

13. HOW SUNDAY (ONLY) SCHOOLS SAVED AMERICA

Sunday Schools began in England as an effort to teach impoverished children how to read and write and to teach them about Christ. The Bible was the primary textbook in these Sunday Schools, as well as their counterparts in America. This movement resulted in long-lasting social change on both sides of the Atlantic.

June of 1780 brought an oppressive and breath-stealing heatwave across much of England.³⁴¹

Through open windows and probably the main doorway in their high-ceilinged Anglican cathedral, a congregation in the factory town of Gloucester could hear children in the street running, cursing, and singing lewd songs. As usual, the parson read the Sunday sermon from his elevated pulpit. But today, he was surely perspiring in his black Church of England robe. As he preached, the nearly motionless air easily conducted the sounds of the ragamuffins into the sanctuary.

One distracted congregant, a local businessman by the name of Robert Raikes,³⁴² was especially troubled by the ongoing situation.

All week the cobblestone and dirt streets of his city stunk from the repugnant garbage and urine that were flung from wooden buckets in the stifling summer sun, then briefly trickled toward the River Severn before it dried underfoot.

For six days each week, Monday through Saturday, the waifs who were now creating so much commotion outside toiled inside. Most of them worked in danger-ridden manufacturing plants, such as the Gloucester pin factories.³⁴³ Others were compelled to twist and squirm up into tight chimneys and scrub toxic ash and creosote from suffocating flues.³⁴⁴

At least on the six workdays, Mr. Raikes did not wonder if a window would be broken at the printshop, which had been part of his family home for nearly a century. From dawn to dusk every day but Sunday, the poverty-stricken children were kept busy eking out an existence and doing so out of sight. Today, however, was Sunday, the Sabbath, and the kids who were normally indoors emerged. Illiterate and unaware of the Bible's good news of salvation through Jesus Christ, their raucous play often became vandalism. What could be done?

Raikes is affectionately remembered as a talkative and sometimes flamboyant newspaper publisher.³⁴⁵ He was also a cheerful and devout member of the Anglican Church of England.³⁴⁶ For Raikes and his family, the Sunday Sabbath meant to worship and rest as his Gutenberg-like wooden printing press stood idle. He and his workers were healthy compared to the uneducated and soot-covered children employed as chimney sweeps and the many youngsters who were pin makers. Such children could be quickly discarded when an arm was broken or a small hand mangled in the gears of unforgiving machinery.

Again, what could be done to reach the street children of Raikes' city? He had already worked to change the approach of prisons, where kids that eventually descended to the level of criminals were sent. But he found that simple reform was, at best, only a temporary change of mind and hopelessly ineffective in the long term. The youngsters needed *transformation*, a permanent change of *heart*, before they ended up as imprisoned adults. And this could only come by submitting to God and living by His word, the Bible. But how could they be reached and taught?

The focus on the Bible as the textbook for England's poverty-stricken, illiterate children did not happen

because of a teacher, a social worker, or a church denomination. Instead, God called a newspaperman.

By burdening Robert Raikes to find a way to offer impoverished boys and girls the opportunity to learn to read and write and then reporting on its success in his newspaper, God launched a movement whereby unsupervised and uneducated kids with little hope of improving their situation received basic academics and moral guidance.³⁴⁷ The Bible was the primary text in this humble Sunday-only educational effort that was eventually known as "Sunday school," and the movement spread quicker and further than anyone could imagine.³⁴⁸ After America's Revolutionary War, England's still embryonic Sunday schooling movement jumped the Atlantic to the United States.

While some say that Raikes may have been more concerned with social improvement (rescuing mischievous children from a life of poverty and future imprisonment), others, such as Hannah More and her sister³⁴⁹ soon launched similar Sunday-only schools driven by a desire to see the Holy Spirit turn illiterate kids to salvation in Christ.³⁵⁰ Reading skills among the masses of child laborers, both urban and rural, greatly increased. In the process, the gospel of Jesus Christ touched more than minds. It penetrated the hearts of students and teachers alike, and because the Bible was the primary textbook in most of these free schools, Bible literacy and ownership exploded. Brown's Bible and family study Bibles in its mold seemed to be everywhere. For over a century, no English language family study Bible surpassed its worldwide popularity.

AT LEAST 26 EDITIONS

At least 26 different editions (and an unknown number of printings) of Brown's *Self-Interpreting Bible* were published in the US, UK, Nova Scotia, and Australia between 1778 and the early 1900s. The (Cyrus I.) Scofield Reference Bible with its dispensationalist perspective on end times (*dispensationalism is the view that breaks world history into several dispensations, roughly: 1) Creation to Noah's Flood, 2) the Flood to Moses, 3) Moses to the Resurrection, and 4) the Resurrection to the Eternal State / more specifically, Scofield wrote of "Seven Dispensations," which can be accessed via <https://tinyurl.com/2ru2c8uf>*) and accommodation of Darwinian evolution through its teaching of the "Gap" theory (the "Gap Theory" proposed that there is an unseen gap of millions or billions of years between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2) and the related Day/Age theory (which proposes that the seven days of Creation week noted in Genesis chapter 1 were each an Age of time), finally overtook sales of Brown's Bible in the decade prior to America's "Scopes Monkey Trial" at Dayton, Tennessee (1925). Regarding the Scofield Reference Bible, "The 1917 edition added Bishop Ussher's dating system to help place the biblical books in chronological context. However, this feature added a wrinkle not wholly intended. Scofield's dating of books consistently tended toward the conservative side; his dating of the Major and Minor

Prophets, for example, affirmed early dates and single authorship and other such standard evangelical positions. On the question of the age of the earth, however, Scofield took a deliberately agnostic stance. His notes affirm the possibility of a day-age interpretation of Genesis 1-2, and he also posited a gap between verses 1 and 2 of Genesis 1—all interpretive alternatives that could leave all options open insofar as a position on the age of the earth. Ussher's dates, however, imply a young earth, roughly six-thousand-years old." (Mangum and Sweetnam, *The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church*, p. 97.) This helped lead to a pivotal moment in Dayton: Tennessee's so-called Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925. There, in the sweltering July heat, the atheist-leaning attorney Clarence Darrow defended John Scopes, a Physical Education teacher who lied and said he taught evolution while substituting in a biology class. Darrow challenged his adversary, the outspoken Christian attorney William Jennings Bryan, to defend his position that humans did not evolve, since he believed in long ages like the "gap" promoted by Scofield. Acceptance of the idea of a supposed "gap" in Genesis 1 gave an opportunity for seminary professors, pastors, and other influencers to insert millions of years for accommodation of evolution. It was after this and related exchanges between the two famous attorneys that—with no hermeneutical justification—the need to believe that the six days of creation were ordinary twenty-four-hour days was widely replaced by millions-of-years-long-days. Brown's *Self-Interpreting Bible's* covenantal and literal view of recent creation was eventually overshadowed—due in large part to the growing popularity of the idea known as Darwinian Evolution, and in part to the immense popularity of Scofield's premillennial "dispensational" view of eschatology/end times. In 1909, when Oxford University Press became Cyrus Scofield's publisher, the long ages of evolutionism were invited into the margins of Scofield's study Bible. Even so, per author and researcher Bodie Hodge, "it was the 1870s when most colleges and universities in the Western World fell to long ages and secularism. Some tried to retain God with the Gap Theory, Day Age, and so on. (See Roberts and Turner, *Sacred and the Secular University*, an insightful study on the shift of universities.)" By 1925, it was this idea of indeterminate long ages supposedly in the Bible that was used to justify the teaching of Darwin's eons even to gradeschool children in government school classrooms.

After visiting the USA during the generation after Washington and Brown, the French political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in *Democracy in America* that the thing that made the United States morally strong was the widespread respect that Americans had for the Bible—based on the Ten Commandments as the standard for morality. De Tocqueville stated: "The sects [Christian denominations] that exist in the United States are innumerable. They all differ in respect to the worship which is due to the Creator; but they all agree in respect to the duties which are due from man to man. Each sect adores the Deity in its own peculiar manner, but all sects preach the same moral law in the name of God. . . . Moreover, all the sects of the United States are comprised within the great unity of Christianity, and Christian morality is everywhere the same. . . . In the United States the sovereign authority is religious. . . . There is no country

in the whole world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence than in America. . . since the country where it now has the widest sway is both the most enlightened and the freest."³⁵¹

The layman-equipping study notes designed by Rev. John Brown made his "self-interpreting" study Bible unique in many ways. Never before was such an expansive compendium of core Christian training combined between the covers of an English Bible.³⁵² Not even the acclaimed Geneva Bible of two centuries earlier featured an array of study tools and cross-references as rich.

As already noted, the first-ever United States edition was a completely new single-volume oversize design.³⁵³ The new design featured much bigger pages, making it the largest single-volume illustrated and annotated English study Bible ever printed in the US up to that time—which also made this American edition truly substantial, unique, and historic. Even the paper and movable metal type were manufactured in the USA as part of the struggling young republic's effort to establish a strong printing industry after the devastating war.

When Rev. Brown died in faraway Scotland in 1787, he left behind handwritten notes for hundreds of text changes and typographical corrections that he hoped would be included in a future edition if ever another printing were undertaken. Two of his adult sons saw to it that their father's improvements were implemented. Some of the words and phrases in Brown's original study notes had been so uniquely "lowland Scot" in nature that they were hard for non-Scots to quickly understand. By his request, they were replaced with words and phrases that were more common and less cumbersome for readers in England, the USA, and elsewhere.³⁵⁴

The unique study Bible's significant capability to equip families worldwide with the clearly communicated gospel of Christ was extremely effective. The spiritual growth that resulted from using Brown's Bible and its generally "inductive" approach to personal Bible study, plus its included teaching tools, affirmed the faith of ordinary Christians throughout the English-speaking world. For over thirteen decades, the extensive distribution stimulated in part by George Washington's decision to allow his name to be noted atop the long list of subscribers in the 1792 edition inspired people from virtually every social level of society. Beginning in New York City and eventually expanding into virtually every part of the USA and throughout the world, the dozens of printings of Brown's *Self-Interpreting Bible* with its "Complete System of the Christian Religion" turned hearts and minds to the Creator and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And while the total quantity of copies eventually printed by the many different publishers is not known,³⁵⁵ the number of lives impacted is undoubtedly many millions.

DECODING PRINTER FONTS AND ROMAN NUMERALS OF THE 1700s

Unfamiliar words (and modern replacement samples)

Thee (you), *Thine* (yours), *Religion* (varies, but usually Christianity), *hitherto* (yet), *Providence* (God), *providence* (the wisdom of God).

Old-English letter styles (and their modern look)

As of 2023, Wikipedia stated the following about the "long s"—which was a staple letter style at the time the 1792 New York edition of Brown's Bible was printed. The Wikipedia entry includes several helpful word samples; "The long s, "f," is an archaic form of the lowercase letter "s." It replaced the single s, or one or both of the letters s in a 'double s' sequence (e.g., 'finfulnefs' for 'sinfulness'.

and ‘poffefs’ or ‘pofsefs’ for ‘possess’—but never ‘poffeff’). . . . The modern “s” letterform is known as the ‘short’, ‘terminal’, or ‘round’ s.”

The “f,” the “s” and the “long s”

“f” (f, as in “free” or “fast”)

“f” (looks like an “s”, as in “she” or “sanctify”; this “s” looks exactly like an “f” except that it has no nib to the right of the lengthwise—up/down—line, near the middle of the letter’s stem).

For the letter “f” without nib on right:

- If at the end of a word (fulnefs, righteousnefs) then use the modern looking “s.”
- If freestanding anywhere else in the word, then use the “f” symbol (“f” with no horizontal crossover of the lengthwise portion in the middle of the stem).
- If immediately before another “s” within the same word, then “ff” (without nib on right).

Examples:

Acts XV:28 “necefsary” [necessary]

Ezekiel I:3 “exprefsly” [expressly]

Ezekiel I:4 “brightnefs” [brightness]

Roman numerals:

M = 1,000

C = 100

L = 50

X = 10

V = 5

I = 1

1792 (M CCCM XC II)

0158 (CLVIII)

0023 (XXIII)

Certainly, the text of Scripture itself is as perfectly errant today as when first combined with John Brown’s study notes and devotional reflections some 250 years ago. Even so, various passages in the remarkable 1792 facsimile that follows can feel somewhat shrouded at first due to old-English style letters, unfamiliar words, and the Roman Numeral chapter numbering system that we are largely unaccustomed to today. Be assured, however, that God’s Holy Word is timeless, and like He did for so many families of the 1790s, God’s Holy Spirit can excite your loved ones to the absolute truth, trustworthiness, and authoritative power of the Bible. We can comprehend God’s thoughts—revealed to us in the Scriptures—through the Holy Spirit, who comforts and lives within all who have repented and received Jesus as Savior.³⁵⁶

This applies not only to the classic “Authorized Version” of Scripture (now commonly known as the KJV/ King James Version),³⁵⁷ the most popular and ubiquitous English translation at the time of Brown and Washington, but also the more recent translations that are widely available today. Whether you prefer the King James, New King James (NKJV), New International (NIV), New Living Translation (NLT), English Standard (ESV), New American Standard Bible (NASB), or the Christian Standard Bible (CSB), which are all versions that have come since the KJV was last substantially updated at Oxford in 1769, each is a translation of the Scriptures mainly from Hebrew and Greek into modern English. When consistently read, each one can cultivate respect and love for Jesus.

As with many of the Bibles bound and given a prominent and convenient place in their subscribers’ homes in 1792, consider placing this facsimile in a similar place in your home. Doing so can remind you of Christians

who have come before and repeatedly inspire you to live in obedience to its precepts. It can serve as a visual cue that sparks natural questions and conversation as you also offer hospitality to friends and family.

Be sure to keep your everyday Bible, the one you most frequently study and take to church, nearby for easy reference and passage comparisons. Read it, live it, and share it at every opportunity you get!



Printing the Self-Interpreting Bible was much like the illustration above.

What Happened?

Next, we will look at factors that contributed to the explosion in demand for and reading of the Bible in America, from the mid-1700s to the mid-1800s, including examining the role that Brown’s *Self-Interpreting Bible* played.

(1776) The thirteen British colonies in America officially issue a document that specifies wrongs incurred and declares independence from the King of England.

(1776) An embargo of Bibles and other goods from England is instituted due to America’s Revolutionary War.



Bibles from the United Kingdom were embargoed during America’s Revolutionary War.

(1778) The first printing of Brown’s *Self-Interpreting Bible* is completed in Edinburgh, Scotland, supported in part from the personal life savings of the preacher/theologian who wrote the study sections, Rev. John Brown of Haddington. Just over a dozen copies of this rare original edition are known to exist in the world today. Brown died in 1787. (At least 26 different English editions were created.³⁵⁸ There was an unknown number of printings among those editions from 1778 to the early 1900s, and most featured different or optional illustrations, maps, and background information. Beginning in the mid-1800s, some editions featured showy bindings and extra commentary not written by Brown.)

(1780) The “Sunday-only school” movement (widely credited to Robert Raikes) takes root in Gloucester,

England, in large part, as a way to provide education to underprivileged and working children.³⁵⁹

(1782) America's first English language Bibles containing both the Old and New Testaments begin to be printed.



Chimney sweeps. Public Domain.

This meets some of the pent-up demand created by em-bargoes related to America's Revolutionary War.

(1788) The US Constitution that had been drafted, signed, and sent to the states in 1787 is ratified in June of 1788, and (in 1789) Congress proposes 12 amendments (known as the Bill of Rights) which are sent to the states for consideration. The process of ratification required the consent of at least three-fourths of the states, which lasted until 1791. Only 10 of the 12 proposed amendments were adopted at that time, and those 10 became what we now consider to be the Bill of Rights.

(1789) While the proposed Bill of Rights is making its way through the thirteen state legislatures, a two-page advertisement promoting subscriptions to the upcoming publication of New York's first, and America's largest illustrated, English language study Bible ever published



appears in a printing of the government record, "Acts Passed at the First session of the First Congress—which began March 4, 1789." The ad enthusiastically promotes "Brown's Self-Interpreting Family Folio Bible, . . . a genuine American edition, the largest

and cheapest ever proofed to be printed in the United States" with "the Objections of Deists and Infidels answered; and every minute circumstance of the revealed will of God faithfully recorded (upon which all our Hopes of eternal Happiness depend . . . Forming a Complete System of the Christian Religion."³⁶⁰ The book containing the Constitution, twelve proposed amendments, the Acts of the first session of Congress, and the two-page advertisement for Brown's Bible is released in late 1789 by New York printers Hodge, Allen, and Campbell. George Washington personally signed his copy of the 1789 Acts³⁶¹ in which this advertisement appeared.

(1790) In March, an official resolution by the New York State Senate and Assembly praises the mammoth undertaking to print Brown's Bible.³⁶² Printing begins in June and continues for nearly two years until all forty fascicles are complete.

(1791) Ten of the twelve proposed 1789 amendments to the US Constitution are adopted. The ten are known as the Bill of Rights. The first of the adopted amendments guarantees Americans the freedom to exercise one's religious beliefs. However, it disallows government establishment of a specific religion or denomination—as had been required by English law prior to the American colonists' Declaration of Independence.³⁶³

(1792) In April, the first US edition of Brown's *Self-Interpreting Bible*—with President George Washington prominently listed as the first subscriber, and a very special Frontispiece illustration that emphasizes America's foundational reliance upon the guidance of God through the light of the Bible, plus symbolism unique to America's struggle for independence—is completed. Each set of fascicles is now ready for binding by the 1,279 people who pre-ordered them. Most subscribed for only one, but some ordered multiple copies, with one ordering

fifty to be sold at his store. These "subscribers" are listed by name, and most listings also show the subscriber's occupation, city of residence, or both. The multi-page addendum is normally inserted either before the book of Genesis or after the book of Revelation (depending on the personal preference of each subscriber/owner).³⁶⁴

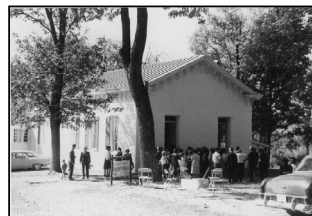
(1792) Among those who subscribed to Brown's *Self-Interpreting Bible* were pastors and preachers, some of whom had little or no formal Bible training. This included Jacob Brush, an itinerant evangelist born in about 1762. Through all types of weather and many dangers, he rode from town to town and to many very rural cabins and settlements and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to groups large and small. Brush's name also appears in the Revolutionary War records of New York (his home state). He died of an aggressive epidemic, likely yellow fever, at age 33 in the fall of 1795. According to public documents that reveal the stipulations of his modest and brief will, we know that his copy of this Bible was left to his younger half-brother, John Smith—who was born in 1775 per handwritten family history notes in Brush's Bible. Smith was about 20 years old when he inherited this Bible. (His handwritten name appears clearly and in ink on the first of the "subscriber" pages—where both President Washington and Rev. Jacob Brush's names are printed.)

(1799) England's "Sunday-only school" movement is copied and implemented in America by emigrant textile industrialist Samuel Slater³⁶⁵ and his wife Hannah Wilkinson Slater of Pawtucket, Rhode Island.³⁶⁶

(1800+) The "Sunday-only school" movement in America is taken by young missionaries inspired in large part by eastern evangelists to minister to the spiritual and physical needs of immigrants and other struggling rural families who were moving westward to establish homesteads on America's ever-expanding frontier. Tens of thousands of tiny Sunday-only schools are established as the movement expanded beyond the Appalachian Mountains, reaching children and their families with both the gospel of Jesus Christ and the basic elements of general education.

(1800) On June 7 and 8, five baptisms at the original log constructed Bullittsburg Baptist Church led by Pastor John Taylor are the earliest publicly documented Kentucky salvations in the era known as America's Second Great Awakening. An ongoing wave of salvations among both free and enslaved men and women continues for many months deep in the rustic frontier hills of extreme northern Kentucky.³⁶⁷

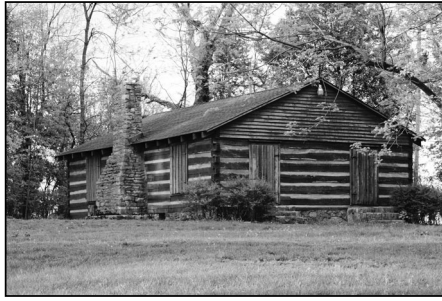
(1800/1801) Only a few days after the Bullittsburg Baptist salvations of June 7–8, during an open-air com-munion celebration led



Bullittsburg Baptist Church in the mid-1900s. (© Boone County Public Library)

The rustic log structure in which the congregants of the Bullittsburg Baptist Church worshipped in 1800 may have looked very much like the log structure that follows. Notice the separate entry doors for male and female worshippers. Attendees of the church have worshipped in a sturdy block and stone building since 1829. It has been remodeled and expanded in the two ensuing centuries but retains much of its historic feel. Bullittsburg Baptist Church is a thriving body, and the 1829 building (above) still stands one mile from the Answers in Genesis Creation Museum, near the Ohio River.

by Presbyterian minister James McGready from June 13–17 at the far-removed Red River Meeting House (in extreme southern Kentucky, 7 miles from the Tennessee border), several Red River congregants also prayed to receive Christ. The records state, "During this sacrament, and until the Tuesday following, 10 persons we believe, were savingly brought home to Christ."³⁶⁸ Meanwhile, God's Holy Spirit continued moving in the



Red River Meeting House (reconstruction, 2014). Public domain.

hearts of the families over 200 miles north at the Bullittsburg Baptist meeting house. By the summer of 1801 there were 110 baptisms of both free and enslaved men and women at and near the frontier church led by Rev. John Taylor and others in what is now known as Boone County Kentucky.³⁶⁹

(1801) From August 6-13, an outdoor meeting based on Scottish traditions of Holy Fairs (communion services) is hosted by a small Presbyterian church at Cane Ridge, Kentucky. Its minister Barton W. Stone invites nearly 20 other ministers—Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist—to also participate. Between 10,000 and 20,000 people come from “forty, fifty, and a hundred miles to attend



Barton Stone preaching (Public Domain)

this meeting” in the sparsely populated rural setting. Now known as the Cane Ridge Revival, it was the largest “camp meeting” of the Second Great Awakening.³⁷⁰

SUNDAY-ONLY SCHOOL MISSIONARIES

“The movement was unstoppable. At the grass roots, the volunteer Sunday school missionaries had no doubt about their goal: to ‘*Christianize America so America can Christianize the world.*’ Volunteers—many of them women—stepped up to travel by foot from the eastern towns to the rough western lands to organize a Sunday school in every village and town. Women traveled down the Ohio River to Pittsburg then walked by foot into Ohio and Indiana to organize schools in these new territories. They went from farm to farm recruiting children to come once a week on Sunday to learn to read and write and to study the Bible. Many of these women were single and later settled down in the community and became the only school teacher in the community—long before there were ‘one room school houses.’ The rest traveled from town to town as itinerant missionaries, founding a Sunday school, training local people to lead it after they were gone, then they moved on and returned later to check up on their fledgling Sunday schools in apostolic fashion. The Sunday school missionaries were urged to not use a horse but to walk from village to village. In their instructions they were told that a horse would tempt them to go too fast and besides, the missionary is generally welcome, because s/he can talk as well as eat but the horse can only eat. Pioneer families hungry for news invited these missionaries to stay with them and before long the missionary was opening their satchel of books and Bibles to sell or give away.

They quickly rounded up children and youth for their new Sunday school and parents were gratified that their children were learning to read and write even if they also got moral and biblical training along with these skills. . . . Fewer names of the host of women agents have survived but there were many. Weary of eastern towns these women felt called to become Sunday school missionaries. Often with another woman (and often against their family’s wishes) they gathered books and Bibles and headed west by boat then on foot to the communities of Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin and Illinois. Walking along the route like Johnnie Appleseed, they spread their Bibles and books and gathered children to teach them about God and how to read and write. They slept on floors in rustic cabins, in barns and sometimes along the roadside which struck fear in the hearts of their parents and relatives back east when they told about it in their letters home. When they arrived in a settlement with a dozen families they often settled down and taught the children and youth weekly. Sometimes they married one of the local single men. Others never got married and moved on to nearby settlements to do it all over again. Their names were mostly lost when their eastern families tossed out their letters that had been stored in attics years later, but they left behind thousands of Sunday schools strung across the ‘western territories’ of Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Illinois and neighboring states. . . . By 1832 there were more than 8,000 Sunday schools. The idea spread so fast that by 1875 there were more than 65,000 schools. By 1889 there were ten million children in American Sunday schools and it was performing the heavy task of public education, sponsored by Christians out of their own pockets. The idea was so powerful that soon governments got into the act. . . . When a community had an operating Sunday school staffed by volunteers they eventually saw the need for more education than just the Sunday morning classes. . . . Communities were developing and now they even had a sheriff, and several dry goods stores. Families wanted more education for their children than the Sunday school could provide. . . . Families banded together as a community to recruit a permanent teacher who could teach their children through the week, not just on Sundays. Sometimes this was the local Sunday school teacher and at other times they ‘sent back east’ for a schoolmarm. The Sunday school thus provided the kick-start for the development of (the) ‘one room schoolhouse’ which followed the Sunday school’s pioneering work. . . . The ministry of the Sunday school and the public ‘common school’ so overlapped for the next few decades that by 1858 the American Union was selling hundreds of thousands of its spelling books to both Sunday schools and public common schools as if they were doing the same thing. They were. . . . The original Sunday school movement was two-pronged in focus: education and Christian education. It sought to teach reading and writing while at the same time presenting the gospel and moral education. With the arrival of the one room schoolhouse the task of general education was absorbed by the ‘common school’ leaving the Sunday schools in churches to focus more on moral education. . . . [T]he Sunday school gradually lost its literacy aim and refocused primarily on the spiritual goals of making moral Christians. However the public school’s spiritual aims diminished slowly. In the 1950s virtually

every day of public school began with reading from the Bible and the Lord's Prayer, and even the Ten Commandments were often prominently posted on the walls of classrooms. As the 'Christian consensus' eroded in the nation these practices disappeared and what resulted is today's division of labor: The public schools handle education and the Sunday school handles *Christian* education."

(Drury, "Short History of the Sunday school," drurywriting.com./The author credits one source in particular, Lynn and Wright, *The Big Little School—200 years of the Sunday School*.)