
A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

Baptists and the Charity School Movement

A FEATURE of English education in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the charity school. Through the charity schools large numbers of children, for whom no other means of education existed, received some form of instruction.[1] In the early stages of the movement there was some degree of co-operation between the Church of England and Nonconformity but this tended to disappear after 1715 and Nonconformists began to establish schools of their own in reaction against the growing hostility of the established Church.[2] Such schools were not necessarily founded by a denominational body: frequently they were controlled by voluntary societies as joint-stock companies based on subscriptions from interested individuals.[3] The establishment of such schools by Nonconformists had been facilitated by two judicial decisions made at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Until that time all teachers were required to be licensed by a bishop, and Nonconformists could be so licensed, providing they were prepared to assent to most of the Thirty Nine Articles. In 1700 it was ruled that the bishops had jurisdiction only over teachers in grammar schools, and in 1701 it was declared that no licence at all was required for teaching in elementary schools, that is, non-grammar schools which taught only reading and writing.[4]

Although the majority of Nonconformist charity schools were established after 1715, there were some in existence before that date. The first had been founded in London as early as 1687, in an attempt to counteract the influence of a free school founded by one Poulton (or Pultney), a Jesuit priest.[5] In 1712 another charity school was opened by Nonconformists in Shakespeare's Walk, Shadwell, London, and met in what were then the premises of a local Baptist church.[6] It would appear that the pupils of this school attended, as one of their three obligatory Sunday church services, the evening service of that Baptist church.[7]

This practice cannot be interpreted as meaning that Baptists played a major, or any, part in the management of the school. Indeed, the converse was true; the attendance at evening service was merely an acknowledgement that the school's premises were also occupied by a Baptist church. Baptists were, in fact, of the opinion that the existing Nonconformist charity schools were under undue Presbyterian influence and were particularly anxious because children attending them were taught the Presbyterian Catechism in which the Article on Baptism (number 95) did not agree with the Baptist standpoint.[8] Benjamin Stinton, a leading London Baptist, pioneered a move to found a Nonconformist school which would not be so dominated by the Presbyterians, a move which came to fruition after the death of

Queen Anne in 1714. Stinton approached two other Baptist ministers, Edward Wallin and Richard Parkes, and three Congregationalist ministers, Isaac Mauduit, John Killinghall and John Sladen, who readily gave their support to the venture, with the result that the foundation of the new charity school was speedily accomplished.[9]

The first rules of the new school (known at first as the Horsley Down Charity School and later as the Maze Pond School) were fully recorded by the Baptist historian, Thomas Crosby, because he considered that they were important for Baptists in three ways: in the foundation of the school Baptists had played a leading part; in its management they had a significant role; in its teaching of religion there was to be no denominational bias.[10] The first of these points has already been noted; as far as the second is concerned, the rules laid down that the school was to have twelve managers, six Baptists and six non-Baptist Dissenters,[11] and in the third case the religious instruction given to the pupils was not to include the 95th Article of the Presbyterian Catechism (all other Articles were permitted).[12]

The rules give us some information concerning the general life of the school. Forty boys were to be admitted and were to be taught by one Master (the first of whom was Robert Morgan, a Baptist) who was to receive an annual salary of £35.[13] Boys were not to be admitted until they had reached the age of 8 years and could read a chapter of the New Testament. Up to twelve boys could be sent to a schoolmistress to be taught up to the entrance standard.[14] The school hours were to be from 7 to 11 in the morning and from 1 to 5 in the afternoon, except for the four months November to February when they were to be from 8 to 11 and 1 to 4.[15] Subjects taught were reading, writing, arithmetic, the principles of the Christian religion, and the singing of the Psalms, all of which were to be in English.[16] Every Sunday the boys were to attend the weekly lecture given in aid of the school[17] and one of the duties of the parents was to see that their sons attended some Nonconformist church for two services prior to their attending the lecture.[18]

The Horsley Down School was active throughout the remainder of the century. In 1715 it increased the number of boys admitted from forty to fifty, a figure which remained unaltered throughout the period. We have extant two accounts of the school, published in 1781 and 1796 respectively, which provide us with information as to its later history. In fact, very little change had taken place in 1781: the curriculum was that of 1714 except that there had been added public readings from Fox's *Martyrology*:[19] the salary of the Master had been increased to £52 10s. per annum:[20] the admission age of pupils had been raised from 8 years to 9 years, whilst the number who could be prepared for admission was reduced from twelve to six,[21] and a leaving age for pupils of the school was stipulated—14 years.[22] In 1785, ten girls were admitted to the school, and this number was increased to twenty in 1788 and thirty in 1793.[23] These girls followed a curriculum similar to that for the boys and were intended to enter domestic

employment on leaving school.[24] The only other changes made in the life of the school were that in 1790 it moved to new premises in Maze Pond, Southwark, and by 1796 a Mistress had been appointed at an annual salary of 30 guineas (the Master's salary was the same as in 1781).[25] According to the 1796 *Account*, the school had in its eighty-two years of existence catered for 1,113 children, of whom 77 were then in attendance (49 boys, 28 girls), 452 boys had been apprenticed and 584 otherwise provided for on leaving.[26]

The general life and structure of the Horsley Down School do not distinguish it in any noticeable manner from other charity schools.[27] Its importance is to be seen in other directions: it was a combined effort by the major Nonconformist denominations and, as such, is a rare example of such co-operation;[28] it was a venture in which Baptists took a leading part and exercised considerable say in its running; and it was unusual in its prohibition of any distinctive sectarian religious teaching. This last point was due to Baptist initiative and insistence, and its real importance lay in the adoption of that attitude by the British and Foreign School Society when founded early in the nineteenth century, and then by Nonconformists in general in the struggles over the 1870 and 1902 Education Acts.[29] That such a point of view was accepted by the legislators not only in 1870 and 1902 but also in 1944 is perhaps a tribute to the pioneering of some Baptists in 1714.

The argument that there was a "Charity School Movement" has not been universally accepted: Mrs. Joan Simon argues persuasively that in Leicestershire, at any rate, those schools with which the S.P.C.K. claimed some connection were not all charity schools, even though they were so called.[30] But whatever the merits of this argument, it should be noted that there were some Nonconformist schools established in the eighteenth century for the education of children of poor parents which were maintained, either fully or in part, by charities expressly provided by individuals for that purpose. Thirty-five such schools have been traced[31] but of these only one has any specific Baptist foundation. This was the school at North Collingham, Newark, Nottinghamshire.

William Hart (d. 1699), a leading member of the Baptist church at North Collingham, provided in his will for the endowment of a school for the children of the village. Mary Hart, his widow, who died in 1718, increased the endowment by the addition of lands at Bicker (in Lincolnshire) and Collingham, the rents and profits from which were to be applied to the school. Children were to be taught to read and write and to receive "instruction in the true principles of the Christian religion" and the schoolmaster was to be one who had "been baptised by being buried into the water after his actual profession of his faith" and to be in full communion with a Baptist church. The master was not to receive any payment from parents of his pupils: two-thirds of the rents and profits from the lands were to be paid to him and the remaining one-third to be used for the purchase of books and fuel. If,

because of persecution, the school was forced to close, the rents and profits were to be applied for the relief of the schoolmaster and Baptist ministers but, once the persecution had ceased, the school was to be re-opened. Permission was also granted to appoint a schoolmistress if necessary. The charity was continued by new deeds of conveyance in 1768 and 1796 with no substantial amendment to its terms.[32]

Although the school continued well into the nineteenth century we have little information concerning its fortunes. As far as the eighteenth century is concerned, the only extant material is a receipt, dated 1st July 1777, for £2 3s. 2d. for the purchase of books for the school.[33] Attendance was not restricted to children of Baptist parents and the number of pupils does not seem to have been much more than twenty at any one time. Thus, in 1743, there were twenty pupils, ten of whom were of Anglican parentage,[34] and in 1829 when the Charity Commissioners reported on the school there were twenty-three pupils, all of whom were boys.[35]

In addition to the Hart Charity, details have been found of seven other bequests made by Baptists in the eighteenth century for the education of poor children. Unlike the Hart bequest, however, these seven make no specific Baptist conditions. The first of these is Hollis's Charities, founded by Thomas Hollis, Jnr., who in 1726 sold some South Sea Stock bequeathed him by his father.[36] The proceeds of the sale (£1,500) and a further £610 were spent in purchasing Whirlow Hall, Sheffield, which was transferred to trustees who were to use the rents and profits therefrom for various purposes, including the following:

(a) A payment of £16 per annum to a schoolmaster and schoolmistress for teaching fifty children of poor artificers and tradesmen in and about Sheffield, the boys to be taught to read and the girls to read, sew and knit.
(b) A payment of £10 per annum to a schoolmaster or mistress for teaching poor children in and about Rotherham to read, and a payment of £5 per annum to a master to teach them to write, the master to supply his own pens, ink, and paper.
(c) A payment of £10 per annum to a Nonconformist minister in Doncaster, part of which was to be used for teaching children to read.

The benefactions to the Sheffield school were increased in 1732 by Thomas Hollis, son of the Thomas Hollis above. The buildings in Sheffield were known as Hollis's Hospital in New Hall Street and comprised almshouses and a schoolroom with accommodation for the master and mistress. At one time the school was attended by as many as sixty pupils, boys and girls, but by the time of the Charity Commissioners' Report (1828) attendance had declined to fifteen boys. The school was open to children of all denominations.[37]

In 1718 Sarah Thayer, of Dalston, Hackney, bequeathed £200 for the provision of a school in Stow-on-the-Wold. A schoolmistress was to

teach poor female children who had either been born, or were living, in Stow to read and learn the "Assemblies" (that is, Presbyterian) catechism by heart. There is no indication as to whether this lady was a Baptist, nor is there any indication as to whether the children had to omit the offensive (to Baptists) 95th Article of the catechism. However, we do know that the bequest was increased by £100 by Joseph Moore, who was a Baptist, and who stipulated that the interest from this money was to be used by "the religious society or meeting" at Stow as the members thought fit. One of the trustees was Benjamin Beddome, Baptist minister at Bourton-on-the-Water, and it was decided that the money should be used towards the school's upkeep.[38] We have no indication of the school's fortunes.

The next Baptist charity for educational purposes which has been discovered is that of Elizabeth Seward who, in 1753, left the proceeds from £400 South Sea Stock to Jacob Moore and every Particular Baptist minister of the Baptist church in Bengeworth, Worcestershire, for teaching poor children to read in schools at Badsey, near Evesham, Evesham itself (two schools), and in Bengeworth. By the time of the Charity Commissioners' Report in 1830, there was only one school open at Evesham and one in Bengeworth, where the mistress was appointed by the Baptist minister.[39] No other details are known of the schools and no mention is made of them in the Worcester diocesan returns for the period from 1782 to 1806, although the presence of Baptists in Badsey, Bengeworth, and Evesham is noted.[40]

By his will of 1769, Robert Houlton left £60, the interest on which was to be used to teach poor children in Grittleton, Wiltshire, to read. Unfortunately no person was found to undertake this task.[41]

Jeffrey Whitaker left, by his will dated 6th February 1775, a sum of money to the Baptist minister at Bratton, Wiltshire, of which the interest on £50 was to be used for teaching the poor children in Bratton to read and write. The number of children aided in this way varied from one to four, largely because the terms of the will were misunderstood and only £1 15s. was spent each year instead of the full amount of interest.[42]

Mary Marlowe, who died in December 1778, provided in her will for the disbursement of sums of money totalling £6,900. Some of this was to be given to Particular Baptist ministers in London, Horsley (Gloucestershire), Bromsgrove, Conwill Cais (Carmarthenshire) and Caerleon, whilst some was to be used for educational purposes. Thus £200 was left either to the deacons and minister of the Nonconformist church or to the rector and churchwarden of the parish church of Dilwyn, the interest on which was to be used for educating the poor children of the parish. A sum of £300 was left on the same terms for the education of the poor children of Leominster and a further £200 was left to the Particular Baptists at Weston-under-Penyard for the purchase of Bibles, printed in English, to be distributed to the poor.

Unfortunately the lady's affairs were, to use the Commissioners' phrase, "found to be in a very deranged state" and had to be sorted

out in Chancery with the result that only £2 1s. 8d. was available annually for teaching eight or nine children in Leominster to read and write. Reading was taught at the Baptist Sunday School and writing in a private school where the pupils went for one hour per day.[43]

The last Baptist bequest for the education of the poor which has been found in the eighteenth century is that of John Haydon who, in 1781, left a sum of money to be used by the Particular Baptist minister at Westmancote, Bredon, Worcestershire, to teach, free of charge, fifteen poor children (boys and girls) of any parish, and of any denomination, reading, writing, arithmetic, and the principles of the Christian religion. Again we have no details of this school and, as with the other Worcestershire schools, there is no record of it in the diocesan returns although the existence of "some" Baptists is acknowledged at Bredon.[44]

As can be seen, these Baptist endeavours in the education of the poor had mixed fortunes but they serve to illustrate that there was a small number of Baptists sufficiently concerned to provide some funds for the education of children of poor parents although, in the general context of such provision in the eighteenth century, this Baptist contribution is woefully small.

NOTES

This article is largely based on the author's unpublished Ph.D. thesis, "The Early Separatists, the Baptists, and Education 1580-1780 (with special reference to the Education of the Clergy)" (University of Leeds, 1976).

[1] M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement* (1938), p. 3.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

[4] J. E. G. De Montmorency, *State Intervention in English Education* (1902), p. 179; W. T. Whitley, *The Contribution of Nonconformity to Education until the Victorian Era* (1915), p. 2; J. Lawson and H. Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (1973), p. 191.

[5] M. G. Jones, p. 131; [Anon.], "Some forgotten London Benefactors", in *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, vol. X (1927-9), p. 73; M. A. Bourne, "Shakespeare's Walk Protestant Dissenters' Charity School", in *Educational Record of the British and Foreign School Society* (1902), p. 7.

[6] M. A. Bourne, p. 9; W. T. Whitley, *Baptists of London* (1928), p. 125.

[7] M. A. Bourne, p. 11.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 10; T. Crosby, *History of the English Baptists* (1738), vol. IV, p. 115.

[9] J. Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists* (1811), vol. III, p. 117; A *Brief Account of the Charity School at Horsly-Down, Southwark* (1781), p. 3.

[10] T. Crosby, vol. IV, p. 116.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 117 (General Rules, No. I).

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 118 (General Rules, No. V).

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 120 (Rules for the Master, No. II).

[16] *Ibid.*, (Rules for the Master, No. III).

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 121 (Rules for the Master, No. VII).

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 122 (Rules for Parents, No. V).

[19] *A Brief Account of the Charity School at Horsly-Down* (1781), p. 4.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[23] *A Brief Account of the Protestant Dissenters Charity School, Instituted at Horsley Down, MDCCXIV* (1796), p. 3.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[27] M. G. Jones, pp. 74-84; M. A. Bourne, pp. 10-11.
[28] M. G. Jones, p. 133.
[29] For which see the author's unpublished M.A. thesis (University of London, 1967), *Nonconformity and Education in England and Wales 1870-1902.*
[30] J. Simon, "Was there a Charity School Movement?" in B. Simon (ed.), *Essays in Leicestershire Educational History 1540-1940* (1968), pp. 54-100.
[31] M. G. Jones, pp. 353-363: these do not include the Horsley Down School.
[32] Will of Mary Hart, *Collingham Charity School and Scholarships*, Nottinghamshire Record Office, 9/109; *Reports of the Commissioners for Charities* (1819-32), vol. 21, pp. 424-6; "The Baptist Churches at Collingham and Newark" in *The East Midland Baptist Magazine*, vol. XII, no. 1 (1902), pp. 3-4.
[33] Nottinghamshire Record Office, 9/117.
[34] *Archbishop Herring's Visitation Returns 1743* (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1929), vol. IV, pp. 33-4.
[35] *Reports of the Commissioners for Charities, loc. cit.*
[36] Cf. A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (1947), pp. 138, 144.
[37] *Reports of the Commissioners for Charities*, vol. 19 (1828), pp. 586-591.
[38] *Ibid.*, vol. 21 (1829), pp. 182-3.
[39] *Ibid.*, vol. 24 (1830), pp. 514-5.
[40] M. Ransome (ed.), *The State of the Bishopric of Worcester 1782-1808* (Worcestershire Historical Society Publications, vol. 6, 1968), pp. 72, 73, 76.
[41] *Reports of the Commissioners for Charities*, vol. 28 (1834), pp. 328-9.
[42] *Ibid.*, vol. 27 (1833), pp. 784-5.
[43] *Ibid.*, vol. 32, pt. 2 (1837), pp. 234-5.
[44] *Ibid.*, vol. 23, (1830), p. 603; M. Ransome, p. 85.

HARRY FOREMAN.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Gordon A. Catherall, M.A., B.D., Ph.D., Minister, Hamlet Baptist Church, Liverpool.

Leonard G. Champion, B.A., B.D., D.Th., Formerly Principal, Bristol Baptist College.

Harry Foreman, M.A.(Ed.), B.D., B.A., Ph.D., Tutor in Charge, Oakengates Outpost, Wolverhampton Teachers' College for Day Students.

E. Bruce Hardy, M.A., B.D., Minister, Findon Valley Baptist Church, Worthing.

Barrie R. White, M.A., D.Phil., Principal, Regent's Park College, Oxford.

Reviews: J. H. Y. Briggs, K. W. Clements, E. A. Payne, Adrian Thatcher.