

of schools established by other bodies. Under this ordinance "religious education" was compulsory. In 1854 the control of education passed to the Provincial Councils, and in 1867 the Ordinance of 1847 was repealed.

In the discussion of 1854-55 Dr. Featherston said, "Considering the difficulties with which the question of education is in all countries surrounded—the differences of opinion which in every community exist in regard to it—and remembering how completely the action of the Home Government has been paralysed by the powerful influences brought to bear against every proposal it has ventured to make on the subject, I cannot but refer with feelings of the greatest satisfaction to the Act which you have passed, without a dissentient voice, for promoting the establishment of common schools on the secular principle, a scheme of education from which we may anticipate the happiest results. For while, on the one hand, the earnest—and I have no doubt conscientious—opposition offered to the scheme by the Churches of Rome and England has had the effect of eliciting a strong and general condemnation of the denominational system to which they adhere, on the other hand the warm manner in which it has been supported by the Ministers of the other Churches and by the large majority of the settlers, as proved by the petitions laid upon your table, affords a sufficient guarantee that the Act will not be permitted to remain a dead-letter, and justifies the expectation that henceforth common schools will spring up in every district where a few families are congregated."

The abolition of the provincial system of government in 1876 prepared the way for a national system of education, and in 1877 the Act was passed that gave New Zealand its present free, secular, and compulsory system of education. Attempts have been made to alter the system that excludes sectarian strife, but without success. In 1881 a Bill was introduced that aimed at reverting to the old system of religious teaching, but the father of the national system—Sir C. C. Bowen—strongly opposed the measure and it was defeated. The agitations of 1897 and 1905 soon came to an end, for neither of them aroused any enthusiasm among the great mass of the people. The present demand is far more extreme in its sectarianism and disregard of the rights of conscience than any previous demand in New Zealand, and we feel confident the people will have none of it.

In America as religious sects began to multiply the teaching of religion was taken out of the public schools, for these reasons: (a) That no religious sect might propagate its tenets through schools maintained by the taxes of all; (b) that the birthright of liberty of conscience should not be infringed; (c) that the cause of sound learning for all should not suffer at the hands of denominationalism; (d) that society might have in its midst at least one unifying organization.

There are, however, other reasons why the State primary education in New Zealand must be secular. There is the governmental reason that accounts for the absence of the teaching of religion in our public-schools curriculum and the presence of moral teaching. The State in this connection is committed to two basic principles—(1) The public education of youth; (2) the separation of Church and State.

The public education of youth is so sacred an obligation of the State that it makes it, first, free, that none—even the poorest—shall be unable to obtain it; second, compulsory, that none—even the most careless and irresponsible—shall evade it. As a natural corollary, therefore, it follows that since all taxpayers are called upon to contribute their quota to the building and maintenance of the public school—since all are compelled to send their children to that school (or make such other provision for the education of their children as shall satisfy the State)—then the curriculum in the school must be such as will do no hurt to the national birthright of liberty of conscience in matters of religion. If religious teaching be introduced into the schools we negate the principle of separation of Church and State; on the other hand, to deny the right of existence to State schools that do not teach religion is to negate the principle of State education free and compulsory for all New Zealand youth. These two principles are basic in the present system of national education in this Dominion. To tamper with either principle spells disaster to the system.

Secondly, there is the democratic reason, for the State would suffer if it were attempted to teach religion (by whatever channel) in the public school. That school to-day is the great nursery for the propagation and growth of that oneness in society that is essential in a democracy—it would cease to be so the moment it began to teach religion. A public-school system can teach religion and survive only where there is a State religion (note, not a State Church, but a State religion) to teach. Professor John Dewey, in an article in the *Hibbert Journal* of July, 1908, states that Americans do not find it feasible or desirable to put upon the regular teachers the burden of teaching the subject that has the nature of religion. Nor does what he calls the alternative plan of parcelling out pupils among religious teachers drawn from their respective Churches and denominations meet with his approval. He protests against such a plan as likely to interfere with the infinitely significant religious work which the schools are doing in bringing together children of different nationalities, languages, and traditions and creeds; and thus promoting the social unity out of which in the end genuine religious unity must grow. The Rev. Ward Beecher endorsed this view. He said, "If in the spring you look along a level cultivated field where corn grew the previous year you will see ridges that remain. Now comes the plough to turn over the soil, and all the old hillocks go down and lie level again for the next crop. The common school is the plough that levels each generation of human life." All the children, irrespective of parentage and social inequality, have to come together and stand on a common level in the schoolhouse. The teacher does not call the roll by the parents' altitudes or the parents' creed, but by the alphabet. Their feet have to toe the same line; afterwards they may shoot their heads as high as they please.

Thirdly, there is the pedagogic reason. Religious education is undoubtedly the complement of all other education—intellectual, political, emotional, physical—but it does not follow that