

Alternatives

A CRY OF despair which issued from a recent Des Moines meeting of the Educational Council of the Iowa State Teachers' Association, over the increasing and costly maintenance of Iowa's penal institutions, contained the novel suggestion that the only remedy to save the state from its crime malady lay in the introduction of religious training in the public school. Could a civic or educational body, indirectly write an indictment of its churches and homes in a clearer language than the school teachers of Iowa have done?

What have the church people of Iowa, native and foreign born, done for good citizenship in their homes and thru their churches, their church schools and church colleges of many languages and nationalities? The presumption is that they have been more concerned with their dogmas and language differences than they have been in the application of practical religion and its relations to citizenship. What defense can the people of Iowa make for their evident failure to inculcate in the minds of their children a thoro appreciation of the religious virtues they have espoused?

Admitting all, does this state of affairs justify the suggested alternative—that they proceed to overthrow the American principle of religious freedom in Iowa? There is no evading the issue. The teachers have forced an unpleasant deduction.

Put religion in the public school and the public school is in immediate danger of becoming sectarianized. This accomplished and a joint government of church and state is not far from materialization and the church majority will again wield its influence upon the government of state and nation. If the home and the church have failed in cultivating the spiritual virtues in citizenship with the growing generation, a remedy should be found without forcing the STATE to conduct the religious training of the child.

A far preferable plan it would be to set aside one or more periods during each school week for the children to attend strictly denominational religious schools of the parents choosing.



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