

# **THE ORIGIN AND EXPANSION OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649032945

The Origin and Expansion of the Sunday-School by H. Clay Trumbull

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**H. CLAY TRUMBULL**

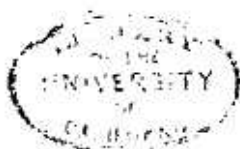
**THE ORIGIN AND  
EXPANSION OF THE  
SUNDAY-SCHOOL**



THE  
ORIGIN AND EXPANSION  
OF THE  
SUNDAY-SCHOOL

BY H. CLAY TRUMBULL  
"

BEING AN EXCERPT FROM "YALE LECTURES ON THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL"  
BY THE SAME AUTHOR

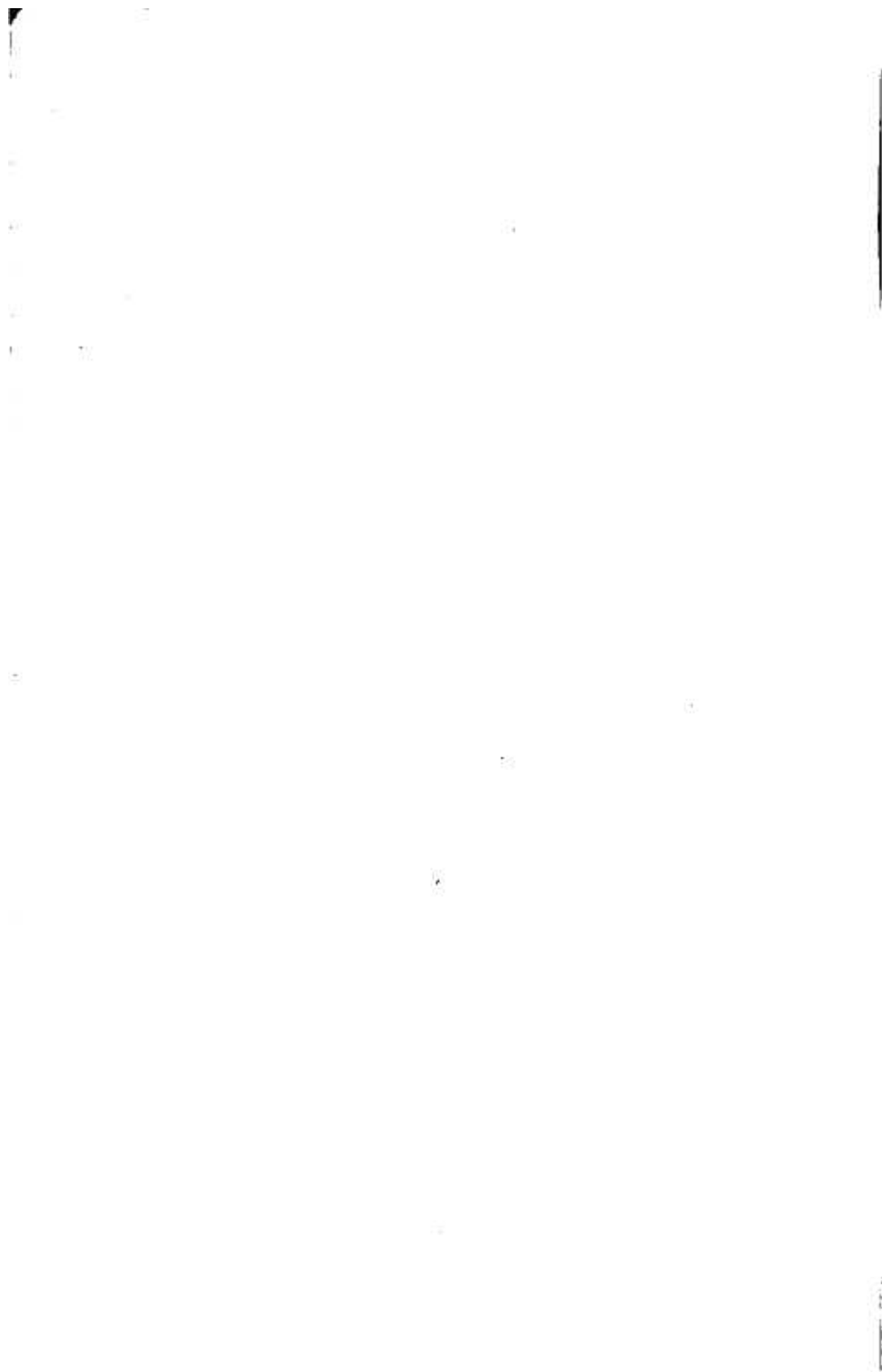


PHILADELPHIA  
THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TIMES CO.  
1906

## LECTURE I.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL: ITS JEWISH ORIGIN AND  
ITS CHRISTIAN ADOPTION.

1883-4





## I.

### *THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL: ITS JEWISH ORIGIN AND ITS CHRISTIAN ADOPTION.*

Definition of a Sunday-school.—Rabbinical Traditions of its Primeval Prominence.—Old Testament Light on its Pathway.—Its Mentions in Ancient History.—Its Prominence in the Synagogue Plans.—Its Primal Curriculum.—Its Essential Methods of Working.—Its Fundamental Importance in the Jewish Economy.—Jesus as a Scholar in the Sunday-school.—As a Teacher there.—His Methods of Teaching.—His Command to Start Sunday-schools Everywhere.—Apostolic Sunday-school Work.—Sunday-schools as the Basis of the Christian Church.

The Sunday-school: Its Origin, Mission, Methods, and Auxiliaries; this is the subject of a series of lectures which I am to deliver here at the invitation of the honored Faculty of Yale Divinity School. And, as preliminary to an intelligent discussion of the theme, it is important to arrive at a definition of the term "Sunday-school," as that term is to be understood and employed in this discussion.

A Sunday-school is an agency of the Church, by which the Word of God is taught interlocutorily, or catechetically, to children and other learners clustered in groups or classes under separate teachers; all these groups or classes being associated under a common head. Herein the Sunday-school is differentiated from the catechismal



general service, from the expository Bible lecture, from the children's meeting, and from any school for secular instruction on the first day of the week. Its source of authority is God's Church; its subject-matter of study is the Bible; its form of teaching includes a free use of question and answer; its membership includes children; its arrangement is by groups clustering severally around individual teachers, as component portions of a unified whole. Any one of these particulars lacking, a school held on Sunday fails of being specifically a Sunday-school. All of these particulars being found, a gathering is substantially a Sunday-school, on whatever day of the week it assembles, or by whatsoever name it be called.

That the Sunday-school in its essential characteristics, as thus defined, was a prominent feature in the economy of the Jewish Church, and that it was included as an integral factor of the Christian Church in the declared plans of the divine Founder of that church, would seem to be evident in the light of the plain facts of history—sacred and secular. It is to those facts that I invite fresh attention just here.

The origin of the Sunday-school, or of this catechetical Bible-school, like the origin of the synagogue, is not fixed with accuracy in Jewish history. Traditions of both these religious agencies run far back of the trustworthy records; but even these traditions have a certain value, as indicative of the earlier existence of the institutions about which they are found already clustering, (with a deeply rooted popular confidence in their verity,) when the institutions themselves have their first distinct record. Hence the multiplied traditions of the prominence and the power of the synagogue Bible-school in

the earlier ages of the world's story, which are to be found recorded in the Talmud and the Targums, are of interest as giving an air of antiquity to that agency of instruction when first it appears in unmistakable plainness as an established historical fact, surrounded by many myths and legends of its primeval honor and usefulness.

The Rabbis tell us that Methuselah was a teacher of the Mishna, before the Flood;<sup>1</sup> that, after the Deluge, Shem and Eber had a House of Instruction where the Halacha was studied;<sup>2</sup> that Abraham was a student of the Torah when he was three years old,<sup>3</sup> and that he was afterward under the teaching of Melchizedek in matters concerning the priesthood;<sup>4</sup> that young Jacob as a good boy did go to the Bible-school, while Esau as a bad boy did not;<sup>5</sup> that Dinah the daughter of Jacob came to grief<sup>6</sup> through playing truant from the Bible-school while her brothers were in attendance there;<sup>7</sup> that among the pupils of Moses in his great Bible-school were his father-in-law Jethro and young Joshua, and that the latter was preferred above the sons of Moses, as his successor, because of his greater zeal and fidelity in the Bible-school exercises;<sup>8</sup> that the victory of Deborah and Barak reopened the schools for Bible study, which had been closed by the Canaanites;<sup>9</sup> that Samuel conducted Bible-schools which were continued to the days of Elisha and

<sup>1</sup> Yalqut on Gen., 12 a. See, also, Dellitsch-Weber's *Syst. der Altkynag. Paläst. Theol.*, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Targ. Jon. on Gen. 22: 19; 24: 62. Bereshith Rabba, ch. 84; comp. ch. 56 and ch. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Bereshith Rabba, ch. 95.

<sup>4</sup> Bereshith Rabba, ch. 43. Yalqut on Gen., 19 c. <sup>5</sup> Bereshith Rabba, ch. 63

<sup>6</sup> Gen. 34: 1 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Qoheleth Rabba, 93 a.

<sup>8</sup> Yalqut on Exod., 76 a; on Josh., 3 a. Comp. also Berakhoth, 63 b.

<sup>9</sup> Targ. Jon. on Judg. 5: 2.

beyond;<sup>1</sup> that wicked King Ahaz had the Bible-schools for children closed in order to exterminate the religion of Moses; that good King Hezekiah, on the other hand, not only fostered the Bible-school system,<sup>2</sup> but personally bore his own children to receive instruction in one of these schools;<sup>3</sup> and finally that the prophecy of Haggai concerning the greater glory of the second temple<sup>4</sup> had reference to the Bible teaching which was to be carried on there, and which, by means of the synagogues and Bible-schools, was to be extended near and far.<sup>5</sup> All this is mere fanciful tradition, it is true; but even as tradition it has an interest through what it shows of the estimation in which the Bible-school was held by the Rabbis, at the time of the recording of these steadily gathering traditions concerning its ancient place and power.

In the line of gleams of light from the Old Testament text on this pathway of rabbinical tradition, we find, in Genesis,<sup>6</sup> a reference to Abraham's three hundred and eighteen instructed<sup>7</sup> retainers. In the Chronicles, we see

<sup>1</sup> Targ. Jon. on 1 Sam. 19: 18 f.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. 28: 24; 29: 3. See Rashi, *in loco*; also Molitor's *Philos. d. Gesch.*, Part I., p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> Berakhoth, 10 a, b. Menorath Ha-maor, iii., 2, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Hag. 2: 9.

<sup>5</sup> Comp. Shir Rabba on Cant. 7: 12, 13; Yalqut, *in loco*; Erubin, 21 a.

<sup>6</sup> Gen. 14: 14.

<sup>7</sup> The Hebrew word (*chaneekh*) translated in our English Bible "trained," includes in its meaning the idea of a training in religion as well as in a use of weapons; and its use in this place would presuppose a process of school instruction under Abraham's oversight. (Comp. Gesenius's *Thesaurus*, s. v., with citation from Kimchi; Fleischer, in *Levy's Neukchr. Lex.*, s. v.; Wellhausen's *Sitz. und Vorarb.*, Heft 3, p. 154; Dillmann's *Comm. s. Gen.*, *in loco*; Buxtorf's *Lex. Heb. et Chald.*, s. v.; Schaff-Lange's *Comm.*, *in loco*, with citation from Wordsworth: "Abram had trained them in spiritual things in the service of God, as well as in fidelity to himself; see chap. 18: 19; 24: 12-49.") Junius and Tremellius, in the Genevan Bible of 1630, say that