

public instruction claims to be judged? It will hardly be contended (especially in view of well-known facts) that the union of religion with education tends of itself to produce a lower physical or intellectual type. We may therefore concentrate our attention upon what is admittedly the chief end of education—namely, upon the moral viewpoint, upon the formation of character and the training of true men and women as we need them. And be it borne in mind that I am all along assuming that this discussion is with men who accept at least the fundamental truths and principles of the Christian faith.

The appeal to results is a favorite theme in the journalistic defence of Australasian secular systems of public instruction. So far as I am aware, however, this argument is advanced, not by way of demonstration, but as a 'retort courteous'—namely, as a challenge to certain adversaries to prove that the secularity of the systems has led to an increase of crime. To this is commonly added a statistical contention to the effect that Catholics, despite their religious system of education, show a notable relative preponderance of crime. A separate operation will be needed for the proper dissection of each of these two flagrant statistical fallacies.

1. It is no part of the duty of the friends of religious education to establish a case against the secular system, whether on the grounds of philosophy or of pedagogy or of results. On the contrary, it is the duty of the advocates of our secular system to justify, if they can, the banishment of religion from the place which it occupied from the beginning in our schools, and which it has occupied throughout Christendom from ages immemorial.

2. The great object of education is to form character, to strengthen the child to adhere to moral principle, to build up habits of virtue, or 'permanent dispositions in the will to act according to the dictates of the moral reason.' Surely it is damning our secular system with faint praise to suggest, as an argument in its favor, that it has not clearly increased the business of our criminal courts.

3. Our returns of crime are practically returns of convictions for crime. But convictions for crime are notoriously only a fraction of the country's total crime. Even on the mere issue of crime an appeal to statistics, therefore, furnishes no clear case for our system of public instruction.

4. 'Social phenomena,' says Rickaby, 'are as a rule exceedingly complex; cause and effect are hard to unravel. Statistics are excellent things, logically applied. But, logic apart, "you can prove anything by statistics."' The good or bad results of our secular system cannot well be expressed in terms of mathematics.

5. Statistics give but an imperfect statement of the crimes of a country. They afford practically no criterion of its moral condition. For the secular State (and the secular State school) takes no cognisance of sin. 'But in morals,' as Spalding remarks, 'sin is the vital matter; crime is but its legal aspect. Men begin as sinners before they end as criminals.' Every historian and moralist knows that an appalling condition of moral rottenness and degeneracy may co-exist with a low criminal calendar—an external conventionalism or aestheticism filming

'The ulcerous place;
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen.'

Conversely, a high calendar of legal crime may, in given circumstances, be perfectly compatible with remarkable moral purity and cultivated goodness. An example in point is furnished by the turbulence aroused among the clean-hearted peasantry of Ireland by the heartless evictions, the wholesale confiscations, and the crude seizures of the scanty food which, in the great famine, stood between them and the long-drawn agonies of death by starvation. Moral degeneracy and dry-rot do not necessarily, nor even commonly, tend to the dock or the prison cell or the hangman's noose—and least of all in a country like New Zealand, in which a high and well-distributed prosperity gives a wide extension and force to social conventions. The ugliest-looking sins are not necessarily the most detestable. There are, for instance, many degrading vices, and more or less fashionable and 'cultivated' abominations, which the statistician never records, but which injure society far more deeply than the beer-swiller and the vulgar brawler that figure on our criminal calendar. The moral justification of our secular system must be sought elsewhere than in statistics of crime.

We know what the Christian religion has done for the moral uplifting of the individual, the family, and society. Let the defenders of our secular system demonstrate the moral benefits which it has conferred in the same direction. This demonstration would, of course, present some of the difficulties that are inherent to estimating the causes of social phenomena generally. But there are some guiding lines which I hereby offer for the consideration of those

Christians who may wish to justify, by an appeal to moral results, the exclusion of religion from the school-life of the child:—

1. We are entitled to assume, a-priori, that wrong or evil principles of life or conduct will lead in action to bad results. And, on Christian grounds (which alone are considered here), the exclusion of religion from its prescriptive place in the formative processes of education must be presumed to be wrong and evil until the contrary is shown.

2. From the broadly calculable influence of the exclusion of religion from the life of the individual, one may roughly estimate its results upon the social life of the nation. The results of a secular system may, perhaps, be best brought home to the general reader by pushing that system to its logical issue, namely, by excluding religion and its sentiments and influences from every phase of the life of the individual. Our prisons tell the tale in part. But if this principle is a sound one, it will bear universal application. The full and final logic of the secular school is, therefore, the emptying of God and His law and His love out of the lives of all individuals that make up our State. This would mean the extinction of religion in this Dominion in one generation. In existing conditions, the exclusion of religion from our school life is fairly chargeable with its fair proportionate quota of the total evils that would be brought about by the exclusion of religion from the whole life of the individual.

3. An old proverbial saying hath it that 'nemo repente fit improbus'—nobody becomes wicked all of a sudden. Wickedness, vice, moral degeneracy, are not, so to speak, propagated explosively. 'Like virtue, they are of gradual growth.' And this is true of the nation as well as of the individual. Now, (a) our secular system has been in operation only since 1876. That is a very short period in the history of a nation. (b) We are entitled (as stated) to assume that evil principles lead to evil results. (c) Even if, owing to the complexity of the problem, we could not demonstrably connect given moral evils with our secular school system, it would not therefore follow that such evils are not chargeable to it. An internal cancer may be gnawing at the vitals of an individual long before it manifests itself to sight or touch or feeling. The same thing may happen to a nation.

4. In Christian countries there are beneficial external causes at work which long stand between a godless system of public instruction and its full results. Among these may be mentioned the following:—

- (a) The good example and refining influence of many earnest Christian teachers.
- (b) The influence of a good home life.
- (c) The comparative absence of poverty, especially in its degrading phases, and the consequent diminution of the classes of vice and crime due to this cause.
- (d) The wide and general distribution of prosperity and comfort, and the cultivation of the social 'virtues' or conventions that are ordinarily associated therewith.
- (e) Industrial and social peace.
- (f) The tremendous power of modern law.
- (g) Above all, and running through all, the restraining, refining, and elevating moral influence of Christian sentiment, which is woven into the very substance of our civilisation and social life, and which endures long after the beliefs, out of which it grew, have ceased to gain assent. *The Key to the World's Progress*, by Devas (London, 1906, pp. 18-58), furnishes some illuminating reading in this connection. It is true of Christian sentiment, as of Moore's attar-jar, that

You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still.

In *The Foundations of Belief* the Right Hon. Arthur James Balfour (pp. 87-8) compares the examples of virtue (apparently) unsupported by religion to 'parasites which live, and can only live, within the bodies of animals more highly organised than they.' 'Their spiritual life,' says he, 'is parasitic: it is sheltered by convictions which belong, not to them, but to the society of which they form a part; it is nourished by processes in which they take no share. And when those convictions decay, and those processes come to an end, the alien life which they have maintained can scarce be expected to outlast them.' 'The bearings of this observation (in Captain Cuttle's phrase) lays in the application on it' to our secular system and its results. It can claim no credit for the real soul of good that exists in our personal, domestic, and social life. These are the triumphs of Christianity and of the Christian sentiment that is in the very atmosphere of our civilisation.

5. In investigating the effects of the exclusion of religion and its moralising influences from the school lives of Christian children we are entitled, a-priori, to credit such exclusion with the evils which, in the circumstances of our country, it is, on Christian principles, calculated to produce. The complexity of the problem, arising from the variety of causes at work, makes it difficult