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Religious Instruction in Public Schools.

PROF. W. ARNDT, St. Louis, Mo.

The January issue of the *Review and Expositor* (Baptist) contains a paper by T. W. Patterson, of Winnipeg, Can., on the question, "Should the Schools of All the People be Used to Teach the Religion of the Majority of the People?" To state this question is, of course, equivalent to answering it. The subject is so important and the argument of Mr. Patterson so good that the readers of the THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY will be grateful for a synopsis of the article, which is herewith submitted.

There is a wide-spread demand for religious instruction in the public schools. Three views may be distinguished: 1. One is that such instruction should embrace the teachings of the Old and New Testaments. 2. The second holds that the history and literature contained in the Bible should be taught. 3. The third sees in religious instruction a course or courses in Christian ethics, in individual and social morality.

As to the first view. It is an axiom with us that man has the right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. That does not mean that religious liberty is entirely unlimited. If it conflicts with the equal rights of others or violates the common morality, it must be curtailed. For instance, when the Mormons in the name of religion attempt to practise polygamy or to induce others to practise it, the State has the right to suppress such attempts. In such a case the State interferes, not in the name of religion, but in the interest of social well-being. It is a further axiom that the primary right to educate the child belongs to the parent, and not to the Church or to the State. Education by the State is of comparatively recent origin. It constitutes an effort of parents to cooperate in the education of their children for the sake of economy and efficiency; it aims at making the coming men and women socially efficient; it endeavors to protect society

Religious Ferment in Czecho-Slovakia.

PROF. W. H. T. DAU, St. Louis, Mo.

By way of Denmark, where great interest is manifested in the rise of the new republic on the southern border of Germany, strange reports are reaching the Protestant world of a remarkable religious reassertion over against Roman Catholicism in what was formerly Bohemia and Moravia. A. Schack has given an account of this movement in *Kristeligt Dagblad* of Copenhagen (October 25, 1922). He connects his account of the reawakening in Czecho-Slovakia with the Free Church of Scotland. This body has for years been engaged in church-work on an evangelical basis in sundry Roman Catholic countries. After the close of the late war this body sent two ministers into Bohemia-Moravia with instructions to make a thorough study of the remarkable evangelical movement that had been started in those countries. The movement seemed a repristination of Bohemian history; it seemed as if John Hus had risen from the dead. From the report of one of these ministers of the Scottish Free Church the following sketch has been built up.

Twenty-seven Protestant noblemen who had espoused the cause of Hus had been executed in 1621 in the large market-place in Prague. In the same place there was recently raised an imposing monument in honor of the Czech reformer. Hus is seen standing in the midst of a group of his countrymen, whom he had roused out of sleep and fired with aspirations of freedom and a new life.

This monument exhibits to the eye present-day Bohemian thought. The Bohemians are on the point of rising from a sleep of centuries, and it is the spirit of Hus that is stirring the people. Hus is the embodiment of Czech ideals. In him the people see

realized all that is genuine and noble in their love of freedom and justice. During the celebration of the five-hundredth anniversary of his martyr death in 1915 a wave of ardent patriotism and religious fervor swept over entire Bohemia. While the war was raging, the sympathies of the Czechs were decidedly on the side of the Allies and opposed to their Austrian oppressors, and in nearly every city and country town memorials were raised for John Hus. For he was regarded, not only as a Protestant hero, but as a great national leader, who had entered the lists as champion of the ancient rights of the Bohemian people. Now that the people, as a result of the World War, have gained their political independence, they are about to free themselves also from superstition, priest rule, and spiritual death. The prayers and supplications of many Czech martyrs seem in a fair way of being answered.

There is scarcely another people that has such a vivid recollection of the profound tragedy of its former history. Again and again there are heard, both in private and in public, references to the martyr's death of John Hus, to the heroic struggle of Hussite warriors under Ziska and others, to the brief rule of their only Protestant King, George Podiebrad, to the fatal battle at the White Mountain in 1620, in consequence of which Bohemia came under the power of Austria and the papacy, to the mortal conflict with the Jesuits and the tyranny of the House of Hapsburg, which extended through three hundred years. Then there came the revolution in 1920. An end was put to Austrian despotism, the Hapsburgers were expelled, and a republic was established, with a Protestant, Professor Mazaryk, for its first president.

Five days after the revolution large crowds came out of Prague to the battlefield at the White Mountain. In the midst of their rejoicing over the freedom which they gained from one of their ancient foes, Austria, a cry was raised that they must now free themselves also from their other foe, Rome. The multitude flowed back into Prague and filled the great market-place. In the place where the twenty-seven noblemen had been executed there stood a great statue of the Virgin Mary. It had been raised at the close of the Thirty Years' War in commemoration of the victory of Austria and the papal power. In a short time the monument was razed amid the applause of the multitude, and not a trace of it remains.

After this a petition was issued by many Roman Catholic priests, demanding far-reaching reforms. The Pope was asked to

permit the use of the Czech language at services in the churches, to consent to the laymen receiving both wine and bread at Communion, to accord priests the right to marry, to give the Church a freer and more popular form of government. A great split occurred when these petitions were declined. One and a half million of Czechs quit the Roman Church. Half a million have not joined any church, and are designated *konfessionstlos* (without church affiliation). About a million of those who left the Roman Church have now organized "the Czecho-Slovak Church," which retains certain Roman Catholic beliefs and rites, but for the rest inclines more and more to Protestantism. The Scottish reporter says: "In a lengthy conversation with one of their leaders, Dr. Farsky, I learned that they had abandoned Mary-worship, that they no longer believed in transubstantiation (the change of the sacramental elements of bread and wine by the consecration of the priest during mass), that they accepted the Bible as their only book for religious instruction in the schools, and that the constitution of their Church was essentially Protestant, although their leaders had received episcopal ordination from the Serbian Orthodox Church. Nearly all their priests are married and gather large, cordially devoted congregations about them. A close and cordial relation exists between them and the new Church of the Bohemian Brethren. It is being planned to effect arrangements by which the theological students of the new Church can be trained by the Protestant theological faculty at Prague. I received the impression that the new Czecho-Slovakian Church is a Church of great possibilities."

The Scottish reporter proceeds to describe the Evangelical Church of the Bohemian Brethren, with which he came into closer contact. This Church was formed in 1919 by an amalgamation of the Hussite Reformed Church with the Lutheran Church. At present it seems full of life, and its influence is constantly growing. A peculiar trait of this Church is its great love for Scotland, for which there is a definite reason. The reporter states this reason thus: "Through our 'Fund for Aiding Students from the Continent' we have been enabled during nearly sixty years to give to a great number of the coming evangelical ministers of Bohemia their theological training at one of our colleges in Edinburgh, Glasgow, or Aberdeen. These Bohemian graduates from our schools have contributed in no small measure to create a good spiritual atmosphere amidst the difficult situation yonder. Scarcely

ever have we spent our money to a better purpose than by contributing to the Fund for Aiding Czech Students."

The pastors are overloaded with work, but they meet with energy and efficiency the difficulties which are created by the great accession of new church-members. The growth of congregations since the close of the war, and especially since the national census in February, 1921, has been simply astonishing. "We shall cite instances from several cities: In Nepomuk the number of congregation-members rose from 1 to 350, in Ciska from 0 to 600, in Konto from 0 to 700, in Kralove from 75 to 1,000, in Pilsen, the second largest city of the republic, from 500 to 8,000, while at the same time 6,000 became members of the Czecho-Slovakian Church, and 22,000 remained without church affiliation. The membership of the Roman Church in this city dropped from 90,000 to 45,000.

"Now, who are the people that thus quit the Roman Church? In Western Bohemia, where I am best acquainted, nearly every class and estate is represented among those withdrawing: university professors, jurists, magistrates, business men, artisans, military men, etc., and a multitude of great and small landholders. By thousands these people quit the papal Church, which is little respected and spiritually dead, and are earnestly seeking the light of the Gospel. Only in rare instances they have churches in which to hold their meetings, and they gather for divine services in the oddest localities: in schools, restaurants, theaters, stores, and the like, and even in these places there is not sufficient room for the multitudes that wish to take part in the divine services.

"Nor is it possible for the Protestant ministers to cope with their work. Often a congregation is not visited more than once a month by its pastor, because he has so many other places to serve. The last Sunday I spent in Bohemia I left Pilsen in an auto at 5.45 in the morning, preached at Manetin at 8, at Hvozda at 9.30, at Kralovitz at 11.30, at Kozlany at 1.30, at Cista at 3, at Plasy at 5.30, and was back at Pilsen at 7.30 in the evening, having preached to audiences that tightly packed the meeting-places. But this is actually what the two Protestant ministers of Pilsen have to do every week. It is a work that requires well-nigh superhuman strength. The most practical help that could be given them at this moment is money for a motor cycle, on which they could make the rounds among the widely scattered towns and villages.

"As a rule, the movement away from Rome has in every in-

stance been started by the influence of a single person. In Nepomuk it was the faith and earnestness of a tax-collector that gave the first impulse to the movement; in Volyne the impulse came from a miller, in Sobeslav from a manufacturer, who before the revolution had been mocked and pelted with mud when he showed himself in public, but has now the glad satisfaction of beholding about 1,200 converts. In the learned quarter in Prague it was through a visit which two ladies had made in their former home that a start was made of gathering a congregation of 300 members. At Merklin a meeting was held at which an evangelical minister was to tell the people about the life and death of Hus. At the conclusion of the meeting one of the leading men of the town came forward and said: 'If these are the principles for which Hus had to suffer death, then I am a Protestant.' He was joined by 610 persons. I visited this town and was together with these people, and I declare that there are few places in which a more warm-hearted, lively, and spiritual-minded community will be found.

"What impresses one throughout the country is the good spirit and unselfish brotherly love which one meets with among the newly converted. I was astonished when beholding the manner in which the Gospel seems to have abolished all distinctions of rank and united all classes in a true brotherhood. University professors and officers in exalted positions sat with peasants and country folk, singing from Sankey's hymnal: - 'Come to Our Savior' and 'Nearer, My God, to Thee,' which lately seem to have become favorite hymns in many congregations. When I beheld their mutual sympathy and their freedom from envy and other features which often disfigure congregational life, I had to think again and again of the statement regarding the first Pentecostal season: 'The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.' Acts 4, 32. In railroad trains religion is often the chief topic of conversation, and it is noticeable that a deep spiritual movement has pervaded the people, that the Czechs are seeking after God and in thousands of instances are finding Him and are rejoicing."

To illustrate his account, the Scottish reporter cites a number of instances. At Roudnice, where he had spoken to a crowded church, a blacksmith came forward after the sermon and "in a voice trembling with emotion told the story of his conversion, stated his reasons for leaving the Roman Catholic Church, and described what he and others were doing for Christ." The evangelical pas-

tor of the congregation asked all who had formerly belonged to the Roman Church to arise, and more than three-fourths of the congregation arose. At Volyne a lecture on Hus was delivered in a hall that could not accommodate the multitude; many listened in at the windows. The Roman Catholic priest had tried his utmost to frustrate the meeting, which lasted two hours, including a talk by the Scotchman's Czech interpreter. Still the people were loath to go home. At Lobeslaw 1,200 persons met for a Communion service in a theater. Many of the communicants had been members of the Roman Church a year ago, and on this occasion received the cup for the first time. At Hvozdnice a schoolteacher had found the Lord and become a zealous Christian. He delivered six lectures in his school on the history of Bohemia and the fight of the Bohemian forefathers for the truth. As a result 1,700 Catholics left their church with this declaration: "We quit the Roman Church, not because we mean to abandon religion, but because we wish to find Christ." These people then met at the school for 130 evenings to study religion. They summed up the result of their study in this statement: "Religion does not consist in ceremonies executed for us by a Catholic priest, but in a regenerate heart, which places itself at the service of Jesus Christ." The Catholic priest issued an order stating that henceforth Protestants must be buried in the section for suicides and criminals. The people answered this order by buying a new and beautiful burial-ground, on which they raised a monument to the men from their community who had been killed in the late war, and every Saturday afternoon — their only free time — they were busy putting a new stone fence around their cemetery. A year ago not a single Bible was to be found in the town; now there is one in every home, and it is being read. The people are a hard-working class: they rise at 3 o'clock in the morning, take the 4 o'clock train for the city, where they have their employment, and arrive at Prague at 6 o'clock. They do not return to their homes until 8 o'clock in the evening. Their Scotch visitor received the impression that they were filled with a quiet fortitude and were convinced that the evangelical faith requires a heroic Christian courage. The Scotchman was also requested to deliver a lecture at the German university at Prague on the history of the Scottish Church from the Reformation to the present time. The professor of English literature presided at the meeting. The question of merging the free church and the state church of Czecho-Slovakia into one great free church was discussed. Also

Catholic and Czech students attended the lecture. The university has 25,000 students, several thousands of whom are Russians and Serbians.

This strange account necessitates a few remarks. 1. The connection between England and Bohemia dates back to the days of Jerome, Hus's friend and successor in labor and martyrdom, who had studied in England. 2. The evangelical movement in Czecho-Slovakia seems to embody pietistic elements, and though Lutherans have identified themselves with it, it is not genuinely Lutheran, and with the Reformed taking a leading part in it, the movement will not turn out Lutheran. In the United States, particularly here at St. Louis, the Czechs and Slovaks have made approaches to, or have been approached by, the Episcopalians with a view to church union. 3. Our Lutheran brethren in Czecho-Slovakia have endeavored to obtain recognition as a religious organization from the authorities of the republic. Even President Mazaryk has been approached by them, but to no avail. Czecho-Slovakia will recognize only that church which it is decreeing for the entire country. It will not coerce any one into belonging to the Church, if he has no desire to do so, but it frowns on any church organization that means to be independent of the state and unaffiliated with the state church. Such an organization comes under the ruling of the state against anarchism! This shows what the Czecho-Slovakian cry of freedom is worth.
