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## The Schools of the Baptist Irish Society\*

THE Baptist Irish Society was formed in 1814 with three principal objects, to employ itinerant evangelists, to establish schools and to engage in the distribution of Bibles and tracts. It is the second of these objects, the establishment of schools, with which this article is concerned but in its day this whole Irish enterprise was one which enlisted enthusiasm and support in the churches.<sup>1</sup> They were kept informed of the society's achievements and its setbacks by a publicity organ, the *Irish Chronicle*,<sup>2</sup> by the annual reports which incorporated lengthy extracts from the reports of the society's agents in Ireland, and by deputation visits to the churches. Some indication of the breadth and generosity of the response which these aroused may be found in the subscription lists<sup>3</sup> and the response to special appeals which came during times of severe economic stress in Ireland.<sup>4</sup> This kind of giving, in its turn, has to be understood in terms of the interest, the compassion, the evangelistic concern and the intercession which lay behind it. The society was one of the agencies through which were flowing the new energies released with the advent of the Baptist Missionary Society. Significantly also it was one of the unitive forces at work within the denomination, one of a group of societies through which, as E. A. Payne has said, "the main stream of corporate denominational life flowed".<sup>5</sup>

The work of the society was handed over to Irish control in 1888 but its educational work had been concluded in 1865, the year in which the society was merged with the Home Missionary Society. The history of the schools belongs therefore to the first fifty years and in particular to the first half of that period, after which, by a change of policy, the schools programme was allowed to run down. While it was in force, however, its educational work put the Baptist Irish Society among a number of agencies which were attempting to provide at least a modicum of education for Irish children. These agencies, varying considerably in size and efficiency, came into being in the years before the Irish Board of National Education was set up in 1831, and it will help to get the size of the Baptist venture into perspective if it is related to these others.

Comparative figures are available for the year 1826 and though the Baptist society had not by that time reached its peak effort it had

\*A paper read to the first Summer School of the Baptist Historical Society, 1968.

been in existence for twelve years, long enough for this to be a fair point for assessment. The figures arrived at by the Royal Commission<sup>6</sup> were as follows:—

	<i>Schools</i>	<i>Pupils on the books</i>	
Association for Discountenancing Vice ... ..	226	12,769	
Erasmus Smith Foundation ...	113	8,882	
Kildare Place Society ...	919	58,205	
London Hibernian Society ...	618	37,507	
Baptist Irish Society ...	88	4,377	
Charter Schools ... ..	32	2,210	
Schools of other societies, etc. <sup>7</sup>	123	7,155	
	<hr/> 2,119	<hr/> 131,105	
Less schools included under two headings ... ..	392	25,093	
	<hr/> 1,727	<hr/> 106,012	
<i>Roman Catholic Schools.</i>			
Catholic Day Schools ...	352	33,529	
Nunnery Schools (Girls) ...	46	7,136	
Christian Brothers ... ..	24	5,454	
	<hr/> 422	<hr/> 46,119	
Maintained by individuals ...	322	13,686	
“Pay Schools” ... ..	9,352	394,732	
	<hr/> 11,823	<hr/> 560,549	
<i>Total</i>	<hr/> 11,823	<hr/> 560,549	

It will be evident from these figures that although in relation to the denomination's size and other commitments the Baptist contribution was a considerable one, nevertheless this must be classed as one of the smaller contributions to Irish education. What gave it significance, was the severity of the need in Ireland. The 14th report of the Commission of Inquiry which sat from 1806 to 1812 estimated that there were about 4,600 schools for “the lower orders”, attended by upwards of 200,000 children. An estimate based on modern research would place the population of Ireland in 1811 at about 6,500,000.<sup>8</sup> Allowing for the fact that the Commission's figure of 200,000 applied to “the lower orders”, not to the whole population, it would seem that something like one-thirtieth of the total population was in attendance at school. The Select Committee of the House of Commons over which Henry Brougham presided in 1816 cited comparable figures for Switzerland as one-eighth of the population, Scotland and Holland one-tenth, England one-sixteenth, Wales one-twentieth, France one-twenty-eighth.<sup>9</sup> In the absence of exact census figures we cannot attribute great precision to these proportions and comparisons but they probably represent a working approximation. They certainly

do nothing to relieve the impression that Ireland's need in this regard was profound. In the twelve years that followed the formation of the Baptist Irish Society, with it and other agencies putting forth their best efforts, the total receiving education rose from 200,000 to 560,000, a notable advance but still far short of the total. All that was being done was too little. Educationally speaking it was a famine situation and this enables us to understand why, in spite of its inadequacies, a contribution such as that of the Baptists was received with profound gratitude by those whom they helped.

The society in its annual reports did not for some time give a detailed and comprehensive break-down of its schools. The first report to do so was that of 1829. In four columns it gives the place of the school, the name of the teacher, the number of children present and the number on the roll. The schools are listed under the name of the minister in whose area of superintendency they came. The total of schools functioning in that year was eighty-two, the average number of children present was sixty and on the roll eighty-two. These figures are reasonably representative for the years 1820-32 when the society's educational work was in its stride. The highest total of pupils on the rolls in one year (1832-33) was 10,000, a figure attained in 1832-33, and the largest number of schools was just under one hundred. For the most part (though there was no rigid rule in the matter) the society's schools were located in the west and south-west, in the provinces of Connaught (counties Mayo, Galway, Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon) and Munster (counties Clare, Tipperary, Waterford, Cork, Kerry, and Limerick). In addition to the routine inspections of the schools, agents went from time to time to survey the scene as a whole and they took care to see that there was no overlapping with schools provided by other societies. If they found this happening they did not hesitate to close a school. The need was great and their resources were limited; waste was therefore intolerable.

The society's London committee early issued a *Teacher's Guide* with directions relating to "the arrangement of the school, the attendance, classes, progress of good scholars, punishments, rewards, school-house, etc."<sup>10</sup> This *Teacher's Guide*, if extant, would presumably shed interesting light on the way in which the schools were intended to be run. In its absence, however, we can turn for help to other sources, such as inspectors' reports and, not least, a statement of guiding principles first drawn up by Rev. Christopher Anderson<sup>11</sup> and set out in an appendix to the Annual Report for 1815. This said:

- "(i) The Schools to be opened should be for the sole and express purpose of teaching the inhabitants of those districts where Irish is spoken, particularly in the south and west, to read their Native Language.
- (ii) Alphabet boards, containing the letters of the Irish alphabet, in the Roman and Irish characters in parallel columns, to be used in teaching the Alphabet; and syllable boards of two and three letters to succeed these.

- (iii) The Elementary Books to proceed gradually with 'spelling and reading Lessons', each short set of Lessons advancing only by one letter, up to the longer and more difficult words. The Irish New Testament might succeed, and after this the Old, *without note or comment*, beginning with the easiest parts.
- (iv) As to the School House, no costly preparations are necessary, especially as the Teacher sent is not to be a permanent resident, and the Native Irish, who are so remarkable for hospitality and kindness, will not certainly fall behind the Highlanders, who, in a very successful attempt to teach them in their own language, have, in general, most cheerfully provided the necessary accommodation.
- (v) When a School is to be begun, all other things being ready, intimation should be given that it will be continued only for a *limited period*, not less than six, nor more than eighteen months, during which time the young and old who attend should be instructed gratis."

As to the content of what was taught this is well summed up in an allusion to one of the larger schools. It was reported: "The Society's school at Nenagh (Tipperary), is become a considerable institution. There are three hundred children in it, one hundred and forty-two of whom are females. They are taught reading, writing, and arithmetic; the Scriptures are constantly read. Upwards of thirty of the girls spin flax, and they are all taught needle-work."<sup>12</sup> Basically, then, the curriculum consisted of an introduction to the 3 Rs, with the Bible as the essential "reader". While other subjects are mentioned occasionally<sup>13</sup> their introduction clearly depended on the ability and the initiative of the teacher.

One of the itinerant ministers, Isaac M'Carthy, who regularly inspected schools, reported that on a visit to the school at Banlay he "admitted some children from the alphabet to the speller's class, and from the speller's to the repetitioners"<sup>14</sup> The "repetitioners" are elsewhere called "committers"<sup>15</sup> or "repeaters"<sup>16</sup> and the children so described were engaged in memorising the Bible, an aspect of the teaching to which we shall shortly return. A schoolmaster reporting on his own account said he had "A great number of Irish scholars . . . Arithmeticians, Writers and Readers."<sup>17</sup> Another schoolmaster, Cowan, who taught at the Palatines, near Thurles, used a different classification, viz. "primarians", "readers second class", "readers" and "figurists"<sup>18</sup> Rev. C. T. Keen analysed the number of children in the schools which he superintended in County Cork under the headings, "Alphabets", "1st part Spelling-book", "2nd part Spelling-book", "Testament Class"<sup>19</sup>

We get a slightly more detailed picture of what was taught in the following extract from a report on the Shannon Vale school:—<sup>20</sup>

“Number of Children on the Books of the SHANNON VALE SCHOOL, December 8th, 1825.

Males, 21—Females, 23—Total, 48 (*sic*, for 44)

CYPHERING				SPELLING			
Exchange	...	...	2	Meaning Strips	...	...	15
Tret and Tare	...	...	1	Polysyllables	...	...	16
Rule of Three	...	...	3	Disyllables	...	...	10
Reduction	...	...	2	Monosyllables	...	...	3
Compound Addition and Subtraction	...	...	3				—
Division, Multiplication, etc.	...	...	9			Total	44
			—				—
		Total	20				
			—				
READING				WRITING			
Bible and Testament	...	...	20	Paper	...	...	19
Education Society's Reading Book	...	...	11	Slates	...	...	25
Baptist Society's first Book and Cards	...	...	13			Total	44
			—				—
		Total	44				
			—				

Prizes or “premiums” were given for good work and to encourage habits of “regularity, cleanliness, general good conduct, and a spirit of emulation.” They might consist of books or clothing or, one of the most valued prizes, a quantity of plain writing paper.<sup>21</sup> Special encouragement was given for the much esteemed memory work, centred on the Scriptures, and remarkable feats of this were regularly reported.

While the rest of the curriculum, within its obvious limitations, was designed to give the child a beginning in education there is no doubt that here, in the emphasis on the Bible as the main reader and on the memorizing of long portions of it, we discern the evangelistic aims which were integral to the society's work as a whole. West, the society's Dublin representative, summed up the position when giving evidence before the Commissioners on Education. He said that the teachers tried to get the children to commit the Scripture to memory “without note or comment, and there to leave it and let it take its own course.”<sup>22</sup>

The judgement that a modern educationist would pass upon this approach—the reliance on memory work and the rejection of any systematic attempt to explain the book that was being memorised—is obvious enough. On the other hand, the approach needs to be set in its contemporary context and there we find not, indeed, any exoneration for the crudity of the method, but at least some reason

to qualify criticism. In the society's numerous *Sunday* schools, to which numbers of the non-Roman children came, there was no question of abstaining from the attempt to instruct the children in the meaning of the Scriptures. Plainly, the policy followed in the day schools was an attempt to meet the religious difficulty which was part of the environment. The society wanted to give its pupils a knowledge of the Bible but it knew that Roman Catholic children would be debarred from coming if anything more than the bare text of Scripture was inculcated. This fact dictated the approach in the society's day schools and the same difficulty conditioned policy in the schools of the educationally more advanced Kildare-place Society.<sup>23</sup> In fact the method did not overcome Roman Catholic criticism. According to Archbishop Murray it left the child "unaided and liable to find his way to error".<sup>24</sup> In the Roman view, of course, the child would have been even more certain to find his way to error if guided by Protestants. The latter, for their part, could not have done less with the Bible and still remained true to their convictions about its significance.

It will have been observed in the list of guiding principles that a main aim of the schools was to teach the Irish children to read in their native language. Indeed, the original idea was that Irish should be exclusively used. This emphasis on the use of the vernacular was one to which the committee attached considerable importance and was indeed one in which it seems to have occupied a pioneering role among English educational agencies at work in Ireland. Christopher Anderson urged this policy because enquiries had led him to believe that something like 2,000,000 Irish spoke their native language and that of these many would not be able to receive education in any language other than their own.<sup>25</sup> Further, it was believed that English being the only language in which Irish Catholics had heard Protestantism expounded, by association of ideas they tended to transfer to the language the hostility they felt towards the religion. (On the same analogy, of course, it could have been argued that political emotions would also inhibit any desire to read English). Another argument employed was that in Wales and Scotland the native tongue was being used with much success for educational purposes. In Wales, for example, experience suggested that twelve children could be instructed to read in the vernacular for the cost required to teach one in English because they could be taught so much more quickly.<sup>26</sup> In a situation in which funds had to be used to the fullest advantage this was a potent argument.

It is clear from his *Memorial on behalf of the Native Irish* that in formulating the vernacular policy Anderson had been influenced by the early history of the Welsh Circulating Schools inaugurated by Rev. Griffith Jones in the 18th century. It is also possible that he and other members of the London committee of the Irish Society were influenced, consciously or otherwise, by the fact that the same policy was being pursued in India by William Carey, Joshua Marshman

and William Ward. Anderson and other leaders of the Irish Society were in close touch with the work of the Baptist Missionary Society and will have known all about the methods of the Serampore trio.<sup>27</sup>

The adoption of the policy in relation to Ireland did not go unchallenged but the critics did not maintain their opposition. Anderson's *Memorial* proved to be a persuasive piece of apologetic and other influential Baptist leaders such as Ryland, Steadman and F. A. Cox gave it their firm support.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless it proved harder to implement the policy than to formulate it. Months elapsed before anyone able and willing to teach the language could be found and it is proof of the importance attached to this policy that a strongly Protestant committee should have been willing, as it was, to employ Roman Catholics as teachers in order to implement it. Even so it became necessary to modify the policy before many years had passed and in 1822 it was reported that Irish was taught "wherever it has been found to be practicable or been thought desirable". Doubtless the supply of competent teachers had something to do with the matter of practicability but in point of fact the society had also met a form of consumer resistance. As English was the language generally used in commerce, parents strongly desired that the children should be taught to read and write in it.<sup>29</sup> If there was ever any substance in the supposed antipathy to English the economic factor overcame it.

Another part of the original policy decision, also due to Christopher Anderson, was for the establishment of "circulating schools". In spite of the name, the idea, strictly speaking, was not that the school should circulate but the teacher. He would stay for a period of anything from six to eighteen months, instructing free of charge all who came, whether old or young, and then move on to another town. It was not surprising that the idea should commend itself. So far as depth was concerned, the society's aims were very modest but they wanted the benefits shared by as many as possible. With teachers at a premium the greatest use had to be made of each one and this the circulating scheme seemed to promise. It also seemed well adapted to the scattered nature of the population and as a means of taking education to the children rather than expecting them to travel long distances to their teacher.

The argument was also advanced that the scheme would be beneficial for the morale of the people; it was supposed that the knowledge that the school was not to be among them indefinitely would make them the more eager to use the opportunity while it lasted.<sup>30</sup> Further encouragement for the circulating plan came from the fact that evidence seemed to show that its worth was already proved in experience elsewhere. Allusion was made once again to Wales and to the work of Rev. Griffith Jones. Statistics for the years 1737 to 1760 were set out and they seemed to portray a success story worth emulating. Moreover, if as seemed to be the case, Jones's schools had done wonders, "they were far from being so complete or so well appointed as the circulating schools of modern times".<sup>31</sup> In



this early vein of optimism, then, the case for the circulating school was built up.

As with the vernacular policy, however, the circulating plan appears to have been modified fairly quickly to meet the realities of the situation. Although, in an apparent reference to the circulating idea, A. G. Fuller said that "for some years the plan was pursued with tolerable success"<sup>82</sup> there is not a great deal of clear evidence of the scheme in operation. We find that it was being proposed in 1830 by Rev. James Allen as the method best suited to new educational work which was proposed for the Achill and Achill-Beg islands, off the west coast of Ireland.<sup>83</sup> This may suggest that he was basing his proposal on evidence he knew, perhaps in the area which he superintended for the society. It is not possible to confirm or deny this from the evidence available but although some schools had the limited duration which one would expect with the circulating scheme, the strong impression gained from the Annual Reports is that many, perhaps most, were taught by teachers who lived in the locality. In the story of the Baptist Irish Society there is ample evidence for itinerant evangelists, not much for itinerant teachers.

It must be confessed, however, that not a great deal is known about the teachers at all. A few stand out but the majority are simply names in lists. Their appointment was sometimes, perhaps most often, left to the superintendent ministers acting on the spot, sometimes it was dealt with by the so-called "Corresponding Committee" in Dublin. West, the Dublin secretary, told the Commissioners that in making appointments "it is the good character and qualification of the man that is the only recommendation."<sup>84</sup> He did not enlarge on what he meant by "qualification". Christopher Anderson, writing shortly after the commencement of the society, said that a number of Irish readers were "under training for Schoolmasters . . ."<sup>85</sup> but unfortunately he too failed to specify what training this was. There is one reference which may shed light on the matter for an Irish magistrate who helped to support one of the schools reported that its teacher had gained a very great deal from "the instructions he received at the model school in Dublin . . ."<sup>86</sup> This could only have been the Model School run by the Kildare-place Society and it may be that the society had some understanding with the Kildare-place Society for training such of its teachers as were able and willing to go to Dublin.<sup>87</sup>

We must not, however, exaggerate the possibilities. In this period only a very small proportion of teachers in Ireland had any training. In 1883, fifty years after the National Education Board had opened its first Model School (for a three months course) "it was noted with dismay . . . that no less than 60% of grant receiving teachers were untrained."<sup>88</sup> It was therefore a somewhat vain hope when in 1839 the committee of the Baptist society spoke of raising the level of instruction in its schools, and to that end, aspired to employ "a somewhat higher class of teachers".<sup>89</sup> In 1836 the committee had

reluctantly but firmly turned down a request from one of their Irish agents to establish a Model School. They entirely concurred in the need for such an establishment but the funds would not allow it.<sup>40</sup>

The financial problem was one which constantly beset the committee. In 1822 for instance, with a deficit of more than £500 on its hands, it was necessary for the committee to refuse requests for additional schools in County Clare, some of which had come from Roman Catholic priests.<sup>41</sup> In spite of every effort it was often difficult to meet the demand for books and other classroom materials<sup>42</sup> and the committee had to refuse a plea for a grant of books towards a "loan library" simply because it had not the funds.<sup>43</sup> It seems certain that the society never established a satisfactory programme for the building of school-houses.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand it kept its teachers' stipends up to the average<sup>45</sup> a point worth mentioning in view of the fact that on this, as on certain other matters, an inaccurate and unjust picture of the society was given by a Dublin K.C. named O'Driscoll in evidence before the Commissioners in 1825 and subsequently published in the *Irish Observer* (16 April 1825).

Financial difficulties of one kind contributed to the curtailment and eventual conclusion of the schools programme. A method by which a number of non-Baptists assisted (though it was not confined to them) was what may be called "the half-and-half" scheme, first approved at the second Annual General Meeting, 1816. In an attempt to increase the number of schools the society offered to pay half a schoolmaster's salary through any person willing to co-operate by paying the other half. Such a person would be free to select the schoolmaster, the appointment being subject to the approval of the society and the school open to its inspection. Thirty-seven schools set up in 1818 were on this basis. A number of the Irish gentry who took up this method of supporting the work also fitted up school-houses on their estates.<sup>46</sup> It seems that help of this kind from non-Baptist sources began to be withdrawn in the 1830s. In noting this A. G. Fuller said, "If this has been in any degree the result of religious animosity, there is at least the satisfaction, that in no instance has the committee departed from the principles of its compact; nothing tending to denominational peculiarities having ever been introduced into any of the schools."<sup>47</sup> We have no means of confirming whether Fuller's remark was offered as speculation or explanation. He seems to have been justified in asserting that the society had not changed its approach from the time when this "half-and-half" scheme attracted outside support. If then, there was a change of attitude towards the society's work we must bear in mind the possibility that O'Driscoll's unfortunate criticisms may have had an adverse effect.

However, the falling-off in the number of schools did not begin until 1833-34 and this prompts us to ask if any other factor can have contributed to withdrawal of support. There seems little doubt that the setting up of the Irish Board of National Education in 1831 will have encouraged the idea that a new and more satisfactory attack was

to be made on the problem of education than that which had been carried out by the voluntary societies. Moreover, the setting up of the Board followed an intensive campaign by Irish Catholicism in which education had become a major battle-ground. Kingshill Moore has recorded how opposition against the Kildare-place Society began in 1819 and how, by 1824, its very existence was threatened. His view is that Daniel O'Connell, as part of his plan to engage the Roman Church with the cause of Irish nationalism, roused the clergy to an educational campaign in which the attack was focused upon the Kildare-place Society.<sup>48</sup>

Doubtless the size and influence of the Kildare-place Society, together with the fact that it used the Bible "without note or comment", made it an obvious target. However, attacks were not restricted to that society. The first report of the Commissioners on Education noted a Roman Catholic petition to the Commons in which, *inter alia*, there was stated the Roman antipathy to the reading of the Scriptures by children in ways which, it was held, could lead them into error. This could include the Kildare-place Society but the Commissioners found that it was not that society but the London Hibernian and the Baptist which were "so conducted as to excite a greater Degree of Distrust on the Part of Roman Catholic Clergy than any of the others."<sup>49</sup> The opposition to these societies did not rest only on the fact that proselytism had actually been effected by them, but on the allegation that such was their object, "that such is the tendency of their schools, and that such might be the effect of their system if it were allowed to prevail."<sup>50</sup> Hence, concluded the Commissioners, schools should be established which would be free from any suspicion of interference with children's religious principles. The grants which the Kildare-place Society had been receiving began to be scaled down from 1827 and when the Irish Board of National Education was eventually set up in 1831, it was granted, not new money, but the £30,000 hitherto granted to the Kildare-place Society and the Society for Discountenancing Vice.

Differing views may be taken regarding the sensitivity of the Commissioners to the Roman Catholic pressure and their reactions probably need to be interpreted in the whole context of the Irish political problem, especially in view of the mounting pressure of O'Connell's agitation at this time. Be that as it may, the tendency of their views, and certainly the effect of setting up the National Board would be rather to discourage than to encourage support for the Baptist society. It is not therefore difficult to account for the loss of non-Baptist support in the "half-and-half" scheme.

The society, however, had never depended on non-Baptist help so that the withdrawal of the latter does not by itself account for the conclusion of the schools programme. The fact is that the society itself changed its policy in regard to schools. The crucial period was that of the mid-thirties when the national scheme began to get into operation and, as it happened, that coincided with a change of leader-

ship in the society. It was decided in September 1837 that "in the present state of education in Ireland" the objects of the society would be "better forwarded by employing the funds expended upon our schools in the increase of Scripture readers and ministers in that country."<sup>51</sup> Thereafter the schools programme was steadily run down. During the 1840s the number of schools fell to about thirty, in the 1850s to below ten, and the last one was closed in 1865.

What this a right decision? We cannot here weigh all the considerations which may have been at work in the minds of the majority which carried through this policy change but there are figures in the Irish returns of the Registrar General<sup>52</sup> which at least raise the question of its wisdom. They are as follows:—

	Persons of 5+ able to read but not to write	Persons of 5+ able neither to read nor write.
	%	%
1841	19	53
1851	20	47
1861	20	39
1871	17	33

It would seem that long after the introduction of the Government scheme many Irish children continued to be without the rudiments of education. Perhaps the society's policy change was based on too optimistic an expectation of what the Government would accomplish. The figures seem to confirm the view which had been expressed by the committee in 1832, that "should the Government plan be carried into effect" there would still be such a need remaining "that even enlarged funds" might be usefully employed in providing schools.<sup>53</sup> Church history has examples of well-intentioned persons overstaying their period of usefulness in a particular sphere. The Irish Society, in concluding its educational policy, may have fallen into the opposite error of a too early withdrawal from a sphere in which help was still needed.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> There are some useful references to the society in E. A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History* (London, 1959) and more recently D. P. Kingdon has enlarged upon its work in a booklet entitled *Baptist Evangelism in 19th Century Ireland* (Belfast, 1965). In spite of its importance to British Baptists in the 19th century however, there are but passing allusions to it in Whitley and Underwood.

<sup>2</sup> *The Irish Chronicle* was issued with the monthly *Baptist Magazine* from January 1819, and for short periods also with the *Primitive Church Magazine* and the *General Baptist Repository*. Though it conveys a good deal of local colour the *Chronicle* does not offer much of significance which is not in the annual reports and these remain the most comprehensive source of information. The extant committee minutes cover only the period from 11 September 1832 to 16 February 1844, though there is extant also a rough minute book for committees and sub-committees from 20 February 1836 to 3 June 1846.

<sup>3</sup> In the 19th century subscription lists were often printed in great detail and anyone concerned to get the feel of Church life will find much of interest in what at first sight seem to be merely long lists of names and donations. In the present instance they also reveal support for the society coming from beyond Baptist circles, as for example, the Anglican commentator Rev. Thomas Scott (to whom William Carey and John Henry Newman owed much in their spiritual development), and the wife of the Bishop of Norwich. Some entries are not without humour, as in the case of the donations which came at intervals from the supporter who owned a "manufactory". She installed a fines box for workmen who were heard to indulge in swearing and the contents were sent to the society.

<sup>4</sup> An instance of the level of giving at such times is provided by the records of the Mint Street Baptist Church, Lincoln. On 21 February 1847 this church collected £68 for "the poor Irish" and the relative size of this may be gauged from the fact that normal collections in the church at this period were often not more than £2 per week and the minister's salary in 1851 is known to have been £120. Lincolnshire Archives Office *1 Bapt. 1*, cited in Archives Report 11 (15 March 1959-23 March 1960), Lincolnshire Archives Committee, Exchequer Gate, Lincoln.

<sup>5</sup> E. A. Payne, *ibid.* page 92.

<sup>6</sup> These figures are set out on pages 14-16 of the Second Report (16 September 1826) of the "Commission for inquiring into the nature and extent of INSTRUCTION afforded by the several Institutions in Ireland, established for the purpose of Education". The Commission was appointed in 1824.

<sup>7</sup> The agencies summarized under this heading were:— the Irish Society, the London Missionary Society, the Irish Evangelical Society, the Ladies Hibernian Society, the British and Irish Ladies Society, certain regimental schools, and gaol schools.

<sup>8</sup> See K. H. Connell, *The Population of Ireland, 1750-1845* (Oxford, 1950) pages 24-25.

<sup>9</sup> See J. W. Adamson, *English Education 1789-1902*, (Cambridge 1930) page 27.

<sup>10</sup> 2nd Annual Report, 1816, page 13 and footnote to page 12.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Anderson's "Plan for Irish Circulating Schools" was first set out in his *Memorial on behalf of the Native Irish* (London, 1815) page 64, and is cited in full in the 1st Annual Report of the Society, 1815, page 46.

<sup>12</sup> 9th Annual Report, 1823, page 11.

<sup>13</sup> There are occasional references to some instruction in history, geography and book-keeping, for older pupils just before they left. E.g. 27th Annual Report, 1841, page 27; 2nd Annual Report, 1816, page 37; 26th Annual Report, 1840, pages 17 and 21; 4th Annual Report, 1818, page 62; 7th Annual Report 1821, pages 10 and 13.

<sup>14</sup> 5th Annual Report, 1819, page 23.

<sup>16</sup> 7th Annual Report, 1821, page 10.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* page 46.

<sup>17</sup> 3rd Annual Report, 1817, page 17.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* page 44.

<sup>19</sup> 6th Annual Report, 1820, page 28.

<sup>20</sup> 12th Annual Report, 1826, page 36.

<sup>21</sup> 2nd Annual Report, 1816, page 14; 9th Annual Report, 1823, page 7.

<sup>22</sup> 1st Report of the Commissioners on Education in Ireland, 30 May 1825, page 739.

<sup>23</sup> See J. Godkin, *Education in Ireland: its history, institutions, systems, statistics and progress, from the earliest times to the present.* (London and Dublin, 1862) page 47.

<sup>24</sup> 1st Report of the Commissioners on Education in Ireland (1825), page 53.

<sup>25</sup> Anderson produced tables based on "the latest computation" but not otherwise identified, (*Memorial*, page 6) and he also used Rev. Daniel Dewar's *Observations on the Character, Customs, and Superstitions of the Irish* (London, 1812). It is interesting to observe that the 1st Report of the

Commissioners in 1825 (see notes (22) and (24)) noted estimates that those speaking Irish exclusively numbered about 500,000, while at least one million more used it except when English was essential (page 82). These figures followed a decade of fairly strenuous educational effort, most of it in English, so they tend to confirm the figures cited by Anderson.

<sup>26</sup> Anderson, *op.cit.* page 65.

<sup>27</sup> As to the deeper sources of the vernacular policy reference may be made to articles in the *Baptist Quarterly* by G. E. Smith (vol. xx. 1963-64. page 293) and M. A. Laird (vol. xxii. 1967-68. page 321). Smith argues that the Serampore educationists owed it to Moravian influence while Laird, in reply, urges that there is no need to look further afield than English Dissent itself. "... it was the Dissenting Academies which led the way during the eighteenth century to the substitution of the vernacular—i.e. English—for the traditional Latin as the teaching medium in institutions of secondary and higher education . . ." Laird's explanation would help us to understand why Baptists should have adopted the vernacular policy for their Irish schools but not why they should have been pioneers in it; one might have expected to find it already in use by existing societies.

<sup>28</sup> *Baptist Magazine*, 1817, pages 275 ff.

<sup>29</sup> 8th Annual Report, 1822, page 10.

<sup>30</sup> 1st Annual Report, 1815, page 47.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* pages 48-50.

<sup>32</sup> J. Belcher and A. G. Fuller, *The Baptist Irish Society; its Origin, History, and Prospects*, (London, 1845) page 41.

<sup>33</sup> 16th Annual Report, 1830, page 11.

<sup>34</sup> 1st Report of the Commissioners on Education in Ireland, 1825, page 53.

<sup>35</sup> Anderson, *op.cit.* page 74.

<sup>36</sup> 8th Annual Report, 1822, page 8.

<sup>37</sup> According to evidence given before the Commissioners a "considerable number" of the society's teachers had been educated by the Kildare-place Society. The number had presumably been building up in recent years but there cannot have been many in the earliest years of the society's work as the Kildare-place Society was only founded in 1811.

<sup>38</sup> J. J. Auchmuty, *Irish Education: A Historical Survey* (Dublin and London, 1937), page 147.

<sup>39</sup> 25th Annual Report, 1839, page 23.

<sup>40</sup> Minute Book of the Baptist Irish Society, 7 June 1836.

<sup>41</sup> 8th Annual Report, 1822, page 15.

<sup>42</sup> It is only possible here to illustrate the society's endeavours in providing materials. In the first year it printed 2,000 copies of a spelling-book "in the English and old Irish letter". In 1818 it printed 5,000 copies each of spelling books of a first and second class, 700 primers and "some of Carpenter's Spelling Book". In 1819 the society commissioned a Mr. M'Quig, "an Irish scholar, to prepare three spelling-books, with the words in Irish and English, in parallel columns" and in the following years the first of these was printed (2,500 copies) together with a large edition of an English spelling book. In 1828 there was printed 10,000 of the first and 8,000 of the second spelling books. The British and Foreign Bible Society gave much help in supplying a New Testament in the Erse lettering.

<sup>43</sup> Minute Book, 5 April 1842.

<sup>44</sup> In the main the society worked on the assumption that the responsibility for providing accommodation should rest with the local community whose children it was seeking to help. It is hardly surprising that a solution commonly offered was the use of one of the ordinary cabin dwellings of the people. (1st Report of the Commissioners on Education, 1825, page 740). It should be said that the use of such accommodation for school purposes was by no means uncommon. A study of the Parochial Returns for Mayo and Sligo, two counties in which the Baptists did a good deal of work, suggests that, in general, the premises they used did not compare badly with others. See 2nd Report of the Commissioners on Education, 1826, pages 1254-1280.

and 1308-1330.

<sup>46</sup> From the Minutes for 13 June 1836 it would appear that the average salary paid by the society to a male teacher was £15 p.a. The historian of the Kildare-place Society gives this same figure as the ordinary income of its teachers in the mid twenties (Kingshill Moore, *An Unwritten Chapter in the History of Education: Being the History of the Society for the Education of the Poor in Ireland, generally known as the Kildare Place Society, 1811-1831* (London, 1904, page 62). It was also the amount of the grant paid by the state to a Class 2 male teacher in the National Schools in 1841. Such grants were supposed to be augmented by local contributions but the latter were uncertain. (G. Balfour, *Educational Systems of Great Britain and Ireland*, (Oxford, 1903), page 95.

<sup>46</sup> 8th Annual Report, 1822, page 8.

<sup>47</sup> J. Belcher and A. G. Fuller, *op.cit.*, pages 49-50.

<sup>48</sup> Kingshill Moore, *op.cit.*, pages 70 ff.

<sup>49</sup> 1st Report of the Commissioners on Education, 1825, page 90.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Minute Book, 5 September 1837.

<sup>52</sup> See Connell, *op.cit.* Table 38.

<sup>53</sup> 18th Annual Report, 1832, page 21.

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