

“Disposed to Take the Charge” British Women and the Management of Female Education, 1800–37

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What I have seen of ability and advancement here induce me to wish to leave the school at Charlotte [*sic*], if possible, under coloured teachers, who could permanently take the charge, visited, however, by a small committee from Free Town, leaving the way open for an European, should one be disposed to take the charge.¹

Hannah Kilham, a Quaker from Sheffield in England, visited the Gambia in 1822–23 and Sierra Leone in 1827–1828 and 1830–32. She organized schooling for girls who had been liberated from slave ships and studied and transcribed West African languages.² Before travelling to West Africa, she had been a founder-member and manager of the Sheffield Girls’ Lancasterian School in England. Like other British women school managers, she applied the values and management practices of English schooling to the organization of colonial education. Writing in 1828, on the eve of her departure from West Africa, she thought the girls’ school she had established at Charlotte should ideally be managed by Africans. However, during her stay in West Africa she applied British cultural assumptions, and concluded that the school at Charlotte would initially require European supervision. What influenced her views? And what took her to Africa in the first place?

Hannah Kilham was one of an increasing number of British women who supervised girls’ education during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, partly because of the expansion of education for girls in England and in the British colonies and dependencies. That increased provision was, in turn, a consequence of an unprecedented rise in women’s participation in

¹Sarah Biller, *Memoir of the late Hannah Kilham, chiefly compiled from her journal and edited by her daughter in law, Sarah Biller of St Petersburg* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1837), 467.

²Alison Twells, “So Distant and Wild a Scene: Hannah Kilham’s writing from West Africa, 1822–1832,” *Women’s History Review* 4 (3): 301–18; Alison Twells, “Let us begin well at home: class, ethnicity and Christian motherhood in the writing of Hannah Kilham, 1774–1832,” in *Radical Femininity: women’s self-representation in the public sphere*, ed. Eileen Yeo (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

associated philanthropy.³ By the 1830s, middle-class women in the English Cathedral city of Chester were involved in establishing, financing, and managing a range of schools for working-class girls.⁴ These included the Blue Girls' Charity School, the Consolidated Girls' School and the Countess Grosvenors Girls' National School.⁵

Similarly in York, women were managers of the Grey Coat Charity School for Girls, the Spinning School for Girls, the York British Girls' School, and the Quaker Trinity Lane Girls' School.⁶ In Manchester, the "shock city" of the industrial revolution,⁷ women helped to establish and manage five Anglican charity schools for girls, and to manage the Cross Street and Mosely Street Unitarian charity schools. There were ladies' committees at the Ladies' Jubilee Female Charity School, the nonconformist Lancasterian Girls' School, and the Unitarian Lower Mosely Street Girls' School and women acted as lady visitors in the National Society day schools of Granby Row and St. George's, Hulme. They also contributed capital for the establishment of the Quaker school in Jacksons Row.⁸

³ Frank Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (Yale: University Press, 1998), 277.

⁴ Joyce Goodman, "Committee women: women school governors in early nineteenth century England," *History of Education Society Bulletin* 56 (1995):48-57. For the Chester girls' schools see Ann M. Kennett, *Chester Schools: a guide to the school archives with a brief history of education in the city from 1539 to 1973* (Chester: City Record Office, 1987). All records for Chester schools were consulted at Chester City Record Office.

⁵ Blue Girls' was an Anglican school founded in 1718 and affiliated to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (cf. J. Hemmingway, *History of Chester* (Chester: Fletcher, 1831); the Consolidated was founded in 1787 by the Anglicans as the Sunday and Working Schools for Girls, later amalgamated in 1821 to form the Consolidated [day] School, affiliated to the National Society, and thus committed to promote the teaching of the Anglican church; and Countess Grosvenors" was founded in 1813.

⁶ Grey Coat: founded 1705; Spinning School founded 1785 by the women of the Grey Coat Charity School for Girls; and Quaker Trinity, a day school founded 1785. For the York schools see Sheila Wright, *Friends in York: the Dynamics of Quaker Revival, 1780-1860* (Keele: Ryburn Press, 1995). British schools were affiliated to the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS), a non-denominational organization that promoted the Bible, but not doctrinal teaching.

⁷ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), 88-114.

⁸ Cross Street Charity School, founded in 1734, and Mosely Street Charity School, founded in 1820, were the precursors to the Lower Mosely Street Schools founded in 1836. The Ladies Jubilee Female Charity School, an Anglican school, was founded in 1812. The Lancasterian Girls' School was founded in 1800; the Lancasterian Society evolved into the BFSS. Granby Row and St. George's were founded in 1812 and 1832 respectively. In 1798, women, like men, lent capital to found the Quaker school in

Women's increasing financial contributions to missionary societies, ladies' educational associations, and the women's anti-slavery movement similarly encouraged the foundation of schools for girls.⁹ The major missionary societies, the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), the Wesleyan Missionary Society, and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) were established in the final decades of the eighteenth century. In India, the 1813 East India Charter Act permitted missionary activity to take place freely for the first time.¹⁰

Official accounts of missionary societies chart the activities of male missionaries but ignore the activities of missionary wives, sisters and daughters in establishing schools for girls, or refer to them only in passing.¹¹ Missionary women's activities were recorded by female associations like the Edinburgh Ladies Society for the Education of Greek Girls and the Society for the Propagation of Female Education in China, India, and the East, as well as by such voluntary education societies as the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS), whose ladies' committee supported and managed female education.¹²

Jacksons Row, in which both boys and girls were taught. The interest on the capital also paid for the running costs of the school, which was managed by men. For an account of the Manchester schools up to 1837 see Sheena Simon *A Century of City Government: Manchester 1838-1938* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1939), 212-27. All records for the Manchester Schools were consulted in the Local History Library and the Archives of the Manchester Central Reference Library.

⁹Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, passim.

¹⁰George Bartle, "The role of the BFSS in elementary education in India and the East Indies, 1813-1875," *History of Education* 23 (1) (1995): 17-33.

¹¹For instance, Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, (London: CMS, 1899) vol.1, is a history of the "great men" of the CMS. Apart from Miss Cooke, women are either omitted, as in the case of Mrs Perowne, whose husband's work at Burdwan is discussed, or mentioned in passing. Mrs Wietbrecht, for instance is described only as a "devoted wife, whose work in England in her old age is one of the happiest memories of the present generation" (314), while Miss Bird, who worked from 1824 on the Nepal border at Gorakhpur with her brother, is described as, "a weak and delicate lady, [who] laboured most devotedly by his side at Gorakhpur, teaching the women and girls, and translating books and tracts into Urdu, until her death from cholera in 1834" (199). For a re-interpretation of the contribution of missionary wives and daughters, see Tanya Fitzgerald, "Women as educators: dilemmas and challenges in early nineteenth century New Zealand," in Judith Simon et al., eds., *Voice, Vision and Identity* (Auckland, ANZHES, 1998).

¹²The Society for the Propagation of Female Education in China, India and the East, commonly known as the Female Education Society, was set up in 1834 as the first missionary society run by women for women. Margaret Donaldson "The Cultivation of the Heart and the Moulding of the Will: the Missionary Contribution

In 1821, the Ladies Committee of the BFSS financed the passage to India of Miss Cooke, the first single woman to travel to India in the cause of female education.¹³ The British women of the Ladies Society for Native Female Education (LSNFE) in Calcutta financially supported and supervised Miss Cooke in the "field." By 1824, Miss Cooke had married a local missionary and had established twenty-four schools in Calcutta and the surrounding villages, with as many as 500 pupils. Various missionary wives, Mrs Corrie, Mrs Jetter, Mrs Reichardt, and Mrs Travin, helped her at different times.¹⁴ Mrs Wilson (née Cooke) worked mainly with lower caste girls, since the large Central School for girls built at Calcutta failed to attract "respectable" girls.¹⁵

Meanwhile, in the Greek Ionian Islands, which the British occupied from 1817 to 1829, Mrs Kennedy and local "matrons" supervised the establishment of schools for girls. Mrs. Lowndes, wife of the LMS missionary, and Miss Robertson, who was financed by the Edinburgh Ladies Society for the Education of Greek Girls, established schools for girls of all classes. By 1837 there were 10 schools—at Corfu, Zante, Cephalonia, Santa Maura, Ithaca, Paxo, and Cerigo—with a total of 475 pupils.¹⁶

These middle-class women's involvement in the expansion and supervision of education for girls was one outcome of the changing British class structure and its relation to shifting patterns of investment. The rising middle-classes based their power on new forms of economic investment, rather than on land as with the aristocracy. Philanthropists adopted the economic methods of joint stock financing and parents began to provide for unmarried daughters through annuities and for married daughters through the system of marriage settlements. Income from marriage settlements,

of the Society for Promoting Female Education in China, India and the East in *Women in the Church* ed. W.J. Sheils and D. Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990). The BFSS noted that in India, Mrs Marshman (BMS, Serampore), Mrs Perowne (CMS, Burdwan), Mrs Rowe (Dighah), Mrs Carey, Cuturah), Mrs Chamberlain (Monghyr), and Mrs Penney (CMS, Calcutta) founded schools. Information on these women is omitted from the official accounts of missionary societies, and BFSS reports do not always provide their missionary society affiliation.

¹³Stock, *The Church Missionary Society*, vol.1, 199; BFSS *Annual Report (AR) 1824*, 116–17.

¹⁴BFSS *AR 1823*, 148; *1824*, 117; *1826*, 30, 97; *1827*, 35; *1828*, 98. Mrs Jetter's daughter was Mrs Greaves of the Church of England Zenana Mission Society.

¹⁵Priscilla Chapman, *Hindoo Female Education* (London: Seeley & Burnside, 1839); David Savage, "Missionaries and the development of a colonial ideology of female education in India", *Gender and History* 9 (2) (1997): 201–21.

¹⁶"Greece" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1958), 782; BFSS *AR 1826*, 39; *1827*, 36; *1828*, 24; *1829*, 38; *1831*, 49.

annuities, and pin money enabled more women to contribute in their own right to the growing number of voluntary educational and missionary societies, thus becoming eligible to stand for a committee and to take an active role in the management of a school.¹⁷

The rationales for women's management of schools could take various forms. Sarah Trimmer argued women had the skills necessary for educating the poor "because the task of early education in all families naturally devolves upon mothers."¹⁸ Women also claimed their work as managers of girls' schools allowed them to play their part in re-building society, shaping national character, and guarding the national interest.¹⁹ Catharine Cappe even hoped her writings about girls' education would help the future historian to "delineate the British character."²⁰

The Ladies Committee for the Education and Employment of the Female Poor urged women to set up local committees to supervise girls' education so British women would replace the employment of unsuitable French men in British families and local shops.²¹ In a call to women to involve themselves in promoting female education, the Ladies Committee of the BFSS simultaneously addressed relations of class, gender, and colonialism by linking the "humanising" activities of women with the formation of British character.

Let, then the highly-favoured ladies of the British islands press forward to this extensive field of usefulness; —nothing can be imagined more suitable to their privileges, nothing more appropriate to their sex, nothing more accordant with the faith which they profess, the humanising influence of which has placed them in such marked contrast to females of the same condition in heathen countries. ... [T]hey... have only to throw themselves on the universal instinct of parental fondness, and on the dawning faculties and affections of children, in order to pour a flood of light upon many a soul.... The leisure and information which British ladies so generally possess, and the easy access to the poor permitted them by the habits of the country, give them a larger scope for personal exertion

¹⁷M.G.Jones, *The Charity School Movement* (London: Cass, 1964), 4; Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660–1833* (Cambridge: University Press); Leonora Davidoff & Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), 206, 211.

¹⁸Sarah Trimmer, *The Oeconomy of Charity or an Address to Ladies Covering Sunday Schools; the Establishment of Schools of Industry under Female Inspection and the Distribution of Voluntary Benefactions to which is added an Appendix Containing an Account of the Sunday Schools in Old Brentford* (London: J. Johnson, 1787).

¹⁹Linda Colley, *Britons Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (Yale: University Press, 1992), 281.

²⁰Catharine Cappe, *Observations on Charity Schools, iv.*

²¹Ladies Committee for Promoting the Education and Employment of the Female Poor, in *Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor*, vol. 4 (1805).

in this walk of Christian usefulness than have.... ever been enjoyed by females in any other age or place; but in addition to this, they possess ample capabilities for promoting the extension of Bible schools to the utmost limits of the globe.²²

The BFSS Ladies Committee built their argument that work in education was appropriate to their sex, on a view of familial relations that took into account women's legal, economic, and social disabilities in wider society. In a world in which men held legal, economic, and social power and women had no civic status, such claims to authority in education upheld the gendered relations of power they were to redress. This paradox underpinned the supervisory work of women school managers both in England and in British colonies and dependencies.

Women exercised varying degrees of authority outside the home through membership of school committees. Although the Ladies Committee of the York Grey Coat Charity School for Girls regulated the affairs of the school in great detail, they were finally responsible to the male committee. Some women left the Ladies Committee as a result of the way in which any "uniformed gentleman" could veto their arrangements for the education of the girls.²³ The Manchester Ladies Jubilee Female Charity School adopted the common management pattern in which men took responsibility for the financial affairs of the school from one committee and women dealt with the school's day to day supervision from another. This followed on the prescriptive ideology of "public" and the "private" that underlay women's legal disabilities in early nineteenth century society.

At the Manchester Ladies Jubilee Female Charity School, the balance of power also shifted at times as women and men left their respective committees when their cherished plans for the education of the girls were dismissed.²⁴ In contrast, women established and supervised the Chester Blue Girls' Charity School. They made decisions about investing funds and supervised the school's personnel as well as both the hidden and formal curriculum. Men acted as trustees for them in the investment of funds, providing occasional advice on financial matters and carrying out resolutions of the female committee when it came to financial investment and building programmes.²⁵ Women from the committee of the Chester Blue Girls'

²²BFSS AR 1830, 22.

²³Catherine Cappe *Thoughts on Various Charitable and Other Important Institutions and the Best Mode of Conducting Them to which is Subjoined an Address to the Females of the Rising Generation* (York: Blanchard, 1814), 20.

²⁴Ladies Jubilee Female Charity School, (LJFCS) Manchester, *Report of the Institution from its Commencement to the Year 1812* (Manchester: n.p., 1812).

²⁵*Minute and Account Book of the Blue Girls' Charity School 1718-1802* (BGCS). See 1719.

Charity School also acted in a subordinate capacity as lady visitors to the male committee of the Chester Sunday and Working Schools for Girls.

In 1821, the women took over the management of the Sunday and Working Schools and amalgamated them to form the Consolidated School, a day school which they affiliated to the National Society. Here, the move from male to female supervision occurred because men found it increasingly difficult to make time to attend committee meetings and to manage the teachers. Under the management of women the school prospered.²⁶

Committees of British women also adopted varying authority relations with men and with indigenous people when supervising missionary teachers. The Ladies Benevolent Society at Cape Town supervised the work of Miss Buzzacott, a missionary teacher, who had trained briefly at the Borough Road School and ran a school of 200 girls for the LMS. Female committees supervised girls' schools in Mauritius, Malacca, Malta, West and South Africa and the West Indies.²⁷ At Cephalonia and Malta, however, British women worked with non-Western women in female education societies, while in Barbados, "the ladies of colour" established the Female Benevolent Society along British lines "for the benefit of their sex."²⁸ Although British women managed many of the schools for non-Western girls run on the pattern of British day schools, the Society for the Promotion of Female Education in Corfu had a male committee²⁹ and at George Town, British Columbia, men were in charge of the girls' school, with women acting in a subordinate, advisory capacity.³⁰

In colonial education, shifts in authority relations also occurred between men and women and between non-Western and British supervisors. Men set up a school for 180 girls at Syria, which they passed over to local "matrons" to supervise.³¹ Miss Cooke's training and passage to India were financed by the BFSS Ladies Committee. Miss Cooke expected to work for the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society for the Establishment and Support of Female Bengalee Schools, a society composed of "native gentlemen," and British men and women. On her arrival, the Calcutta School Society refused to support her because the "native gentlemen" of the committee would not agree to her giving

²⁶Sunday and Working Schools, Chester, *Committee Minutes 1803-1830*, 18 March 1816; Letter to the National Society requesting affiliation 27 May 1820. (National Society Archive, mis-filed under the Chester Diocesan School).

²⁷BFSS AR 1837, 23, 49; BFSS AR 1818, 61; 1820, 18, 29, 116; 1824, 129; 1825, 104; 1827, 190; 1829, 76; 1830, 21; 1837, 19.

²⁸BFSS AR 1821, 112; 1823, 130; 1830, 95.

²⁹BFSS AR 1831, 49.

³⁰BFSS AR 1818, 50.

³¹BFSS AR 1831, 91.

religious instruction in the schools and Miss Cooke refused to compromise.³² The CMS came to her rescue and she was accredited to them.

From 1825, the British women who had founded the Calcutta LSNFE took over her supervision. In his letter to Sarah Lushington asking her to join the committee of the LSNFE, Bishop Heber explained that the management of the school was being transferred to women because the Indian parents of the girls saw the Central School as an unsuitable environment for their daughters to be educated. They objected to the fact that Mr. Wilson lived at the school, male teachers were on the premises teaching the boys and men came for committee meetings. To make the enterprise more "female," a Central Girls' School was to be built at some distance from the boys' school and the managers were to be women.³³ Under the supervision of the LSNFE, Mrs Wilson expanded the number of the schools in the area from 24 to 35 between 1825 and 1827. The LSNFE went on to co-ordinate the work of other missionary women working at "out stations" by attaching a female vice-president of the society to each school.³⁴

When it came to the day to day management of schools in England, male and female committees operated in different ways. Male committees paid careful attention to social and ecclesiastical standing when noting who was present. The chair generally fell to the most highly ranking member and due attention was given to social and ecclesiastical status when appointing officers to committees.³⁵ Female committees were more egalitarian in their committee organisation. Members tended to be noted in alphabetical order, and offices were often rotated amongst the women. At the Manchester Ladies Jubilee Female Charity School, one woman was appointed each month as "special visitor," with power to act "as the committee." Where female committees made distinctions between women it was often on the basis of age. When

³²BFSS AR 1824, 116.

³³Letter from Bishop Heber to Mrs Charles Lushington, 16 February 1824, reprinted in Amelia Heber, *The Life of Reginald Heber by his Widow, with selections from his correspondence, unpublished poems, private papers; together with a journal of his tour in Norway, Sweden, Russia, Hungary, Germany and a history of the Cossacks* (London: J.Murray, 1830) (2 vols.) vol.1, 186.

³⁴BFSS AR 1826, 30, 97; 1827, 35 On the formation of the LSNFE, funds were transferred from the CMS to the Ladies Committee to advance their work. My reading of the BFSS reports, places the work of female school committees in its wider context and results in a different interpretation of the role of the LSNFE than that of Aparna Basu, "Mary Ann Cooke to Mother Teresa: Christian Missionary Women and the Indian Response" in Fiona Bowie et al., eds., *Women and Missions: Past and Present*, (London: Berg, 1993), 193.

³⁵Goodman, "A question of management style"; R.J.Morris, "Voluntary societies and British urban elites 1780-1850: an analysis," *Historical Journal* 26 (1983): 95-118.

there was a stalemate on the committee of the Ladies Jubilee Female Charity School, the casting vote was given to the oldest woman present.³⁶ In some schools, older married women controlled the school committee, while younger unmarried women did much of the day to day supervision. At the Chester Consolidated School, four "ladies" acted as "directors" and six "young ladies" as "inspecting visitors."³⁷ As Sarah Trimmer noted in her advice to women philanthropists, formal structures of this type held the potential to train younger women in the skills required for school management.³⁸

In contrast to the relative absence of hierarchies in English female committees, the composition of female committees and the appointment of presidents, patronesses and vice-presidents in the British colonies closely mirrored the male status hierarchies upon which colonial life was built.³⁹ Women whose husbands headed government and military structures were placed as presidents and vice-presidents of their ladies educational associations. Lady Amherst, wife of the Governor General of India and Mrs Heber, wife of the Bishop of Calcutta, were prominent committee members of the LSNFE in Calcutta.⁴⁰

As husbands were re-deployed around the colonies, wives picked up the threads of their educational work in other places. Lady Hastings left the school committee at Calcutta for the committee at Valetta when her husband vacated the Governorship of Bengal to become Governor of Malta.⁴¹ Amelia Heber and her family departed unexpectedly from Calcutta in the aftermath of the sudden death of Bishop Heber. As Sarah Lushington remarked, the death or removal of a husband in the British colonies could lead in days to a woman's entire existence being turned upside down, as her house contents were auctioned and she and her children were shipped often unceremoniously back home.⁴² The close relation of a woman's position on a colonial school committee to the ranking of their husband or father meant that female status on such committees was partly illusory.

In England and the British colonies and dependencies, women's supervision of their schools was often unremitting. Catherine Cape noted that although

³⁶LJFCS, Manchester, *Annual Report*, 1812; *Ladies Committee Minute Book 1809-1856*.

³⁷Consolidated School, Chester, *Committee Minutes*, 18 March 1816.

³⁸Trimmer, *The Oeconomy of Charity*.

³⁹For the hierarchical nature of life in the colonies and its consequence for women see Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

⁴⁰BFSS AR 1825, 98; 1826, 38.

⁴¹BFSS AR 1824, 47, 48, 118.

⁴²Mrs.C.Lushington, *Narrative of a Journey from Calcutta to Europe by Way of Egypt in the Years 1827 and 1828* (London: Murray, 1829), 4.

men might suffice with a committee meeting once a month, girls' charity schools needed strict regulation because the period spent in the school constituted the whole of a girl's education. This was not the case for boys, who continued to learn a trade when they were apprenticed. Girls, however, simply became menial household servants.⁴³ Many female committees in England organized complex rotas for supervising their schools. At the Manchester Ladies Female Jubilee Charity School, in addition to the "special visitor," four women acted as monthly visitors on a rota basis.⁴⁴ The women committee members of the Chester Blue Girls' Charity School and the Manchester Lower Mosely Street Schools visited the schools regularly, with two women acting as visitors each week on a rota system.⁴⁵ At the York Grey Coat School, the women managers superintended in six-week blocks, during which the managers visited the school at least once a week. Each woman took responsibility for inspecting a different aspect of the school: the curriculum, the industrial occupations and the selling of the goods to local manufacturers, the discipline and the domestic organisation, including the produce grown in the school's garden. The women also signed all the bills and overlooked the matron's accounts.⁴⁶ This pattern of close supervision was followed in the British colonies and dependencies as women organized their visiting on rota systems and visited frequently. In Calcutta, each of the schools was placed under the care of a particular member of the committee. In line with the supervisory pattern in Britain, the women visited their schools once or twice a week.⁴⁷ Similarly, at Malacca before a teacher from Britain was appointed, the "ladies of the settlement" attended alternately for two hours a day.⁴⁸

Closer supervision of girls' schools than was the case for boys' schools, in England and the British colonies and dependencies, was linked to the gendered division of labour in the middle ranks of society. Women had time at their disposal for supervising their schools, whereas men were often too busy in commerce, industry, or the colonial service to be able to give the necessary time for frequent visiting. Gentry women in England and the wives of Governors General of the British colonies had to fulfil social engagements which made them less available for supervision than their middle-class counterparts.

⁴³Cappe, *Observations on Charity Schools*, 16.

⁴⁴LJFCS, Manchester, *Report from its Commencement to June 1812*.

⁴⁵BGCS, Chester, *Visitors Book 1811–1826*, 3 December 1811; Lower Mosely Street Schools (LMSS) *AR 1837*, 13.

⁴⁶Cappe, *Thoughts on Various Charitable Institutions*, 20.

⁴⁷BFSS *AR 1825*, 42; *1826*, 38, 99.

⁴⁸BFSS *AR 1829*, 76; Malacca Free School, *First Annual Report of the Malacca Free School for the Year 1827* (Malacca, printed at the Mission Press, 1828) (BFSS Archives).

When Bishop Heber outlined the proposed management structure of the Calcutta Central School, in his letter to Sarah Lushington, he noted, "Lady Amherst has kindly promised... to attend as frequently as she can." Yet, like their middle-class counterparts, some titled women devoted much time to the management of their schools. Prior to her departure from India in 1824, Lady Hastings visited all the girls' schools in Calcutta. When she arrived in Valetta, the schools were in a state of neglect but by 1829, under her supervision, they had "acquired that credit which for want of completely understanding the system they had not before attained."⁴⁹ In England, Lady Spencer rose at 5.30 every morning, despite constant entertaining. She prayed for an hour, read the Bible for a further hour and after a meagre breakfast at nine attended to her household duties and good works before dinner.⁵⁰ She chaired the first committee meeting of the Sunday schools she founded in the Abbey Parish of St Albans, and from 1814 was a member of the National Society Ladies Committee and a lady visitor of the National Society's model school at Baldwins Gardens. She learned to spin flax so that she could stand in for the teacher in her school of industry and pressed her daughters, Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire and Harriet Lady Bessborough, and later her granddaughters, into helping in the schools whenever they came to visit.⁵¹

Close supervision of girls' schools was also tied to women's views of the aims of girls' education. In England, there was a hierarchy of schools for the female poor consisting of Sunday schools, schools of industry, charity schools, and the day schools of the voluntary education societies. All these schools aimed to turn out domestic servants, who would also have the requisite skills for their future roles as the wives of working-class men.⁵² Gradations of English female working-class schools are evidenced by such charity schools as the Chester Blue Girls' Charity School and the Manchester Ladies Jubilee Female Charity School, which provided girls with "outfits" for service and trained them for residential positions in "better class" households. Meanwhile, schools lower in the hierarchy fitted girls for the lesser positions of "dailies" or "chars."⁵³ Women closely supervised working-class

⁴⁹BFSS AR 1824, 48; BFSS 1827, 97.

⁵⁰Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire* (London, Harper Collins), 14.

⁵¹G. Levenson-Gower, ed., *Hary-O: The Letters of Lady Harriet Cavendish, 1796-1809*, (London: Gower, 1940), 196; National Society, *AR 1814*, 16; National Society, *Minutes of the Ladies Committee 1813-1828* (National Society Archives).

⁵²Ann Summers, "A home from home—women's philanthropic work in the nineteenth century", in Sandra Burman, ed., *Fit Work for Women* (London: Croom Helm, 1979).

⁵³Meg Gomersall, *Working-class Girls in Nineteenth-Century England: life, work and schooling* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 64.

girls' education because female servants were viewed as a potential danger to children in more prosperous families.⁵⁴

Maria Edgeworth built on Locke's associationist psychology to argue that women of the lower classes made associations through imagination rather than reason. As a result, they were incapable of developing suitable moral values and were in danger of contaminating the minds of children in their care.⁵⁵ Catharine Cappe maintained that close supervision of working-class girls in schools and of the work of their teachers by women of a higher station was the key to "correct" association.⁵⁶

Close supervision of girls also facilitated the cultural transmission of the gendered characteristics upon which both female "virtue" and the order of the well run home were thought to rest. Women school managers often taught in the schools they managed and transferred skills used in the everyday administration of their households to the management of female schools.⁵⁷ In some schools the school rules and dress were those of domestic service.⁵⁸ Women managers also instigated punishment and reward systems which valued the characteristics of honesty, sobriety, industry, chastity, quietness, gentleness, compassion, cleanliness, and neatness. These gendered and classed characteristics were seen as central to the smooth running of the well ordered home⁵⁹ and were thought to be desirable character traits in domestic servants and future wives.⁶⁰ Middle-class women constructed class hierarchies through gender difference by their frequent presence in their schools and by their practical involvement with the girls' education.⁶¹ Women managers' stress on domesticity, however, built on the familial relations which underpinned both middle-class and working-class women's subordination in wider society. By adopting management practices that repeated the gender relations of society at large, middle-class women tempered their own power with powerlessness.

⁵⁴Maria Edgeworth & Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education* (London: J Johnson, 1801) (2nd edn. 2 vols.) vol. 1, 183ff.

⁵⁵Mitzi Myers, "Servants as they are now educated: women writers and Georgian pedagogy," *Essays in Literature* 16, (1989): 51-69.

⁵⁶Leach & Goodman, "Catharine Cappe".

⁵⁷Goodman, "Committee women"; Goodman, "A Question of management style".

⁵⁸LJFCS, Manchester, *Report 1812*, Rules.

⁵⁹Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, 142

⁶⁰BGCS, *Visitors Book 1811-1826*, January 1813 to March 1813, 3 May 1813, 5 September 1814, 20 February 1815.

⁶¹Goodman, "A question of management style".

Although some schools in the British colonies trained girls for service,⁶² female committees in the British colonies were keen that girls become teachers so they would spread Christianity, along with notions of “respectable” femininity.⁶³ From its earliest days, the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society looked forward to the time “when the girls already under instruction shall be fitted to undertake the education of others of their own sex.”⁶⁴ In requesting funds to establish a new college to train female teachers, the BFSS Ladies Committee noted,

In Greece, in Africa, in the East and West Indies... female teachers... have gone forth to aid in rescuing their own sex from the dominion of ignorance and sin.⁶⁵

Many early nineteenth century British women educationists looked through the lens of British cultural assumptions and patronisingly depicted Hindu society as problematic. Elizabeth Hamilton employed associationist psychology to argue that a Hindu mother mis-educated her children by “associating the idea of *good* with the superstitions to which she devotes him; and by the idea of *evil* with the slightest deviation from the rules it prescribes.”⁶⁶ Mrs Wilson wrote of the women and girls in the Calcutta area,

the manners of the Hindoo families are indeed very low; their ideas sadly contracted and they have little notion of that order and propriety which are so very essential to the female character.⁶⁷

The women of the LSNFE thought that by training teachers for the school or the zenana,⁶⁸ they would “rescue” and “reform” both marginal and higher-caste communities; for “reformed” girls, they argued, would influence wider Hindu society through their children. Portraying non-Western women as agents of cultural transmission mirrored middle-class views of working-class women and girls in England. Hannah Kilham applied this strategy in both England and Africa; for she translated into African languages the books of domestic maxims she had written to encourage virtue and domestication in the girls of the Sheffield Girls’ Charity School.⁶⁹ She also built on another basic assumption of British women school managers; that the British woman educationist was the agent of cultural transmission in the transformation of

⁶²Basu, “Mary Ann Cook.”

⁶³BFSS AR 1837, 23.

⁶⁴BFSS AR 1822, 125. At this point there were 30 girls.

⁶⁵BFSS, *New Training School for Female Teachers Under the Direction of the Ladies Committee of the BFSS* (London: BFSS, 1842). BFSS Archive.

⁶⁶Hamilton, *Letters on Education*, 9.

⁶⁷BFSS AR 1826, 98.

⁶⁸The zenana was the enclosed area of higher caste homes, where women spent their time.

⁶⁹Twells, “Let us begin well at home.”

non-Western and working-class women. Underpinning these interlocking ideas was the paradox that women were seen as capable of both undermining or building up society.⁷⁰

Some women committee members travelled widely both in England and the British colonies, gaining knowledge of girls' schools and their management. When Sarah Lushington became a member of the BFSS Ladies Committee, she brought with her the expertise gained in the Calcutta LSNFE, and a knowledge of female education acquired during her overland crossing from India.⁷¹ Hannah Kilham, with her experience of girls' education in West Africa, also joined the BFSS Ladies Committee. Women like Catherine Cappe, Sarah Lushington and Hannah Kilham disseminated their views and experiences of school management through diaries, letters and memoirs, as well as through more formal educational writings.

The circulation of philanthropic and missionary reports also brought some lesser known women educationists to the attention of a wider audience. Missionaries wrote to the BFSS about Mrs Kennedy, who was well known in Cephalonia for her work for the education of Greek girls. The BFSS reprinted the reports of the local missionaries, along with Mrs Kennedy's letters to the society and the BFSS Ladies Committee commented on her work. On her return to England, the BFSS Ladies Committee invited Mrs Kennedy to speak to them about female education in Greece, when she told them that she was also to visit the Edinburgh Ladies Society for the Education of Greek Girls.⁷²

Individual women committee members and some female committees built on their experiences as school managers to comment on the "condition" of the women and girls they encountered. The women of the Grey Coat Charity School for Girls at York disliked girls being apprenticed when they left school. They wrote a series of letters to the school's male committee, which culminated in the abolition of apprenticeships for girls. They maintained that female apprenticeship was nothing but a form of slavery; for a boy apprentice learned a trade and had the possibility of being recognized as a master in his own right, whereas a girl learned nothing but to labour in the most menial occupations and to fear her master or mistress. A boy led into "vice" under these circumstances had the chance of redeeming himself but not so a girl.⁷³

The women established a Female Friendly Society to replace apprenticeships for girls. Catharine Cappe portrayed the women managers of the

⁷⁰Sophie Hamilton, "Images of femininity in the Royal Commissions of the 1830s and 1840s" in Yeo, *Radical Femininity*, 14.

⁷¹She was the first woman to make the overland crossing. Cf. Lushington.

⁷²BFSS *AR* 1826, 91, 92; 1827, 36; 1828, 63. Her name was frequently mentioned in letters from Mr Lowndes of the LMS. BFSS *AR* 1828, 62.

⁷³Cappe, *Observations on Charity Schools*, 54.

schools and of the Female Friendly Society as “the exemplars, the guides, the protectors, and guardians of their own sex, and where it is practicable, their reformers also.”⁷⁴In the Female Friendly Society, the women managers aimed to teach young girls to respect themselves and to be cautious of marrying profligate characters who would reduce them and their children to poverty.⁷⁵ In saving small sums of money regularly, girls would complement the skills of sewing and spinning they learned in the schools. Poor women and girls would thus become economically self-sufficient in the home should the need arise at any point in the female life cycle. This strategy aided recipients, and prefigured future feminist demands. However, it simultaneously reinforced prevailing middle-class gender ideology that decreed working-class women should remain in the home.

In Africa Hannah Kilham was forthright in her critique of slavery and in India British women committee members spoke against child marriage and sati.⁷⁶The women of the LSNFE in Calcutta used Enlightenment languages of progress and emancipation, modernity and tradition, and light and darkness to place themselves as the yardstick against which to judge the “condition” of non-Western women and girls. The British outlawed sati in 1829, but experienced difficulties in enforcing the ban.⁷⁷ Women committee members in Calcutta and England entered contemporary debate through their representations of the woman as suttee and the development of educational strategies through which they hoped to “quench the flames of the suicidal suttee.”⁷⁸ To ensure that widows remained “protected” in their families, committee women analysed the material conditions of sati and recommended educating women in useful commercial skills like sewing, which they believed, would render widows “more useful to their families” and so less under the “thrall of tradition.” This strategy again located the woman in the family, all the while giving her economically worthwhile knowledge.

In England and the British colonies, the women of school committees spoke of reforming the women of the poor and the women of non-Western communities and raising their status. Women on school committees worked hard to alleviate both the hardships of working-class girls in England and the

⁷⁴Ibid 125.

⁷⁵Ibid 66, 67.

⁷⁶The term “sati” denotes the ritual burning of a widow on her husband’s funeral pyre and “suttee” the widow who sacrificed herself.

⁷⁷Anand A. Yang, “Whose sati? Widow-burning in early nineteenth century India” in Cheryl Johnson-Odim & Margaret Strobel, eds., *Expanding the Boundaries of Women’s History: Essays on Women in the Third World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

⁷⁸BFSS AR 1824, 48.

"condition" of non-Western women and girls. Despite their intent, committee women reinforced gendered relations of dominance and subordination, and those of colonialism and class, by speaking for poor women and girls and non-Western women. As a result, advocacy outweighed empowerment.⁷⁹

The practice of women school managers built upon ideals of woman in relation to men, rather than upon a view of women as independent beings. This relational view of women lay at the heart of women's subordination in wider society. Although middle-class British women viewed pupils in terms of cultural re-generation, girls and their parents were not merely passive recipients of education. As active educational consumers, at times they subverted the ideals of women committee members by taking the marketable skills which schools offered, while rejecting Bible teaching and attempts at cultural reform. In India, parents were often happy for their daughters to learn sewing but frequently caused them to desert schools when a pupil professed Christianity and schools closed as a consequence.⁸⁰ In England, parents and pupils often took the chance of future employment in the homes of the wealthy, which attendance at a school supervised by middle-class women offered.⁸¹

Membership of a school committee enabled middle-class British women to build notions of "public womanhood," albeit contradictory ones. The arguments of Catharine Cappe and Elizabeth Hamilton, that women's supervision of girls' education would lead to national re-generation by reforming the domestic "mores" and "affections" of the people,⁸² constituted an important claim to power at a time when morality was thought to bear a significant relationship to the stability of the state.⁸³ However, such arguments exemplified the contradictions of building educational management practice on views of woman as a relational being. The result was that female management practice was characterized by *both* relations of power and powerlessness; for women's supervision of schools confirmed the subordinate position of women in wider society, while simultaneously, in contradiction, moving middle-class women forward as educational experts and co-builders in the construction of national identity.

⁷⁹For an analysis of the relationship of advocacy and empowerment see Eileen J Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representation of Gender and Class* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996), chapter 9.

⁸⁰BFSS *Annual Report 1821*, 54; Savage, "Missionaries", 203.

⁸¹Gomersall, *Working-class Girls*, 71.

⁸²Cappe, *Thoughts on Various Charitable Institutions*; Elizabeth Hamilton, *Hints addressed to the Patrons and Directors of Schools* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1815).

⁸³Robert Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England, 1760–1832* (Cambridge: University Press, 1989), 139.