**Samuel Sharpe 1799–1881**

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Jump to:[navigation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Sharpe_%28scholar%29#head), [search](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Sharpe_%28scholar%29#p-search)

**Samuel Sharpe** (1799–1881) was an English [Unitarian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unitarianism) Egyptologist and translator of the Bible.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel\_Sharpe\_%28scholar%29

**Life**

He was the second son of Sutton Sharpe (1756–1806), brewer, by his second wife, Maria (died 1806), third daughter of Thomas Rogers, banker, and was born in King Street, Golden Square, London, on 8 March 1799, baptised at [St. James's, Piccadilly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._James%27s,_Piccadilly). His mother was sister to [Samuel Rogers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Rogers). On her death, followed by his father's failure, he found a second mother in his half-sister Catherine. [Daniel Sharpe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Sharpe) was his younger brother. At midsummer 1807 Samuel became a boarder in the school of [Eliezer Cogan](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Eliezer_Cogan&action=edit&redlink=1) at [Higham Hill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higham_Hill), [Walthamstow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walthamstow); at Christmas 1814 he was taken into the banking-house of his uncles Samuel and Henry Rogers, at 29 Clement's Lane, [Lombard Street](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lombard_Street,_London); and remained connected with the firm till 1861, having been made partner in 1824.

Brought up an Anglican, he came gradually to adopt the Unitarian views held by his mother's relatives; in 1821 he joined the congregation of [William Johnson Fox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Johnson_Fox) at South Place, [Finsbury](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finsbury). For many years Sharpe and his brothers taught classes, before office hours, in the [Lancasterian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lancasterian) school, Harp Alley, [Farringdon Street](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Farringdon_Street&action=edit&redlink=1). He was elected a fellow of the [Geological Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geological_Society) about 1827, but took a greater interest in mathematical science and archæological research, as his contributions (1828–31) to the *Philosophical Magazine* show.

His interest in Egyptology followed the works of [Thomas Young](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Young_%28scientist%29). He studied the works of [Champollion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Champollion) and what had been published by [Sir John Gardner Wilkinson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_John_Gardner_Wilkinson), learned [Coptic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coptic), and formed a hieroglyph vocabulary. Before publishing his first book, ‘The Early History of Egypt’ (1836), he consulted his uncle, Samuel Rogers, who said, ‘Why, surely you can do it if Wilkinson can; his only thought is where to buy his kid gloves.’

Sharpe's work as a translator of the Bible began with a revision (1840) of the authorised version of the New Testament. His Greek text was that of [J. J. Griesbach](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=J._J._Griesbach&action=edit&redlink=1), and he took little interest in the progress of textual studies. When, in 1870, the project of a revised version was undertaken by the convocation of Canterbury, Sharpe was one of four Unitarian scholars invited to select a member of their body to co-operate with the New Testament company.

His benefactions to University College and School, London exceeded £15,000. He was a trustee of Dr. [Daniel Williams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Williams_%28theologian%29)'s foundations, 1853–1857; president of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in 1869–70, and president of Manchester College (now at Oxford) in 1876–8. He died at 32 Highbury Place on 28 July 1881, and was buried at [Abney Park Cemetery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abney_Park_Cemetery) on 3 August. He married (1827) his first cousin Sarah (born 1796, died 3 June 1851), daughter of Joseph Sharpe, and had six children, of whom two daughters survived him.

**Works**

The first part (spring of 1837) of his ‘Egyptian Inscriptions,’ chiefly from the [British Museum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Museum), contained the largest corpus of hieroglyphical writing that had yet been published, and was followed by additional series in 1841 and 1855. His ‘Vocabulary of Hieroglyphics’ was published in the autumn of 1837; in the introduction he thus states his general method of investigation: ‘Granted a sentence in which most of the words are already known, required the meaning of others;’ he allowed that the results were often tentative. In the autumn of 1838 appeared his ‘History of Egypt under the Ptolemies;’ in 1842 his ‘History of Egypt under the Romans;’ these were incorporated with the ‘Early History’ in ‘The History of Egypt,’ 1846. Other publications followed in the same line of research, but on many points his conclusions did not win acceptance.

His revision of the authorised version of the Old Testament was first issued in 1865. In eight editions of his New Testament, and four of his Old, he devoted care to the improvement of his work. As a translator he was concerned to remove archaisms. Among the last advocates of unpointed Hebrew, he published manuals for instruction in this system. His ‘History of the Hebrew Nation and its Literature,’ 1869, and his exegetical works bear the his individual stamp. He said of himself, ‘I am a heretic in everything, even among unitarians.’

For the Unitarian weekly, *The Inquirer*, founded in 1842 by Edward Hill, he wrote for some years, though he thought newspaper writing ‘a bad employment.’ He resumed in 1876 when the *Christian Life* was started by his friend [Robert Spears](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Robert_Spears&action=edit&redlink=1), writing a weekly article till his death. He had contributed papers, chiefly biblical, to the *Christian Reformer* (1834–63) with the signature ‘S. S.,’ and to many other periodicals.

He published, besides doctrinal tracts:

* ‘The Early History of Egypt,’ 1836.
* ‘Egyptian Inscriptions,’ 1837; part ii., 1841; 2nd ser. 1855.
* ‘Rudiments of a Vocabulary of Egyptian Hieroglyphics,’ 1837.
* ‘The History of Egypt under the Ptolemies,’ 1838.
* ‘The New Testament, translated,’ 1840; 8th edit. 1881.
* ‘The History of Egypt under the Romans,’ 1842.
* ‘Notes on the Hieroglyphics of Horapello Nilous,’ 1845 (Syro-Egyptian Society).
* ‘The History of Egypt from the earliest Times till A.D. 640,’ 1846; 6th edit. 1876, 2 vols.; in German from the 3rd edit. (1852) by Jolowicz, revised by Von Gutschmid, Leipzig, 1862, 2 vols.
* ‘The Chronology and Geography of Ancient Egypt,’ 1849, with [Joseph Bonomi the younger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Bonomi_the_younger).
* ‘Fragments of Orations in Accusation and Defence of Demosthenes … translated,’ 1849.
* ‘Sketch of Assyrian History,’ in Bonomi's ‘Nineveh and its Palaces,’ 2nd edit. 1853.
* ‘The Triple Mummy Case of Aro-eri Ao,’ 1858. 13. ‘Historical Notice of the Monuments of Egypt’ in [Owen Jones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Owen_Jones) and Bonomi's ‘Description of the Egyptian Court in the Crystal Palace,’ 1854.
* ‘Historic Notes on the … Old and New Testaments,’ 1854; 3rd edit. 1858.
* ‘Critical Notes on the … New Testament,’ 1856; 1867.
* ‘Alexandrian Chronology,’ 1857.
* ‘Some Particulars of the Life of Samuel Rogers,’ 1859; 1860.
* ‘Egyptian Hieroglyphics,’ 1861.
* ‘Egyptian Antiquities in the British Museum, described,’ 1862.
* ‘Notes’ in Bonomi's ‘Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia,’ 1862.
* [‘Egyptian Mythology and Egyptian Christianity,’](http://sacred-texts.com/egy/emec/index.htm) 1863.
* ‘Sketch of the Arguments for … authorship … of the Pentateuch,’ [1863].
* ‘The Alabaster Sarcophagus of Oimenepthah,’ 1864.
* ‘The Hebrew Scriptures, translated,’ 1865 3 vols.; 4th edit. 1881, in one volume with New Testament.
* ‘The Chronology of the Bible,’ &c., 1868.
* ‘Texts from the Bible explained by … Ancient Monuments,’ 1866; 1869, 1880 (drawings by Bonomi).
* ‘The History of the Hebrew Nation and its Literature,’ 1869; 5th edit. 1892.
* ‘The Decree of Canopus; in Hieroglyphics and Greek, with translations,’ 1870.
* ‘The Rosetta Stone; in Hieroglyphics and Greek, with translations,’ 1871.
* ‘Short Notes to … translation of the Hebrew Scriptures,’ 1874.
* ‘Hebrew Inscriptions from the valleys between Egypt and Mount Sinai,’ 1875; part ii. 1876.
* ‘The Journeys and Epistles of St. Paul,’ 1876; 3rd edit. [1880].
* ‘The Book of Isaiah arranged chronologically in a revised translation … with … Notes,’ 1877.
* ‘A Short Hebrew Grammar without Points,’ 1877.
* ‘The Book of Genesis … without Points,’ 1879 (selections).
* ‘An Inquiry into the Age of the Moabite Stone,’ &c., 1879.
* ‘Bαρνάβα Ἐπιστολή. The Epistle of Barnabas … with a translation,’ 1880.

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