

# "THE WEEK" ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

WE are all ready to acknowledge the difficulty of making religious instruction a part of the work of our public schools. But most of us are keenly alive to the necessity of doing the best that can be done for the religious education of the children of this country. It is, therefore, to say the least, disappointing when a paper, generally so admirable in tone as the *Week*, seems to cast in its lot with those who declare that all religious education in State schools is impossible. And all this is done almost without an expression of regret.

The very heading of the article to which we refer is invidious—"State Taught Religion." We can imagine cases in which State taught religion would be perfectly reasonable. Such was the system under the Hebrew commonwealth, and it would be a bold thing to say that a divinely sanctioned system was wrong. In a country in which there was practically no difference of religious opinions, there would surely be no grievance in the State supporting religious education. But we will venture to go further. In a country which is essentially Christian, it might surely be expected that an attempt should be made to bring religion into our schools, whilst all children might be excused attendance on religious instruction, if it were the wish of their parents.

All are agreed to teach morality. But few will believe that religion and morality can be divorced. It is not merely that religious sanctions are ordinarily of considerable influence, but it is difficult to understand the very existence of morality, if it is left an open question whether there is a God, or we are simply a portion of a merely material universe. To be silent on such a subject is practically to declare that it is of no importance.

But, we shall be told, we are here only at the beginning of our difficulties. Suppose that we begin with the being of God, we are at once confronted with the existence of very serious differences of opinion as regards the nature and the revelation of God. We have Roman Catholics, evangelical Protestants, Unitarians and Jews—all in considerable numbers. The Roman Catholics need not be considered, as they have separate schools, and probably would not allow their children to be taught by any but their own authorized teachers. The Jews would almost certainly be withdrawn from any kind of Christian teaching. But something might be done for the rest, who form the overwhelming majority of the children of this Province.

Now, there are two methods by which the work might be attempted. It might be agreed not merely to read the Bible—not a very useful thing to do—but to teach and learn the Bible on certain doctrinal grounds, agreed upon by the different Christian denominations of the country. As far as we know, all Christians accept the Apostles' Creed. Probably all, except Unitarians, would accept the Nicene Creed. Or some formula of doctrine like the German "Formula Concordiæ," might be drawn up, embodying the fundamental doctrines common to the various Christian bodies.

No doubt there are difficulties here: there are difficulties about everything. But they do not seem to be insuperable. Of course nothing could be taught about the orders of the ministry; but what need would there be for any such teaching? Nothing could be said about the baptism of infants—for or against it. But surely the substance of the Christian religion could be taught without introducing questions of this kind. Besides—with a con-