

Newfoundland's First Known School

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Newfoundland's First Known School

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THE ESTABLISHMENT of the first known school in Newfoundland at Bonavista in 1727 occurred in a pivotal period in the province's history. While Newfoundland had had an English presence from the early sixteenth century, it was only in the early eighteenth century that it acquired any of the political, judicial, commercial and social institutions that were common features of contemporary England and its American colonies. The innovations in Newfoundland in the early eighteenth century included, in addition to the first school, religious institutions and embryonic governmental and judicial systems.

The delay in the provision of a normal societal infrastructure was largely the result of Newfoundland's official status, which in turn was inherently associated with the nature of its only economy, the cod fishery. Unlike England's colonies to the south, with their land-based economies, Newfoundland's *raison d'être* was the cod fishery which for two hundred years was carried on primarily by seasonal fishermen from England and Ireland. Newfoundland's fishery did not require a permanent local work-force; indeed, by and large the entrepreneurs of the industry, based themselves in England and Ireland, opposed the development of a permanent local population which they saw as a potential competition and a threat to their considerable influence on official British policies concerning Newfoundland. That influence was sufficient to ensure that permanent settlement was not encouraged through the establishment of societal institutions.

Despite official indifference or opposition, from about the early seventeenth century there emerged a small year-round population made up primarily of men who were left behind at the end of the season to protect land facilities and to get an early start in the spring, supplemented by the remnants of several unsuccessful attempts at formal colonization. As well, small entrepreneurs from England and Ireland emigrated to Newfoundland and established fishing facilities, normally inshore fishing boats and associated land premises. Increasing numbers of these

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“boatkeepers” or “planters” built homes, brought out women, established families, and hired servants to help with the fishery. As the number of permanent settlers grew, a few centres, such as St. John’s and Ferryland, began to support a number of local merchants.

By the late seventeenth century, then, the year-round population was made up of three more or less distinct groups: merchants, planters, and servants.¹ The merchants provided the planters with supplies for the fishery in return for fish at the end of the season. The planters owned the fishing property — boats and fishing facilities on land — and hired servants to assist with the catching and curing of the fish. Many of the servants were in debt to the merchants or planters and were, in effect, slaves to their employers as their debt was compounded over a number of years with little prospect of ever being able to pay it off. During the winter some of the servants were hired by the planters or merchants to work at such activities as cutting firewood and repairing or building boats or fishing facilities and other structures.

All these developments were taking place without official sanction. While the year-round inhabitants, as well as the summer fishermen, were subject to British law, there was no adequate means of enforcing the laws. The ancient system of the “fishing admirals,” by which the captain of the first vessel to arrive in a port in the spring had limited authority to keep order during the fishing season, was still in place, but it was increasingly unsatisfactory, especially for the inhabitants. The fishing admirals were accused of being either biased against the residents or neglectful of their responsibilities. Even that modicum of law enforcement was absent when the fishing ships returned to England and Ireland at the end of the fishing season.

As the year-round population grew, so did reports of lawlessness during the winters, primarily made by local merchants and planters against servants. Large numbers of unemployed servants spent their idle time in riotous living, it was claimed, threatening property and lives, especially of the more privileged classes. One of the petitioners, William Keen, a merchant in St. John’s, described the situation as follows:

Since [the departure of the Commodore], divers ill actions and thefts has been committed insomuch that we have scarce anything we can call our own, our sheep for our provisions and the produce of our gardens are stole from us and for want of proper authority the offenders although convicted go unpunished.²

After receiving an increasing number of representations from local merchants and planters, in 1729 the British Government took a small step in the direction of providing Newfoundland with a semblance of law enforcement. It gave the title of “Governor” to the commodore of the convoy that annually accompanied the fishing fleets from England and Ireland. The governors appointed justices of the peace and constables in the larger centres along the populated coast, the first official authority in Newfoundland during the winters, when the governors were in England.³ The

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commission of the first governor made it clear that the new governmental and judicial system was a direct response to the perception in England of Newfoundland as a place where unruliness abounded, especially in the winter:

A governor should be appointed there [Newfoundland] to prevent the irregularities, outrages, rapes, felonies, murders and other heinous offences which are frequent committed in our island of Newfoundland, especially during the winter season by wicked people, for want of proper persons legally authorized to restrain and punish such offenders.⁴

It was the conviction of some in Newfoundland that the solution to all that wickedness lay not only with the appointment of a governor, justices of the peace and constables, as necessary as that was; equally important was the inculcation of religious discipline among the residents, especially the lower classes. No churches had been established and the only presence of clergy was the result of the occasional visit of one on a passing ship. Petitions from certain of the more "respectable" merchants and planters were sent to the British Government and to the hierarchy of the Church of England requesting that clergy be stationed in Newfoundland.⁵ The initial response was to put chaplains on the navy ships of the convoy that accompanied the annual fishing fleets from England. In 1701 the first year-round residential clergyman, Reverend John Jackson of the Church of England, was appointed to St. John's.

In 1703 Jackson was appointed as a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), a newly-formed English organization that had as its primary mandate the establishment and maintenance of missions of the Church of England throughout the British colonies. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the SPG provided financial support for the clergy of a number of Newfoundland parishes of the Church of England that would otherwise not have been viable.

In 1725 Henry Jones, a 35-year-old clergyman of the Church of England, arrived in Bonavista. Initially under the personal patronage of Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London, Jones was soon accepted as a missionary of the SPG. Little is known of Jones prior to his appointment to Newfoundland. It is known he had a wife and several children, whom he left behind in England when he first moved to Newfoundland and who joined him two years later when he returned after spending a winter in England recuperating from an illness. Jones remained an SPG missionary in Newfoundland for 21 years before moving to the West Indies.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BONAVISTA SCHOOL

From the outset Jones stressed the importance of the education of the children of Bonavista. He addressed the matter of a school in his first meeting with the

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congregation, held shortly after his arrival. His report on the meeting contains the following reference to the question he put to the meeting and the response:

Question: Shall a charity school be begun to be founded in this place?

Answer: Some persons promise to pay for schooling of one child each — to be sent as soon as the winter is pas[t].⁶

Jones lost little time in making arrangements for the school. In the fall of 1726, before returning to England for the winter because of ill health, he engaged a teacher, raised sufficient subscription fees to pay her and instructed her to open the school the following spring. When he returned to Bonavista the following year, he found the school in operation.⁷

The opening of the school has been put at various dates by writers on the subject. F.W. Rowe was clearly in error when he stated in *The Development of Education in Newfoundland* that it opened in 1722 or 1723.⁸ Others have set it at 1726 without giving evidence from primary sources for that conclusion.⁹ While no date can be set with certainty, on the basis of the documentation available, a likely period can be identified.

Jones arrived in Bonavista in May, 1725. In his first two letters to England, both dated November 5, 1725, he reported that he had had a meeting of the congregation at which he had raised a number of issues including the matter of a charity school, to which the response had been positive.¹⁰ His next correspondence was to the Bishop of London, dated February 9, 1727 and written from Covent Garden, London, since he had been required to return to England for the winter because of ill health.¹¹ A week later he wrote to the SPG,

The people finely [sic] are willing...to set up a Charity School.... I raised by subscription £8 am promised more, for the teaching the poor children to read for the year 1727, have ordered a Schoolmistress to begin to teach them early this spring.¹²

He was clearly referring to the spring of 1727 as the time to begin the school. His next letter, also to the SPG, was dated November 7, 1727, from Bonavista. In it he reported that he had arrived there on May 31 of that year, and wrote,

All the poor children of this port, whose Parents would send them to School, have been taught this year gratis, the School dame having been satisfied by the subscriptions raised here for that purpose.¹³

Jones repeated the information in his letter to the Bishop of London, written on the same day.¹⁴

As there is no reference in Jones's letters, or in any other documentation, to an earlier beginning of the school, it can be concluded with reasonable confidence that the school was opened for the first time in the spring of 1727.

Jones's school was fashioned after the charity schools of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in England where they were a relatively new kind of educational institution. Established first in the late seventeenth century and sponsored by various groups of well-meaning people of the middle and upper classes and often associated with churches, the charity schools were intended as a

means of educating poor children. Most denominations had such schools. By the end of the century, for example, numerous schools under the sponsorship of adherents of the Church of England had been established throughout England. In 1699 the SPCK was established to co-ordinate the charity schools of that denomination. In practice the SPCK had no formal jurisdiction over the schools; rather, it provided guidance in the areas of philosophy, curriculum, methodologies, and the qualifications and responsibilities of teachers.

The SPG and the SPCK were interlocking organizations, the SPG having been formed largely from the membership of the SPCK. It is, therefore, not surprising that Jones approached the SPCK for support for his school. Throughout his tenure in Bonavista that support was forthcoming in the form of encouragement, texts and related materials.

IDEOLOGY

Predictably, Jones accepted the philosophy of the SPCK and seemingly made every effort, insofar as was possible, to adopt the primary features of the Society's schools in England. At the core of the philosophy, curriculum and methodology was the matter of religion. The SPCK and the sponsors of their schools firmly believed that through the church they were being called to save as many souls as possible, and that the means to that salvation was adherence to the theology and practices of the Church of England.

The primary concern of the members of the SPCK and the sponsors of other charity schools was for the poor children, whose parents could not be trusted to provide adequate guidance or to set the correct examples through their own behaviour. In addition to genuine compassion for the children who were growing up in such conditions, there was a social dimension to the concern for their welfare:

Instruction in Bible and catechism during the formative years of childhood, before the infant population was ready for apprenticeship or service, would build up a God-fearing population and, at the same time, would inoculate the children against the habits of sloth, debauchery and beggary, which characterised the lower orders of society.¹⁵

Jones made it clear that he too felt a special responsibility for the children of the poor. In his first letter from Bonavista to his principals in England he stated it as follows:

I have very much at heart planting a Charity School amongst us for instructing the Poor in reading and knowledge and practice of the Duty as Christians which is very much wanted through [the] Poverty and Ignorance of their Parents.¹⁶

Jones frequently referred to the children of his school as poor, but it is not clear what he meant by "poor." The poorest families in Bonavista, as elsewhere in Newfoundland, would have been those of servants and poor planters. However, the

A
Primitive Catechism
USEFUL FOR
Charity-Schools.

Without the Texts of SCRIPTURE.

PART I.

For the *Catechumens*; or, *Beginners*
in Christianity.

SECTION I.

Q. **W**H O made you, and all the World ?

A. *God Almighty.*

Q. Why did God make the World ?

A. *To manifest his glorious Perfections ; and to communicate of his Goodness to his Creatures.*

Q. Why did God make Man in particular ?

A. *As a reasonable and free Creature, to have Dominion over the rest, and to praise, and adore, and serve him, the common Creator, and Benefactor of them all.*

Q. Of how many parts did the Primitive Christians suppose Man to be made ?

A. *Of three, (1.) The Spirit, or rational and immortal Part, (2.) The Soul, or sensitive Part, and (3.) The Body or fleshy Part.*

Q. What do the Scriptures particularly teach you of God ?

A. (1.) *That there is but One True God.*

(2.) *That He is Everlasting in Duration,*

local merchants and some of the planters would have been more prosperous. As there was only one school in Bonavista, children of the more affluent families, if they were to attend school at all, would have had to attend Jones's school along with the truly poor. In this respect the school at Bonavista was different from many of the charity schools of England where for the most part the charity schools accommodated the children of the poor or lower labouring classes while children of more substantial means attended other schools.

THE TEACHER

Jones did not identify the "school dame," as he called her, who taught in his school, nor does he say much about her background or qualifications. Over the years he made several passing references to a teacher, but it is not clear whether he was referring to the original teacher or to a replacement. In any event, he appeared to be satisfied with the quality of teaching in his school. In 1731, for example, he reported of the teacher, "she is very careful and writes a good hand."¹⁷

Jones gave only a hint or two concerning her qualifications. Clearly he expected her to measure up as closely as possible to the teachers of the SPCK charity schools of England. There the government had no regulations concerning the qualifications of teachers, and almost anyone could establish a school. The SPCK wanted their teachers to be of a higher standard than was typical of the teachers in the private schools and formulated its own list of qualifications.

In a publication for the SPCK, Rev. Dr. James Talbot described the qualifications that were expected of a teacher of the charity schools; he was to be

1. A member of the Church of England, of sober life and honest conversation, and not under the age of twenty-five years.
2. One that frequents Holy Communion.
3. One that hath a Good Government of himself and his Passions.
4. One of meek Temper and humble behaviour.
5. One of a good Genius for teaching.
6. One who understands well the Grounds and Principles of the Christian Religion, and is able to give a good Account thereof to the Minister of the Parish or Ordinary on Examination.
7. One who can write a good Hand, and who understands the Grounds of Arithmetic.
8. One who keeps good order in his family.
9. One who is approved by the Minister of the Parish ... before he be presented to be Licenced by the Ordinary.¹⁸

To these demanding qualifications, Talbot added patience and humility, sagacity and judgment, justice and equity, meekness and forbearance, candour and sweetness of disposition, diligence, application and a pious and devout frame of spirit.¹⁹

THE CHILDREN

Jones gave few details about the children in his school. In 1731 he reported that there were between 20 and 30 children.²⁰ However, the number must have varied considerably with the years and the seasons. Parents were not required by law to send their children to school, and not all would have been convinced that formal learning was necessary. Most of the servant class, with no formal learning themselves, would have known that such learning had few financial benefits for them. To improve their lot they needed to make the transition to the planter class, and that move was extremely difficult and more dependent on finances, credit and the right connections than on formal learning.

The essential rationale for formal learning for Jones, as for the sponsors of the English charity schools, was an entirely different matter. For them it was religion and morality, not economics, that were at the core of their schooling, and only those parents who held the same views would have made an effort to have their children attend schools regularly. A number of parents may well have been less enthusiastic about the need for that form of learning and would have kept their children from school when they were needed for more pressing reasons, such as helping with family chores.

As well, the poorest families were dependent on the generosity of patrons to pay the subscription fees for their children, and in seasons when there was a decrease in returns from the fishery, that financial support for the school diminished. Jones reported in 1727, for example, that

the people of this port...have this summer sustained some detriment in the trade for want of merchant ships...their charity seems to flagg [*sic*] with respect to a continuance of the school.²¹

Also, many families in Bonavista, as elsewhere in Newfoundland, were highly mobile, moving inland in the winter to be closer to wooded areas or temporarily moving their fishing activity to other areas of the coast when fishing in their home harbour was experiencing a downturn.

It is likely, then, that attendance in Jones's school would have fluctuated considerably from time to time.

THE SCHOOL BUILDING

While it is not clear whether the first school was held in a schoolhouse, it is likely that it was not. Jones made no mention of a schoolhouse in his report of the public meeting of 1725 that agreed to the establishment of a school.²² By the fall of 1726 members of the congregation had agreed to build a schoolhouse and at about the same time they committed themselves to providing housing for the minister and to rebuilding and furnishing the church.²³ Jones stated in his correspondence to the

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SPG, however, that “this [was] beyond their power thro’ the poverty of most of them” and asked the Society to help in whatever ways they could.²⁴ The correspondence and minutes of the SPG acknowledge the request but make no reference to a commitment to assist in the building of a church or schoolhouse.²⁵ In subsequent correspondence, Jones thanked the Society for their continued support of his stipend but did not acknowledge any funds for buildings. As it was Jones’s practice to thank the Society profusely for all contributions, the absence of acknowledgement is most likely an indication that none was received.

Jones had returned to England during the fall of 1726, and when he returned in the spring of 1727, he found that his teacher was holding school, but he makes no mention of a schoolhouse.²⁶ With Jones away from the community over the winter, with the congregation’s commitments to the rebuilding of the church and with the poverty of many of the parishioners, it is most unlikely that they would have built the schoolhouse over the winter in time for the opening of the school in the spring of 1727.

There were a number of possible settings for the school. It may have been held in the church, but the church was an old one and was being repaired when the school was opened.²⁷ A more likely location was the house of the teacher. During the eighteenth century it was not unusual elsewhere for charity schools to be held in dwelling houses.²⁸ That arrangement was not as difficult at that time as it would be for modern schools. For the most part the curriculum and teaching methods required only recitation from a few books. None of the paraphernalia of the modern school was present; almost all that was needed was chairs or benches for the teacher and learners.

CURRICULUM AND METHODOLOGY

In his correspondence Henry Jones did not provide much detailed information on the curriculum or methodology of his school. There is only fragmentary evidence consisting of the occasional comment in his letters and brief references in the records of the SPCK and the SPG. In attempting to reconstruct in this paper the most likely approximation of educational experiences in Jones’s school, the evidence from these sources has been coupled with information on charity schools in England and the American colonies that were supported by the SPG and the SPCK. Not surprisingly, Jones appears to have attempted to follow as closely as possible the curriculum of these schools.

The most authoritative guide for sponsors and teachers of the charity schools of the Church of England was *The Christian Schoolmaster* by Rev. Dr. James Talbot who wrote it at the request of the SPCK.

The primary elements of Talbot’s curriculum were reading, writing and mathematics, all of which were firmly underpinned by religious and moral instruc-

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tion. Indeed, almost everything that happened in the charity schools was a reflection of the religious and moral milieu of the institution. Instructions to the charity schools left no doubt about the centrality of religion, specifically that of the Church of England, in their schools:

To the End that the chief Design of this School, which is for the Education of Poor Children in the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion, as Professed and taught in the Church of England, may be the better promoted, the master shall make it his chief Business to instruct the children in the Principles thereof, as they are laid down in the Church Catechism.²⁹

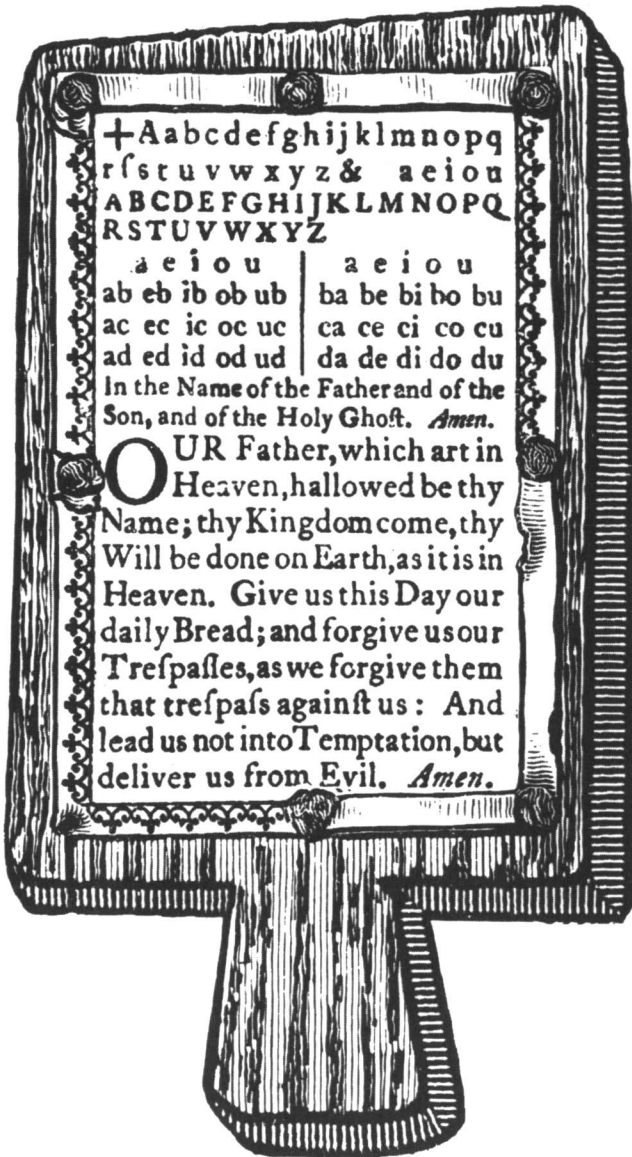
As is to be expected, the view of Henry Jones concerning the prominence of religion in education coincided with those of his church in England. As noted above, in his first letter from Bonavista to England he stated that his reason for starting a school was to provide instruction “in reading and knowledge and practice of the Duty as Christians.”³⁰

Of the subjects of reading, writing and mathematics, reading was considered of most importance, for it was through reading that the religious objectives of the schools could be most readily met. That position is not surprising, especially in schools of the Church of England with its emphasis on a written liturgy. To be full participants in the church services, members of the congregation needed to be able either to read passages in the Book of Common Prayer or to recall them from memory. Readers could also be independent users of the Bible as well as of religious tracts and other religious literature being printed in increasing numbers.

As soon as the children started attending school, they were directed to the reading of religious material. In fact, teachers normally did not wait for them to learn to read before exposing them to the religious passages. Even before they could read, they were expected to memorize sections of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer.

The children of the SPCK schools in England had access to a number of books, primarily a horn-book, a primer and a spelling book, the Bible or New Testament and the Book of Common Prayer. It is clear from correspondence between Jones and London that the children of Bonavista had access to most, if not all, of the books normally available in the schools of England.

The horn-book was the first “book” the children were permitted to handle themselves. Most likely they were allowed to take horn-books home with strict instructions to take good care of them. For many families this would have been the first printed material in their house. A horn-book was not a book as we understand the word. It was, in fact, a sheet of paper or vellum attached to a small piece of board in the shape of a paddle and covered with transparent horn (hence, the name “horn-book”). The edges were usually bound with metal. The more expensive ones were bound with embossed or gilded leather. From time to time horn-books were sent by the SPCK to the children of Bonavista. In 1732, for example, 36 horn-books were sent, 12 of which were of the more expensive gilded variety.³¹



A Horn Book

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By and large all horn-books had the same elements. In the top left corner was a cross, followed by the alphabet in small and capital letters. Below were the vowels singly and in combination with consonants. These were followed by "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen" and the Lord's Prayer.

Horn-books were used by all denominations. All had essentially the same format and content, but there were slight differences among the publications of the various denominations. For example, the Catholic horn-books omitted the exhortation "And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from evil," commonly used by the Protestants in the Lord's Prayer. Also, some non-Catholic publishers considered the cross too closely associated with Catholicism and replaced it with the letter X.³²

Learners proceeded from the horn-book to the primer. Numerous editions of primers were on the market and were normally published by individuals who were clearly identified with particular denominations. Most primers were similar in format, with variations in content that reflected the publisher's religious affiliation.

In general the primers approved for use in the schools of the Church of England were similar to *The New England Primer*.³³ The main sections of that primer are as follows:

- (i) the alphabet, vowels and consonants, sometimes along with Old English versions of the alphabet;
- (ii) vowel-consonant combinations, an extension of the examples on the horn-books;
- (iii) in sequence, words of one, two, three and more syllables with clear separation of the syllables, for example, "ab-sent", "god-li-ness" and "hu-mi-li-ty;"
- (iv) an illustrated exercise in the alphabet in verse, in many instances embodying a religious or moral lesson, for example,

A: In *Adam's* Fall
We Sinned all.

B: Thy Life to Mend
This *Book* Attend.

C: The *Cat* doth play
And after slay;

- (v) a list of sentences that the learner was next expected to read and memorize, for example,

I will fear GOD, and honour the KING.

I will honour my Father and Mother.

I will Obey my Superiors.

I will Submit to my Elders.

I will Love my Friends.

I will hate no Man.

I will forgive my Enemies, and pray to God for them.

I will as much as in me lies keep all God's Holy Commandments.

I will learn my Catechism.

I will keep the Lord's Day Holy.

I will Reverence God's Sanctuary,

For our GOD is a consuming Fire;

- (vi) a lesson for each letter of the alphabet, for example,

A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.
Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith.

Come unto Christ all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and He will give you rest;

- (vii) the Lord's Prayer;

- (viii) the Apostles Creed;

- (ix) the Ten Commandments;

- (x) the names of the books of the Bible;

- (xi) an introduction to numbers from 1 to 100, normally presented in the following three forms:

i.	1	one
ii.	2	two
iii.	3	three;

- (xii) a short version of the Catechism with sets of questions and answers, for example,

Question. What is the chief end of Man?

Answer. Man's chief End is to Glorify God, and to Enjoy Him for ever.

Question. What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him?

Answer. The Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament is the only Rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him.

Question. What do the Scriptures principally teach?

Answer. The Scriptures principally teach what Man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requireth of Man.³⁴

For all parts of the primer, the method of teaching was essentially that of recitation. In learning the alphabet, each child was required to recite each letter and was not permitted to go to the next passage until he or she was able to recite the alphabet without error. As well, students were expected to be able to recognize each letter as the teacher pointed to it, sometimes from an alphabet painted or carved on a piece of board. The same method was used to teach syllables and individual words.

The approach to teaching the passages containing sentences was essentially the same as that used for the alphabet. The children read each sentence in turn, with mistakes being corrected by the teacher. Each child's knowledge of each sentence would be tested many times on succeeding days, and he or she was allowed to



In *Adam's* Fall
We Sinned all.

Thy Life to Mend
This *Book* Attend.

The *Cat* doth play
And a *fter* slay.

A *Dog* will bite
A *Thief* at night.

An *Eagles* flight
Is out of flight.

The *Idle Fool*
Is whipt at *School*.

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proceed only after the teacher was satisfied that the child was proficient with the passage. Several sections were expected to be committed to memory, including the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Catechism.

A more advanced version of the Catechism than the one in the primer was available as a separate monograph. Most denominations, including Anglicans, Catholics and Dissenters, had Catechisms. Those of the Bonavista schools, as was to be expected, would have been approved by the Church of England. From the Catechism the children progressed to the Book of Common Prayer, from which they learned to read the daily offices of the Liturgy, the Common Prayer for Morning and Evening, the Collects, and the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds. These were followed in turn by the Psalms of David, the New Testament, and finally the Old Testament.³⁵

Whether any of the bundles of books sent from England contained additional books for the children is not known. It is possible that a few copies of *Aesop's Fables* found their way to Bonavista in this manner. They were used in the charity schools to reinforce the learning of the morals they illustrated.

It is also likely that the Bonavista children were provided with copies of *The Whole Duty of Man*,³⁶ a book considered by the sponsors of the Church of England charity schools in England to be a valuable aid in reinforcing the values taught in their schools. John Calam has noted its centrality:

A single work, rarely missing from S.P.G. booklists and often the Anglican's only self-owned supplement to the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, embodied, however, the collective mood and message of sermon and abstract, history and pamphlet. This was the ubiquitous *The Whole Duty of Man*, a basic literary target of any Anglican child who ever learned to read.³⁷

In England the book was commonly given to the children of the charity schools at the end of the school year.³⁸ Prominent among the numerous religious themes of *The Whole Duty of Man* was the exhortation to be content with one's lot. Knowing one's station and being content with it were God's will and the duty of every person.³⁹

At that time spelling and reading were very much related. Much of the primer consisted of passages that were used as spelling lessons. In addition to primers, the Bonavista school was sent copies of a speller, called *Dixon's Speller*.⁴⁰

While today the skills of reading and writing are normally considered in combination as elements of basic formal education, in the eighteenth century they were seen as distinct and unrelated. It was not considered unusual that an individual could read but not write.⁴¹ Unlike reading, writing was not part of basic education; rather, it was considered an advanced competency to be taught only to those who were already proficient readers. It is likely that many children did not learn to write. It was rarely considered necessary to teach girls to write, and many boys, attending school sporadically and infrequently, would have finished their formal education before attaining the level of reading that was considered a prerequisite to writing.⁴²

In the philosophy of the charity schools, mathematics was considered an advanced subject to be taught only to students who had reached an adequate level of proficiency in reading and writing.⁴³ In at least two of his letters Jones made reference to the place of writing and mathematics in the curriculum of his school:

I design this winter to enter such of them as are capable, upon writing and arithmetick.⁴⁴

[I] intend myself to teach this winter all that are capable to learn to write & cast accounts.⁴⁵

The only aspect of mathematics that formed part of basic education was the element included in the primer, the counting of numbers from 1 to 100. Even the ability to use these numbers was associated with a religious purpose. As stated in *The New England Primer*, knowledge of the numbers will “serve for the ready finding of any Chapter, Psalm, and Verse in the Bible.”⁴⁶

Higher mathematics, or arithmetic (sometimes called “casting accounts” at the time) was reserved for the more advanced students, normally boys. It was one of the few elements of the curriculum that were included for essentially secular purposes. The higher mathematics was taught primarily to enable the students to function at the lower levels of business, perhaps as clerks, by keeping the accounts of their employers. The subject consisted of the basics of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. For the most part the operations were restricted to whole numbers and were not applied to fractions or decimals. Some attention was also given to weights and measures and currency.⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

Henry Jones continued to operate the school during his tenure at Bonavista. In 1735 he reported that he had two schools in the community. While he did not give details, it is likely that he had established one for boys and one for girls. When he moved to Trinity in 1741, his successor continued to maintain the schools in the community.

The establishment of the school in Bonavista set the stage for the involvement of the SPG and the SPCK in schooling in Newfoundland. Throughout the rest of the eighteenth century, missionaries of the SPG established a number of schools in Newfoundland: in St. John’s in 1746, Harbour Grace in 1768, Scilly Cove (Winterton) and Carbonear in 1783, and Burin in 1794.⁴⁸

The establishment of the school at Bonavista is significant, but not because it was a harbinger of an immediate development of extensive institutional education in Newfoundland. On the contrary, in the succeeding decades of the century the establishment of schools in the rest of Newfoundland was infrequent and sporadic. For some time, formal education in Newfoundland continued to be the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, Jones’s school in 1727 marked the beginning of

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institutional education in Newfoundland, and thus is a noteworthy event in the history of education in the province.

Notes

¹The transient summer population from England and Ireland also comprised three components: merchants/owners of fishing ships, byeboatmen and servants. The bye-boatmen, the transient equivalent of the year-round planters, came to Newfoundland each spring as passengers on the fishing ships, together with their servants. Normally they rented boats and land facilities from local planters or merchants. At the end of the fishing season they returned home for the winter.

²CO194/8/185.

³For the first 87 years the governors, who were also commodores of the naval convoy, returned home with their convoy and the fishing ships in the fall. The first governor to take up year-round residence was Vice-Admiral Francis Pickmore. He started his residency in the fall 1817 but died in February, 1818.

⁴CO 194/9/141-145.

⁵Prowse, Appendix 1.

⁶Fulham Papers, Vol.1, f.22.

⁷SPG Letter Books, Series A, Vol.20, p.268.

⁸Rowe 27,28.

⁹For example, "Bonavista", *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland*, Vol.1, 214; Hickman 3; and Barnes 15.

¹⁰One to the SPG (Fulham Papers, Vol.1, ff.17-18) and one to the Bishop of London (Fulham Papers, Vol.1, ff.19-20).

¹¹Fulham Papers, Vol.1, f.25.

¹²SPG Letter Books, Series A, Vol.19, p. 285.

¹³SPG Letter Books, Series A, Vol.20, p.268.

¹⁴Fulham Papers, Vol.1, f.27.

¹⁵Jones 4.

¹⁶Fulham Papers, Vol.1, ff.17-18.

¹⁷Fulham Papers, Vol.1, f.39.

¹⁸Jones 98.

¹⁹Talbot 19,20.

²⁰Fulham Papers, Vol.1, f.39.

²¹*Ibid.*, f.27.

²²Fulham Papers, Vol.1, ff.17-18.

²³SPG Letter Books, Series A, Vol.19, p.285.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵SPG Journal, Vol.5, p.115.

²⁶SPG Letter Books, Series A, Vol.20, p.268.

²⁷SPG Letter Books, Series A, Vol.19, p.285.

²⁸Jones 34.

²⁹*Ibid.* 76.

³⁰Fulham Papers, Vol.1, ff.17-18.

³¹SPCK Letters, CS2/24, f.3.

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³²Bayne-Powell 226.

³³*The New England Primer* was initially printed in the mid-seventeenth century in England for use in the colonial schools of the Church of England. Over time it went through a number of editions and revisions. The edition used as reference in this paper is the one published in 1727, of which a facsimile is reproduced in *The New England Primer* by Paul Ford.

³⁴Ford.

³⁵Jones 78,79.

³⁶*The Whole Duty of Man*, originally published in the time of Cromwell, is commonly attributed to John Alstree, a divine of the Church of England. It continued to be published, with many editions and revisions, well into the nineteenth century.

³⁷Calam 97.

³⁸Jones 78,79.

³⁹Calam 97.

⁴⁰SPCK Letters, CS2/24, f.3.

⁴¹This notion continued in Newfoundland well into the nineteenth century when the census reports included two columns, one for the number of those who could read and one for those who could write.

⁴²Jones 80.

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴Fulham Papers, Vol.1, f.27.

⁴⁵SPG Letter Books, Series A, Vol.20, p.268.

⁴⁶Ford.

⁴⁷Hatton.

⁴⁸First references to financial support by the SPG of teachers in the individual communities are found in the Annual Reports of the SPG as follows: 1746 (St. John's), 1768 (Harbour Grace), 1792 (Bonavista), 1794 (Burin), 1796 (Scilly Cove). In addition, the Annual Report of the SPG for 1783 makes reference to winter schools in Port de Grave and Carbonear, but stipends were not paid by the Society to teachers at these locations. For Bonavista, the SPG did not make a separate allocation for teachers' stipends until 1792. It appears, then, that before that date teachers at Bonavista were paid by subscribers and benefactors.

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