



The War That Wasn't: Religious Conflict and Compromise in the Common Schools of New York State, 1865-1900

Benjamin Justice

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An ambitious and timely look at the role of religion in New York State's early public schools.

Historians of religion and public schooling often focus on conflict and Bible Wars, pitting Catholics and Protestants against one another in palpitating narratives of the embattled development of American public schooling. The War That Wasn't tells a different story, arguing that in nineteenth-century New York State a civil system of democratic, local control led to adjustments and compromises far more than discord and bitter conflict. In the decades after the Civil War, New Yorkers from rural, one-room schools to big city districts hammered out a variety of ways to reconcile public education and religious diversity. This book recounts their stories in delightful and compelling detail. The common school system of New York State managed to keep the peace during a time of religious and ethnic pluralism, before sweeping educational reforms ended many of these compromises by the turn of the twentieth century.

Benjamin Justice is Assistant Professor of Education and History at Rutgers University.

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