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PAPYROLOGY IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The interest of Czechs in the monuments of Greek literature can be traced back to the beginnings of the 16th century. At Wittenberg, Jan Blahoslav, later bishop of the Unity of the Czech Brethren, learned Greek and the members of his community translated the New Testament from the Greek. The return to Catholicism in the 17th and 18th centuries reasserted the domination of Latin studies over Greek in the now Czechoslovak states. The teaching of Greek declined until the humanistic revival which accompanied the incorporation into the Hapsburg monarchy. The most important educational reforms were enacted in 1854 and, although the Reform has been changed in details, its enactments dominated Czech high schools for more than a century. The climate of interest was a favorable one in Czechoslovakia when large quantities of papyri in Greek began to come to Europe from Egypt in the 1880s.

In 1934 the Library of the University of Prague acquired its collection of papyri from Theodor Hopfner, professor at the German University of Prague. The collection had previously belonged to Carl Wessely, and Hopfner stipulated that these papyri, which are still in the library, bear the name *Papyri Wessely Pragenses* (PWP). It was also Hopfner who began the publication of these papyri; first in 1935, the so-called "magic papyrus" in *Archiv Orientální*, and the second in 1936, "Letter from Syros to Heroneinos," in a history of the Roman Empire in Czech.

After World War II almost all the other pieces of PWP were published by Ladislav Varcl; they proved to be documents of economic character illustrating the activities of an Egyptian farm in the 3rd century A.D. The texts were subsequently printed in *SB VI* 9406-9415. Jan Merell, professor of the Theological Faculty of Prague, has not only edited papyri (e.g. "Nouveaux Fragments du Papyrus 4," *Revue Biblique* 43 [1938] 5-22), but his monograph dealing with papyri and textual criticism in the New Testament has served as an introduction to papyrology to many Czech students and scholars since its appearance in 1939.

