

times and circumstances from secular instruction; for there is no religious atmosphere, there are no religious principles, permeating the life of the school. But on what principle of psychology or of pedagogy are the moral and the intellectual faculties of the child treated as water-tight compartments? Why treat religion and secular instruction as incompatibles, as oil and water, that will not mingle, as medicines that must be swallowed at times or places far apart—and 'when taken not to be shaken?' Religion and education have been in intimate alliance for ages. Why should they, on this outer rim of the earth, not also swing on the same gate and play in the same yard?

6. The civil Government may not itself teach religion; therefore the State-aided schools (it is argued) must be emptied of religion—and therefore, again, of religious dogmas. Now, as a matter of fact, the whole secular system is founded upon religious dogmas—that is, on dogmas relating directly to religious matters. Secular and religious education alike start from the principle that education is a training for life. Upon this the secular system raises the following implied dogmas: That religion in education is inconsistent with or hostile to the true life-aim of the child; that the exclusion of religion from education promotes the true life-aim of the child; that the immemorial teaching of Christendom as to the intimate union of religion and education is a piece of heretical pravity. The practical tendency and effect of the putting of these dogmas into practice in the schools is to leave upon the child the impression that the doctrines and principles and precepts of religion have no necessary connection with the realities of life. Here we have a highly sectarian set of implied dogmas regarding religion, and tending of themselves towards indifferentism. Catholics, and many Christians besides, oppose all this on religious grounds, and upon these alone. It is ultimately a quarrel between dogma and dogma—between the new State dogmas on the one hand and the old and practically universal belief of Christendom on the other. It is for the Christian defenders of the new State dogmas to reconcile them, as best they may, with the teachings of Christian philosophy and revealed religion and the true principles of pedagogy. I shall watch the process with a friendly and curious interest.

But that is not all. The State—which may not teach religion—has done more than in effect to promulgate doctrines of religion. It has imposed these necessarily implied dogmas, by law, upon the consciences of the people. It rewards with free education the children of those whose religious beliefs permit their acceptance of its dogmas; it punishes those whose conscience does not permit such acceptance. It places these latter parents between the following disagreeable alternatives: (a) They must either smother their conscientious convictions in return for the valued boon of a free education, or (b) they must pay a double and continuing fine from which there is no practical escape—namely, a forced tax payment (with the alternatives of distraint or imprisonment) for the support of a system of public instruction of which they cannot in conscience avail themselves, and a second payment towards the cost of the religious education which they can with a safe and happy conscience accept.

I commend these considerations to the fair and thoughtful reader. They will, I trust, suffice to show that many difficulties surround the argument for the exclusion of religion from the school, when that argument is based, whether directly or indirectly, upon the non-competency of the civil Government to teach religion.

CATHOLICS AND PRISON STATISTICS

II. SOME SUDDEN AND PECULIAR 'CONVERSIONS' TO 'ROMAN CATHOLICISM'

(By the REV. CHARLES J. VENNING, S.M., Catholic Chaplain to the Wellington Prison.)

In an article under the above heading in our issue of December 24 the Rev. C. J. Venning, S.M., Catholic Chaplain to the Wellington Prison, showed how unreliable were the records as to the religion of prisoners, and gave several instances of such who described themselves as 'Roman Catholics' when they were in reality non-Catholics, and in some instances atheists. In the following contribution on the same subject Father Venning gives us a further and more detailed insight into the manner in which considerable classes of non-Catholic prisoners become 'Roman Catholics' in gaol for reasons entirely dissociated with religious convictions:

The Attorney-General (Hon. Dr. Findlay) is at present busily engaged revising the police regulations. He stated

recently that 'the machinery of the regulations must be brought up to date. The question of prison reform and criminology has engaged a good deal of his attention during the last few years. The classification of prisoners is a difficult problem.' Every thinking man knows how pressing is the need for such reform. Catholics, for instance, would like to see some reform in the present system of compiling information in regard to the religious denominations of crime for enumeration in our prison statistics. Why not see that the information therein supplied approximates at least in some degree to scientific correction, especially as, year by year, it is used for the purposes of a comparison between creed and creed? Why not require in this matter the measure of accuracy—or at least the absence of gross and positive falsehood—that, in certain contingencies, is required under legal penalty in certain other matters of our census returns? Why should not Parliament make religious misdescription by criminals and misdemeanants an indictable offence? Why should the Catholic body be charged with the delinquencies of members of other creeds or of non-creeds? If these criminals described themselves in the gaol records as 'Roman Catholics' with a view to spiritual ministrations, we would raise no objection. No Catholic chaplain would object to preach to a 'mixed congregation' in a gaol. But when these false and persistent statements are used for public information and comparison in the *Official Year Book*, we should not remain silent. The affirmations of prisoners as to their religious profession should be taken as statutory declarations in which false statements would be punishable as perjury. A few prosecutions—for which a rich abundance of evidence is ready at any time—would serve to convince the criminal fraternity of the Dominion that, in this matter at least, 'honesty is the better policy.' Why should we be saddled, as we are saddled to a considerable degree, with the crimes of the active or nominal adherents of other creeds or non-creeds?

Official prison statistics of religious denominations, as at present compiled, are utterly worthless and misleading. They furnish no reliable evidence whatever as to the religious allegiance of prisoners. Why do so many criminals practise this curious misdescription to so great an extent against Catholics? The Editor of the *New Zealand Tablet* supplies the answer in part in the *Otago Daily Times* of February 6, and in his own columns of February 11; and shows how far the mystery of criminal psychology conceals the rest from persons who are mentally and morally normal. From the same paper of a previous date I quote the following: 'We are convinced that in the graver offences that constitute "criminals" in murder, suicide, rape, indecent assault, burglary, swindling, infanticide, prenatal murder, juvenile depravity, flagrant conjugal infidelity, and in other grave infractions of the moral laws of which God takes note where the policeman and the statistician fail, the Catholics of New Zealand would gladly take their chance as against those of all other sections of the community.'

Even when (more or less qualifiedly) 'genuine' Catholics are discovered in prison it is found that (1) most of them know nothing of their religion, which cannot therefore be blamed for their plight; (2) the great majority of them are, in the matter of educational up-bringing, the products of State schools. They are in gaol, not because they are Catholics, but because they had no Catholic influence in their early lives; they had been without a Catholic home, Catholic companions, Catholic teaching, Catholic schools. It would be impossible for anyone to find a vestige of Christianity in six out of thirty men at present in the Wellington Terrace Gaol—six 'Roman Catholics,' bogus, counterfeit Catholics, who cannot even make the sign of the Cross. Eight out of thirty do not know the 'Our Father.' Three of those who do know any prayer at all know not the Catholic, but the Protestant version. Five out of the remainder declared that they were 'confirmed' by Father —. This fact will tickle the Catholic ear. A Catholic knows from his catechism that a Bishop is the ordinary minister of this Sacrament. Yet five individuals declare that Father — (mentioning the name) confirmed them. In two of the cases the priests mentioned reside in New Zealand. They would be amused to hear that the Holy See had favored them with the power to administer this Sacrament. When asked how old he was when 'confirmed,' one 'Roman Catholic' prisoner timidly ventured to reply that he was five years old! Another said he was 'confirmed' 'two or three times'! Perhaps he meant to say that he had been 'convicted' two or three times! Twenty-two out of thirty 'Roman Catholics' in Wellington Prison were, educationally, the product of State schools. Of the remaining eight, two are exceedingly doubtful. One stated that he went to a Catholic school 'for a while,' but finished at a State school. Another averred that he was five months at a Catholic school. Even these statements were not to be relied on, for in two cases I was told at first that they went to a Catholic

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