1918 and after 1945 and especially fascinating on the Nurnberg trials, where, apart from being a witness, he translated many of the final speeches.

Dr. Schmidt now lives at Tegernsee in the Bavarian highlands. He had come to fetch me at the station in his elegant Mercedes cabriolet and, though it was late October, we lunched in the open on the fret-work balcony of his music-box-like chalet, overlooking the steel-blue mountain lake and the already snow-capped peaks piercing the pastel green, cloudless autumn sky. The only sound that afternoon was the leisured tinkle of the cowbells on the Alpine meadows, a rustic background music to a very worldly conversation. His English is so perfect that only by its utter faultlessness does it betray an acquired language. He had never been abroad until he became an interpreter and he learned to speak his foreign languages by picking up the best voices over the radio, and by listening carefully to such people as Sir Austen Chamberlain or Briand ("a voice like a 'cello"). These are the only "natural fibres" in what, he insists, was originally an entirely "synthetic product": languages learned at school. In appearance he is a big, well-proportioned man who carries his 200 lbs. with an easy swing; in his youth he rowed for his university, walking, swimming and dancing are his hobbies still, only recently he won a tango contest, with his sculptress wife. The round full face of his big square head is hardly handsome, but it has a winning freshness and openness, with very blue eyes underneath straw eyebrows and thinning fair hair combed back from a high and pleasantly freckled forehead, altogether a very manly face. Especially when he looks up over spectacles which have somewhat slid down from his plumpish nose, his likeness to Winston Churchill is startling, it would only need a cigar replacing his own favourite pipe. Dr. Schmidt now advises German industries on foreign relations, lectures a great deal—among others on the technique of international conferences at the Speyer Academy which trains the new Foreign Office staff. He turned down a princely offer to become Chief Interpreter to the International Ruhr Authority: "After years of speaking other people's texts I find a need to express my own ideas in my own words."

An afternoon with Paul Schmidt is a busman's holiday to a journalist. (When *Time* interviewed him they brought two stenographers along working in shifts for six hours). Inevitably one talks shop and discusses personalities. Horthy? "The last of the *grand seigneurs*." Franco? "Most affable, but very shrewd and too tough a nut for Hitler to crack, he committed himself to precisely nothing. Just as King Leopold gave nothing away in his talk with Hitler." His later experience at Nurnberg is no less interesting. It illustrates what we already know in our part of the world from Lord Hankey's book, the fateful errors in the Nurnberg trials. Schmidt remembers dozens of instances illustrating vividly how any good point that the defence would put forward was ruled out as "irrelevant," only because it was awkward for one or the other nation now acting as judges. The Krupp trial was a farce, since somewhat rectified when the Americans liberated the condemned this spring, but the Weiszaecker case compromised whatever repute these trials still had with the unbiassed world at large. His unique post enabled Schmidt to watch from a seat in the front row the full cycle of events, from the

1918 defeat through gradual recovery to an all time summit of German power, soon to crash to total defeat, the resulting chaos, the trials and errors out of which a new Germany is shaping itself. Whatever influence he can wield, he uses to warn against the most dangerous parallel of all this history-repeating-itself to pattern. In 1932 the Allies refused Chancellor Bruening—Germany's greatest man of goodwill—what a few months later it presented to Hitler's forerunner Von Papen on a silver salver. There is still some fear that Chancellor Adenauer may likewise be shipwrecked a few hundred yards outside a sure harbour. For that reason most of the best informed students of international affairs on the continent welcome the return of Churchill to Downing Street.

In Dr. Schmidt's Tegernsee guest book I noticed the name of André Francois-Poncet, the French High Commissioner in Germany. His British counterpart, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, is in a sense an old colleague of Schmidt; he accompanied Chamberlain, as Schmidt did Hitler, at those fateful encounters at Godesberg in September, 1938. Remarked my host—who, incidentally, was the man to receive (in Bismarck's old room) that Sunday morning September 3rd, 1939 the British ultimatum from Sir Nevile Henderson—"Chamberlain was a real Christian with a high sense of moral responsibility, not only towards his own country but towards humanity at large—that Christian feeling and responsibility was, alas, entirely lacking on the Nazi side." It touches a new difficulty in the technique of interpreting which did not exist before now that between freely elected democratic leaders and totalitarian dictators the same words have no longer the same meaning, "where there used to be only a difference of language there has now risen an untranslatable difference of spirit."

KEES VAN HOEK.

THE MORAL CONSERVATISM OF HAWTHORNE

CONSERVATISM in America, though so often defeated at the polls, always has held its head high among men of letters. And in some ways the most influential American writer of conservative instincts was Nathaniel Hawthorne, the "boned pirate," the master of allegory, that humorous, melancholy man obsessed with the problems of conscience. Awake equally to the terrible and the comic, he was at once an active politician and an abstracted dreamer. It was Hawthorne who restored to the American mind that doctrine of Sin which Emerson and the other Transcendentalists so studiously ignored.

Some recent writers, anxious in this turbulent age to buttress popular sovereignty by what means they can, have been eager to demonstrate that because Hawthorne was a Democrat, he must have been a democrat. He was; but so was Fenimore Cooper, who believed passionately in government by gentlemen. Theirs was a truly Tory democracy. Hawthorne disliked snobbery and commercial appetites; he wanted to be proud of America; and his very fascination with the dead past occasionally

tempted him into an uneasy expression of sympathy for the present and hope for the future. Yet few other Americans have been so congenitally conservative as Hawthorne, steeped in tradition and suspicious of alteration. His democracy was the democracy of his friend President Franklin Pierce, an intelligent, moderate, and honest gentleman of considerable talents with whom partisan historians have dealt brutally. Like Pierce, Hawthorne knew that the curse of Southern slavery could not be dispelled by punitive legislation or Northern intimidation. He detested slavery, but he understood that, its existence being contrary to the trend of economic forces and moral convictions throughout the world, with the passage of time it would pass away without interference. Fanaticism could imperil the Union, but it could not resolve social questions like this. No man ever was more justly hanged than John Brown, he declared in contempt of Emerson and Thoreau and Lowell. If his moderation had been more widely emulated, North and South, America might have kept to the path of tradition which, he knew, was the secret of English political tranquillity. Yet all this is of small importance now; it is his underlying social and moral principles that possess enduring significance. He influenced American thought profoundly by his perpetuation of the past and by his expression of the idea of sin.

The survival of a conservative spirit depends upon reverence for dead generations. The incessant movement and alteration of life in America, the absence of true family continuity, even the perishable fabric of American building, unite in tempting the United States to ignore the past. All Scott's genius was required to remind nineteenth-century Britain that any generation is only a link in an eternal chain; and the problem of persuading Americans to look backward to their ancestors was still greater. Irving, Cooper, and Hawthorne (with historians like Parkman) succeeded in waking the American imagination; they created, out of rude and fragmentary materials, a vision of the American heritage which still helps to direct the amorphous mass of the American people into a national ideal which originated among a few English-speaking folk along the Atlantic shore. Among these writers Hawthorne's work possesses the most enduring strength. In the solitude of his haunted chamber in Salem he learned how hard was the task of a romancer in a land without the mystery of antiquity; he taught himself to conjure up the ghost of old New England, and his necromancy gave to American letters a bent still discernible. Mr. Ivor Winters, in a recent book, enigmatically describes this influence as Maule's Curse, or American obscurantism. Winters does not seem to mean political obscurantism in the sense commonly understood; but it is true that Hawthorne, more than anyone else in American literature, punctured the bubble of "enlightenment" which Emerson's school was endeavouring to puff up still further. He was no idolizer of the past; he knew it to have been black and cruel, often, but for that very reason comprehension of the past ought to be a preface to any social reform. Only through scrutiny of the past can society descry the limits of human nature.

Americans, of all peoples who ever existed, cared least about their past. It is curious, Hawthorne remarks in *The Marble Faun*, that they pay for portrait busts. "The brief duration of our families, as a hereditary

household, renders it next to a certainty that the great-grandchildren will not know their father's grandfather, and that half a century hence, at farthest, the hammer of the auctioneer will thump its knock-down blow against his blockhead, sold at so much for the pound of stone." In the England of Burke veneration of one's forefathers was still a natural social impulse, and contempt for old ways an artificial novelty. But in the America of Hawthorne expectation of change was greater than expectation of continuity; and although some measure of veneration was as essential to society as it had ever been, nevertheless veneration had become the creation of artifice. It was necessary to hew out an artificial reverence, that men might look backward to their ancestors and by corollary look forward to their posterity. To this Hawthorne addressed himself.

That part of the American past which was his especial province, Puritan New England, exerted an influence in the long run substantially conservative. Though born of a stern dissent, Puritanism in America soon displayed a character more demandingly orthodox, according to its own canons, than the comparative leniency from which it had fled. In *The Scarlet Letter*, retrospectively in *The House of Seven Gables*, in many of the *Twice Told Tales* and *Mosses from an Old Manse*, that Puritan spirit is described with inimitable perspicacity: fiercely censorious, resolute, industrious, allied with free political institutions, introspective, repressive of emotion, seeking after godliness with a zeal that does not spare self-pity or even worldly ambition. The Puritan character, for all its lasting influence upon the American mind, stands poles apart from the common aspirations and impulses of modern American life. Suspicious of alteration and expansion, repressive of self, Puritanism detests the hedonistic appetites that predominate. Puritanism is moral conservatism in its most unbending form: and of all the varieties of mutiny that the modern world suffers, moral revolution is the most violent. Because of Hawthorne America has not been able to forget wholly the Puritans, either their vices or their virtues.

Yet this achievement, magnificent in a lesser man, is merely incidental to Hawthorne's chief accomplishment: impressing the idea of sin upon a nation which would like to forget it. Hawthorne was never mainly an historical romancer; his burning interest was morality. Writing such artful moral allegories as had not been produced since Bunyan, he chastened American optimism by declaring that sin, in quality and in quantity, is virtually constant; that projects of reform must begin and end with the human heart; that our real enemy is not social institutions but the devil within us; that the fanatical improver of mankind through artificial alteration is, commonly, in truth a destroyer of souls.

Belief in the dogma of original sin has been prominent in the system of every great conservative thinker—in the Christian resignation of Burke, the hard-headed pessimism of John Adams, the "Calvinistic Catholicism" of Newman, the stern vigour of J. F. Stephen. With Hawthorne the contemplation of sin is his obsession, almost his life. "True civilization," wrote Baudelaire in his journal, "does not lie in progress or steam or table-turning. It lies in the diminution of the marks of original sin." Though so radically different in mind and heart, Hawthorne and Baudelaire were close together in this view. By heroic

effort, Hawthorne suggests, men may diminish the influence of original sin in the world, but this struggle requires nearly their undivided attention. Not that Hawthorne is a true Puritan, or perhaps even a strict Christian. His novels are not tracts. He dissects the anatomy of sin with a curiosity insatiable and even cruel. In *The Scarlet Letter*, and again in *The Marble Faun*, he suggests that sin, for all its consequences, may be an enlightening influence upon certain natures: although it burns, it wakens. Perhaps our regeneration is impossible without sin's agency. "Is Sin, then—which we deem such a fearful blackness in the universe—" he makes Kenyon speculate in *The Marble Faun*—"is it, like Sorrow, merely an element of human education, through which we struggle to a higher and purer state than we could otherwise have attained? Did Adam fall that we might ultimately rise to a loftier paradise than his?"

But whatever sin effects, we must reckon with it as the greatest force which agitates society. In *The Blithedale Romance*, as in a half-dozen short stories, Hawthorne describes the catastrophe of well-intentioned humanitarianism between moral blinkers. He did not convince America of the necessity for taking sin into every social calculation. It remains merely an uncomfortable theory to men of the twentieth century, and an age that has beheld human beings consumed in the furnaces of Ausschwitz or worked to death like old horses in the Siberian arctic, still pretends that it is no more than a theological sham. Even a critic like Mr. R. C. Churchill, often astute, an inheritor of the old English Liberal tradition, writes doggedly (in his recent *Disagreements*) of "the barbarous, pre-civilised notion of Original Sin"—although a Fabian like Mr. Crossman now admits its reality. Hawthorne did not make the doctrine of sin popular, but he left a good many people uneasily mindful that it is possibly true. This is his powerful conservative achievement.

"A revolution, or anything that interrupts social order, may afford opportunities for the individual display of eminent virtues," wrote Hawthorne in his sketch *The Old Tory;* "but its effects are pernicious to general morality. Most people are so constituted that they can be virtuous only in a certain routine." This is Burke's mind, through and through. Hawthorne returns to this theme of moral conservatism throughout his works, but his most lengthy analysis of the destroying power of sinful impulse, once revolutionary moral precepts are practised, is *The Blithedale Romance*. In that novel he turned his back, with good-natured contempt, upon the idealists and radicals of Brook Farm, upon Emerson and Alcott and Ripley and Margaret Fuller and "all that knot of dreamers." For they had forgotten the sinfulness of man, and with it, the proper functions and limits of moral action. When the story is done, the fanatic reformer who is its chief character, Hollingsworth, is grimly resigned to attempting the reformation of one criminal only—himself. "The besetting sin of a philanthropist, it appears to me," Hawthorne says through the mouth of Coverdale, "is apt to be a moral obliquity. His sense of honour ceases to be the sense of other honourable men. At some point of his course—I know not exactly when or where—he is tempted to potter with the right, and can scarcely forbear persuading himself that the importance of his public ends renders it allowable to throw aside his private conscience."

Three of the short stories in *Mosses from an Old Manse* constitute Hawthorne's most terse and convincing exposition of the reality of sin: *The Hall of Fantasy*, *The Celestial Railroad*, and *Earth's Holocaust*. The last of these has a pertinence greater today than it possessed a century ago. It is the destruction of the past by innovating modern mankind, carting off to a bonfire on the Western prairie everything that dead ages venerated. Pedigrees, noble crests, badges of knighthood, and all the trappings of aristocracy are tossed in; a despairing gentleman cries, "This fire is consuming all that marked your advance from barbarism, or could have prevented your relapse thither." But purple robes and royal sceptres follow; and strong drink, and tobacco, and the weapons of war, and the gallows—and presently marriage certificates, and money, and a cry rises that deeds to property must burn, and all written constitutions. The bonfire is augmented, very soon, by millions of books, the literature of the ages. "The truth was that the human race had now reached a stage of progress so far beyond what the wisest and wittiest men of former ages had ever dreamed of that it would have been manifest absurdity to allow the earth to be any longer cumbered with their poor achievements in the literary line." To replenish the pyre the people soon drag up surplices, mitres, croziers, crosses, fonts, chalices, communion tables, pulpits—and the Bible. "Truths which the hearers trembled at were nothing but a fable of the world's infancy—so into the holocaust with Holy Writ." And now it seems that every vestige of the human past has been destroyed in this magnificent reform, and mankind may luxuriate in primitive innocence. But "a dark-complexioned personage" reassures the despairing reactionaries: "There's one thing that these wiseacres have forgotten to throw into the fire, and without which all the rest of the conflagration is just nothing at all"—the human heart. "And, unless they hit upon some method of purifying that foul cavern, forth from it will reissue all the shapes of wrong or misery—the same old shapes or worse ones—which they have taken such a vast deal of trouble to consume to ashes. I have stood by this livelong night and laughed in my sleeve at the whole business. Oh, take my word for it, it will be the old world yet!"

This was the substance of Hawthorne's resolute conviction: that moral reformation is the only real reformation; that sin will always corrupt the projects of enthusiasts who leave it out of account; that progress is a delusion, except for the infinitely slow progress of conscience. But Hawthorne, like Pierce, was broken in the whirlwind of fanaticism, Northern and Southern, which wailed onward to Sumter, and then raved triumphant from Manassas to Appomattox. "The Present, the Immediate, the Actual, has proved too potent for me," wrote Hawthorne in the last year of his life, the year of Gettysburg. "It takes away not only my scanty faculty but even my desire for imaginative composition, and leaves me sadly content to scatter a thousand peaceful fantasies upon the hurricane that is sweeping us all along with it, possibly into a Limbo where our nation and its policy may be as literally the fragments of a shattered dream as my unwritten Romance." From that hurricane-fanned conflagration of reforming enthusiasm and sinful appetite which became Civil War and Reconstruction American moral and political conservatism has not yet recovered, and perhaps never can. "Believe me, the fire will

not be allowed to settle down without the addition of fuel that will startle many people who have lent a willing hand thus far," growls the observer in *Earth's Holocaust*. Thus the New England idealists, when the war was burnt out, discovered aghast that from its ashes writhed the corruption, brutality, and baneful ignorance which were supposed to have been roasted in their integument dogma of sin.

RUSSELL KIRK.

Michigan State College.

THE MARVEL OF AN EGG