

RELIGIOUS TEACHING IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

A Paper read by Rev. Dr. Cochrane, of Brantford, at the Knox College Alumni Conference, Feb. 4, 1898.

The Duty of the State to Educate Children.

THE Public School as it exists in Canada and the United States is a State institution organized, supported and governed for the purpose of providing what we call a common school education, which all classes require, whatever may be their sphere in life. Its support comes from taxation levied upon every citizen no matter what his religious belief, or whether he has any such belief at all, or whether the parties have children to send to the Public schools or not. Nor is there any injustice in such compulsory taxation, for if the masses are allowed to grow up in ignorance, anarchy and vice will eventually undermine and destroy the body politic. Such being the case, the question arises, shall the Bible be used in the Public school, and, if so, to what extent? Shall it be simply a reading book, without note or comment upon the part of the teacher, or with such bare explanation of its meaning as is demanded to make its truth understood by the youngest scholar? Or shall it be read consecutively or in selected portions daily and its meaning explained, as in the case of other text-books, either by the regularly appointed teachers in school hours or by clergymen after the secular teaching of the day is ended, and under such regulations as are now in existence or others that may from time to time be framed?

If the State Teaches Religion It must Control Religion.

In countries where the population is wholly or largely Protestant, belonging to one church and attached to one creed, there is comparatively little difficulty in teaching religion and using the Bible as a regular text-book for instruction in doctrine as well as morals. Such was the case in Presbyterian Scotland half a century ago, although not so much at the present day, when other denominations have increased in numbers and influence. But the condition of affairs is radically different on the continent of America, where denominations are multiplied and the adherents of each conscientiously believe their doctrines and policy to be the best. And if it is granted that it is incumbent on the State to teach religion in the Public schools, it is equally the province of the State to control the religion of the people, determine what the true religion is, appoint and support out of State funds the clergymen, and guard against the intrusion of heresy.

But it is Not the Province of the State to Teach Religion.

This is the ground taken by those who advocate church and State connection, and certainly, if we admit the right of the State to legislate in the one case we

must lo
high mo
book,
acquain
desirabl
not see
The nu
the term
every d
church
of all d
that reli
greater,
without
and a fe
of the S
has, in
foremos
gate rel
of the U

Of th
otherwi

(1) T
the ent
but a st
because
religiou
as but
schools

(2) T
and pol
as they
there is
our Pu
some e
their p
histori