On April 21, 1859, John B. McFerrin, editor of the Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Nashville, declared in the Nashville Christian Advocate that certain works published for the Methodist Episcopal Church would “never see the light” in Southern church libraries. 3 “Instance, The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book, from the press a few weeks since—a work we regard as far worse than Uncle Tom’s Cabin . . . . Such publications are rank with abolition sentiments, and cannot be sold by our agency . . . .”4

Indeed the high emotions surrounding the split over slavery at General Conference in 1844, as well as a commitment to the development of Sunday School library books, led the General Conference of 1848 of The Methodist Episcopal Church to order the Book Concern to publish “antislavery tracts,”5 which soon included The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book. This effort distinguished the Methodist Episcopal Sunday School Union (SSU) from the older and larger American Sunday School Union (ASSU), which refused to take a stand on slavery in its publications for children.6 An examination of The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book, in addition to several other books published for the libraries attached to Methodist Sunday Schools, offers a window into the religious, social, and educational priorities of the early Methodists. The plots, characters, and themes of the books reveal how concepts about childhood and children’s literature changed over the course of the nineteenth century. And the settings for much of this Sunday School literature reflect the broader social themes that resounded across the nineteenth century.

1 The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book: containing a few words about American Slave Children; and stories of slave-life (New York: Carlton & Porter for the Sunday School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1859).
2 This paper draws from the exhibit, “Instructing Children & Families: Sunday School Books of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1827-1880,” curated by Cynthia M. Rogers, at the United Methodist Archives & History Center, Drew University, Madison, NJ, in 2008. The Methodist Library at Drew University has become a repository for a large collection of books published for the Methodist Sunday School Union during this period.
4 Pilkington, 391.
5 Pilkington, 391.
One of the key figures in the early development of the Methodist Sunday School and its publications was Daniel Parish Kidder (1815-1891), who served as Corresponding Secretary of the Sunday School Union and general editor of Sunday School books and tracts from 1844-1856. Kidder is widely credited with improving the Methodist Sunday School and its teaching and for dramatically increasing the number and selection of books available to Sunday School libraries. Kidder later served as Professor of Practical Theology at Drew Seminary from 1871-1881, and his papers, which offer rich details of that early Sunday School period, are part of the Methodist Collection at Drew University.

An overview of the Sunday School movement and the emergence of the Methodist Sunday School Union with its commitment to the development of libraries for children and families will provide the backdrop for the discussion of several select Sunday School books (1827-1880), including The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book.

Sunday School

The concept of Sunday School, along with the development of books and teaching materials, began in England. Robert Raikes (1736-1811), a printer and publisher in Gloucester, England, known for his reform efforts in the jails and prisons, is widely credited with starting the first Sunday School in 1780 for children of the working classes who had virtually no access to any formal education. Raikes saw the children working in the pin-making factories of Gloucester and concluded that religious instruction was the key to redeeming these “neglected and ragged children.” The Bible was Raikes’ central text for instruction, but since there was no public education system, literacy training was crucial, and he soon developed small manuals teaching the alphabet, spelling, and moral instruction and prayers. This concept of Sunday School, which was opposed early on by some of the English nobility who feared the effects of a literate lower class, quickly gained popularity and support from such reformers as William Wilberforce, John Wesley, George Fox, and others, leading to the formation of the Sunday-School Society of 1785 and later the London Sunday School Union of 1811.

While Raikes generally received the credit for the formation and momentum of the Sunday School movement, W. A. Candler, who wrote a history of the Sunday School for one of the early Sunday School conventions in 1879, states us that the concept of religious instruction for youth and adults was hardly a novel idea. Indeed, John Wesley established a Sunday School in his Savannah, Georgia, parish in 1736; Bishop Asbury followed suit in Hanover County, Virginia, in 1783; and “in the year 1793 Katy Ferguson, a

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8 Rice, 18.
9 Rice, 19-23.
poor African woman, with no knowledge of Raikes or other Sunday-schools, established the first Sunday-school in New York City.”¹¹ Thus the Methodists were supportive of the reform and instruction of the working class through this movement.

Within the United States, however, the impetus for a Sunday School movement dated back to the 1790s. It flowed primarily from a concern for working children who were “slipping through the cracks” of the educational system and “receiving neither the literacy training nor the religious knowledge that potential citizens of the new republic needed.”¹² Historian Anne Boylan argues that the Sunday School movement fell within the overarching nineteenth-century theme of institution-building, engineered by reformers committed to evangelical Protestantism (as were many nineteenth-century reformers). These evangelical reformers believed Sunday School could help effect the transmission of such personal values as “self-control, delayed gratification, and self-improvement,”¹³ all of which were viewed as imperative for the progress of the individual and the nation.

The First Day Society of Philadelphia launched the most ambitious Sunday School program in the United States for children of the lower classes. Organized in 1791 by an interdenominational group of “enlightened republican gentlemen,” which included Episcopalians, Friends, and Catholics, the First Day Society reflected the conviction that this new republican experiment could only succeed with an educated populace.¹⁴ The leadership of the First Day Society generally hired teachers, paid bills, and set policy, but remained rather remote from the day-to-day operations. By 1810, however, enrollments began to decline, due largely to the development of the free public schools and the growth of Sunday Schools whose evangelical mission eclipsed their educational goals.¹⁵ These evangelical Sunday Schools, which were started by individual congregations, differed in many ways from the schools of the First Day Society whose primary focus was interpreting the Bible, so literacy training was only the means toward that end. Their organizers were driven by the goal of personal conversion, and they were intimately involved in the schools’ operation, fostering great activism and geographical growth. They began forming associations to encourage the growth of evangelical Sunday Schools and to provide educational resources, culminating in the formation of the Sunday and Adult School Union in 1817, renamed the American Sunday School Union (ASSU) in 1824.¹⁶

The proliferation of evangelical Sunday Schools also coincided with the growth of the free (public) school movement, and in general a complementary arrangement prevailed, whereby literacy became the domain of the pub-

¹¹ Candler, 48.
¹² Boylan, 6.
¹³ Boylan, 3.
¹⁴ Boylan, 8.
¹⁵ Boylan, 8-11.
lic schools, while Sunday Schools attended to religious instruction. These boundaries were not absolute, however, for Sunday Schools often continued the practice of reading instruction to insure biblical literacy for those unable to attend weekday public schools, while public school curricula were infused with Protestant assumptions. What distinguished these American Sunday Schools from their English counterparts, however, was their broad appeal across the boundaries of social class, their role in the recruitment of new church members, and their efforts to spread a “culture of evangelical Protestantism” with its mission of spiritual and personal reformation. Boylan cites several reasons for their rapid growth and development, including the Second Great Awakening; a new approach to child psychology which argued that children could experience conversion; the inclusion of children from church-going families which provided a middle class orientation; and the growth of the public school movement which allowed for the complementary arrangement described above.

The American Sunday School Union (ASSU), while functioning as an ecumenical association of individual Sunday Schools rather than church bodies, was largely dominated by Presbyterians, and “low” Episcopalians. Denominationalism soon threatened its unity. Methodists, Baptists, and high church Episcopalians began forming their own Sunday School organizations, which often closely resembled those of the ASSU, particularly with their focus on publications. For Methodists the issue was primarily theological in their insistence that their Sunday Schools apply their Wesleyan-Arminian theology and organize their instruction toward conversion. Indeed James Pilkington argues that during this period the heated disputes between the Calvinists and Methodists often overshadowed even those between Catholics and Protestants. In any case, these partisan denominational scuffles led to the ASSU finally copyrighting and restricting its own publications, providing even more impetus for Methodists to develop their own materials.

Thus by April, 1827, the Sunday School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church (SSU) was formed in New York City, led by Corresponding Secretary Nathan Bangs, who also headed the Methodist Publishing House. Thereafter followed the all-important publication of Bibles, tracts, teachers’ manuals, lesson books, hymnals, and other literature, so essential to the work of the Sunday School. Bangs had headed the Methodist Book Concern since

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17 Boylan, 19-21.
18 Boylan, 168.
19 Boylan, 12-20.
21 Boylan, 77-78.
23 Pilkington, 253. This happened sometime between 1830 and 1844. Pilkington does not give the exact date.
24 Kirby, Richey, and Rowe, 181.
1820 and was instrumental to its growth. Among his significant contributions were an expanded *Methodist Magazine*, the *Sunday School Advocate* (in newspaper form), and a series of inexpensive books, the “Sunday School and Youth’s Library,” which contained over 200 titles by 1842. In *The Methodist Episcopal Church*, as with Robert Raikes a generation earlier, the development of the Sunday School was inextricably linked to publishing.

One significant setback for the Methodist Sunday School and publishing endeavors was the 1836 fire which completely destroyed the Book Concern headquarters on Mulberry Street in New York City. Numerous setbacks notwithstanding, the General Conference of 1840 enacted legislation which gave “official sanction to the Sunday School Union,” required it in every congregation, established its reporting and control, and expanded its reach to youth as well as children. Thus the foundation was laid for what early twentieth-century Methodist historian Addie Grace Wardle called “the glad new day in the program of Sunday school work,” when in 1844, the Rev. Daniel Parish Kidder became the first “editor of Sunday School Books and Tracts,” as well as Corresponding Secretary of the Sunday School Union. Wardle praised his organizational ability, his literary standards, and his skill in business management. Of specific importance to the collection at the Methodist Library at Drew, however, was Kidder’s arrangement with the Religious Tract Society of London for free book exchange; his solicitation of American writers; and his compilation and editing of approximately 800 Sunday school books, over half of which now reside in the Drew Methodist Library collection.

In the context of Kidder’s influence over the content of SSU books and libraries, and the ready access to his papers at Drew, it is helpful at this point to review some of the highlights of his life and leadership within the nineteenth-century Methodist Episcopal Church. Kidder’s son-in-law, the Rev. G. E. Strobridge, wrote a biography of Kidder in 1894. James Richard Joy’s commemorative biography, *The Teachers of Drew 1867-1942*, notes Kidder’s conversion to Methodism as a teenager “though his family had no liking for Methodism,” his graduation from Wesleyan University in 1836, and his early service (1838-1840) as a missionary to Brazil. His brief missionary sojourn, which resulted in the death of his first wife, also inspired two books on Brazil, which Joy describes as the “best account of these ‘good neighbors’ that had been printed in English.” Following pastorates in

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26 Norwood, 212-213.
27 Pilkington, 283.
29 Wardle, 83.
32 Joy, 82, describing *Sketches of Residence and Travel in Brazil* (1845) and *Brazil and the Brazilians* (co-authored in 1857).
Paterson and Trenton, New Jersey, in 1844 Kidder was elected secretary of the SSU and editor of Sunday School Books and Tracts, a position he held until 1856. Kidder’s subsequent seminary career included professorships at the newly-formed Garrett Biblical Institute (1856-1871) and Drew Seminary (1871-1881), where he served as Professor of Practical Theology, assumed many administrative and library duties, and penned a homiletics textbook. Kidder retired from Drew in 1881 and was named secretary of the Board of Education of The Methodist Episcopal Church.

It is relevant to note that Kidder took this position very conscientiously at the age of 28, traveling extensively to promote and carefully document the expansive growth of Sunday Schools and libraries. He also attempted to improve the overall standards for Sunday Schools, developing a constitution defining positions and duties and as early as 1847 called for “teacher institutes” to improve instruction, an innovation finally put in place decades later. Furthermore, he was very committed to “character building,” as his book selections and “Sunday School Temperance Pledge” demonstrate. Finally, he exerted much energy into organizing Sunday School anniversary celebrations featuring children to generate interest in the cause.

It is also important to note some of the standards Kidder applied to book selection. Strobridge notes Kidder’s interest in “protecting as well as informing . . . the minds of the young,” and his belief that “the guarantee of substantial truth be required in the publication and purchase of SSU literature,” which led him to include biography, history, natural history, mission narratives, and travel, and often to exclude material appealing to the imagination and emotions. Kidder borrowed heavily from Europe, particularly English authors, and he spent much of 1852-1853 in Europe visiting Sunday Schools and seeking out children’s books and authors. While some of the books described here were published slightly later than his 1844-1856 leadership of the Sunday School Union, it is safe to argue that he set the standards and tone for their development.

Sunday School Books

While it is very difficult to choose which books to highlight among the hundreds from Drew’s collection, the following, arranged roughly chronologically, are representative of popular authors, social reform movements that were important to early Methodists, and the changes in religious chil-

33 Daniel Kidder, *A Treatise on Homiletics: designed to illustrate the true theory and practice of Preaching the Gospel*, 1864 (numerous printings).
34 “Constitution of a Sunday-School Society” (2128-5-3:17), Daniel Parish Kidder Papers, Methodist Collection of Drew University, Madison, New Jersey.
35 Candler, 100-101.
36 “Sunday School Temperance Pledge” (2128-5-3:17), Daniel Parish Kidder Papers, Methodist Collection of Drew University, Madison, New Jersey.
37 Strobridge, 182-183.
38 Strobridge, 190-191.
Children’s literature that occurred from 1827-1880. Books by the first two authors were first published by the Religious Tract Society of England, which supplied much of the early religious literature for children. The balance is by American authors who wrote for the Methodist Sunday School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

**History of Little Henry and his Bearer, by Mrs. Sherwood**

Mrs. Mary Martha Sherwood (1775-1851) was one of England’s most famous Evangelical children’s authors, and her books were often reprinted in the U.S. for the Methodist Sunday School Union. Edwin Rice, the noted historian of the American Sunday School Union, noted that *Little Henry* was the first book published by the ASSU in 1817. Mrs. Sherwood spent ten years in India with her husband Captain Henry Sherwood, and her letters and journals reflected her commitment to the young and “the heathen,” and were often the source of her many published tracts, stories, and books. In fact, Evangelical authors often wrote from their own experiences, since fiction was shunned as valued literature for children. *Little Henry* was named for her son who died at age two, but he was the prototype of the missionary child, concerned in this story about the “soul” of his “Hindoo” servant, or bearer. Lynn and Wright note that in this early genre, “child-size religious virtuosos could convert servants, parents, older relatives, friends, hardhearted benefactors and strangers.” Children were viewed and presented as little adults, so it wasn’t unusual that “at eight and one-half years of age Henry could read the Bible in two languages, conduct learned arguments about the Christian faith, cite Scripture appropriately in diverse situations and ably assist others toward conversion.” Margaret Bendroth argues that much of this tract literature “was oppressively didactic, replete with instructive examples of upright boys and girls overcoming temptation or dying happy deaths,” as did *Little Henry*, once he learned of his bearer’s conversion. Nevertheless, Sherwood’s biographer Nancy Cutt writes that “the first generation of her readers grew up to shape the Victorian world,” while her popularity in America, though shorter, “helped to form children’s taste for narrative literature before the appearance of home-grown Sunday School writers.”

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40 The capitalized Evangelical refers to the reforming wing of the Church of England.
41 Rice, 146.
44 Lynn and Wright, 45.
46 Cutt, ix, x.
Books by Old Humphrey (1787-1854)

Old Humphrey, sometimes called Old Alan Gray, pseudonyms for the English George Mogridge, penned more than sixty titles found in Sunday School libraries. Of note are *The Monster*[^47] in which Old Humphrey tells children who have heard the silly stories of dwarves and giants that “I am going to speak of a real monster, which has been roaming about the world for almost six thousand years . . . SIN”; *The Balloon*,[^48] which describes a hot-air balloon released into the sky which he compares to prayers and praises sent up to God; *Precious Stones*,[^50] in which Aunt Andrews compares the ranking of Chinese mandarins to the jewels of adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, truth, temperance, eternal life, etc.; and *Perhaps Not*,[^51] the title and phrase used as a rhetorical device by Old Richard the gardener in response to the expressed passions of a young man! Old Humphrey was a well-known British author for the Religious Tract Society whose fiction went beyond the somber death-related conversion stories of the early nineteenth century. He used humor and clever imagery in his stories and was evidently a favorite of D. P. Kidder, who revised and edited many of his books.

Books by the Reverend Daniel Smith (1806-1852)

The Reverend Daniel Smith was a Methodist minister of the New York Conference and a prolific writer for the Sunday School Union. Believing that there was a dearth of good books for young people, he resolved to pen and compile over fifty books for the Sunday Union addressing such topics as natural history, biography, advice for parents, missions, Bible characters, and essays and anecdotes for young people.

Daniel Smith appears to have been an author favored by D. P. Kidder. His nature stories reflect a gentle, reverent respect for creation, as well a commitment to teaching. *Morning Walk*[^52] is a simple story for young children, in which a father takes his young son to examine a bird’s nest. He tells his son: “birds are a very interesting part of the Creator’s works. They fill the groves and fields with their music: they destroy thousands of insects that would otherwise prey upon the trees and roots of the plants and grain; and they are very harmless, as well as useful creatures.”[^53] Smith also assembled selections for a multi-volume Natural History series, which reflected considerable scientific and historical understanding, as well as a commitment to caring for

[^47]: Old Humphrey; revised by D. P. Kidder, *The Monster* (New York: Lane & Scott for the SSU, 1851).
[^50]: Old Humphrey, *Precious Stones* (New York: Lane & Tippet for the SSU, 1848).
[^51]: Old Humphrey, *Perhaps Not* (New York: Lane & Tippet for the SSU, 1848).
[^52]: Daniel Smith, *Morning Walk* (New York: Lane & Scott, for the Sunday School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1849).
God’s world.\textsuperscript{54} \textit{The Parent’s Friend}, based on Smith’s pastoral experience, is a series of letters written to parents on such topics as understanding how children imitate their parents, how parents should act in concert with each other, the agreeable home, the impact of peers, selecting books, profanity, the importance of recreation, etc. Letter XVI on “Method of Conveying Instruction” underscores Smith’s commitment to indirection in teaching, seizing on accidental occurrences, lessons from observing nature, such as the organization and industry within the anthill and beehive, the wonder and usefulness of trees, bubbling springs, etc.\textsuperscript{55} Smith also urged parents to “condescend” or go to the child’s level, as he illustrates:

\begin{quote}

The minister of state, coming into the apartment of Louis XV of France, found the monarch upon his hands and feet, with the young prince mounted on his back. “Monsieur,” said the king to the minister, “are you a father?” “Yes, sire,” was the reply. “Well,” said Louis XV, “then let us have our frolic.”\textsuperscript{56}

\end{quote}

What Smith infused into much of this work was the importance of the parent and the home in the Christian upbringing of children, an important shift in emphasis from the early literature from the Religious Tract Society. Boylan cites new discussions in this mid-nineteenth century period regarding the child’s inner nature and the more romantic images of the child’s “blooming cheeks and laughing eye,” as opposed to the child as little adult, full of depravity and original sin. Horace Bushnell’s widely-read \textit{Views of Human Nature} (first published by the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, 1847) challenged the old views of childhood and presented a theory of the child’s impressionability and the baby’s innocence. Bushnell wrote of “an organic union between parents and child in the early years,” and stressed the essential nurture of the child through “the spirit of the house.”\textsuperscript{57} He viewed revivalism as “intrinsically detrimental to family relationships,” leading to “indoctrination” and “drill,” and his Christian nurture theory followed a more longstanding (and somewhat controversial) view of “conversion as a gradual, unfolding process.”\textsuperscript{58} While salvation remained a central goal of the Methodist Sunday School Union, the literature written from the mid-nineteenth century onward also reflected the importance of the parents and home in nurturing behavior and decision-making.\textsuperscript{59}

\textit{The Brandy Drops, or Charlie’s pledge: a temperance story and The}
Temperance Boys: a sequel to “The Brandy Drops” by Aunt Julia (Julia Colman, 1828-1909)

These books are illustrative of a group of novels by American authors that underscored the Methodist Sunday School Union’s commitment to temperance. Aunt Julia’s characters, such as the boy whose “fear of ridicule” led him to overindulge in brandy drops and collapses inebriated(!), are drawn with humor and affection. Charlie’s infraction is handled with care and repentance within his home, for the temperance house is the very picture of peace and happiness. Colman’s characters ask many hard questions about temperance. Why is it called temperance if it’s really abstinence? What about Uncle John, the favorite relative who imbibes on occasion? Does one drink really lead to a life of drunkenness? Clearly the ultimate goal is the signing of the temperance pledge and the formation of children’s temperance societies to promote “moral courage” among children as well as adults. While Colman’s purpose is instructive, it is the child’s point of view which drives the narrative, and the children display a range of traits and motives, differing dramatically from the prototypical “missionary child” of Mrs. Sherwood’s books. The social backdrop of these novels explores poverty, child abandonment, and illiteracy, mostly relating them to the effects of alcoholism. But as in the early literature, the reformed child can serve as an agent for change in the adult, and the institution of Sunday School provides the training ground for such change.

The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book; containing a few words about American slave children and stories of slave life (1859)

The introduction to The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book, “A Few Words About American Slave Children,” delineates its key messages. Its first sentence, “Children, you are free and happy,” contrasts the fate of “hundreds of thousands of American children [who] are slaves,” due not to these children’s parents, but to the masters of these children who say: “your children are OURS—OUR PROPERTY! They shall not be taught to read or write; . . . they shall not be taught to read the Bible; . . . we shall whip them, sell them, and do what else we please with them . . . .” Anticipating the questions of child readers, this introduction gives emphasis to the powerlessness of the slave parents and answers the hypothetical boy’s questions, “but why did those slaves let their masters bring them into this state? Why didn’t they fight as our forefathers did when they threw off the yoke of England’s laws?” The answer stressed the cruel conditions by which “wicked men . . . from England and other parts of Europe” preyed upon African villages, placing them in ships “packed like spoons below the deck.” It stressed the forced

60 Julia Colman, The Brandy Drops, or Charlie’s Pledge, and The Temperance Boys (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1858).
61 The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book, 7.
62 The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book, 8.
separation of families and underscored the primary truth: “it is always A SIN AGAINST GOD to thus hold . . . a human being as property!”  

The book contains three main stories aimed at presenting children with an accurate picture of what slave life was like for slave children and the parents from whom they were so often separated. There are also ten illustrations, in contrast to most of the books of this period which contained only a single illustration on the frontispiece opposite the title page. The author of the first story, “Little Lewis,” was by Julia Colman (who wrote Brandy Drops and The Temperance Boys), and the next two, “Mark and Hasty; or Slave-Life in Missouri” and “Aunt Judy’s Story: A Story from Real Life,” were written by Matilda G. Thompson.

“Little Lewis” was the precocious slave child of a Kentucky owner, whose daughter was teaching Lewis to read. His mother, separated from her husband and children, grew disturbed and violent, and, believing death a better fate than slavery, tried to stab Lewis and herself when they happened to meet. Although sold to other masters opposed to literacy, Lewis was able to find others who would continue teaching him, and he finally made his way to Boston, where he secured his freedom, married, and became a teacher and a Christian.

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63 The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book, 9.
Illustration 2: “Hasty’s Grief,” from *The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book*

“Mark and Hasty; or, Slave-Life in Missouri,” concerned the separation of families through the slave trade. Hasty, a slave laundress, and Mark, were owned by two separate families in St. Louis (Missouri having become a slave state under the Compromise of 1820). One Saturday night Mark stayed up all night with his sick child Fanny, and as a result, fell asleep as he was getting the carriage ready for his master’s (Nelson’s) ride to church. Nelson, furious, whipped Mark, and decided to put him up for sale. Hasty went to a sympathetic white woman, Mrs. Jennings, who tried to persuade her husband to intervene with Nelson, and when that was unsuccessful, Mrs. Jennings went to Mrs. Nelson. Mrs. Jennings, described as “a true Christian woman,” was equally unsuccessful with Mrs. Nelson, who called her husband, “a rigid disciplinarian . . . [who] makes it a rule never to overlook the first symptom of insubordination,” and lamented that “we wives can do nothing; however great our repugnance may be to it [slavery].” Mark was sold to an owner in the deep South, and Hasty, hopelessly distraught, became ill and died. Before her death, nevertheless, she persuaded Mrs. Jennings to purchase and free her daughter Fanny, which Mrs. Jennings did, and the Jennings moved to Chicago where Mrs. Jennings became “an active worker among the anti-

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64 *The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book*, 35, 36.
65 *The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book*, 36.
slavery women in that liberty-loving city.” An important theme of this story was that neither church-going nor Christian charity could alleviate the suffering or injustice of this repugnant institution.

“Aunt Judy’s Story: A Story From Real Life” told the story of an elderly former slave of James Madison, who was befriended by the Ford family in Indiana. Aunt Judy was of special interest to the Ford children, for they with their mother provided food and other assistance to the impoverished Aunt Judy. Even though Madison’s widow had emancipated Aunt Judy as a young woman in Virginia, Aunt Judy faced danger and violence in a country only half free. To set the stage for the telling of Aunt Judy’s story, the Ford children were actively engaged in questioning the social and legal ramifications of slavery. Young Cornelia Ford was faced with the decision of whether to surrender one of the eggs from the chickens she was raising to go into the basket for Aunt Judy. (Cornelia’s mother let this be Cornelia’s own struggle.) Likewise, young Alfred Ford engaged his father in a debate over whether it was the slave or the “poor Indian” who’d been worse treated. While Mr. Ford pointed to the “cruel and vindictive course” taken by some Indians toward whites, Alfred felt he had the stronger argument when he noted that the Creek Indians refused to return fugitive slaves to the masters, even though the government withheld the $250,000 owed the Creek for some of their lands, and paid the masters with it instead. Alfred argued that the Creek Indians’ decision to ignore the Fugitive Slave Law showed great humanity.

The stage being set, Mrs. Ford then told Aunt Judy’s story. Emancipation papers notwithstanding, Judy, who had moved with Madison’s daughter to Kentucky (a slave state) and married a slave on a plantation, found herself and her young son imprisoned and sold as slaves after her husband died from a lifetime of severe abuse. After a long life of enslavement, despair, and separation from her children, Aunt Judy was finally recognized and rescued by a friend of Mrs. Madison’s daughter. Emancipation clearly held no guarantee of freedom for many slaves.

*The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book* ends with a brief vignette and illustration of an “aged negro” with a missionary in the West Indies, entitled, “Me Neber Gib It Up.” Although “once a slave he had a freeman’s soul,” and because England had abolished slavery, now this man struggled to learn to read so he could read the Bible. Many themes are summarized in the final paragraph: “Let us hope the time is not far distant in which the colored people of our own happy land will also all be free, all able to read the Bible, all possess that soul freedom with which Christ makes his disciples free.” This was the legacy of John Wesley and the message of the early Methodist Sunday School Union.

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66 *The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book*, 47.
67 *The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book*, 52.
These series reflect the changes that took place in Sunday School books over the course of the 50 year span considered in this paper. Change is somewhat hard to trace, since books went through many revisions and printings. By the 1860s, however, many multiple-book series of children’s stories were being published. Drew holds at least 25 such series. In general, these books aimed to be physically appealing to children and contained more illustrations and shorter selections. The Hawk Hollow Stories are very small, purple books, with titles like Bertha and her Brother, The Church by the Springside, and Captain Lee’s Present. Tragedy, death, and disappointment were still ever-present, but the stories spotlighted families and the impact siblings can have on one another.

By the time the Blossom Books were published over a decade later, much of the fiction still promoted “good behavior,” but children were generally depicted in a lighter vein, affectionately at play. Illustrations are large and plentiful, and selections are generally a page in length. Gender predicted the desired character traits—caring, patient girls and bold, courageous boys, and stories were often set in the context of family and home. In A Summer Wreath (Blossom Book), we find stories entitled “Little Mother”; “Tommy’s Orchestra,” in which the all-boy band plays “Yankee Doodle,”

70 Bertha and her Brother (New York: Sunday School Union, 1863).
71 The Church by the Springside (New York: Sunday School Union, 1863).
72 Captain Lee’s Present (New York: Sunday School Union, 1863).
73 A Summer Wreath (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1879).
and “God Save America”; and “A Hard Lesson,” in which a sister helps her brother learn patience. We also read of little girls knitting for the soldiers and boys fishing, and then being persuaded to return their catch to the water. While all of these books contained some moral truth or posed a choice regarding behavior, they were written to appeal more to the child’s imagination and experience than to the salvation of the child’s soul.

Libraries

It is virtually impossible to determine a time when the SSU of the Methodist Episcopal Church did not attach libraries, however rudimentary, to their Sunday Schools. They functioned as lending libraries for children and families, a means of standardizing SSU instruction, a source of rewards for scholars, and a way to forge connections between the Sunday School and the home.\textsuperscript{74} Of course, there were challenges, in financing publication as well as determining how efficiently to produce and distribute books as cheaply and broadly as possible. Upon assuming the secretariat of the SSU and editorship of Sunday School Books and Tracts for The Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844, D. P. Kidder inherited a finance arrangement, whereby Sunday Schools were to provide one cent per quarter for every teacher and student, with the sum to be split between literature and Sunday school work.\textsuperscript{75} Kidder was quite critical of this approach, which burdened those who had already given their time and energy, and soon the responsibility was shifted to individual churches.\textsuperscript{76} Interestingly, Kidder and his nineteenth-century successors gave considerable attention to providing statistics regarding the number of Sunday Schools, scholars, books, pages printed, libraries, conversions, collections, etc. Kidder was pleased to report in 1857 that from 1844 to 1857 collections for Sunday School had increased from $700 to $12,000; and books published rose from “hardly worth counting” to 1,000 separate volumes, that year alone printing 70,000,000 pages and binding nearly 2,000 volumes per working day of the year.\textsuperscript{77} One assumes publicizing these statistics was a great motivator for growth, although the question of quality versus quantity figures as well, particularly with respect to books.

Marketing strategies came increasingly into play. An 1849 catalogue of SSU Publications and tracts lists the following categories:

- Five dollar library of the first 100 volumes of the Youth’s Library;
- Children’s Library-A, 130 volumes, Children’s Library-B, 130 volumes;
- Youth’s Library-460 volumes;
- Five Dollar Library, No. 1, 50 volumes;
- Five Dollar Library, No. 2, 50 volumes.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{74} Wardle, 155.
\textsuperscript{75} Bucke, 586.
\textsuperscript{76} Strobridge, 176-177.
\textsuperscript{77} Strobridge, 211.
\textsuperscript{78} Descriptive Catalogue of the Sunday School Publications & Tracts of the Methodist Episcopal Church (New York: Lane & Scott, 1849), 181.
Such packaging encouraged churches to buy in quantity and enabled Sunday School libraries to be readily established. With respect to distribution, books were sold through ministers and the mail, and the Book Concern opened retail establishments in six cities for their publications. From all evidence these strategies worked. W. A. Candler reported that Sunday School libraries (of all denominations) were so important that they were included in the 1870 census, which reported 33,580 Sunday school libraries and 8,346,153 volumes.

However, numbers fail to tell the whole story. Theories about children and childhood were changing by the latter half of the nineteenth century, as was the emerging secular literature for children, which offered imaginative fiction and fairy tales. In short, by the 1880s the publication of Sunday School library books began to be eclipsed by the availability of more popular children’s literature from other sources. Ironically and prophetically, the Methodist centennial publication, Methodism and Literature (1883), warned, “There is a spirit abroad which, especially since our late war, demands a lighter, less serious, less instructive, more exciting, and more miscellaneous literature for children and youth than is either healthy for young minds or fitting for a Church press to produce.” Although we can see some evidence of changing trends in the books published for the SSU of the Methodist Episcopal Church from 1827 to 1880, the denominational presses soon lost ground to the secular production of children’s literature.

While theories regarding child development and religious education inevitably change, these early Sunday School library books, while quaint and didactic by today’s standards, provide a useful glimpse into the literature and priorities of the early years of the Methodist Sunday School movement as it navigated the challenges of the nineteenth century.

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79 Kirby, Richey, and Rowe, 183.
80 Candler, 83.
81 Boylan, 149.
82 Shaffer, 28.
83 “The Ideal Sunday-School Library,” Methodism and Literature, published for the Methodist Centennial (Cincinnati, 1883), 205.