

**RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

The Christian Statesman is one of our best exchanges. It is devoted to reform movements based upon great fundamental principles. It stands for the observance of the Sabbath, the suppression of Mormonism and the use of the Bible in the public schools, among other similar matters.

In the February number it quotes an editorial paragraph from the Presbyterian of the South, in which we said: "Is it not the part of the Church rather than of the State to furnish religious training? Suppose the whole Christian Church of this country were doing all that it possibly could do to train all the people, young and old, in the vital truths of religion, there is no reason why everyone in all this land should not be reached. And if this should be done, there would be no need to turn this duty over to the State, which cannot do it half so well. The serious question for the Church to consider is, whether it will do its duty or shirk it and try to turn it over to the State."

In commenting upon this, the Statesman says: "It is distinctly and in a pre-eminent sense, the function of the Church to furnish religious training to all of her people, and to all others, older and younger, whom she may be able to reach. But the State, as a moral being, can also deal with moral matters. The responsibility of the State for the punishment of crime implies the previous obligation to furnish instruction in morality. The State is the only organization that can provide a universal system of education. . . . To allow the work of moral education to remain wholly in the hands of the Church would be to allow the most needy, from a moral point of view, to remain in a considerable degree untouched as to moral education."

We must admit that we are not quite sure as to the apparent distinction which this writer makes between religion and morality. Our point was that the State ought not to teach religion. He says that it ought to teach morality. Of course we recognize the fact that the principles of morality must be based on religion. But, in the ordinary acceptance of the terms, religion has to do with the state of the heart in relation to God, while morality is the manifestation of some of the principles of religion in the acts of the outward life. A man is often said to be a very moral man who makes no pretension of religion. He observes all the outward requirements of correct dealing with his fellow-man, and so keeps all the laws of the State and of society.

These practices are all based upon religion. But a man may be taught them by a man who is not religious and who does not teach or practice religion.

If this is what the Statesman means by teaching morality, there can certainly be no objection to the State's giving such instruction. It is entirely right for the State to teach the duty of obedience to its laws. All just laws are based upon the principles of religion, but this does not imply that, when laws are promulgated, the religion, upon whose principles they are founded, must be promulgated with them.

It is very true that if laws are to have their full value, it must be shown that their violation is sin against God. Still the law may be of great value in restraining evil, even when it is only shown that its violation is a crime against the State.

The difficulty about teaching religion in the public schools is to decide what kind of religion is to be taught. Who is to prepare the

text books? We called attention a few weeks ago to an illustration of the danger in this matter. The National Reform Association, with headquarters in Washington, is making a very strenuous effort to place the ten commandments on the walls of all the school-rooms of the country. This is a most commendable undertaking, if it were to stop with merely putting up the commandments as taken from the word of God. But this association is sending along with the commandments a series of questions and answers as to their meaning. These were prepared by a Roman Catholic priest and contain teachings which no Protestant would want instilled into the mind of his child.

It has been proposed that some system should be prepared by representatives of the various denominations, working together, so that the views upon which all agree may be collected and used. But who is to select these representatives? Because a man is a member of the Presbyterian Church is no proof in itself that he represents that Church in his views. And so with the other churches.

Another very important question to consider is who is to teach this system of religion? Religion cannot be properly taught except by a believer in that religion. We doubt very seriously whether any good will come of the teaching of religion by a man who is known not to be religious. If a man is to be a successful teacher of the Christian religion, he must be a Christian.

This would, therefore, impose a religious test upon the man who is to be a teacher, and State officials would have to pass upon his religious qualifications. This would necessitate these officials being Christians. And so the difficulties multiply.

Of course we would all like to have religion taught in the schools provided our views of religion are taught by teachers of whom we can approve. But it is impossible to do this to the satisfaction of all.

The evidence of the difficulty of adopting any satisfactory plan is shown by the fact that none has ever been devised that has proven practical and acceptable.

Several plans have been tried, but so far as we can learn they have not met with much success. One of these is what is known as the Gary plan, which derives its name from the city of Gary, Ill., where the plan originated. This plan allows the children to leave school one afternoon each week during school hours to receive any religious instruction which the church may provide. The school takes no account of attendance or instruction. Attendance and study are entirely voluntary, and the furnishing of the instruction is voluntary with the church.

Another plan is what is known as the Colorado plan. In this plan also the church furnishes the instruction; but, by an arrangement between the school and the church, the scholar is given credit on his school course for his standing in his Bible study. But this also is voluntary, and investigation has shown that where this plan has been tried, not more than 15 per cent. take advantage of the opportunities offered.

Whenever the study of religion is left entirely optional, the probability is that those who need it most will not be reached.

Until some better plan is devised than any we have ever seen or any that we can imagine, we want the schools to stick to the simple reading of the Scriptures, "without note or comment." This is the basis upon which the

great Bible societies of the world have done their inestimable work, the results of which are seen in all parts of the world.

**WHAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD NEEDS.**

That God has set up a kingdom in this world is without question. The word we use so often, "the Church," occurs but seldom in the Scriptures. Christ's own title is "the kingdom of heaven," or "the kingdom of God." This kingdom has its subjects, its ordinances and laws, its message and its purpose.

Every kingdom depends on its subjects. To it they owe loyalty and service. From them must come its support, and by them its purpose must be carried out.

These truths are axiomatic. They need no proof.

The subjects of the kingdom of God are the blood-bought souls, the redeemed out of every nation.

The ordinances and laws are contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. They are ordained of God, and are only to be changed by Him. Every law made, whether at Sinai or on the Mount, is in force until repealed by God, or fulfilled in Christ.

Its message is the offer of the gospel to all men everywhere to repent and come to God. To believe in His Son, and yield subjection to him.

Its purpose is to establish righteousness as a rule of conduct in the world.

As this kingdom is in the world, though not of it, it has a material side. The old economy recognized this. Altars must be erected, priests ordained and supported, animals procured and slain, a tabernacle first, and then a temple, must be built at great cost.

While the kingdom under the New Testament dispensation was simpler and less costly, yet the demands for means to propagate it were larger. Though holding the power of supplying his wants and those of his disciples in his hands, Jesus depended on the gifts of his little flock for the supply of his simple needs. The apostle insists that every man lay by him in store as the Lord has prospered him on the day of worship.

The objection men have to the question of money in connection with the Church has no weight in view of the teaching and practice of the King.

Money is needed and the kingdom will fail unless the people of God recognize this and supply the need.

The question occurs, how much shall be raised, and by what means?

A very much larger amount ought to be raised than is done now. As Dr. Jowett says, "The most pathetic thing about Jesus is that he is always short of money." We throw in a dime or a quarter as if that was the size of this project. The Southern Presbyterian Church does not average \$20.00 per member a year; a little over five cents a day. The unnecessary things of life, cigars, soda-water, chewing-gum, fine clothing, equipages, &c., get the dollars, the kingdom of God has to content itself with the pennies.

Is it any wonder that men of the world pass this greatest of all plans by with a sneer or a patronizing air, when we project it on the plane of the lowest?

God has very plainly told us what part we are to contribute to the promulgating of His kingdom; not less than one-tenth of all we have and make is for Him. This is the minimum. Below this we are robbing God and degrading His kingdom. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "This ye ought to have done, that