

seeking to obliterate crime, we degrade the public sense. Second, we cannot forget the effect upon the executioner who administers the punishment. Can he do such a service for a price and escape serious degradation? The picture presented by the application of a very aged man to be permitted to act as executioner in the case of a convict sentenced to capital punishment the other day in Ontario, for the sake of a few dollars, is as suggestive as it is pitiable. A similar degradation occurs whenever an individual is hired to wield the lash on a culprit sentenced to the whipping-post. If either capital punishment or flogging are to be prescribed by the courts, it is a serious question whether the punishment should not be inflicted directly by an officer of the court—not by a man hired for the occasion.

There is so much, both in the subject and spirit of Mr. Burton's "Reply," in our last number, with which we are in hearty sympathy that we should gladly let it pass without further comment were it not that it seems proper to set ourselves right in a matter in regard to which we are particularly anxious not to be misunderstood, because we deem it of the very first importance. Let us premise that we are not discussing a question of theology, as such, but are merely trying to make clear our reasons for thinking that religion cannot be taught in public schools, under State control. Mr. Burton regrets that *THE WEEK* "should lend itself to the strengthening of two popular fallacies, viz., that morality and religion are separable, and that the latter is inseparable from denominational dogma." Is religion separable from morality? We answer "Yes." Though religion cannot exist without morality, it is quite conceivable that morality may exist without religion. We do not know whether we could agree upon a close definition of religion, but we may surely assume that religion cannot exist without some positive belief in the existence and attributes of a God. Hence neither an atheist nor an agnostic can be held to be, in any ordinary sense of the word, "religious." But it would be easy to point to conspicuous instances, among the living and the dead, in which both atheists and agnostics are and have been men of unimpeachable morality—practicing the precepts of "charity, honesty, patriotism and truthfulness." Nor is the distinction between the two things hard to define. Morality has to do with conduct, religion with motive. Morality pertains to action, religion to character. Morality is external, religion internal. A man who thoroughly believes that "Honesty is the best policy" may be strictly upright in his dealings, yet in his heart be the very opposite of religious, in the usual acceptance of the word.

Is religion inseparable from denominational dogma? If we take "dogma" in its

proper sense, as denoting a settled opinion or belief, and admit that religion relates to God, the answer is clear. Religion must imply some particular belief with regard to the character and attributes of God. That belief is a dogma. And, inasmuch as it is well known that no expression can be given to such a belief, by any one class of the religious, which will not be dissented from by others who claim to be equally religious, the dogma is no sooner put into words than it becomes a denominational dogma. This may be made clear by reference to Mr. Burton's last article. Striving to find a basis in religion for the morality he would have taught in the schools—and, by the way, it is noteworthy that in so doing he himself unwittingly concedes that the two things are separable—he ultimately finds that basis in a power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness along the line of love, and adds, "That power we name God, and the Christian God is Love." But let the teacher lay down that dogma in the school and teach it to the children as the essence of religion and he would quickly find himself in a cauldron of denominational controversy. "That is but one side of the truth," many would exclaim, "and hence a mischievous half-truth. God's justice, his abhorrence of sin, and so forth, are just as much attributes of his character as his love." This is but one of several reasons why religion cannot, as religious people are at present constituted, be taught in the State schools. Those who think it indispensable will have to fall back upon private—not separate—schools. Others, and probably the great majority, will content themselves with the next best thing, and try to procure teachers who know how to train the tender consciences of the child by constant reference to his sense of right and wrong, trusting to the religious teaching he receives in the home, the church, the Sunday-school, etc., to supply the foundation which he himself, assuming him in every respect competent—a large assumption—may not attempt to lay in exegetical or dogmatic teaching. But for the Government to authorize and require a public school teacher to teach "with authority" an alleged religious fact or principle is to violate the rights of every parent who does not positively accept that fact or principle.

THE NORTH-WEST QUESTION.

Mr. Dalton McCarthy has lost no time in re-introducing his North-West Bill in the Dominion House of Commons. The relations now existing between him and the Government leave little room to doubt that he will this time do his utmost to push the matter to a successful issue. The promptness and vehemence with which Mr. Devlin picked up the gauntlet which he fancied had been flung upon the floor of

Parliament, bodes ill for the tone of future discussions. And yet the Bill, on its face, simply proposes to recognize the people of the North-West as having reached the position, in point of population and intelligence, at which they should be accorded the same rights in regard to local legislation which are secured to other Provinces by the constitution. Why should they not? If any one were disposed to take the view that the people of the North-West are not yet numerous enough to be entitled to control the local legislation of so vast a territory, there might be room for argument on that point. But the contention of those who so strongly oppose the measure does not rest on this ground. The objections urged would evidently be urged no less strongly did the prairies contain ten times or twenty times the present number of settlers. The view is, evidently, that for some reason the North-West Territories and Provinces are not entitled now, and will not be entitled at any future time, to the enjoyment of the same rights in respect to the control of their educational policy which are enjoyed by all the other Provinces, except Ontario and Quebec, whose liberties are restricted by mutual agreement. One can but wonder what Mr. Devlin, Mr. Tarte, and those who think with them, would propose to do when the Territories shall have become, as we may not unreasonably hope they may become before many years, equal in population to Quebec itself, with a disparity perhaps greater than that which now exists between the mass of the settlers and those who have any special desire for the perpetuation of the French language in public documents, or the denominational system in public schools. It is evident that the time is not far distant when the idea of ruling the country from Ottawa, in respect to those local matters which are placed by the Constitution under Provincial control, would be absurd, if it is not already so.

When, two or three years since, we discussed a similar question with reference to Manitoba, we felt it necessary to do so on quite different grounds from those upon which the present discussion must be carried on. The crucial question was then one of constitutional interpretation. We were at that time utterly unable to admit that there had existed in the Red River country, prior to its absorption in the Confederation, anything in the nature of Separate Schools under legislative sanction, such as could give colour to the contention that the abolition of such schools was in violation of the rights secured to the Roman Catholic minority by the well-known provisions of the British North America Act. That contention has been finally disposed of by the highest judicial authority in the realm. No one will, we venture to say, claim that the principle underlying that decision does not apply with even greater clearness to the Territories.