5 Away to school

IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF ANOTHER

At home or in church were not, of course, the only places where girls were 'schooled' in the early modern period. Following on the medieval tradition of sending girls as well as boys to spend their childhood in another, preferably socially superior, household, many parents of high social standing continued to send their daughters to join another family, where they would be expected to receive the kind of education considered appropriate to their class and inevitably share, in whatever degree, in the religious life of the household. It is important to recognise that this was but one method of socialisation amongst several for such girls, a plurality which was itself expressed in the public-private debate in education, a debate which recognised the reductionism of the common idea that the sending of children away to this kind of schooling was simply an expression of a lack of affection on the part of parents. As always in individual cases, motivation would not only be different but also mixed, and in the records rarely indicated, though inevitably an affirmation of social hierarchy and gender subordination would figure largely in the expectations of parents who negotiated the details of such education for their daughters. None of the evidence, however, would seem to confirm that such a mode of education 'betrayed a want of affection in the English', or was followed merely in order that their children would 'have better manners', or 'to reduce the possibility of incest and Oedipal tensions'. As always in the period, 'custom' and status were the prime movers in the matter, with religious allegiance a built-in factor.

Nicholas Orme has used the domestic correspondence of the mid- and late fifteenth century to show the practice at work in the families of the Pastons, Stonors and Plumptons. The letters which passed between Arthur Plantagenet, Viscount Lisle, his second wife Honor Basset and their agent John Hussey tell a similar story of the placing of the Plantagenet and Basset daughters, with
Husee’s letter of 18 June 1536 to Lady Lisle giving a good indication of the intricate planning and negotiating which were required for the placing of daughters. Having spent a year under the supervision of Dame Elizabeth Shelley, Abbess of St Mary’s in Winchester, Bridget Plantagenet was sent, when she was about 7, to the household of Sir Anthony and Lady Jane Windsor, Sir Anthony reporting to her father in September 1538 ‘she is very spare and hath need of cherishing, and she shall lack nothing, in learning or otherwise, that my wife can do for her’. Bridget’s sister Elizabeth was likewise sent to the household of her half-brother Sir John Dudley, the son of Lisle’s first wife Elizabeth. Their step-sisters, the Basset girls, were also sent away from home for the early years of their education. At the age of 13 Catherine Basset was sent to live with Eleanor, Countess of Rutland. Between 1533 and 1538 her sisters Anne and Mary were sent overseas to northern France to be housed not far from their father, who was the King’s Deputy and Governor of Calais. Anne went to join the household at Pont de Remy near Abbeville of Mme Jeanne de Rieu, who assured her parents ‘I will treat her like my own daughter. The young lady is one who can easily be taught.’ She stayed there for three years. Mary was not far away in Abbeville with the family of Mme Anne de Bours.

Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, had several young ladies in her charge, alongside other young aristocratic gentlemen, some of them wards of court of her son. In the equally pious household of Sir Thomas More we find Anne Cresacre, only daughter of Edward Cresacre, a Yorkshire landowner who had died in 1519, placed there by Wolsey when she was about 12 years old, and remaining to marry More’s son John in 1529. In addition, there were Frances Staverton, a niece of Sir Thomas, and Margaret Giggs, adopted by More, who married a fellow of the household, John Clement, each of them educated alongside More’s own daughters, Margaret, Elizabeth and Cicely and step-daughter Alice. Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury had in her household her two granddaughters, Margaret and Catherine, two great-granddaughters, the daughters of her grandson, Sir Arthur Pole, as well as the unrelated Joan Cholmley, Elizabeth Cheney and Alice Densell. In the late 1540s Lady Neville, wife of Sir Anthony Neville, had in addition to her own three daughters the daughter of Sir Thomas Fenton and three other gentlewomen, Anne and Catherine Topcliffe and Ursula Clifton. When she was 9 the wardship of Catherine, daughter of William, tenth Lord Willoughby, was purchased by Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, and it was in his house that she was brought up under the tutelage of his first wife Mary Tudor, sister of Henry VIII and Dowager Queen of France, together with the latter’s two daughters by her previous marriage, and her niece Lady Margaret Douglas, daughter of the Earl of Angus and Queen Margaret of Scotland. Catherine
later married Charles Brandon as his fourth wife and, on his death, as Dowager Duchess of Suffolk was a fervent supporter of the reforming party in religion, in her turn maintaining several ‘children of honour’ in her household at Grimsthorpe in Lincolnshire.11

Four of the six daughters of Edward Seymour, the disgraced Lord Protector Somerset, were committed by the Privy Council to the guardianship of their aunt Elizabeth Cromwell, widow of Thomas Cromwell’s son Gregory. Margaret, aged 5 and Francis, aged 3, the two younger children of Sir Henry and Lady Anne Willoughby, were sent on their father’s death in 1549 to the care of their uncle, Henry Medley. When she was 6 Margaret was presented with her own copy of the Bible. She later continued her education as lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Suffolk, and went with her to the court of Queen Mary Tudor, and ultimately to that of Queen Elizabeth.12 In 1572 the widowed Jane Tuttof wrote to her ‘loving cosen’ Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey:

I give you hearty thanks for bringing up my daughter in your household. Let her learn to write and read and cast accounts, and to wash and brew and to bake and to dress meat and drink, and so I trust she will prove herself a great good housewife. As you requested I am sending £4 for you to give her.13

Elizabeth Manners lost her husband John, fourth Earl of Rutland, in March 1588. In the following June she wrote to the Countess of Bedford:

Now that my daughter [Elizabeth] has recovered I commend her to you and resign all the power which I have over her. I beg you will form her in such course both for education and maintenance you think fit, remembering the small stipend allotted to her by my lord. Her education has been barren hitherto, nor has she attained to anything except to play a little on the lute, which now, by her late discontinuance, she has almost forgotten. I have committed to my daughter her whole year’s annuity the employment whereof I commit to your discretion.14

In 1597 Sir Robert Sidney, then in the Low Countries on government service, wrote to his wife Barbara, who had already played an active part in the early religious education of their children, urging her to join him and suggesting that the time had come for their two eldest daughters, Mary and Katherine, to be placed in the household of another for their continued education. Mary, then ‘almost ten’, he proposed should be placed with Catherine, Countess of Huntingdon, and Katherine, ‘Kate’, then ‘almost eight’, with Anne Rich, Countess of Warwick, each of these ladies well known for the care with which
they looked after those placed with them. Mary, apparently, was ‘fearful’ at the thought of not being able to join her father, though in fact she would have joined several other young ladies in the charge of Catherine Hastings, the widow of ‘the Puritan Earl’ Henry, third Earl of Huntingdon. They included the future diarist Margaret Dakins, Lady Margaret Hoby, whose first husband was Walter Devereux, who with his sisters Penelope and Dorothy were also resident members of the household. In a postscript to a letter to Sir Julius Caesar in 1618, Lady Catherine quite justifiably claimed ‘I think there will be none make question but I know how to breed and govern young gentlewomen.’ As part of the ‘breeding’ process, this deeply religious woman doubtless made it plain that she ‘governed’ in accordance with the Fifth Commandment.  

A similar reputation was claimed for Lady Elizabeth Cholmley by her husband Sir Hugh, who noted in his Memoirs that ‘divers of the best of the county desired to have their daughters in service with her’. Having been brought up by her parents ‘in the nurture and admonition of the Lord’, Ellen Bentley married the Reverend Asty of Stratford in Suffolk, her memorialist reporting that ‘when she was first married several gentlewomen sent their daughters to be with her that they might live under her instructions, and the Lord made her very useful to them’, and with the same purpose in mind the relations of Mary Mounteford, who died in 1656 aged 93, ‘a woman of so great virtue, so modest, so devout and so well-grounded in religion that she never swerved from the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England in the worst of times’, sent their children to be educated in her religious household.  

George Clifford, later Earl of Cumberland, became a ward of Francis, second Earl of Bedford, when he was 11, and was brought up in the Duke’s household at Woburn, ‘that very school of virtue’, where he was to meet their daughter, Margaret Russell. The two were married in 1577, he aged 19 and she 16, whereupon they went to live with his mother Lady Clifford at Craven Castle in Cumberland, later to produce a daughter, Lady Anne Clifford, who under the guidance of her mother ultimately ‘knew well how to discourse of all things from predestination to ssea-silk’. Nor were the daughters of royalty exempt from this mode of education. In 1603 Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of James I and Anne of Denmark, was placed in the household of Sir James and Lady Anne Harrington at Combe Abbey in Warwickshire, where with their daughter Lucy (later Countess of Bedford) she was joined by the daughter of Sir Robert Carey, and Theophilia, the daughter of Sir Thomas Berkeley, Lucy in turn taking Sarah, the daughter of Sir William Harington of Bagworth. Mary Gunter lost both of her parents in infancy when she was committed to the care of ‘an old lady, a strong papist’, who died when Mary was 14, whereupon she was sent to live in the Protestant household of Sir Christopher Blount, whose wife Lettice, Countess of Leicester by her former marriage to Robert Dudley, weaned her away from her early Catholic upbringing, taking away all her Catholic
books and causing her to give an account of the sermons that were preached in the household twice on Sundays. As part of her ‘conversion’ she vowed that she would read over the whole Bible once every year, and did so for the next 15 years, keeping notes and learning passages by heart. She remained with the Countess for 22 years, dying in 1622.19 Lady Joan Barrington, daughter of Sir Oliver Cromwell and sister of the future Protector, had in her household alongside her five daughters, Elizabeth, Mary, Winifred, Ruth and Joan, her god-daughter Mary Towse, daughter of William Towse, Sergeant-at-Law of Takeley in Essex, and Mary’s sister Jane, together with Mary Whalley, daughter of Sir Richard Whalley, Lady Joan’s brother-in-law.20 On occasion, of course, a pious upbringing was not the only or indeed the prime reason for sending a daughter to another’s household. Sir Edward Molineux, for example, sent his two daughters to the house of his cousin to be brought up, as he said, ‘in virtue, good manners and learning, to play the gentlewoman and good housewife, to dress meat and oversee their households’. Henry Thordike was more tersely direct in sending his niece to live with the Isham family in Northamptonshire ‘that she might find match by having the honour of being in your house’ – though in such a godly environment as the Ishams insisted upon, the young lady would also have been assured of a godly education.21

The greatest household to which a girl could be sent was, of course, the royal court, an old chivalric tradition by which both boys and girls were sent from home to learn the appropriate mode of service to their elders, as well as to acquire courtly manners and to participate in the religious pattern of the royal household. The practice continued virtually unchanged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and nowhere more so than in the pious ambience of the household of Henry VIII’s Queen, Catherine of Aragon. It was to this place that in 1517 Catherine Parr’s newly widowed mother Maud went as a 21-year-old lady-in-waiting to the Queen, accompanied by her three young children, Catherine aged 3, Anne aged 2 and the infant son William, there to be joined eventually by the young Princess Mary with whom they were brought up, alongside Katherine Willoughby and Joan Guildford, daughters of Catherine’s other ladies-in-waiting. At the Queen’s instigation the princess was in the mid-1520s to be tutored by Juan Luis Vives, who produced for his young charge a plan of education, De Ratione Studii Puerilis, and for a wider audience De institutio Foeminarum Christianarum. These were both dedicated to Queen Catherine, whilst to the Princess he dedicated his Satellium srue Symbola, a collection of moral axioms and advices. When Catherine Parr was brought to the court of Catherine of Aragon to be brought up with Princess Mary she could not have known that one day she would be Queen with a similar group of young women under her supervision, including another future queen, Lady Jane Grey.22
The court of Queen Elizabeth was also used as a ‘school’ for numerous ‘maids of honour’, among whom were Elizabeth Vernon, who later married Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, patron of Shakespeare and John Florio. However, this was without first getting the Queen’s permission, thereby incurring the latter’s displeasure and a spell for both of them in the Fleet prison. Also at court at this time were the sisters Lettice and Cecilia Knollys and Catherine and Philadelphia Carey, as well as Anne Russell, daughter of Francis, second Earl of Bedford, who was later to marry Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick.23 Mary Sidney, daughter of Sir Henry and Lady Mary Sidney and sister of Philip, with whom she was later to collaborate in the translation of the Book of Psalms, was in 1575 when she was 13 sent to the court of Queen Elizabeth where she became a lady-in-waiting, as her mother had been before her. Two years later she was married to Henry Herbert, the second Earl of Pembroke, 25 years her senior.24 The household of Queen Henrietta Maria was of course quite different in its religious orientation, but it was to there that Margaret Lucas, later Duchess of Newcastle, was sent, following her mistress on the outbreak of war first to Oxford and then to France. Elizabeth Livingstone (later Delaval) was also at court aged 18, serving in the Privy Chamber of Queen Catherine, wife of Charles II.25 Margaret Blagge, whose father the royalist colonel died when she was 8, was placed at court in 1664, when she was 12, her mother Mary being maid-of-honour to Anne Hyde, Duchess of York. It was one of her companions there, Anne Howard, who introduced her to John Evelyn, who had such an influence on her as a young woman. Anne Finch was maid of honour to the Catholic Mary of Modena, second wife26 of James II. The practice of obtaining a place at court for young ladies of quality was thus continued throughout the period and, in each case, during their most impressionable years they would amongst other things have absorbed the religious ambience of the place, sometimes accepting and following, at other times rejecting, the doctrine and practice which surrounded them.

ACADEMIES

In the early seventeenth century the parameters of the public–private debate as to whether boys should be educated at home by a private tutor or sent away to one of the increasing number of grammar schools which took in boarders were somewhat widened when applied to the education of a certain class of girls. Nunneries and convents were no longer available unless a girl were sent abroad, but the continuing practice of educating girls at home or in
the household of another family was supplemented by the quite new opportunity of sending them away from home to a boarding school for the education of daughters of gentlemen. It was taken for granted that grammar schools were the reserve of boys, though there were exceptions—the statutes of the grammar school founded at Baunby in 1594, for example, allowing that girls could be admitted, though none ‘above the age of nine, nor longer than they may learn to read English’. Those of the small grammar school founded in 1571 (though not built until 1590) in the village of Harrow-on-the-Hill by the will of John Lyon expressly forbade the admission of girls. The Founder’s Rules drawn up by Thomas Saunders for the school he founded in 1637 at Uffington in Oxfordshire were quite explicit:

Whereas it is the most common and usual course for many to send their daughters to common schools to be taught together with and amongst all sorts of youths, which course is by many conceived very uncomely and not decent, therefore the said schoolmaster may not admit any of that sex to be taught in the said school.

Whilst these examples tell us something about the social attitudes of the particular founders, they also give some indication that the segregation of boys and girls was not as all-embracing as might appear. Even so, it was early recognised that schools should be set up expressly for girls. Thomas Becon, for example, insisting that:

It is expedient that by public authority schools for women children be erected and set up in every Christian commonwealth, and honest, safe, wise, discreet, sober, grave and learned matrons made rulers and mistresses of the same, and that honest and liberal stipends be appointed for the said schoolmistresses which shall travail in the bringing up of young maids.

Richard Mulcaster, himself a successful grammar-school master, made much the same point in his Positions of 1581. The seventeenth century saw an increased recognition of the need for such provision. Comenius and his circle of followers were insistent that if the kingdom of God were to be achieved on earth then the religious education of all, high and low, girls as well as boys, should become a priority. In his plan for a Reformed School (1650), John Dury made it plain that though boys and girls should be strictly segregated:

The main scope of the whole work of education, both in the boys and girls, should be none other than this: to train them up to know God in
Christ, that they walk worthy of Him in the gospel, and become profitable instruments of the Commonwealth in their generations. And in order to do this, two things are to be taught to them. First, the way of godliness, wherein every day they are to be exercised by prayers, reading of the Word, catechetical instructions and other exercises subordinate to the life of Christianity. Secondly, the way of serviceableness towards the society wherein they live, that they may be enabled each in their sex respectively, to follow lawful callings for profitable uses, and not to become a burden to their generation by living in idleness and disorderliness, as most commonly those do which come from the schools of this age.

None of this was out of the ordinary, nor indeed was Dury’s criticism of females in respect of the ordinary vanity and curiosity of their dressing of hair and putting on of apparel, the customs and principles of wantonness and bold behaviours, which in their dancings are taught them, and whatsoever else doth tend only to foment pride and satisfy curiosity and imaginary delights, shall be changed by this our course of education, into plain, decent cleanliness and healthful ways of apparelling themselves, and into such exercises of hearts, heads and hands, which may habituate them through the fear of God to become good housewives and careful housewives, loving towards their husbands and their children when God shall call them to be married. 30

In his proposals for an education for all members of the commonwealth, Dury was of necessity talking about an elementary level of education, but his criticisms were plainly directed against the ‘daughters of gentlemen’ and the new boarding schools, ‘academies’, which were now being provided for them. It was to provide a reformed alternative to such schools that Edward Chamberlayne proposed the founding of An Academy or College Wherein Young Ladies and Gentlemens May at a Very Moderate Expense be Duly Instructed in the true Protestant Religion (1671). Those girls who were kept at home for their tuition, he argued, were too easily ‘corrupted or betrayed by servants’; those who were sent abroad ‘returned otherwise virtuous but generally tainted with and inclined to Romish superstitions and errors’. But he reserved his chief criticism for the maiden schools in or about London where either through the unskilfulness or negligence or covetousness of the mistresses, too much
minding their private profit, the success hath oft times not answered the expectations of their parents and friends, whereof there are divers lamentable examples and grievous complainings.

Instead, he proposed the purchase of a large house near London, with a chapel, hall, lodgings and ‘rooms for all sorts of necessary offices, with gardens, orchards and courts’. A divine of the same parish would be appointed chaplain, a ‘grave and discreet lady’ would be the ‘governess’, to be assisted by ‘divers and other matrons’. Only in such an environment would it be acceptable to hire visiting teachers for singing, dancing, music, needlework and cooking. Prospective parents were invited to invest in the financing of the institution, with the money subscribed to be put under the trusteeship of the Mercers’ Company. In the event of failure, subscriptions would be returned with 5 per cent interest. Like so many of the projects of the period we have no further evidence of the scheme, or of the fate which awaited Daniel Defoe’s similar proposal for an ‘academy for women’ in his Essay Upon Projects (1697), with one to be set up in every county and ‘about ten in the city of London’, thus (he claimed) putting an end to ‘one of the most barbarous customs in the world, considering us a civilized and Christian country, that we deny the advantages of learning to women’. 31

Significant too, however, was the increasing part played by women themselves, not only in arguing for a greater equality of the sexes but also in following this up with proposals for the better education of girls and women as an essential means of achieving such a change. We have only the indirect report of John Duncon, memorialist of Lettice, Viscountess Falkland, the devout wife of Lucius Cary, that she had hoped to help in the foundation of houses for the education of young gentlewomen and the retirement of widows (as Colleges and Inns of Court and Chancery are for men) . . . hoping thereby that learning and religion might flourish more in her own sex than heretofore and have such opportunities to serve the Lord without distraction . . . but these evil times disabled her quite.

Mary Astell’s Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Great Interest, which she published in two parts in 1694 and 1697, was a considered discussion of the education of women and particularly the place of religion therein, complaining that girls and young women were too often taught the principles and duties of religion but not acquainted with the reasons and grounds of them, being told ‘tis enough for her to believe, to
examine the why and wherefore belongs not to her. And therefore, though her piety may be tall and spreading, yet because it wants foundation and root, the first rude temptation overthrows and blasts it.

But, as she was not alone in claiming, ‘the soil is rich, and if well cultivated would yield a noble harvest’. She therefore aimed to produce someone who is a Christian out of choice, not in conformity to those about her, [one who] cleaves to piety because it is her wisdom, her interest, her joy, not because she has become accustomed to it . . . [who] acquires a clear understanding as well as a regular affection, that both together may move the will to a direct choice of good and steadfast adherence to it.

A religious education based on reason and understanding would, she claimed, redirect those ‘whose piety blazes higher without understanding . . . having more heat than light’ and whose ‘zeal outruns their knowledge’. Moreover, a good deal of blame should be attached to those parents who, in the education of their children,

have taught them perhaps to repeat their catechism and a few good sentences, to read a chapter and say their prayers, though perhaps with as little understanding as a parrot, and fancied that this was charm enough to secure them against the temptations of the present world and waft them to a better.

Astell was plainly aiming at a more highly educated group of women than most parents and clerics would have contact with, and she acknowledged this in her proposal to erect a monastery . . . or if you will a religious retirement . . . a seminary to stock this kingdom with pious and prudent ladies whose good example, it is to be hoped, will so influence the rest of their sex that women may no longer pass into those little useless and impertinent beings which the ill conduct of too many has caused them to be mistaken for.

But she faced and, in the end, was unable to resolve the dilemma that faced all those women of the period who argued for greater equality for women but recognised the huge range of capacity when the detail of provision had to be decided. Like many before her she asked the rhetorical question, ‘What is it but the want of an ingenious education that renders the generality of feminine
conversations so insipid and foolish and their solitude so insupportable?’, yet felt it politic to accept that ‘women have no business with the pulpit, the Bar and St Stephen’s chapel [that is, parliament]’ and to reassure her male readers that ‘we pretend not that women should teach in church or usurp authority where it is not allowed them; permit us only to understand our own duty . . . to form in our minds a true idea of Christianity’. To her conservative way of thinking, a woman’s Christian life would be confined to prayer and praise . . . spiritual and corporal works of mercy as relieving the poor and healing the sick, mingling charity to the soul . . . instructing the ignorant, counselling the doubtful, comforting the afflicted and correcting those that erand do amiss . . . [together with] daily performance of the public offices after the cathedral manner.

Competent in these matters, some such women might become ‘tutors to the daughters of gentlemen’ and ‘stock the kingdom with pious and prudent ladies . . . able to teach in schools of the better sort’, a proposal which anticipated Charles Kingsley’s Queen’s College in London by 150 years.32 When John Batchelor printed his The Virgins Pattern, in which he memorialised ‘the life and death of Mistress Susanna Perwich . . . who died July 3 1661’ when she was 25 years old, he dedicated it ‘To all the young ladies and gentlewomen of the several schools in and about the city of London and elsewhere’. His reason for doing so arises from the fact that Susanna was the daughter of Robert Perwich, who had a school for the daughters of gentlemen in Hackney in which she had finished her own schooling and had then become a teacher.33 Hackney was at the time a salubrious suburban village to the north of the City of London, in which many prosperous middle- and upper-class people had taken up residence, and in which were to be found several schools of a similar kind and clientele. One of the earliest to be mentioned was that of Mrs Winch, which is known as a result of a notorious episode in 1637 when a pupil of the school, the 14-year-old Sarah Cox, an orphan with a goodly portion, was abducted whilst walking on nearby Newington Green by Roger Fulwood, brother to Katherine, one of Sarah’s school friends, who had failed in an earlier attempt to persuade Sarah to marry him. Fulwood took the girl to Southwark House, the London residence of the Bishop of Winchester, and forced through a form of marriage, with the aid of spurious documentation. Sarah was finally rescued, and after the case was brought to court delivered of a declaration of nullity.34 It was in the following year that the 8-year-old Katherine Fowler arrived in Hackney to join the school run by Mrs Salmon, later to marry and as Katherine Phillips to make her name as the poetess ‘the Matchless Orinda’.35 The two eldest daughters of Sir John Bramston were
also sent to Mrs Salmon’s school on the death of their mother in 1648, and in his notebook Samuel Sainthill of Bradninch, north of Exeter in Devon, recorded his outgoings for the teaching and boarding of his sister at the school during the period 1651–3. Mary Aubrey, a cousin of the antiquary, also attended the school, and in 1675 Ralph Josselin’s two daughters Mary and Elizabeth arrived with their mother from Ears Colne in Essex, Josselin noting in his diary, ‘God bless them in their education, both in soul and body.’ In 1695 Sir Richard and Lady Mary Newdigate sent their daughters Anne (‘Nan’) aged 16 and Elizabeth (‘Betty’) aged 13 to a school in the village run by Mrs Beckford, to be joined in the following year by their sister Jane (‘Jenny’) aged 14.

The Hackney schools were plainly supported over the years by the prosperous parents of young ladies but no records of the schools have survived. However, Samuel Pepys, in typical fashion, recorded in his diary his visit on Sunday 20 April 1667 to Hackney parish church, St Augustine’s, chiefly in order to run his eye over the ‘young ladies’ of the schools, whom he deemed ‘very pretty’. The same is true of other schools of a similar kind which were to be found in the villages which circled London in the seventeenth century. To the north of Hackney in the village of Tottenham was to be found the school for the daughters of gentlemen which Bathusa Makin ran and advertised in a ‘Postscript’ to her Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Women (1673) at a fee of £20 per annum. A few miles to the east of Hackney in Islington the Dissenter Esreal Tong (or Tongue) had an academy for girls in the 1660s, in which it was claimed that all were able to construe a Greek gospel by the time they were 14. Just to the south, in Stepney, a school run by Mrs Friend was attended by Anne Heather, sent there as an orphan by the City’s Court of Aldermen at an annual fee of £21, and later in 1638 Sir Edward Nicholas sent his daughter Susan there. In the 1620s Sir Simonds D’Ewes’ two sisters, Mary and Cecilia, attended a school in Walbrook, a little to the east of Stepney and not far from St Paul’s, kept by ‘a poor merchant’s wife’. Cecilia died there in 1620, aged 10, and D’Ewes reported that on the Sunday before her death she repeated the greater part of the sermon she had heard that day, and inquired about some chapters and verses in the Bible which she could not find for herself. Near the river just south of Greenwich in Deptford was located a school known as Ladies Hall, some of whose girls took part in Robert White’s masque Cupid’s Banishment, which was performed in Greenwich at court before James I’s wife Queen Anne of Denmark, probably as the eight ‘wood nymphs’, listed by name in White’s published text, who sang ‘In joy is Cupid gone’. It was to this school that Lettice, the daughter of Sir Richard Newdigate, was sent in 1620 when she was 15, at a fee of £22 per annum. Upstream to the east at Putney was the school that the eldest daughter of Mrs Margaret Ducke attended, one of several in the area, since
John Evelyn recorded in his diary for 17 May 1649 that he went ‘to Putney... to see the schools and colleges of the young gentlewomen’. After the death of his wife, in 1678, aged 31, Francis North, Lord Keeper Guildford, turned his mind to the continuation of the education of his young family. His two sons, Francis and Charles, he sent to his mother, his daughter Anne to the home of his sister Lady Wiseman (later Countess of Yarmouth) in Chelsea, ‘where also there was [as Roger North reported] a good school for young ladies of quality, which was an advantage’. Whether Anne actually attended the school we do not know, but the school in question was probably that run by Josias Priest and his wife, newly removed from ‘Leicester-Fields’. It was for the young ladies of this establishment that Henry Purcell wrote his opera *Dido and Aeneas*, and it was to this school that Edmund Verney, eldest son of Sir Ralph, took his daughter Mary (‘Molly’) aged 8, where she joined Betty Denton, daughter of Dr William Denton and sister of Sir Ralph’s god-daughter and niece ‘Nancy’ Denton. Elizabeth Palmer, who in 1680 married John Verney, had already been a pupil there.

The concern of the Verney family for the education of their children is well documented in the extensive family correspondence, a concern which was complicated by Sir Ralph Verney’s exile in France during the 1640s. He had his son Edmund (‘Mun’) and his daughter Margaret (‘Peg’) with him in Blois, whilst ‘Jack’ remained at home with his mother, Lady Mary. The family was thus quite used to children living away from home, but it was the education of Sir Ralph’s youngest sister Elizabeth (‘Betty’), she of the ‘cross, proud and lazy disposition’ who appeared to be ‘in love with her own will’, which proved to be the greatest worry to the family. The possibility of placing her or sending her away to school was often discussed. Several attempts to place her with relatives proved to be unsuccessful, and when she was finally sent to live with her older sister Margaret, wife of Sir Thomas Elmes, she unilaterally discharged herself and returned home, prompting Sir Ralph’s wife Lady Mary to conclude in a letter to Sir Ralph ‘nobody will take her’. Finally, Sir Ralph suggested:

If it be thought for Betty’s advantage to be sent to a school, though it be dear, I am content to be put to that charge. It seems the mistress demands £25 a year for diet, teaching and all things... She is a strange, perverse girl and so averse to going thither that she doth stick to threaten her own death by her own hands, though my girls (who have been there) give all the commendation that can be of that school.

Her uncle, Dr Denton, agreed with the proposal, acknowledging that it would
be ‘a great change’ but hoping that ‘this being abroad may do her more good than if you had given her £500 and no breeding’. A few days later he reported, ‘On Friday last, with many tears and much regret Betty went to school, but I drooled it out and left her.’ The move seems to have succeeded, for in October Dr Denton wrote, ‘I never saw so great a change in countenance, fashion, humour and disposition (and all for the better) in any body; neither could I imagine it possible it could have been wrought so soon.’ Betty eventually married a clergyman, the Reverend Charles Adams, her torrid adolescence apparently firmly left behind her.48

The metropolis and its environs were plainly well served in the provision of boarding education for the daughters of gentlemen. Provision in the provinces was by definition more scattered, though the evidence is more often than not equally lacking in detail other than the existence of such schools. For example, all that is known of the schooling of Margaret and Mary Kytson, daughters of Sir Thomas and Lady Elizabeth Kytson of Hengrave Hall in Suffolk, is derived from an account book which recorded expenditure ‘For a drinking at Thetford and the children going to school at Norwich’ in January 1573, Norwich lying about 30 miles away to the east of their home. A different kind of source, the Sandwich Orphans’ Book, provides evidence that between 1592 and 1594 Thomasine Wolters, an orphan with property producing an income of £10 a year, was sent to a boarding school in Canterbury at a fee of £8 per annum during which time she was provided with ‘a book containing all the service and the singing psalms’ at a cost of 2s 6d. Later, in 1626, the same accounts report that Elizabeth, the daughter of Robert Wild who had died at sea, was boarded with the wife of William May at 10s a quarter for ‘schooling, shoes and flannel waistcoat’ together with ‘a book to teach her to read’.49

The diary of John Dee was terse in the extreme, recording only that in 1590 on the 21st of May his daughter Katherine was ‘put to Mistress Brayce’ at ‘Brayford’ when she was 9. Rosemary O’Day has noted a late-sixteenth-century unpublished letter from Anne Higginson to Lady Ferrers of Tamworth Castle reporting the details of a boarding school in Windsor whose unnamed mistress was charging £32 per annum (plus extras) for the 20 girls who were boarding with her. By comparison with the fees charged in the London boarding schools we have already noted this was an expensive establishment, though Anne reassured Lady Ferrers that she had already placed some of her own ‘kindred’ there.50 Sir George Courthope reported in his Memoirs that when his mother died in 1620, when he was 4 years old, his two sisters Anne and Frances were sent to a school in Westerham in Kent to board with ‘a gentlewoman whose name was Isley’. He was sent to a presumably local school where he learned the elements of Latin grammar, before going first to Merchant Taylors’ School and then to Westminster School before entering University College Oxford when he was about 14 in 1630 – a good example of no expense being spared.
on the prolonged education of the boy of the family. John Haynes was a relatively prosperous merchant in Exeter but he afforded only day schooling for his daughter Susannah who, when she was 6, was taught by a widow, Mrs Clark, at 2s 6d a quarter in 1642 and 1643. The boarding school which Mrs Parnell Amye ran in Manchester was in 1648 reported as charging £11 per annum for schooling and lodging with the usual extras for dancing and music. Each of Henry Oxinden’s three daughters were sent away to school, Margaret and Elizabeth, whose mother was Oxinden’s first wife Anne Peyton, attending the school run by a Mr Beavan at Mersham, about 15 miles from the family home at Barham in east Kent. The schoolmaster was recommended to Oxinden by Unton, Lady Dering, wife of Sir Edward Dering and near neighbour at Surrenden:

besides the qualities of music both for the virginals and singing (if they have voices) and writing (and to cast accounts which will be useful to them hereafter) he will be careful also that their behaviour be modest and such as becomes their quality, and that they grow in knowledge and understanding of God and their duty to Him which is above all... his wife is an excellent good woman and his daughter a civil well-qualified maid, and both work very well. I presume you will think £30 a year for both reasonable when you consider the hardiness of the times and that there is more trouble with girls than boys.

The two girls were 12 and 11 when they went off to school. Their younger sister Katherine (‘Kitty’) who was born in 1644, daughter of Oxinden’s second wife Margaret Culling, was sent in 1652 to the school run by Mrs Margaret Jackson in Canterbury who, according to Lady Dering, was ‘connected in the Precincts’ though Mrs Jackson’s letters to Kitty’s parents rarely mention what kind of religious education the girl was receiving. Oxinden had on one occasion to defend his Margaret against some comments, made by his cousin Elizabeth Dallinson, about the class of her parents. She was, he wrote,

a yeoman’s daughter... but such a yeoman as lived in his house, in his company and in his sports and pleasures like a gentleman, and followed the same with gentlemen... and he bred his daughter, according to herself, maintaining her four years at school amongst other gentlemen’s daughters at the same cost and charges they were at.

Ralph Jesselin’s daughters who went to the Hackney school in 1675 had started their schooling away from home, Mary to White Colhe in 1668 when
she was 10 and Elizabeth to Bury St Edmunds in 1674 when she was 13. Their elder sister Jane had gone to Mrs Piggott’s school at Colchester in 1656 when she was 10, though whilst she was there she resided with her father’s cousin John, Ralph noting in his diary ‘The Lord bestow his blessing in mercy on her there, his prudence was very visible in her going.’ Another diarist, Ralph Thoresby, reported his sister’s leaving to go from Yorkshire to Leicester to attend Mrs Falkland’s school there, but of the school we know nothing more. Before she married Ambrose Barnes of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Mary Butler went by sea with her widowed mother from that town to go to school in Windsor, about which we know as little as we do about the education of her own daughters, Mary, Anne, Sarah and Hannah who, we are told by their father, were kept at their needle by their mother ‘after they had left boarding school’, the whereabouts of which remains a mystery. As little can be said of Sarah Davy (née Roane) who reported ‘It pleased the Lord my time being expired at school to return me my father’s house.’ Linda Pollock has noted from manuscript account books that Sarah and Martha Worsley were at school incurring fees of about £10 per annum in the late 1650s and early 1660s, that the fees for the schooling of Betty Wittenwounge in 1685 came to £18 for the year, and that the quarterly bill for the two daughters of Anne Phelps was £11 12s 10d in 1699, though once again no details of their curriculum are forthcoming.

The journal and account book for the Reverend Giles Moore fortunately tell us a little more about his expenditure on and placing of his niece and adopted daughter Martha (‘Mat’). On 20 March 1669 he noted that ‘I was with Mistress Chalon and bargained with her at £12 per annum for the board and schooling for Mat, which at first she would not yield to, but at last by Mr Taylor’s interposition she yielded.’ On 19 April he ‘took a journey to London carrying with me my little maid whom I placed at school. I bought her a new gown and petticoat costing £1 16s and a primer 8d’. On 20 June 1671 he sent £1 10s for 6 weeks’ board at Mistress Chalon’s, and later another 25s together with a Bible and New Testament which cost him 7s. He was obviously a careful though relatively generous account keeper, recording that ‘The exact amount I laid out upon her from the time of my resolving to take her to the day of her marriage [at which he officiated] besides her diet and washing in my house was £163 12s 6d.’ It would have been more helpful if Celia Fiennes had included rather more detail of her visit to Shrewsbury in 1698 than the bare entry to her journal: ‘Here is a very good school for young gentlewomen for learning [needle]work and behaviour and music’, but unfortunately hers is no more than typical. It has to be said that religious formation was so expected in all levels of education that it would have been taken for granted rather than commented on.
ELEMEN TARY SCHOOLS

With such an emphasis on church and household as the primary educative institutions it is not surprising that, in the matter of basic religious education, that other recognised institution, the school, should not be considered to be as important as an alternative or as a supplement to those traditional avenues. On the relatively few occasions when schooling had been associated with the setting up of a chantry, some form of elementary education became available but, after the dissolution of the chantries in the 1530s, where a school was refounded it was invariably as a grammar school for boys only. Undoubtedly, a schooling in the elements of the vernacular was provided in such schools, though only as a preliminary to the learning of Latin, as for example in Plymouth schoolmaster William Kempe’s ‘The Education of Children in Learning (1588)’ where it was recommended that such a programme should be continued only until the boy ‘be about seven years old, at which time he shall proceed to the second degree of schooling, which consisteth in learning the grammar’.99 Richard Mulcaster in his ‘Elementarie (1582)’ had been more concerned to justify the claims of the English tongue but, though he argues at one point that by teaching reading in school he aims to ‘lay the ground first of learning, in religion towards God and in religion itself to observe the law and ordinances of my country’,60 he nowhere develops this aim as the primary purpose of the education of all children, as the early Protestant reformers had done. Nor does he consider it necessary to establish schools for this purpose as Thomas Becon had done in his ‘New Catechisme (1559)’.61

Such a comprehensive system of elementary schooling continued to be called for, especially during the period of the Commonwealth. William Dell, for example, called for schools to be built in all towns and villages, stipulating at the same time that ‘in the villages no women be permitted to teach little children but such as are the most sober and grave’, and that ‘in these schools they first teach them to read in their native tongue, which they speak without teaching, and then presently as they understand, bring them to read the Holy Scriptures’.62 Dell’s stipulation with respect to women teachers was not new, of course. Francis Clement had, in 1587, complained that

children as we see almost everywhere are first taught either in private by men and women altogether rude and utterly ignorant of the due composing and just spelling of words, or else in common schools most commonly by boys, very seldom or never by any of sufficient skill.63

Charles Hoole, himself a grammar-school master of long experience, writing in the late 1630s, acknowledged that
The petty school is the place where indeed the first principles of all religion and learning ought to be taught, and therefore rather deserveth that more encouragement should be given to teachers of it, than that it should be left as work for poor women or others, whose necessity compel them to undertake it as a mere shelter from beggary.\(^6^4\)

William Walker, the master of the grammar school at Grantham, was similarly concerned that elementary schooling was left to ‘ignorant schoolmasters and school madams, whose reformation were well worth the inspection of gravest authority’.\(^6^5\)

Complaints and comments such as these provide indirect evidence that schooling at this elementary level was indeed available, though obviously not in the systematic fashion that the early reformers would have wished. However, early signs of provision are also evident in the church’s attempts to control education at all levels through diocesan injunctions and visitation as well as through the licensing of teachers. The 1536 Royal Injunction required of the clergy that ye do instruct the children of your parish such as will come to you at the least, to read English, so that thereby they may the better learn to believe, how to pray and how to live to God’s pleasure.\(^6^5\)

In practice, an injunction such as Bonner’s of 1555: “That schoolmasters of any sort be not admitted till they be by their ordinary or by his authority examined and allowed,”\(^6^7\) tended, with some few exceptions, to be applied only to male teachers of Latin grammar, even though subsequent injunctions and visitation articles, as well as the 1604 Canons, continued to be couched in ‘catch-all’ terms such as ‘None shall teach school without licence’ and visitation articles continued to enquire ‘whether any do presume to keep school within your parish or teach any children before he be duly examined and licensed by the ordinary for his sufficiency, life and conversation’ and to insist that ‘we shall not suffer or permit any to teach schools whether publicly or privately in any private houses within the parishes unless they shall bring licences first from us under our hand’.\(^6^8\) The 78th of the 1604 Canons stipulated that curates desirous to teach should be licensed before others ‘for the better increase of his own living, and training up of children in the principles of true religion’.\(^6^9\)

The Act of Uniformity of 1662 exacted an oath of non-resistance as well as the usual licence from all schoolmasters, a requirement exemplified in Sheldon’s 1665 visitation article which obliged churchwardens to enquire whether...
the said schoolmasters, ushers, schoolmistresses or teachers of youth, publicly or privately, do themselves frequent public prayers of the church and cause their scholars to do the same, and whether they appear well-affected to the government of His Majesty and the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England.70

The 'catch-all' nature of such orders is reflected, too, in the variety of licences actually issued. In addition to the majority of licences issued to teachers in grammar schools, we find cases such as that of John Barnwell who was licensed to teach boys the abcedarium and English letters in the parish of Walpole, in Suffolk, in 1582, or of Richard Prist in the following year to teach the art of writing, abcedarium and English letters in Methwold, in Norfolk. Thomas Woodwerde of Belford, in Northumberland, was licensed 'according to his enablement and education to keep a school and to teach children to read and write the English tongue and to cast accounts'. In 1607 David Palmer was licensed to teach English and writing at Watford in the diocese of London.71 Provision at this elementary level is also indicated in the records of presentment of those who were found to be teaching without licence. The 1565 visitation of the Archdeaconry of Essex produced the report that in the parish of 'Westilberye' 'One John Goose teacheth certain youth of the parish the Absye [ABC] and to read, unlicensed'. In 1581 in the Archdeaconry of Canterbury, the churchwardens reported that 'There is one John Bussher our clerk that teacheth some to read and some to sing but whether he be licensed thereunto we know not.' In 1613 Roger Hartfield of Arundel in Sussex presented 'an honest and poor man [that] doth teach small children to know their letters and read English, unlicensed'. In response to the Articles of Enquiry of 1579 in the Archdeaconry of Chichester, the vicar of Stoughton, in Sussex, reported that 'We have no schoolmaster here but I do teach the youth in the English tongue.72

But the problem of unlicensed teaching proved, unsurprisingly, difficult to solve. As late as 1682 it was noted that 'It is to be wished that order be taken according to law with all unlicensed schoolmasters and schoolmistresses and keepers of private academies, whereof there are great numbers in and about London.'73 Apart from the obvious issue of religious conformity, there were economic reasons why teachers (of either sex) at the elementary level would wish to avoid paying the fee exacted for the issuing of a licence, to say nothing of the cost of travelling to the place where the archdeacon's official was waiting to record the issue of the licence. Moreover, as Rosemary O'Day has pointed out, there is a considerable methodological problem facing the historian who wishes to make use of ecclesiastical records for study of the history of elementary education in the early modern period. From the
prescriptive evidence it would appear that the church, through its bishops and their officers, had an intense interest in the monitoring of the content and the teaching of such provision. But the practical implementation of such policy depended to a very large extent on the efficiency with which these men approached their responsibilities. Nor did every bishop pursue those who did not conform with the fervency of a Bancroft, a Laud or a Wren. The same would be true of the church-wardens whose responsibility it was to respond to the articles of visitation and to present those who were found, or indeed known, to be unlicensed or who failed to exhibit a licence previously issued. In the 1590 Visitations Returns for the diocese of Ely, for example, it was reported that though 20 parishes reported the presence of a schoolteacher, 45 made a return of ‘nullus’ and 86 remained blank. Even so, records are there to be used, and if they cannot reveal precisely how many elementary teachers were operating at this elementary level nor how efficiently they operated, they do at least provide direct evidence that at particular points in time named men and women were providing such education, albeit to a very small proportion of the population.

Studies of particular dioceses and localities have also revealed the existence of schools which had been endowed for the provision of an elementary form of education for a group of children who would never enter a grammar school or academy, and it is in this area of education that we begin to notice provision being made explicitly for girls to be educated outside of the home, in a formal institution where learning to read had as its primary aim an ability to read the Bible and other godly books. The bulk of the evidence for such endowed elementary education is to be found in wills (continuing, until 1858, to be under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts) wherein the rents from donated lands or the interest from a capital sum were indicated to be put to the provision of education for the children of those ‘sorts’ of parents usually labelled ‘poor’, ‘humble’, ‘labouring’, ‘decayed’. Often such testaments provide only the barest detail — a sum of money and the number and ‘sort’ of children to be provided for — as in the case of Michael Wentworth’s provision in 1587 of £5 per annum for a master to teach five poor children at Stradbroke in Suffolk. In 1562 in the village of Wenhamston in the same county, William Pepyn left £20 to educate poor children in ‘learning, godliness and virtue’, provision which was supplemented in the following year by the will of Reginald Lessey, who left a piece of land in Blythburgh for the same purpose. In 1635 the will of the London draper Charles Parrett left, among other bequests, the sum of £5 for the ‘instructing and teaching to read in the English tongue poor children born and bred’ in the parish of Boebrickhill in Buckinghamshire. Two years later in the same county, John Pym left an annuity of £10 to be paid to a master for the teaching of ten poor children at Brill. By a deed of 31
December 1642 Robert Dewhurst and his sister Catherine provided land, from the rents of which a school was to be built in Cheshunt, with a house for the master whose salary would be a generous £20 per annum, to teach the poor children of the parish to read ‘that they might know God the better’, as well as to write and cast accounts. The school survived, and in 1908 was a public elementary school with 230 pupils. At Brampton in Derbyshire the 1679 will of Peter Calton left the seemingly inadequate income of 10s per annum to provide for the teaching of two boys, yet subsequent supplementary endowments enabled the school to continue throughout the eighteenth century. In the same way, the £2 per annum from the rent charges of 11 acres at Easton in Leicestershire, which Thomas Collins bequeathed in his will of 1669 for the teaching of four poor children, was supplemented in the eighteenth century, and the school continued on into the nineteenth.

Other benefactors provided a little more detail. In 1586 for example, George Whately of Stratford-upon-Avon granted lands in Henley and other parts of Warwickshire, half the rents of which were to provide for a schoolmaster to teach 30 children reading, writing and arithmetic in Henley-in-Arden. The children were to be between 8 and 13 years old, were not to remain for more than three years, and were eligible for admission only if they had attended the Sunday school in the town for at least six months previously. In 1638 Sir Edward Alleyne left £100 in his will to purchase within 12 months of his death land in trust for the schooling of poor children of the parish of Hatfield Peverel in Essex. Other sums were provided for the purchase of cottages, and out of the total income £5 was to be paid by the trustees to a schoolmistress for the teaching of 11 children. In the same year, the London glazier Abraham Wall left £4 per annum for a schoolmaster to freely teach poor children of Heptonstall in Yorkshire, his birthplace, together with £1 per annum for the purchase and distribution of Bibles. The initiative received an enormous boost and virtual refoundation in 1643 when the Reverend Charles Greenwood of Thornhill provided a capital sum of £410 for its support, together with £100 for the building of a schoolhouse. The will of Robert Rayment of 1661 left a house and land to provide an income of £10 to be paid to the minister and churchwardens of Buckden in Huntingdonshire for a schoolmaster to teach the English tongue and the grounds and principles of true religion according to the Church of England to those of the village ‘as shall be too poor to pay’. The Lichfield draper and Commonwealth MP Thomas Minors left money in 1677 for a school in which were to be taught 30 poor boys to ‘read in English books until they could read the Bible’, a provision which one of his trustees, William Jesson, augmented in 1685 by a bequest of 20s per annum to buy Bibles for the poor scholars. Francis Willoughby made similar provision in his will of 1672, which left £4 per annum for a master or mistress to teach the poor
children of Middleton in Warwickshire, together with a sum of £20 to purchase Bibles for them. Anthony Walker, the rector of Fyfield in Essex by his will of 1687 (he died in 1692) left two houses in Fyfield and 56 acres in High Ongar in trust to Sir Francis Masham and others to establish a school in which a schoolmaster would be paid £8 per annum to teach the poor children of the parish of Fyfield, together with one from Ongar and one from Willingate, to read, write and cast accounts and to say their catechism. One pound was allocated for the purchase of books and paper for the poorest sort of children, plus £1 for Bibles. He also left two tenements in Fyfield for the residence of the schoolmaster or dame and the church clerk, the rent of the adjoining pastures to go to the keeping of the houses in repair. In 1679 William Austin of Trumpington, Cambridge, left 14 acres of land in Bottisham to put four of the poorest children born in Trumpington to school ‘until they can read a chapter in the Holy Bible perfectly, and then a Bible to be given to them and they dismissed and others of the said town to succeed as aforesaid’. Of the £500 left by Simon, Lord Digby, in 1694 for ‘good, pious and charitable uses’, the princely sum of £4 per annum was allocated for the teaching of the daughters of the poor in Coleshill, Warwickshire to read, knit, spin and sew, a similar sum being provided to teach boys to read, write and cast accounts so as to qualify them to become bailiffs or gentlemen’s servants or undertake ‘some honest trade’.

It will be seen that many bequests provided funds which, even if they were regularly forthcoming (which some obviously were not), were so small as to be virtually non-viable. As a result, many produced no subsequent evidence of their survival, whilst others became subsumed under eighteenth-century charity school provision and surfaced later as elementary schools in the nineteenth century. Some wills, however, provided funds which gave a school a much greater chance of survival. In 1611 for example, Marmaduke Longdale of Dowthorpe Hall, Skirlaugh in Yorkshire, left £200 for a school. Richard Aldworth left £4000 to provide an annual income of £215 for a school for 20 boys in Reading which, after much delay, became the Reading Bluecoat School. In 1634 William Smyth left £250 to purchase land, the rents of which were to be used for a schoolmaster to teach ‘all youth, rich and poor, female and male’ who had been born in West Chiltington, Sussex. Launcelot Bathurst’s 1651 bequest of £150 was to make provision for the poor of the parish of Staplehurst to be taught reading and writing, together with ‘instruction in their duty to God and man’, an initiative which was supplemented in 1656 by a subscription which raised the sum of £40. In 1662 the Reverend John Scargill left £540 for a school at Westhallam in Derbyshire. The schoolmaster was to be paid £10 per annum to teach reading, writing and casting accounts, together
with the church catechism. Unusually, a maintenance grant of 9d per week was to be paid to 12 ‘pensioners’ in the school.88

Some few will-makers were concerned to direct their bequests to the education of girls only, though examples of this occur only at the end of the period, as in the 1683 will of Bartholomew Hickling. Part of the monies accruing from the rents of land left for the purpose was to be spent in providing Bibles to be distributed to children in the area around Loughborough. The rest was to be used to found a school for 20 poor girls from Loughborough, with a mistress who would be paid £4 per annum to

... teach and instruct the said 20 poor girls in learning the English alphabet of letters and the true spelling and reading of the English tongue, in good manner and behaviour and also in the grounds and principles of Christian religion.

Hickling also took the wise precaution of appointing a trust of eight local men to administer his bequests after he and his wife had died.89 Simon Digby’s school in Coleshill, Warwickshire, was similarly designated for ‘the daughters of the poor’ in 1694, as was that founded by Offilia Rawlins, who left £100 for that purpose, in the same year. In 1705 Lady Anne Walter left £600 in her will of 20 July 1705 to provide a school for 24 poor girls of Sarsden and Churchill parishes, to be admitted between the ages of 7 and 9 and to stay for four years, when they would be given a Bible and a Prayer Book.90

For the vast majority of these schools we have no evidence of their subsequent history, nor indeed whether the wishes of the benefactor were actually put in train. Some few foundations, however, provide evidence of the provision of elementary education for girls when such provision was not the primary purpose of the institution. Christ’s Hospital, founded in 1553 on the site of the old Greyfriars buildings in Newgate Street, London, was such an institution, having at the outset as part of its offerings a school for poor girls. The hospital’s ‘General Accounts’ for the opening year show payments of 6s 8d to the ‘governesses’ as salary, together with other small occasional payments to ‘Goodwife Smoothing’ and ‘Goodwife Saepsched’ for ‘the teaching of the women children’. Further supplementary contributions point to a continuing presence as, for example, in 1625 when George Dunn (an ‘Old Blue’, as former pupils of the attached boys’ grammar school were known) bequeathed £4 per annum for 27 years ‘for teaching them [the girls] to read English that they may the better attain unto the knowledge of God and an understanding of the Word’. In 1638 Sarah Wale left a messuage (a property) rents of which were to provide for a mistress to teach reading at a salary of £5 per annum, with a further £5 for ‘a sufficient able man’ to catechise the girls.
1644 Dame Elizabeth Clere left £100 for the teaching of reading and needlework. The Great Fire of London destroyed the school buildings in 1666, when the schools were evacuated to Islington, and when these were demolished in 1902 both the Boys' and the Girls' schools were removed to Horsham where they both flourish today, though for a rather different clientele.91

What is now known as the Red Maids' School in Bristol started in much the same way as Christ's. In 1634 the mayor-elect Andrew Charlton, with other members of the Bristol Common Council, began to plan for a girls' school to be part of John Whiston's hospital foundation known as 'The Queen Elizabeth's Hospital in Bristol', with the sum of £1000 left in 1606 by Dame Mary Ramsey, who with her husband Sir Thomas had been an earlier benefactor of Christ's, and with other benefactions including £200 from Mrs Anne Colston. With these monies a school for 40 'poor women children whose parents, being freemen and burgesses of the said city, shall be deceased or decayed' with a 'grave, painful and modest woman of good life and conversation' as their teacher who would be responsible to see that they were 'kept, maintained and also taught to read English and to sew', from the ages of 8 or 9 until they were 18. As was so often the case, the implementation of these arrangements proved more difficult than their authors might have intended. However, after much coming and going in the Court of Chancery, the school started with a small complement of 12 girls. Like Christ's, it survived and flourishes to this day.92

At the end of the seventeenth century the Children's Hospital at Great Yarmouth in Norfolk took in boys and girls from the ages of 5 to 15, either as orphans or when their parents were unable to maintain them. The main aim of the institution was to prepare the children for apprenticeship or work, but the contract of Abraham Bayly, who became master of the hospital in 1696, gives a clue to its limited educational aims:

To be allowed for teaching of every child, viz. 20s when it can read well the Bible, 20s more when it can write well, 20s when it can cypher well to the rule of three inclusive, and 20s when each girl can sew plain work well.

Moreover, the children were to be given 2s 6d each when they achieved these targets. As each child entered or left the establishment, the master recorded in the hospital's register a comment on his or her level of achievement. It was recorded of Mary Clark, for example, that she 'can't read at all' when she entered in 1700, though after four years in residence 'she reads her testament but indifferently and has gone through her sampler'.93 It was, of course, only schools such as these, with relatively large endowments and, more importantly,
owning property which increased in value over time, which provide
documentation of a serial kind over a period of time.

Whilst some founders provided funds for the teaching of ‘poor children’ or
‘youth’, others were careful to indicate that they were making provision for
both boys and girls in their bequests. William Smyth of West Chilton in
Sussex, for example, left £250 in 1634 to purchase land which would produce
a rent of £5 or thereabouts for a master to ‘teach all youth, rich and poor,
female and male, born in West Chilton’. Farther north, at Great Marlow in
Buckinghamshire, William Borlase made available funds for a more substantial
endowment of a school which would provide an elementary education for 24
girls and a similar number of boys.94 In 1655 Sir Francis Nethersole left an
endowment of lands in Warton and Polesworth in Warwickshire for a school
in Polesworth, stipulating that though there was to be one school building to
house both boys and girls, they were to be taught in separate classes, with
a master and a mistress (for whom he provided houses) who would be
responsible for teaching the boys to read and write English and the girls to
read and ‘work the needle’, and all were to be grounded in ‘the principles of
Christian religion’.95 In 1663 Robert Towrie, of Aldbrough in East Yorkshire,
left 130 acres of land, the rents of which were to go to the general relief of the
poor of the area, including the paying of a schoolmaster to teach both boys
and girls. The 1674 will of John Bosworth of Yardley in Worcestershire left
land from the rents of which a schoolmaster was to be paid £10 per annum to
 teach the boys and girls of Long Itchington in Warwickshire. In 1678 Joseph
King of Ongar in Essex left houses with rents of £35 per annum for a master’s
salary of £10 per annum and £1 per annum for the purchase of Bibles and
devotional books for six boys and four girls. The school was still in operation
in 1906.96 Beside endowing village schools in Skipwith and Nun Monkton in
East Yorkshire, Dorothy Wilson, a spinster who died in 1717, founded two
schools in that city, one for boys and one for girls.97 The fact that provision
was made explicitly for girls as well as boys, and sometimes for girls only,
suggests that it would not be unreasonable to suppose that when the
provision was for ‘poor children’ or ‘youth of the parish’ this was not intended
to exclude girls from the benefits so provided.

The lack of detail in such wills which has been referred to is, of course,
highly frustrating to the historian of education. An exception, however, is
provided in the will of Sir John Offley, dated 4 October 1645, though not
proved until 1658. In it he charged his executors to build

two decent and convenient schoolhouses, both of stone within Great
Madeley in the County of Stafford in a place there called the Parsonage
Yard, with a fair, comely, strong and substantial stone wall before both the said schoolhouses to be built in the nature and after the manner of a courtyard before the said schoolhouses towards the king's highway, with a wall or partition in the middle to divide them, viz. one schoolhouse for the teaching of boys English, Latin and to write and cast accounts, and the other for the teaching of girls to read English and to work all kinds of needlework. The schoolhouse for the teaching of boys to be 20 feet in length and 16 feet of breadth within the walls, and the height thereof to be 13 feet, and to have a chimney built of stone therein of 8 feet wide. And the schoolhouse for teaching of girls to be 16 feet of length and 16 feet of breadth within the walls and the height thereof to be 12 or 13 feet and have a chimney likewise built of stone therein of 8 feet wide, and that both the said schoolhouses be floored all over with good strong oaken board. And for the erecting, building and finishing of both the said schoolhouses handsomely, strongly and substantially and sufficiently with all things needful and necessary, decent and fitting, I do give will and bequeath the sum of £100 or £120 or whatsoever more will do, and finish the same in and after the form and manner aforesaid at the decision of my executors. I will and bequeath that my next heir shall assure and settle three score pounds a year... £30 per annum for the finding and maintaining of a sufficient schoolmaster for the teaching of the said boys in the said school... and £10 for a sufficient usher, and £20 for the finding and maintaining of a sufficient schoolmistress for the teaching of the said girls. And that the Lord or Lady of the manors of Madeley... shall have the sole election and choice of the schoolmaster and schoolmistress often as need shall require... whom I desire to have a special care in their choice as well of the skill and sufficiency as of the carriage and behaviour of the parties they make choice of, always provided that the now vicar of Madeley John Jackson be none of them, and I will and bequeath that all the boys and girls of Madeley, Onneley and Mucklestone parish be free to come to be taught in the said schools without paying anything at all for their schooling and teaching therein.

In a codicil to his will Sir John also left the sum of £250 for the building of two houses for the master and mistress.

The school is remarkable not only in respect of the detail provided in the will, but also in the fact that it was actually built in accordance with those details, and survived to be included in George Griffiths' 1860 report, *The Free Schools and Endowments of Staffordshire*, by which time 'No Latin has been taught for many years', though the salaries of the master and mistress had
been increased by Lord Crewe, the Lord of the Manor, to £60 and £40 respectively and the Madras system of teaching was being used. The School Charity Commissioners reported in 1825 that each school had about 60 pupils in attendance. Moreover, in 1855 the then headmaster was able to report in a local newspaper article that the school continued to flourish, though on the horizon were plans to convert it to a primary school with the building of a new secondary modern school in the village.58

Very occasionally alternative forms of provision are to be found, as at Dedham in Essex, where in 1589 the classicis (presbytery of elders) determined that every child in the village should be taught to read, a set of ‘orders’ requiring that young children of the town to be taught to read English and that the moity of that which is given at the communion be employed for the teaching of such poor men’s children as shall be adjudged able to bear it themselves, and a convenient place to be appointed for the teacher of them.59

A quite different kind of support came from the inhabitants of the Fens village of Willingham who, in 1593, joined together to subscribe the impressive sum of £102 7s 8d. The fund was subscribed to by 102 people, with only five donations being more than £2. The articles which were drawn up insisted that only the children of Willingham residents should be taught in the school, with most being required to pay a small fee, the children of the poor alone being taught free of charge. Whether the original subscribers intended that the school should be anything other than an elementary school is not clear, though this quickly did become clear when William Norton, the master, was licensed to teach grammar in 1596. Thereafter the school regularly sent boys to Oxford and Cambridge, though like most very small grammar schools these would be a small minority, with the majority of pupils leaving school when they had acquired the elements of the vernacular. A similar form of financing elementary education is found in the village of Staplehurst in Kent when in 1656 a subscription of £40 was raised to supplement the £150 left by Lancelot Bathurst in his will of 1651 for the education of the poor of the parish in reading, writing and ‘instruction in their duty to God and man’.101 David Underdown has indicated an unusual form of financing a school in uncovering the work of Mrs Hannah Gifford, who in 1651 was appointed by the Town Corporation of Dorchester in Dorset to be mistress of a school at a salary of £10 per annum if fewer than 30 pupils came forward, and £12 if the numbers exceeded that. In fact, at one time she had over 60 pupils in the school. The finance for the school came in part from the receipts at the annual Gunpowder
Plot sermon, which in the later years of the school's history in the 1670s came to only £1 10s. Mrs Gifford was charged to teach her pupils to read and to learn the catechism, though the orientation of the school's curriculum is revealed by her receipt in 1658 of primers, Bibles, testaments and 'other small books' to the value of £3 5s 7d, and in 1666 of eight New Testaments, 11 psalters, 13 primers and 12 horn books.101

The evidence for elementary education for girls is scattered and diverse, with the relatively ephemeral nature of such schools as we have been able to note adding to our frustration. But for our purpose there is sufficient evidence to show that at this educational and social level, schooling was provided by both men and women founders for girls to be taught by both masters and mistresses, sometimes alongside boys and sometimes on their own, and that the over-riding aim of such education was a religious one – the fostering of a God-fearing and deferential clientele.