., and (2) a steady deterioration (or staying on the same low level) in clothing, food, health, morals, value of money, etc. What does this mean for the future?

It can mean only one thing (which by the way is the same all over the world): the disregard for the human factor caused by the interest in enlarged production. Whether you take the Eastern zone or the Western zone of Germany, on each side of our country people have to bow before the world of the necessities which man has created himself.

How do people in Germany respond to a life that has lasted almost three years, now, since the end of the war? Generally, their helplessness is hidden behind a simple hope and wishing: "It will become better some day." They cannot and will not imagine that their life is condemned to misery. But nobody knows and says when a change for the better will come, and how it will come. Their real attitude is like that of a man who wants to commit suicide, but lacks the courage to do so. Therefore he lives on. . . .

There are other groups which are more active and have certain tasks before them: actors, politicians, students, etc. These groups are in a better position to keep mentally upright in the struggle for survival. But they also often come into situations where they feel life more an ordeal than a joy or a task.

And there are the official optimists—usually the occupation authorities—interested in keeping the peace, and the continuance of life and

production in general. Look at their announcements for the beginning of the new year!

But no *independent* development for better or for worse is possible in Germany. Everything, every slight change, depends on international developments. The solution of the German question is possible only on an international scale. That means not only international understanding between the big Allies, but solution of the general crisis of society—of which the German crisis is a part.

The present "leading" generation of Germany, which was born and acquired its conscience before Hitler came to power, lives in a great transition period. It is in some ways a very interesting period to live in—because these people are young enough to endure all the strains of everyday life—but it is also very hard, very difficult, to live in. And it is a time for people who understand to keep their heads clear. The end toward which everything moves can and will be only the emancipation of man from the world of *things* now ruling over him.

GERMAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW THE GREEN KINGDOM

To speak of books about Nature, when easy access to fields and woodlands is possible for nearly everyone, may seem to be evidence of an undue affection for the printed word. And yet, there is the same kinship between a fine book about the living world of nature, and Nature herself, as there exists between, say, the Sermon on the Mount, or the *Upanishads*, and the wise and serene life that some men still live today. See what R. H. Francé, a nature-lover of nineteenth-century German, was able to generate, in his *Germs of Mind in Plants*, with only words to work with:

It is of deep significance that in all popular sayings, the plants are living, perceiving, acting creatures. This popular idea finds poetical expression in the Dryads, those nymphs of tree and forest of the ancient Greeks, who with a tree were born and with it died.

The narcissus, hyacinth, laurel, and cypress retain their human fate and stand as enchanted mortals, in the sunny southern forest of the gods. For the Germans also, forest and meadow are filled with living if silent brothers, and their gentle queen, Balder's wife Nanna, comes down to us every year in the gorgeous pomp of fairyland. In India this dim outline becomes a philosophy, in which all nature meets us as a mirror saying: "This is you." Wherever we dig down into these old sources we meet with the same stream: the deepest conviction of a bygone race, whether it be in the wonderful didactic poem of Empedocles—

For I was once perhaps as boy or girl
Dust, mayhap, or bird or fish . . .

that in playful mixture of poetry and fundamental wisdom speaks that mystic phrase: evolution long ago began the unveiling of man; whether it be in the mystic sayings of the Middle Ages, of the wonderful herbs that talked on Christmas Eve, or of the mandrake that gave a heartbreaking cry when pulled from the earth.

In the folk-songs of the Russians and Norwegians, the plants are living, feeling fellow-creatures, and even with us, in spite of our long separation from nature, there still remains a remnant of the old feeling, that the plants are animate creatures, which our poets, at least, will not permit us to forget.

There is, we think, a Religion of Nature, a quality of feeling and thinking which never offends the reason, yet which nourishes the human heart with the profound sense of rapport that Francé seems to know so well. His book is an implicit pantheism of the world of plants, moving from illustration to illustration of the sensitive plant-intelligence of rootlet, tendril and cell. Francé draws on the great scientific authorities of his time—Darwin is his most frequently quoted source—but *Germs of Mind in Plants* is essentially a record of first-hand observation, and of more than observation, for his descriptions achieve a kind of fraternal identification of the reader with the living activities of plants. On the subject of phototropism (movement or turning toward light) he tells of the responses of plants to light of various sorts. The rotation of the sunflower is well known, but far more fascinating is the tiny catapult mechanism of the fungus *Philobolus*, which seeks the light with even greater determination. A denizen of the manure pile, *Philobolus* each day performs its rite of sun worship—in both self-destruction and self-perpetuation:

Fresh as dew, glistening like a diamond, looking as if woven from a breath, it raises its raven black head proudly in the morning, and during the forenoon throws itself with a sudden movement far into the air. Then it collapses like a breath of mist and its life is ended. The next morning, however, there stands another shining head in the same spot. This little fungus, which the botanists call *Philobolus crystallinus*, always points this little black head, in which the spores are located, towards the light. If it is placed in a darkened room, with but a single small opening for the light, a delicate bombardment is heard through the whole forenoon. Every little spore head is shot at the spot of light, and by this means the tiny fungus proves that it knows very well from what source light comes.

Francé's language is that of a lover of the natural world, but as a scientist, he does not abuse the sympathetic confidence of his reader. He tells of the *germs* of mind in plants, leaving the final mystery of the coordinating and guiding intelligence in living things without pretended explanation. "What," he asks, "is this puzzling Something that shows us its features for a moment in these simple phenomena?"—

We natural scientists are seeking for it with all eagerness, but up to the present time no one can say. Momentarily we get along with a phrase, by saying it is "Life." . . . The different parts have subjected themselves to a higher purpose: to the furtherance of the best existence. This in the latest natural science is called *teleology*, a misleading and much-abused word, and one easily leading to unscientific conclusions, but from which it is impossible to escape, and that will govern the scientific investigation of the future until its cause is understood.

Before leaving Francé's book, it should be said that its numerous drawings are excellent; we cannot vouch in any technical sense for the scientific exactitude of the author, but, unlike some other popularizations of botany, this book contains many citations from scientific literature, and Francé writes with an easy familiarity that suggests thorough knowledge of his subject. (*Germs of Mind in Plants* is still listed as available from the publisher, Kerr & Co., Chicago, at 60 cents.)

One wonders what Francé's larger conclusions might have been, for himself, about the wonder and meaning of natural phenomena. A similar wondering is evoked by that almost unique testament of faith of a modern botanist, *The Flowering Earth*, by Donald Culross Peattie. Such books contain the promise of a secret therapy for all the world—if only we could find out what it is! And yet, to try to make the nature-lover's secret explicit would somehow kill its essence. It is not meant to be told in ordinary speech. It is a mood, a transcendent nostalgia of the spirit, but it is also rooted in the damp, hospitable earth—rooted, but not chained or contained—and least of all accessible to the measuring and defining propensities of human beings.

The greatest scientists seem to be more in the confidence of Nature than the rest of us. There is a kind truth they know which never appears in their scientific papers. Einstein, more self-conscious than most, has spoken of it thus:

To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and

the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms—this knowledge, this feeling, is at the center of true religiousness. In this sense, only, I belong in the ranks of devoutly religious men.

Another great physicist, Erwin Schrödinger, goes, like Francé, to the *Upanishads* for human expressions to clothe his most profound ideas. Who or what is the "I"—he asks, at the end of his recent book, *What Is Life?*—this "self," the primary reality of our lives?

The only possible inference [Schrödinger writes] . . . is, I think, that I—I in the widest meaning of the word, that is to say, every conscious mind that has ever said or felt "I"—am the person, if any, who controls the "motion of the atoms" according to the Laws of Nature.

Thus Schrödinger, like many an illustrious thinker before him, is really saying, in this passage, that the Self in man is God! He continues:

In Christian terminology to say: "Hence I am God Almighty" sounds both blasphemous and lunatic. But please disregard these connotations for the moment and consider whether the above inference is not the closest a biologist can get to proving God and immortality at one stroke.

In itself, the insight is not new. . . . From the early *Upanishads*, the recognition *ATHMAN* = *BRAHMAN* (personal self equals the omnipresent, all-comprehending eternal self) was in Indian thought considered, far from being blasphemous, to represent the quintessence of deepest insight into the happenings of the world. . . . consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown; . . . there *is* only one thing and that what seems be a plurality, is merely a series of different aspects of this one thing, produced by a deception (the Indian *MAJA*); the same illusion is produced in a gallery of mirrors, and in the same way Gaurisankar and Mt. Everest turned out to be the same peak seen from different valleys. (*What is Life?* Macmillan, 1946.)

COMMENTARY
THE EDITOR'S UNEASY CHAIR

AN editorial desk, these days, has an unpleasant likeness to the mind of the all-knowing diplomat described by Lin Yutang in *Between Tears and Laughter*. So many "important facts" gather there that often it seems an impossible responsibility to convey their meaning efficiently and justly to the reading public. The diplomat, of course, is protected from this sort of dilemma by the institutional egotism of his profession. He knows, with the certainty of a "saved" fundamentalist, that he and he alone is competent to make appropriate use of the diplomatic and military intelligence in which he deals. The editor, on the other hand, must daily remind himself of the possibility that his readers will include many who are wiser than himself, and that *all*, wise or not, are entitled to reach their own conclusions about the facts.

Nevertheless, editors must try to explain. They cannot attempt only a sterile "objectivity, " As Darwin once remarked, "How odd it is that anyone should not see that all observation must be for or against some view, if it is to be of any service."

Explanation is the defining of the unknown in terms of the known. Pseudo-explanation is the labelling of the unknown with familiar words. And education is the process by which men learn to identify a genuine explanation and to expose the illusions and deceptions of pseudo-explanation. Knowing his own limitations with respect to words, the amateur "explainer," the writer or editor, always arrives at humility long before he achieves wisdom—if he ever does. He comes to realize that every definition, however excellent, excludes some other truth; that always, a light on some place or thing creates shadows elsewhere.

That is why, perhaps, the wisest of men never wrote anything at all, but left to posterity a few aphorisms applying to principles instead of places and things—the only way they could be sure of

not hiding any truth. Because we do not follow the example of the wisest, but choose tasks more suited to our talents, those of us who edit and who write must always stay on the right side of the line that separates suggestive explanation from occupational delusions of grandeur. Ink and paper play only a subordinate part in the quest for certainty, and truth itself, whatever it may be, is not a literary phenomenon.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

THE most important factor in the mental development of a child or adolescent is his understanding of whatever "unwritten contract" may be the basis for interaction among the members of his family. And each group does in fact have such a contract, whether it knows it or not. People who have decided to live together develop a pattern of things which they expect from each other. When a wife or husband feels unfairly treated by a marriage partner it is usually because of a conviction that a mutual agreement has been violated. The fact that such unwritten contracts are usually not well constructed is of course very obvious, because of the vast number of painful misunderstandings which arise in the majority of homes.

The child is not only a witness to misunderstandings and recriminations between parents; he participates in them psychologically. Even though he may not see any outward signs of difficulty, he nevertheless *feels*, either that his parents know what they are doing with each other, or that they do not. And if the latter is the conclusion, however subconscious, the child will be led towards a final rejection, perhaps in adolescence, of his parents' entire psychology of human relationships. This result is apt to be regarded by parents, when it occurs, as nothing short of an ungrateful rebellion without consideration of all the many things "done for the child," yet the child may simply be repeating a page in the book of human progress. The steps leading to the formation of the American Republic were on a larger scale the same steps which the majority of children are compelled to take when they come of sufficient age to mature their own principles and opinions. A parent's merely negative reaction is an attitude not at all unlike that of the British when the American colonies decided that the time had come for them to seek a better sort of "social contract" than the imperial

agreement which their parent land had imposed on them.

A creative rebellion may be a necessary act even in those cases where no *unpleasant* conflict exists with parents. No family contract should ever be conceived as unalterable, for the reason that the addition of every child means the addition of another distinct individuality, and the "group mores" need to be sufficiently revised to include the creative abilities of each one. Even the earliest problems of child psychology are essentially "problems of government," for they all have to do with some sort of social contract within the family. As a child begins to form the idea that he is participating in a "contract" with his parents, brothers and sisters, his response to conflict situations is encouraged to be more intelligent, since his arguments for "what he wants" will tend to be rationalizations of principles which he assumes are common ground in the family. At such a point it is more important that he try to relate his desires to some sort of principle in an effort to convince his parents than that he agree with their wishes, because his final adjustment in the home depends upon development of his own working philosophy.

The majority of rifts between husband and wife, parent and child, always seem to have something to do with someone's contention that the other *should* feel or act in such and such a way *i.e.*, as a "good husband" "good wife," or "good child." This way always lies madness, for each person differs in his way of expressing the same thing, and unless care is taken to recognize the background of ideas and attitudes, misunderstandings are likely to be frequent.

There are many accepted notions of "family contract." The most common results from the parental habit of telling a child, "If you sweep the front walk every day for six months, I will buy you a bicycle." Yet such proposals are not contracts in any meaningful sense at all, being only a simple extension of the reward-and-punishment system. The psychology is Jehovistic, and the

bicycle becomes a sort of divine dispensation for rites performed. Parents who talk about a prospective bicycle from the standpoint of the various constructive needs which it might fulfill are actually providing a much better notion of family contract, even though they require nothing as specific payment from the child. The bicycle is either a good thing or it is not a good thing. If both parents and the child can agree that it is the former, no conflicts which ensue before the time of its purchase are likely to alter this basic fact. If having the walk swept is a good thing, and if there is any common meeting-ground between children and parents in perceiving the fact, the child can be glad to do the job, simply on the ground that he has more free time than anyone else for such tasks.

The most important contract is always the contract of reason, or expressed willingness of parents to make all decisions respecting the child's wants in the course of a calm and careful discussion in which the child plays his own independent part. If such an attitude can be established, there exists an ever-growing opportunity for the parents to present matters the child has never before seriously considered (such as the child's economic dependence) at a time when the child's mind is open. All of this can flow naturally from the attitude toward family government which parents utilize in deciding matters between themselves. On such a basis, ample room remains for the parents to ask the child to *try* a suggestion for a stipulated length of time, and then make his own decision. In such cases the child is not asked to give up his individual judgment, but only to weigh all the facts before giving his final opinion. In the background is the mutually understood "contract of reason and at the root of this, in turn, is the amount of thinking which has been done on just why the parents and child are together in the first place, and what are the ways in which they can make the most of their association. It simply does not work for the parent to decide such matters in private, and then invent clever tricks which will condition

children's responses in a desired direction. The child must himself participate to some degree in establishing the basis for the common life of the home. He must be regarded as a moral agent in his own right, if he is to be expected to form, in time, a mature conception of responsibility.

Books on child psychology, we suspect, can be more harmful than beneficial unless this fundamental consideration is held in mind. The child is an individual; his reason needs stimulation, and his desires need to be considered seriously. If parents apply a formula, no matter how excellent, to a current problem, without any thought of the child as an individuality distinct from all others, no solution will be permanently constructive. No "case history" is like any other. No rule of thumb ever works more than superficially in the adjustment of human relationships. The uniqueness of each situation is its most important characteristic. The fact that others have had *similar* problems may be good to know, but the root of mature understanding between parents and children is the recognition that no two people are exactly alike, nor do they ever adopt identical attitudes for exactly the same reasons.

FRONTIERS

Re-Education—Theory and Practice

THE United States is one of the few nations of the world which came into being without nationalistic pageantry. The American Founding Fathers did not think that they and their countrymen were "special people" with a tribal destiny. The American people were children of Liberty, not children of Wotan. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States relate to universal human qualities, and ideals cherished in common by all men. Any people, anywhere, can copy and adopt for themselves the principles on which these documents are founded. There is in them no reference to unique hereditary privilege. The Patagonian Indians, if they like, may use the same principles with equal justification.

The United States, therefore, while it has acquired a few imperialistic habits, has no imperialist tradition to give them sanction. Instead, Americans are compelled by *their* tradition to justify imperialistic excursions in terms of the "civilizing" influence of American culture. There is little reference to "right of conquest" in American State papers; whatever we have to justify, it is always done on moralistic grounds.

This means that war, as an instrument of national policy, must always be defined by Americans in what is, ultimately, the language of education. We fight our enemies, not simply to exterminate them—never to "enslave" them—but always to make them "better." Admiral Mahan, a noted advocate of the Manifest Destiny theory of American history, put the American philosophy of war in a single sentence: "The province of force in human affairs is to give moral ideas time to take root."

Many Americans are convinced that this principle embodies the only possible justification for war as a national policy. During World War II liberal journals in the United States gave as much space to discussions of how to "re-educate" the Germans, after victory, as to any other single topic connected with the war. With an almost hysterical enthusiasm, Louis Adamic turned out an entire book on the democratic rehabilitation of Europe. His *Two-Way Passage* proposed the voluntary return to Europe, after the war, of thousands of naturalized Americans who would undertake to teach their former countrymen how to practice

democracy. Teachers and political liberals who thought in the humanitarian terms of the American tradition impatiently awaited the time when military "force" would give way to the more congenial work of "rooting" moral ideas among the vanquished peoples abroad.

Statistics were gathered to prove the practicability of re-education in democratic ideals. Sidney W. Mellen's study of the Reichstag elections from 1919 to 1933 (*American Political Science Review*, August, 1943) illustrates the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of these preparations. According to his summary:

1. In the first election, before Versailles and before the failures of the Weimar Republic, the German people strongly repudiated militarism and aggressive nationalism, and showed their overwhelming preference for a liberal or progressive democratic republic.

2. By May, 1924, after Versailles, the Ruhr struggle, and the inflation, and after irretrievable errors by the early Weimar Governments, the German people had made a violent swing toward the militaristic and reactionary Right.

3. By May, 1928, after four years of slow reconstruction and economic recovery, they had reversed the previous trend and made unmistakable progress back toward the democratic and non-militaristic line-up of 1919.

4. In July, 1932, under the impact of the depression and mass unemployment, 37.3 per cent of the German voters supported the Nazis. This was the high point of Nazi strength before Hitler became Chancellor.

5. In the first election after Hitler acquired control of the machinery of state, 53.0 per cent voted for the major parties of the extreme Right, all of them definitely militaristic. However, even at this time Hitler's party did not secure a majority of the votes.

In short, the major swings in popular sentiment can be explained largely in terms of the economic, social, and moral hardships—and recoveries—through which the people lived in this period.

Mellen's conclusions on re-educability were as follows:

Considering these election results as a whole, in the light of the handicaps which the German people inherited from their past and particularly in the light

of the long-drawn-out ordeal through which they lived during and after the war, there is no evidence that those people have a greater-than-average natural predisposition toward militarism and aggressive nationalism, or a smaller-than-average natural democratic capacity for self-government. There is plain evidence that when social and economic conditions are tolerable, their political tendencies are preponderantly democratic and reasonable—above all, capable of improving.

Like so many other educators, Mr. Mellen felt under obligation to point out that the German people could not repudiate their Nazi masters until the armed strength of the latter had been destroyed, and he added: "This is the main reason why the United Nations are bound to pursue their fight until the defeat of German arms is complete—and this time there will be no armistice until Germany is invaded and her armed forces routed and demoralized."

It is probably correct to assume that American educators who went abroad to help with the re-education program departed with the best will in the world, and with at least the optimism displayed by Mr. Mellen five years ago. But according to current reports from Germany, re-education is not working out. The moral ideas are not taking root, and instead, neo-fascist tendencies are gaining strength and fighting an "undercover war" for control over the minds of the German youth. This, at least, is the verdict of Fred M. Hechinger—educational columnist for the *Washington Post*—who records his impressions gained during a recent tour of German schools and universities in the February *Harper's*. We can believe what he says because he does not write to "blame" anybody, but to explain, as well as he can, some of the reasons why the re-education program has stalled and is even sliding backward into a revival of Nazi attitudes. The basic explanation for this failure, it appears, is that truly liberal education is not something that can be administered in appropriate doses following a noisy but ineffective denazification program.

Hechinger's article is worth reading carefully not only as a tract for the times, but also for what it reveals about historical processes and liberal education, in principle. His picture is not completely gloomy. He found one or two extraordinary teachers—one whom he describes with pleasure and at length—who are accomplishing educational miracles under peculiarly

difficult circumstances. From Hechinger's dispassionate appraisal of the re-education program, one learns to accept the conclusion that arises, almost spontaneously, from this and any other serious contemporary social study—that the hope for the future lies with the few exceptional men who stand firm against the popular and typical trends of the day, not only in Germany, but in all parts of the world.

This is the epoch of the Mass Man, as Ortega proclaimed sixteen years ago. In such an age, the sources of our optimism must be sought in the occasional distinguished individual, the small and almost unknown minority. Progress, today, such as it is, will always be found to be strictly "unofficial." Thus, in contrast to Hechinger's gloomy essay on re-education in Germany, there is another picture of spontaneous revival in self-education, now proceeding there. This account is by Herbert Maw, an English relief worker, and was published in England last fall:

All over Germany there are tiny cells of enthusiastic youth groups, idealistic students, small women's organisations, little societies and committees; teachers, pastors and welfare workers; artists and others, who in spite of how we think they ought to feel, believe it or not, are full of an incredible youthful vitality, interest, seeking and receptiveness, which is a constant source of amazement and encouragement to even the invariably optimistic relief worker. Such people may be safely left to carry on with any new beginnings and ideas which we may have helped to start and encourage.

But the real tragedy is that, taken as a whole, this real intellectual and spiritual hunger—often surprisingly more than the physical hunger—is not being met by more than a few concerned members of the Allied occupation forces. This is not so much callousness as a rejection of our own spiritual poverty and blindness. . . . If, instead of endlessly describing and uselessly criticising, modern writers would devote their time and energies to constructive comments and some encouragement, and endeavor to meet this enormous physical, spiritual and intellectual need, we should slowly begin to win ground.

Admiral Mahan is no longer here to answer, but the question may be asked of all those who share his view of the "province of force"—Just what are the moral ideas we wish to take root in the occupied lands of Europe, and how do we propose that it be accomplished? Our own program of re-education

brings no kind word from American observers; an English spokesman wrote the foregoing quotation; and in the Russian zone, there is the usual censorship and "thought control." Where are the "moral ideas" we promised ourselves would follow the violence of war? The soil, from all reports, is waiting, the people hungry, and the hour late.

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READING AND WRITING

ON the question of what happens after death, orthodox Protestantism has been noticeably silent for more than half a century. Definite ideas about Heaven and Hell, it seems, went out of fashion with harps, gold pavements and smoking pots of brimstone, leaving the state after death in a characterless fog of gentle optimism. The prevailing Protestant view is still more or less that stated by Dr. James Orr in 1893:

. . . we have not the elements of a complete solution, and we ought not to attempt it. What visions beyond there may be, what larger hopes, what ultimate harmonies, if such there are in store, will come in God's own time; it is not for us to anticipate them, or lift the veil where God has left it down. (*The Christian View of God.*)

As a result, perhaps, of the sense of finality implied by Dr. Orr, Protestant theology gave up its interest in the question of an after-life, turning to discussions of "prayer," "sin," and more recently, of the contradictions between the "practical" and the "mystical" ways of life. In practice, the more liberal Protestant churches have tended to develop their activities in the direction of "social service," while their ethics became simply humanitarian in content, tinged with a Christian vocabulary.

The recently published Church of England's *Report on Spiritualism*, therefore, becomes a matter of special interest as possibly signifying the beginning of a reversal of this trend. Spiritualism achieved great gains in England during the war, which may have something to do with publication—after eight years of alleged suppression—of this report by the British *Psychic News*. Briefly, the seven signatories (out of a committee of ten) of the Report declare all "physical" phenomena as not proved, but add that there is "a strong *prima facie* case for survival and for the possibility of spirit communications, while

philosophical, ethical and religious considerations may be held to weigh heavily on the same side." With a watchful eye to the welfare of the faithful, the Report concludes:

If Spiritualism, with all aberrations set aside and with every care taken to present it humbly and accurately, contains a truth, it is important to see that truth not as a new religion, but only as filling up certain gaps in our knowledge, so that where we already walked by faith, we may now have some measure of sight as well.

There is, we suspect, "a truth" in Spiritualism. We are not ready to charge both William Crookes and William James with being gullible fools, to say nothing of the esteemed persons who signed this Report. But we are wary of a field of investigation which could force Prof. C. E. M. Joad to the melancholy conclusion that, "if ghosts have souls, they certainly have no brains." The low quality of the "communications" coming to his notice inspired the further comment: "The view that those of us who survive undergo a softening of our cerebral tissues seems to me a gloomy one."

Possibly the Church of England sought an "official" source of conviction on the subject of immortality, and hence resorted to a "Committee" on Spiritualism for information. Committees, after all, are something like the Church Councils which, through the centuries, have always been needed to supply Divine Revelation with its legitimate "authority." But for our part, the "Intimations" of Wordsworth are better evidence of immortality than the "miracles" of all the séances ever held, or to be held. Séance phenomena doubtless prove something—the question is, *what?*