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Religious Instruction in Public Schools.

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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

Confucius's Birthday Celebrated at a Modern Mission College.

REV. G. O. LILLEGARD, Hankow, China.

The writer has a vivid recollection of the first Christmas Eve he spent in China. The great Union University at Nanking, supported by several of the strongest American missionary societies, was celebrating its Christmas holidays. The festivities that evening consisted of a Chinese play given by the University students, which the missionary body attended *en masse*. After we had witnessed a few murders and other tragic scenes, we left the place alone, sick at heart and as homesick as it ever has been our fate to be in China.

Evidently the usual Reformed indifference to our church-festivals was at the root of this peculiar "Christmas spirit." But an item in one of the Hankow daily papers a short time ago leads us to think that the indifference may have extended even farther than to the externals of our church-festivals. For the birthday of Confucius was celebrated in such a whole-hearted manner by the students of Wesley College in Wuchang that one suspects they have little heart left for Jesus Christ or the true God. The report, written by a Chinese student, Mr. D. F. Senn, is as follows:—

"Wesley College Students Celebrate.—The 27th day of the 8th month (lunar year) was in the past ages as at the present time, and will undoubtedly be in time to come, observed and celebrated on account of the birthday of our great and widely known sage and philosopher, Confucius, who was born B. C. 551. Usually on this day the schools, some of the foreign firms, and a few government organizations all stop their routine work in order to show their respect to, and do honor to, the Great Man. To go by the regulations of the college and the prevailing custom in our country, the college staff has given to the students this grand and important day as a holiday, on which they are not only hoped to make the best out of it they can, but are also expected to tell the illiterates, with whom they have or have not acquaintance, that over two thousand five hundred years ago there lived in our dear country a great sage, whose virtues and precepts are worth the while being learned and put into actual practise.

"On the evening of the previous day, October 10, a celebration meeting was held in the college assembly hall; teachers, students, and some outside guests just filled up all the seats and made the gathering very lively. Prof. P. S. Li presided. The meeting was

opened by singing the 'Hymn to Confucius.' Then Scripture-reading followed—selections from the *Book of Great Learning*, a Confucian classic, were read by Prof. Hu. After this came the speech by Prof. Tuan, who, although having a sore throat and being unable to speak, yet harangued to his attentive hearers. The speaker rehearsed about the origin of the Confucian religion, and how and where it and Christianity exactly correspond in their teachings. Exclamations of approbation were continually heard.

"After all this the Wen-Ming plays made their appearance. . . . Without any dress rehearsal because of the lack of time, the performances were fairly well done and heartily enjoyed by the audience, which could find no leisure to stop laughing and hand-clapping. The meeting was closed by shouting three cheers in honor of Confucius, and the hurrah of voices broke down the house. Long live the teachings of Confucius!"

The quaint English of the writer does not make this report less tragic when one considers that it comes from one of the old, well-established mission colleges of Central China, to which this country has been looking for the light that is to lead it out of the political, intellectual, and spiritual darkness in which it gropes. And yet all too many of the mission colleges in China are of this stamp. If they do not put Confucius above Christ, they at least cater sufficiently to Chinese prejudices to make the students believe that Confucius is fully the equal of Christ and his "religion" fully as good as Christianity. What these colleges are doing, all too many missionaries are also doing; at least they are neglecting to testify against this. Even Lutherans cooperate with such unchristian "Christians" and seek to correlate their work with that of these deniers of our Lord.

What should *we* do under these circumstances? It is not enough to decry the conditions on the mission-fields and perhaps find in them a reason for not supporting foreign missions. It is not enough for us to point out the errors in the conduct of these other missionaries. We should rather work with holy zeal in every way open to us to bring the light of the pure Gospel to heathen China. We ought to rebuke those who hide the Truth of God under the bushel of their "socialized Christianity," not merely by word, but also by deed, and show them that the old Gospel is the only remedy for the evils under which the heathen suffer so much to-day. We must show our faith in the eternal Word of God by our works. As we see other missions losing themselves in the ex-

ternals of religion, — charitable deeds, union organizations, etc., — we ought to spend our whole energy in bringing the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to those who perish in the darkness of heathenism or Confucian ethics or modern evolutionistic philosophies. What a challenge to our faith and courage are not the mission-fields to-day! Are we going to shrink back from performing this duty? Or are we rather, though we be but a Gideon's band, to fight and work trusting in the almighty God and to conquer in His name? There can be only one answer for every true Lutheran.
