

religious education must find a place in the curriculum of the public primary school. There is a sound pedagogical reason for the inclusion of moral teaching in our syllabus and the exclusion of religious teaching. Paragraph 35, revised syllabus, reads: "The moral purpose should indeed dominate the spirit of the whole school life, and the influence of the school and its teachers upon the pupils should be such as is calculated to be a real factor in the formation of good character. . . . The experience of teachers will guide them as to the best time and manner in which to impart these lessons. It will probably be recognized that abstract moral teaching fails to excite any interest in the minds of children generally, and that it is best to enforce the principles of moral conduct by examples taken from history, biography, poetry, and fiction." The following extracts from Professor J. J. Finlay's book, "The School," are of value here. Speaking of the function of the school, he says, "We distinguish at the outset between schooling and education, because the large field of education includes every means by which the race seeks the higher purpose of existence. But the school is limited to immature beings who are only feeling their way in matters of conduct; ideals are only in process of growth; the youth's ethic is simple, his view of morals primitive; in days not far distant he would no doubt take flight—for the present he is content with the simplest fare. For the teacher also this is the wisest course. We defend this limitation of the onus of schooling from the point of view of the psychologist, for there is a subtle danger to the healthy development of children in the common attitude which brings either religious practice or ethical reflection too much into the focus of the child's attention. The writer has no desire to disparage the solicitude which the Churches and the moralists display on behalf of the young. But their error has been found in the neglect to study the child's nature. . . . Those who exercise the healthiest influence over children—those, that is, who are most respected and beloved, whether teachers or parents—often hold themselves in reserve; they refrain from probing too intimately into the recesses of the childish heart; they abstain from exhortation, and rely upon suggestion rather than upon formal instruction."

Fourthly, there is the natural reason for not teaching religious truths in the public schools—there is no available text embodying the essential and elemental truths of religious experience that would be acceptable to the whole community. If any attempt be made to teach any given religious truth the majority of the community will not support it. Some of the majority will say too much is taught, some will say not enough is taught, some will say none of it should be taught. This is true of no other subject in such a degree as it is true of religion.

Finally, there is the religious reason. The public school is best promoting the interests of true religion by training the children to live religious lives (as they are trained), the honest straightforward life, the kindly deed and thought—these are the finest religious expressions of the child.

*Result of Thirty-seven Years' Experience of the Secular System in New Zealand.*

First: Because it is secular it can with justice be made compulsory on all to avail themselves of it. The fact is of the greatest importance to the State, since it is the children of the careless and irresponsible section of parents that will grow up to be the greatest menace socially, morally, and financially if the handicap of heredity and environment is not to a great extent defeated by a sound elementary education.

Secondly: It affords to the State an absolutely free choice of teachers, a fact of tremendous value to the State not only from the educational but also from the economic standpoint.

Thirdly: It has resulted in an almost complete cessation of sectarian strife. It is not going too far to say that the child brought up in New Zealand schools is ignorant of the meaning of the phrase "sectarian strife," and only comes to know it in after-years through the instrumentality of certain Churches and certain societies. The schools are free in the sense that there are neither social nor religious tests for teachers or pupils. The doors stand open equally to the Anglican and the Baptist, to the Jew and to the Gentile, to the rich and to the poor.

Fourthly: The system affords equal opportunity for all, and has been a unifying influence in our national life. It is equitable to all religious beliefs simply because it is neutral. It favours none, but stands for religions free from political interference and politics free from religious interference.

Fifthly: The absence of religious teaching from the primary-school curriculum has not led to evil results. Morally the people of New Zealand compare more than favourably with the people of other countries. The following figures are quoted from a pamphlet written by His Honour Sir Robert Stout, K.C.M.G., Chief Justice:—

| Year. | Distinct Convicted Prisoners received into Gaol under Twenty Years of Age. | Proportion per 10,000 of Mean Population of all Ages. |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 1887  | 220                                                                        | 3.69                                                  |
| 1892  | 140                                                                        | 2.18                                                  |
| 1897  | 125                                                                        | 1.73                                                  |
| 1902  | 109                                                                        | 1.37                                                  |
| 1908  | 124                                                                        | 1.31                                                  |
| 1909  | 98                                                                         | 1.01                                                  |
| 1910  | 100                                                                        | 1.01                                                  |
| 1911  | 85                                                                         | 0.83                                                  |
| 1912  | 129                                                                        | 1.24                                                  |