Children with a cause: Training antebellum children for the abolition of slavery

Erik A. Stumpf
Iowa State University

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Children with a cause: Training antebellum children for the abolition of slavery

by

Erik Andrew Stumpf

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Rural Agricultural Technological and Environmental History

Program of Study Committee:

Kathleen Hilliard, Major Professor
Pamela Riney-Kehrberg
Brian Behnken
John Monroe
Amy Slagell

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

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The work before you began as a moment of inspiration born from pure desperation. As I prepared for my final semester as an M.A. student, I faced a dilemma. How could I manage to combine my interests in the abolition movement with a class requirement to write a research paper about something related to childhood? Sensing that failure was imminent, even weeks before that final semester, I spent days futilely trying to find a way to accomplish that task without humiliating myself before a professor respected in our department and far beyond. The answer one day struck as quickly as a lightning bolt. If evangelical people today and then wanted to instill their beliefs into their children, and abolitionists tended to be evangelicals, then would it not be the case that abolitionists would have the goal of training their children to be abolitionists as well? With this germ of an idea, a project spanning the next several years began.

I owe a great debt to two institutions that have provided me with tremendous educational opportunities at different stages of my life, Faith Baptist Theological Seminary and Iowa State University. Faith accepted me as a graduate student who was not yet certain that he had the ability to do or excel at graduate work and worked with me through some tumultuous times in the early 2000s, as seemingly every unit in the Iowa Army National Guard faced immediate deployment, and I managed to be connected to most of those deployments. My professors there managed to be simultaneously comforting and challenging. Three professors stand out needing recognition here. John Hartog III, the seminary dean at the time, constantly poked and prodded me to seriously consider doctoral studies to sharpen my abilities. Ernie Schmidt managed to bring his enthusiasm for Wilber Wilberforce, the British abolitionist, into a multitude of classes and discussions, and that led me to wonder about similar connections
here in the United States. George Houghton allowed me to take the next step, granting me
permission to ignore strict topical guidelines to pursue this curiosity. This placed me on a path
which eventually led to this study.

Iowa State University welcomed me into the fold as a refugee from the factory floor of
a check-printing plant which was scheduled to close. As I wondered what to do next, the
thought of returning to history became unshakeable, and Charles Dobbs and the graduate
college graciously and quickly accepted me into the program. The department itself has
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The professors on my committee each have a special place on this journey as well.
Kathleen Hilliard energetically engaged with my ideas at our initial meeting, which showed
that this would be a partnership which worked. As life and times took their unpredictable turns,
she has managed to be a steadfast supporter while finding flexible ways to work through
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ability to allow a wildly creative approach was invaluable in my quest to understand how
children were supposed to engage their world as abolitionists. Amy Slagell graciously set aside
time from her hectic schedule to meet with a frazzled student beginning this journey and just as
graciously agreed to be part of the project.
Above all, I give thanks for and to my family. My wife, Becky, has been there supporting me through our wild journey over the years, working, helping, encouraging, and believing. Our daughter Zoe always sends me off to the library with the words “Do great work at the library.” I dedicate this project especially to Becky, to Zoe as she learns to read and write, and to Doria, who never got to.
This dissertation explores the efforts of abolitionists in the antebellum United States to recruit children to join in their battle against slavery. From the very beginnings of this movement, abolitionists understood that reaching adults would be virtually impossible and turned to children, whom they considered to be natural enemies of slavery, to become the catalyst which they believed would inspire people across the nation to combat slavery and successfully seek its end. Abolitionists constructed a new model of childhood which viewed children not as people who needed to be taught obedience, but people who needed to be instructed in ways that they could change their world for the good of the slaves. To this end, abolitionists taught children several ways to join the fight against slavery and proposed a childhood in which every area of life was devoted to the antislavery cause. Abolitionists provided a wealth of materials to train these children theologically to hate slavery and love the slaves, and also contrasted the steady expectations of middle-class children to the nightmares slaves lived out every day. “Children With a Cause” will show that children did indeed join the abolitionist movement, even as it changed over the years from 1831-1859. The dissertation will also make clear that children ultimately faced insurmountable obstacles that they could not overcome. This dissertation, then, provides a new look at a new form of childhood as well as an examination of abolitionist strategies over the years as the reformers encountered the changing social, political, and economic realities of antebellum America.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

My attention was first called to the subject of slavery, in my boyhood, by an illustrated pamphlet, upon the first page of which was shown the picture of a negro slave woman, with her baby in her arms, who was being severely whipped by a cruel slave-driver, or plantation overseer, until her bared back was lacerated, and the blood was flowing from her wounds.¹

Abolitionists needed help. They saw slavery as a moral evil, a sin against God, threatening to destroy the United States, and they needed an army of fellow workers to combat this scourge. The earliest abolitionists knew that it would take many more like-minded reformers in order to convince all people, North and South, that the institution needed to end immediately. This proved to be easier said than done, and these crusaders found that many people had no interest in joining the cause, either because they were unfamiliar and unaffected by the lives of the faraway slaves, or had other interests which precluded them from joining the movement. Even in the very first days of the antebellum abolition efforts, reformers questioned whether adults could ever be reached in the fight against slavery. Thus convinced, abolitionists immediately and urgently searched for other sources of converts.

Abolitionists turned to children as the source of salvation for the slaves and hope for the nation, believing that children would serve as the catalyst for action and discussion which would create the needed army of abolitionists. Innocent, trainable, and potentially a way to avoid the difficulties abolitionists faced reaching families, children became a vital audience for

abolitionists and their moral message of salvation for the slaves. To this end, the abolitionist movement in the United States produced materials for children intended to show them the evils of the institution and then to train those children in ways that they could resist slavery from their white, middle-class Northern homes. Abolitionists taught these children that they could have an impact on the people in their own homes by convincing their siblings and parents to join the abolitionist crusade, and an impact among their classmates by sharing materials with them and bringing them to anti-slavery meetings. Further, abolitionists taught children that they could impact slavery directly by financial means, providing children with an early consumer education to avoid purchasing products made by slave labor. Accordingly, northern children responded, providing valuable new footsoldiers in the war against slavery.

The abolition movement itself grew out of a nation undergoing several processes of dramatic transformation. The antebellum years saw the emergence of a developing capitalist economy in the United States, and this development brought about dramatic changes in the way the nation’s people did business and conducted their daily lives. This development, termed the Market Revolution by some historians, or the transition to capitalism by others, saw a gradual shift away from a fully agrarian economy to one which incorporated workers moving from the countryside into the cities into new types of professions with new purposes. This transition challenged traditions, lifestyles, and at times, Jeffersonian republican ideals of the independent landowner able to vote for the common good over his own personal interests. This plunged an increasing number of Americans into a new environment of fierce competition for wages and jobs.²

These times also saw merchants reaching more distant domestic markets with their products than ever before due to transportation developments such as canals and steamboats. This emerging transformation brought new jobs, especially in the northern United States, and put those jobs in new locations, specifically forcing an increasing number of men to find professional work away from their homes, which then contributed to a change in the way families functioned. Importantly, while some of these developments brought the nation closer together with common culture and consumer products, they also created a greater distance between makers, sellers, and markets, and introduced a physical separation into American families during their workdays. This distance characterized much of the emerging economy, with people and companies selling to markets farther away, moving jobs to locations separate from their families, and all the while bringing issues from more distance locales to the homes of middle-class Northerners.

These new jobs brought new situations to northern families and especially the creation of a middle class in the region. These middle-class men and their families experienced both new living and working conditions transformed by these new work situations. While defining this new middle class has remained an elusive and imprecise objective for historians, several have provided an understanding which helps to make this new development clearer, though not fully complete.

The men and women of this middle class formed a middling group, not self-sufficient or independently wealthy, but not identifiable as working class, either. In these families, the men earned their wage from an employer rather than their own shop or farm. This created both security and insecurity for families, as they knew where their money came from as long as

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employment continued, but also knew that their stability could end in a heartbeat with the end of that job. The urban location of these professions and sometimes greater income also encouraged new levels of consumption for these families, found in areas such as the design and use of their homes and a growing abundance of consumer goods, including such things as toys, clothing, and books for different members of the family. At all times, though, these middle class families experienced new forms of insecurity stemming from fears of the possibly temporary nature of their new societal position, knowing that the salaried labor the family depended on could end at any moment. As a family without the old ideal of self-sufficiency, the end of that wage could quickly lead to the loss of the family’s home and an inability for the family to purchase food for subsistence. This potential loss of the family’s home also threatened the continuation of the safe haven that the home was to provide from the turbulence of the changing world outside, which then threatened to make that instability a part of life within the family rather than a burden that the husband bore as he struggled on behalf of his family in the rough and tumble world.³

But the husband’s position as salary earner formed only one part of middle-class identity. Also, moving employment away from family enterprises housed in the family home created a new situation in northern families, one in which the husband was absent from the home during the entire workday, leaving their wives alone to juggle all the household chores with children constantly underfoot. Reformers and advice writers such as Catharine Beecher began to promote a new family concept described as “separate spheres” for this new form of

family life, in which men scrapper ruthlessly for their family’s living in the rough-and-tumble world outside of the home, and women created a safe and morally pure haven within the home focused on Christian values and love for fellow family members, and using that haven to physically protect children from the malevolence of the world beyond the front door.\textsuperscript{4}

As this insecurity brewed, many Northerners found solace through conversion during the Second Great Awakening, which burned especially bright through the 1820s and 1830s. Spurred by evangelists such as Charles Finney, this revival became a source of security for many middle-class Northerners seeking answers to their turbulent times. The revivals also filled these fervent new converts with a zeal to reform the sinful world they saw around them into one that eliminated many problems and social issues while making it possible to redeem their society and produce one worthy of Christ’s return. These new converts formed together in societies geared towards correcting the social evils of the day, with temperance societies joining to battle against alcohol consumption, peace societies seeking to eliminate the scourge of violence from all aspects of American society, and abolitionist societies such as the American Anti-Slavery Society and its many local branches seeking to win freedom for the slaves of the South. These groups would meet together in a home or meeting hall to hear speakers discuss the issue so central to them, procure and distribute literature designed to

convert others to the cause, and donate moneys essential towards operating the organization and combatting whichever issue it was intended to challenge.⁵

Abolitionists inserted themselves into this situation with literature geared for children, which both created a way to penetrate the threshold of the family home and offered a sphere of agency for children heretofore unmentioned by reformers and advice writers, one in which the children themselves would act as catalysts upon this environment to transform the middle-class home into an abolitionist stronghold. In so doing, the abolitionists found a way to reach the middle-class audiences they so desperately needed to reach but found so difficult to gain access to. Reaching children brought the abolitionist message beyond the threshold of the middle-class home into the living rooms and other spaces by equipping earnest children with abolitionist beliefs and materials to help spread those beliefs. This took advantage of the urban middle-class lifestyle of separate spheres and produced materials that promised to reach and challenge each member of the family. These materials showed mothers and fathers in their expected middle-class spheres, with mothers tending to the moral training of the children and ensuring that the home remained safe from the corruption of the outside world while fathers went out into that anything-goes world to provide for their families. Abolitionists utilized this framework in their stories, especially in the early years of the 1830s, to show middle-class families operating as expected, but including the twist that defines this part of the movement. Abolitionists proposed that children would be the catalyst that propelled the movement, serving as the active agent within their own homes or in the rest of their world, working

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earnestly and relentlessly in each to bring in converts to the abolitionist cause, and fellow warriors to the battle against slavery.

Towards this end, abolitionists set out to create an entirely new model of childhood with children as the catalysts that would spur on action to free the slaves and a generation that would embrace the full measure of racial equality that abolitionists sought to bring about. Children would create both the freedom that slaves needed immediately and the climate of racial acceptance that slaves would need in order to experience that freedom to its fullest measure.

The first strategy abolitionists employed was termed moral suasion. Moral suasion was a non-violent, apolitical approach designed to convince slaveholders and Northerners to adopt the abolitionist ideal that slaves were human beings equal to white people and therefore deserving of freedom and full equality with white people. Reformers adopting moral suasion as their approach believed that people would be converted by looking at different kinds of evidence, including biblical arguments, arguments from personal experience, and other moral arguments. To accomplish this mission, abolitionists organized into Anti-Slavery Societies geared towards hearing abolitionist messages, spreading abolitionist materials, and raising funds for the abolitionist cause. Abolitionists also published newspapers such as the *Liberator*, the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, and others, as well as books, pamphlets, songbooks, parlor dramas, and other materials designed for use in convincing people of the evils of slavery. This approach was the predominant approach of abolitionists during the 1830s and carried on in diminished ways through the 1840s and 1850s.

These abolitionists believed that children were crucial to the success of moral suasion as a strategy to combat slavery. Believing that children were born with a natural hatred of
slavery that only a lifetime of contrary experience could extinguish, abolitionists sought to inoculate children against what they saw as the corrupting influences of the world around them to convince children to join the fight against slavery before it was too late and those children could be converted into adults who tolerated and profited from the institution.

Juvenile abolitionism has attracted very little academic study. A scholar of American literature, Deborah DeRosa, was the first to offer a thorough examination of abolitionist children’s literature, and the first to conclude that there did exist a sizable body of such works, enough even to consider this as a serious approach from abolitionists to expand the membership of their movement. With her work, *Domestic Abolitionism and Juvenile Literature, 1830-1865*, DeRosa provided an invaluable resource which conclusively proved the abundance of abolitionist material for children.6

DeRosa concluded that abolitionists utilized a variety of forms from their time, including written works and handkerchiefs with embroidered messages to reach children, and argued that these works constituted an appeal to children’s emotions. While many of the works did exactly that, especially any work that sought to recreate the painful experiences of slave life, this does not ring true for all abolitionist children’s material, as abolitionists sought to reach the mind as well as the heart, taking the time to patiently yet quickly explain the situations, provide children with practical steps to take in the fight against slavery, and a combination of each with Bible lessons for children about slavery. Emotional appeals always played an important role, but not the only role.

A major point of difference between DeRosa’s work and this one involves issues of historical context. DeRosa’s book effectively describes things abolitionists of the 1840s and

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1850s wrote, but does not go back to the earliest stages of recruiting children the earliest days of the American abolition movement, with outreach to juveniles first appearing with 1831 issues of the *Liberator*. As a result of her starting point, DeRosa was able to identify that women played an important role in recruiting children, which she attributed somewhat to women employing their agency within the separate spheres arrangements of the day to reach an audience no one would refuse to them. As this study attests, women were indeed crucial to this aspect of abolitionism but because DeRosa misses the beginnings of the movement, she misses the shifts in leadership and authorship which occurred among abolitionists reaching children, with the very first leaders of this approach composed of eastern male leaders such as William Lloyd Garrison, the American Anti-Slavery Society and Henry C. Wright, who served for a year as the Children’s Agent of the organization, travelling around the Northeast establishing anti-slavery organizations comprised of children. These leaders published pieces in the *Liberator* from its earliest issues and then serving as an outlet to publicize the work juvenile abolitionists were doing, passing the work of converting children to the AASS, who published *The Slave’s Friend* for 40 monthly issues between 1836-1839, a magazine intended solely for children. Matters of frustration or division among male abolitionists as they quarreled over the matter of continuing moral suasion efforts or adopting political approaches led men to abandon the training of children, which was then picked up by eastern women such as Eliza Follen in 1839 and carrying through the 1840s, not so much because it was a harmless area in which women could work, but because men simply quit trying. Instead, men and women divided their attention between moral suasion approaches and political ends to the slavery battle, including such means as forming of antislavery parties such as the Liberty Party and the Free-Soil Party and attempts to restrict slavery from the territories, seen in protests against the Mexican War.
and attempts such as the Wilmot Proviso to restrict slavery from new American territories. In
the meantime, while men divided their attention and moved away from forming associations, a
small group of women picked up this method of reaching children. The end of that decade saw
the Eastern women largely drop out as most abolitionists abandoned moral suasion as a means
to fighting slavery, and the work of recruiting children followed a familiar path for individual
abolitionists, becoming a western effort, which was in this case led by female authors in Ohio,
Wisconsin, and Minnesota publishing through John Jewett Publishers of Boston and the
American Reform Book and Tract Society of Cincinnati, the former famous for its massive
success publishing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin.* These publishers and women then sought to emulate
Stowe’s success and approach from that massive bestseller in these last-ditch attempts at moral
suasion for children.

DeRosa’s approach also neglects the most important facet of abolitionist literature for
children, which must be the role that authors intended children to play in the struggle against
slavery. While a focus on the role of authors offers valuable background about those engaged
in recruiting efforts, and especially so if provided with rich historical context, it stops short of
asking why abolitionists would recruit children and fails to answer how abolitionists believed
children could act against slavery.

DeRosa described abolition as a political movement, though none of the works address
political solutions, largely due to the political limitations of children, such as their inability to
vote. Instead, these authors recruiting children focused instead on things that children could do,
such as talking to others of various ages, consumer decisions children could make, and
societies children could join in order to raise money for the abolitionist war on slavery. Though

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7 Jeffrey, 4; Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-
numbers are difficult to come by, this likely reached a very limited audience of children and families. DeRosa mentioned that these works were available through well-known commercial publishers, but with the exception of John Jewett Publishers of Boston in the 1850s publishing a small handful of novels, these abolitionists were normally forced by market realities and the lack of appeal the abolitionist message really held for Northern people to publish through smaller, lesser-known and lesser-distributed publishing houses, sometimes including the creation of their own abolitionist publishing houses to get the works printed.  

Historians have not previously undertaken an in-depth look at the role of children in combatting slavery, but scholars have explored several important questions about the abolition movement which inform our understanding of the movement and the role abolitionists expected children to play. Historians have focused great attention on the identity of the abolitionists, which helps us to identify those who joined the movement as predominantly members of the emerging middle class. Historians have also focused attention on various approaches that abolitionists adopted and provided much understanding of the importance of moral suasion as an abolitionist strategy, especially in the early years of the movement. Since moral suasion was the approach abolitionists utilized in their attempts to reach children, that contribution is of supreme importance here. Historians have deeply explored the origins of the antebellum abolition movement. Most importantly here, historians have debated whether the abolition movement emerged ex nihilo as a result of the Second Great Awakening or whether it emerged in a continuum with the abolitionists’ earlier Quaker predecessors.

Historians have adopted various views about the identity of the abolitionists. The argument has centered around a traditional view that continues over time, with renewals for

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8 DeRosa, 1-12, 40.
each generation of historians, that the abolitionists were people of conscience motivated by their conversion experiences or the wave of religious enthusiasm stemming from the Second Great Awakening. Historians have offered alternatives at different times, once arguing that the abolitionists can best be described in terms of their middle-class backgrounds, with abolition beliefs serving as a sort of bedrock principal for the forming northern middle class. The most recent alternative offers that the abolitionists were driven by a moral objection to slavery, but argue that this objection was not necessarily religious in nature.

The earliest consensus among historians was that abolitionists were motivated by their religious beliefs. Gilbert Barnes argued that abolitionists were motivated by a religious impulse in his early synthesis *The Abolitionist Impulse.*9 Alice Felt Tyler stated even more directly that the “American reformer was the product of evangelical religion” and included detailed accounts of the different ways that religions affected different groups and areas of the nation, but consistently placing reform movements in the evangelical camp.10 Dwight Dumond and Larry Gara carried this interpretation forward into the 1960s, with Dumond noting on his very first page that “they denounced it as a sin which could only be remedied by unconditional repentance and retributive justice” and extending credit for abolitionist leadership first to Quakers and then Presbyterians and Baptists.11 With a nod towards his own times, the 1960s, Gara pointed out that the abolition movement combined “religious enthusiasm and radical social thought,” adding that this religious impetus reinforced the intractability of abolitionists as they refused to compromise in any way with the continued existence of slavery.12

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Donald Scott described the abolitionists as devoted young evangelicals who “considered emancipation their essential life-work and derived their basic self-definition and esteem from this role,” with these evangelicals making a conscious decision to become abolitionists just as they made conscious decisions to convert during the Second Great Awakening. These abolitionists placed a real stress on converting youth and children and felt a real need to combat sin in the world, with this urge to emancipate finding “its most fertile ground among young evangelicals who were caught up in the grip of this new and dynamic form of sacred vocation.” For Scott, then, the most fervent of the abolitionists were young converts from the Second Great Awakening motivated purely by their newfound Christian faith.

Robert Abzug noted that many reformers, including abolitionists and the entire broad spectrum of antebellum reformers, inspired much resistance towards their desired reforms precisely due to their religious motivations and “tendency to apply religious imagination and passion to issues that most Americans considered worldly.” Abzug also argued that many prominent reformers entered their careers with ministry ambitions and found their reform involvement to be their own new sort of ministry. Following a discussion of the intense responses to the Second Great Awakening, James Brewer Stewart concluded about the revival, “From this morally charged setting sprang New England’s crusade against slavery,” and that these radical reformers traced their activism directly to the revivals they experienced during the 1820s.

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John Quist showed that the religious impulse for reform crossed sectional boundaries in his analysis of temperance and abolitionist reformers in two specific counties. Quist noted that evangelical beliefs drove reformers in Michigan and Alabama, with evangelical fervor in each striving to battle against gambling, theatre, Masonry, and alcohol, with the obvious difference that only the Michigan country embraced the fight against slavery.\textsuperscript{16} Beth Salerno examined the membership rolls of Female Anti-Slavery Societies across the North and demonstrated that women’s involvement in these societies grew both from women’s traditions of helping their neighbors and their religious roots in the Second Great Awakening, which led them to seek answers for their turbulent economic times.\textsuperscript{17} Examining the role of rural women in the abolition movement, whom she described as the backbone of the entire movement, Julie Roy Jeffrey found that the rural reformers taking part in the abolition movement were white evangelical Protestants or Quaker women who made this participation a normal part of their everyday lives.\textsuperscript{18}

Other historians have emphasized the class background of abolitionists rather than their religious background, arguing that people who adopted abolitionist beliefs did so as a response to the tumultuous economic times of the antebellum United States rather than a religious response that may or may not have been connected to those economic worries. Such historians inevitably noted that these reformers came from the growing middle and professional classes. Bertram Wyatt-Brown introduced this interpretation when he analyzed the makeup of abolitionist intellectuals and found that they were nearly always members of that professional

\textsuperscript{17} Beth Salerno, \textit{Sister Societies: Women’s Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America} (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005), 9.
class working in professions such as teaching, writing, or serving as ministers. This dovetailed nicely with conclusions from his work *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery*, which noted the difficulties that even a religiously-motivated upper-class reformer such as Lewis Tappan found in recruiting abolitionist support amongst wealthy New Yorkers and Bostonians, who often found their fortunes inextricably tied to southern slavery.19

Other historians noted that the duration of the abolition movement outlasted the fire of the revivals, thus necessitating another factor as the motivation of abolitionists. In *The Antislavery Rank and File*, Edward Magdol mentioned the various complications involved in identifying the abolitionists, including the environment of social, economic, and political change in the forming United States. Magdol developed his study of abolitionist identity by including the Second Great Awakening as a motivator for abolitionists, but not the driving factor in their development, instead stressing the time of revival as a response to the stormy times of the antebellum United States, with people looking for something to create a sense of stability in their difficult times rather than a catalyst to push for greater levels of social and economic change. Magdol noted that the men who became abolitionists focused on political action tended to be working-class laborers, while the ones who focused on moral suasion efforts tended to be middle-class professionals and proprietors. Most significantly, Magdol noted that revivalism burned itself out by the early 1840s, thus requiring another motivation that could carry on the movement, though Magdol did not work through the concept that the

revivals could have been the lasting spark which created a movement that continued to absorb people throughout the 1840s and 1850s.\textsuperscript{20}

Historians in this vein pointed to a variety of reactions to antebellum economic issues as the factor motivating abolitionists. Herbert Aptheker embraced this concept and included that the abolitionists considered themselves to be revolutionaries in their own time as they sought to overthrow slavery from its place as the major economic power within the United States. Notably, Aptheker also argued that religion was an important foundation for abolitionists and a profound motivator of the cause, arguing that abolitionists put forth an early sort of liberation theology while claiming that abolitionists rejected many facets of traditional Christian religion of the day.\textsuperscript{21}

Steven Mintz placed the abolitionists firmly within the middle-class and claimed a mix of anxiety and faith due to their changing social and economic environments, calling abolition a “middle-class reform gospel,” with a drive to preserve human dignity during the transition to capitalism in the early United States, but somehow lacking a full-fledged concern for social equality.\textsuperscript{22}

Harriet Hyman Alonso bridged the gap connecting abolitionist identity to recruiting children into the movement with her book \textit{Growing Up Abolitionist}, which told the story of the children of William Lloyd Garrison and his wife Helen. In this case, the children of a middle-class professional family found themselves maturing into reformers through the unique connections of their father, who brought many of the leading reformers of the day into his

\begin{thebibliography}{99}


\bibitem{Aptheker} Herbert Aptheker, \textit{Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement} (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), xi-xii, xvi.

\bibitem{Mintz} Steven Mintz, \textit{Moralists and Modernizers: America's Pre-Civil War Reformers} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), xviii, 141.
\end{thebibliography}
home and created an opportunity for his children to meet them and learn what they believed and why, even as they learned daily from their father’s fervency.\textsuperscript{23}

A growing number of historians in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century have argued that abolitionists were motivated by moral reasons, but not necessarily religious ones. Manisha Sinha has played an important role in this interpretation, offering both a new foundation for abolitionists in the African-American struggle for freedom, arguing for example that freed African-Americans may have been the core of subscribers to the \textit{Liberator}, and arguing explicitly that “abolition, however, was never simply a reflection of religious revival.” In her magisterial work, \textit{The Slave’s Cause}, Sinha noted that abolitionist membership crossed boundaries of race, class, and gender, and included people whose views transcended a narrow focus on slavery to encompass every evil or problem they saw in society.\textsuperscript{24}

In \textit{The Abolitionist Imagination}, Andrew Delbanco and others argued that the abolitionist movement was “an instance of a recurring American phenomenon” in which “a determined minority sets out, in the face of long odds, to rid the world of what it regards as a patent and entrenched evil.” For Delbanco and the other contributors, the outrages which led to the emergence of antebellum abolitionists included the Missouri Compromise and other avenues of political context, and “never simply a reflection of religious revival.”\textsuperscript{25}

In other areas, such as the nation’s capital, the city’s image and political centrality provided the impetus for abolitionists to take action, argued Stanley Herrold in \textit{Subversives}:

\textsuperscript{24} Manisha Sinha, “Did the Abolitionists Cause the Civil War?” in \textit{The Abolitionist Imagination} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 95, 104; Manisha Sinha, \textit{The Slave’s Cause: A History of Abolition} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 1-
Antislavery Community in Washington, D.C. This city provided a unique combination of northern visitors who would encounter slavery and find it morally objectionable while also serving as a city which seemed to suffer from moral and economic decay, which many blamed on the existence of slavery within its limits. This created a unique combination of African-Americans, northern evangelicals and Quakers fighting slavery in this southernmost outpost of the abolitionist movement, which also led these abolitionists into a complex mixture of moral suasion and political strategies.\(^{26}\)

Regarding abolitionists who sought to recruit children to the cause, their identity involved both static and dynamic features. At essentially all times, these reformers were middle-class professionals targeting other middle-class professionals and setting that lifestyle as a social norm for parents and children alike to understand and relate to the contrary experiences of slaves. With the ready inclusion of Bible lessons in their materials, it is fair to conclude that the authors of the 1830s were greatly influenced by the Second Great Awakening and assumed a heavy influence of evangelical Protestant Christianity in the lives of their readers. These class and religious factors remain the same throughout the recruiting efforts.

An important note to understanding abolitionists that is particularly relevant in light of the misunderstandings and distortions that people include when mentioning their movement, it is crucial to come to grips with the abolitionists and their goals. The movement itself evolved as different members took on different approaches to ending slavery, partially due to impatience with the continued existence of the institution and partially because other approaches seemed to offer a more powerful and effective means of solving the intractable problem, and partially because matters such as slavery in the territories and the acceptance of

new states into the Union demanded political action. Beginning as a moral suasion movement in the 1830s through means such as the *Liberator* and the American Anti-Slavery Society, the difficulty of persuading slaveholders to give up their lucrative enterprise combined with the difficulty of even gaining an audience with which to make the attempt as well as controversies over appropriate gender roles within the movement led abolitionists to split between two different approaches in 1840, with some continuing to advocate for moral suasion as the winning approach and others seeing a need to enter the political arena and solve problems related to slavery through political action. As the conflict over slavery continued to percolate through the 1840s with no ending in sight, some abolitionists in the 1850s began to add violence as an approach to the battle, most notably John Brown in Kansas and Virginia. Since abolitionists recruiting children focused on the moral suasion approach throughout each decade, this section will focus on historians’ examination of abolitionists and moral suasion.

Aileen Kraditor noted the importance of motivation behind abolitionists who chose moral suasion as their approach, arguing that the religious motivation of abolitionists led them to take a radical approach. Kraditor included the response of the general northern public, who considered this to be offensive to their sensibilities. Abolitionists pressed on, Kraditor wrote, believing that slavery was a fundamental sin harming northern and southern society alike, and a sin requiring total repentance from the entire nation in order to heal the heart of the nation, and therefore a problem requiring radical solutions.²⁷

Abolitionists used various means to address slavery through a moral suasion strategy. Ford Risley successfully argued that abolitionist leaders saw the press as an “invaluable tool” against slavery and knew the need for their own press, since regular outlets closed themselves

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off from publishing abolitionist works. This led abolitionists to create such papers as the *Liberator*, *National Era*, the *North Star*, and many more.\(^{28}\) Kate Levi noted that antislavery writing began in the West in 1840 as moral suasion literature, which tended to be the vanguard effort as abolitionists spread their work to new areas, with the publishing work in Wisconsin originally controlled by men from eastern states.\(^{29}\) Julie Roy Jeffrey delved into the broad range of activities that moral suasion abolitionists carried on, including sewing circles, antislavery fairs, propaganda, sponsoring lectures, and assembling anti-slavery societies.\(^{30}\) Deborah DeRosa noted that abolitionists used all sorts of popular media in their approaches to children, specifically appealing to emotion in order to win their conversion.\(^{31}\)

My research into abolitionist efforts to convert children to the cause shows that abolitionists used each and every one of these approaches, beginning with a plethora of literature geared not only towards emotional conversions, but also by reasoning with children to show them that opposing slavery was simply the only reasonable thing to do, using arguments from experience, the Bible, and consumer efforts to show children that slavery must be opposed. In addition, reformers established Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies in which children would join together with their peers in the battle, and in some cases, children joined adult reformers by providing items for sale at anti-slavery fairs or even conducting their own.

A recurring note from both research and reading is the connection between antebellum abolition efforts and earlier efforts made by the Quakers, primarily in Pennsylvania. In *The Slave’s Cause*, Manisha Sinha argues that abolitionists, whatever their background or religious

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\(^{30}\) Jeffrey, *Great Silent Army*, 5-6.

\(^{31}\) DeRosa, *Domestic Abolitionism*, 40.
motivation may have been, were reformers taking part in a continuous tradition of American
reform, and in their case, especially carrying on traditions previously expressed by the
Quakers.\textsuperscript{32} Richard Newman offered several areas of continuity between antebellum
abolitionists and Quakers, including free produce ideas (the idea of using one’s market power
to purchase products made from free labor rather than slave labor), anti-slavery petitions,
providing areas of practical aid to African-Americans in their experience of freedom, forming
societies to promote the abolitionist cause, producing reform literature, and putting all of these
together in a movement geared towards convincing the masses of the evils of slavery, though
not always as a coherently coordinated movement.\textsuperscript{33} Stanley Herrold noted similar continuities
among abolitionists in Washington, D.C., in some cases finding that a movement comprised
early on by Quaker activists was almost seamlessly handed off to their antebellum
counterparts.\textsuperscript{34}

My own research, especially influenced by time with the archives at Swarthmore
College, indicates that the antebellum abolitionists certainly borrowed methods from their
Quaker antecedents, including the production of children’s literature and the consumer ideals
of free produce, but were not able to go as far as Quakers had. For example, antebellum
abolitionists needed to focus on penetrating the threshold of middle-class homes, because the
doors of public schools were not opened to them. The focus on practical means of opposing
slavery and helping freed African-Americans, including treating freedmen as equals in every
way, permeated the works of antebellum abolitionists, and represented a sort of incomplete
continuity with earlier Quaker efforts but with the addition that children were not just to adopt

\textsuperscript{32} Sinha, \textit{The Slave’s Cause}, 5.
\textsuperscript{33} Richard Newman, \textit{The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic} (Chapel
\textsuperscript{34} Harrold, \textit{Subversives}, 13-30.
abolitionist views as society prepared for the slave’s freedom, but were to take action themselves to bring this freedom about.

An issue which generates tremendous popular confusion today in understanding the abolitionists is understanding what exactly their goals were, with some seeing their goals as restricting slavery to its then-current environs, others arguing that abolitionists sought the immediate end to slavery with no provision for the future of the people whose freedom they sought, and others seeing a much more benevolent goal from the abolitionists of elevating freed slaves to full freedom in the United States. Historians of the abolitionists themselves present various views of these goals, including the original belief that abolitionists sought full equality and citizenship for freed slaves, which found restatement in the 1970s but was faced with new alternatives in the 1990s, including an argument that abolitionists were seeking almost solely to raise awareness of the issue without necessarily providing the solution to the slavery problems and one that the abolitionists sought freedom for the slaves for purely religious reasons both connected and disconnected from the straightforward issue of freeing the slaves.

Historians who focus on the abolitionists adopting a moral suasion approach find that these reformers strove for different goals and emphases. Joe Richardson found that the American Missionary Association plainly advocated full citizenship for freedmen, with no distinction there between white and black Americans, which included education as a means to train the freedmen for life as citizens.35 Richard Newman added to this focus on citizenship that immediatists sought full equality and societal participation in all areas of American life for

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the future freedmen.\textsuperscript{36} James Brewer Stewart added another dimension to this goal, connecting freedom to the growth of capitalism in the United States, noting especially that immediatists “therefore contained a vision of a competitive system unparalleled in its inclusive belief that capitalism nurtured harmony among races and classes,” as well as providing all Americans with limitless opportunities for upward social mobility.\textsuperscript{37}

Part of a wave of responses during the 1990s, Steven Mintz advocated that the purpose abolitionists sought to achieve was simply to increase awareness of the evils of slavery. After describing abolitionism as a middle-class reform gospel, Mintz developed his argument to state that abolitionists sought to awaken Americans to the moral evil of slavery, but rather than proscribing solutions or pushing for immediate emancipation, Mintz argued that the abolitionists sought to leave the matter of solutions to politicians.\textsuperscript{38}

Other historians have argued that the abolitionist goal of freeing the slaves was part of a greater religious goal, such as bringing in the Millennium. Robert Abzug described this idea as one where abolitionists, armed only with Bibles, sought to remodel the world around them into one in which the sacred and profane were no longer separate, but all were guided by sacred texts to do sacred things creating a “radical joining of Heaven and earth.”\textsuperscript{39} Quist added a somewhat more nationalistic angle to reformers’ motivations, noting that, to the antebellum reformers, America itself was at stake, and the reformers found themselves in a struggle for the soul of the country.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{36} Newman, “From Pennsylvania to Massachusetts, from Colonization to Immediatism” in \textit{The Transformation of American Abolitionism}, 107-130.
\textsuperscript{37} Stewart, \textit{Holy Warriors}, 55.
\textsuperscript{38} Mintz, \textit{Moralists and Modernizers}, 141.
\textsuperscript{39} Abzug, \textit{Cosmos Crumbling}, 7-8.
\textsuperscript{40} Quist, \textit{Restless Visionaries}. 
Chapter Summaries

Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it.
Proverbs 22:6

This verse served as a mission statement for abolitionists reaching out to children, and serves here to show the different aspects and questions of abolitionists training children. The abolitionists who reached out to recruit children into the movement used this verse prolifically, both in ways that were directly quoted and in more informal ways where they simply inserted the words of the verse into their sentence or arguments towards parents. This theme verse is included at the start of each chapter with words bolded to indicate the portion of this verse that the abolitionist efforts highlighted.

Chapter 2, “Why Children?” addresses the question of why abolitionists decided to reach out to children and addresses the word “child” in this theme verse. This chapter will show that abolitionists saw children as innocents not yet corrupted by the troubles of slavery and also as the hope of the future that could do what the current and previous generations of Americans had not done and would not do in the battle to end slavery. Eastern men and their organizations, such as the *Liberator* and the American Anti-Slavery Society took the lead to lay a foundation which explained precisely why abolitionists saw the need to recruit children.

Chapter 3, “What Could Children Do, or, The Abolitionist Child” describes the way abolitionists believed that children should go, and shows a variety of practical things that children could do in every area of their lives, encapsulating family time, time with friends, time in the market, their free time, and everything else in their daily lives. This chapter will show that abolitionists believed that children could devote their entire lives to battling slavery, and will show a clear focus from abolitionists on the ability of children to raise money. Further, this
chapter will show that abolitionists saw children not only as the future of the movement, but as a very present help in their current time of trouble. In addition to the foundation that the early Eastern men leading this approach to children laid in answering why it was important to reach children, this chapter will lay a foundation of practical steps children were asked to take in the battle against slavery at the very beginning of the abolitionist movement.

Chapters 4 and 5 describe the training that abolitionists provided to children in order to teach that slaves were human beings and to shape their middle-class childhood into one of deep racial acceptance and equality. Knowing that their readers rarely had personal interaction with slavery, abolitionists produced works to humanize slaves for these inexperienced northern children in order to create sympathy in their hearts and minds for the slaves. Each of these chapters reflects a different focus for abolitionists in their training of children, and emphasize the word “train” from the abolitionist theme verse.

Chapter 4, “God, Children, and Slavery, or, The True Christian” shows the religious reasoning of abolitionists in their endeavor to teach children that slaves were equally human to white people and deserved full equality, while also showing slavery as a sin against God. This was an early focus for abolitionists seeking to reach children, who they presumed most often to be evangelical Christians, or raised by the same. This approach involved Bible verses, theological instruction, and examples from slave life that authors related to Bible verses and concepts to connect the readers’ faith to abolitionist ideals. The eastern men leading the early part of this segment of abolitionism saw this as a crucial cornerstone to the foundations of belief they sought to build in the youthful generation.

Chapter 5, “Shattered Innocents, Shattered Innocence,” portrays a contrast that abolitionists developed between the painful realities of slave life with the relatively comfortable
expectations of northern middle-class children for their own lives. Abolitionists carefully taught children that slaves were not allowed any of the same expectations, including things as routine as the opportunity to learn to read or as stressful as the fears of slave children wondering if either of their parents would return home from their day of work. This chapter reflects the need that abolitionists saw to supplement their theological teaching with practical examples that readers could relate to in order to bridge the gap between the theological concept of the slaves’ humanity and the lack of experience many northern white readers would have with African-Americans. Since many readers would never have met anyone with darker skin than themselves, abolitionists found it necessary to provide this practical teaching as another way to shape their reader’s childhood into one that embraced racial equality, thus providing them with this foundation which could help the cause and the slaves in both immediate and long terms.

In this way, chapter 5 differs from the previous chapter but is connected in that it showed practical aspects of slavery designed to win the sympathy of the child readers by portraying the horrors experienced by fellow humans while giving children the opportunity to compare their own relatively comfortable middle-class lives to the precarious lives of slaves. This chapter shows the perils of slave life with some focus on issues such as pain, punishment, the separation of families, and was meant to recreate a general sense of fear with which the slaves lived. Further, this chapter shows the movement among leaders trying to reach children, as the men originally driving this effort drop out entirely by 1839, and shows a change in focus on the part of women seeking to convert children. The women seeking to reach children in the 1840s dropped the economic arguments, religious arguments, and attempts at organization in favor of a focus solely on bringing children into contact with the horrific experiences of slavery through the written word.
Chapter 6, “Children and the Cause,” demonstrates that children did indeed take the abolitionist lessons to heart and sought to live out their new beliefs, joining Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies, raising money for the cause, reading abolitionist literature, and more. This chapter also shows that, despite abolitionist dreams of reaching children across the north, that a child’s family background most often determined whether they adopted abolitionist beliefs. Children who adopted abolitionist beliefs were usually influenced by a close family member. In this way, then, the abolitionist ideal of families adopting moral suasion to persuade other family members took place successfully within the safe walls of the family home. This chapter will also show that children who did adopt abolitionist views encountered great obstacles in the world outside of their family home when they tried to take action on their newfound beliefs.

To the author’s chagrin, this chapter also shows that, despite the earlier efforts, adults and children did indeed depart from this path during the turbulent 1850s. The intensifying political conflicts over slavery overshadowed efforts at moral suasion, and all but a very small number of abolitionists abandoned the old idea of reaching children for the movement, led by two publishers who seized an opportunity they envisioned to potentially serve as prophets while making profits. These publishers reshaped the work of reaching children, largely abandoning all earlier approaches, focusing instead on novels and short stories which provided examples for children, especially girls, of other children beginning and living Christian lives, and inevitably becoming abolitionists as a result of their newfound faith. This chapter traces the movement to recruit children all the way through its last dying gasps in 1859, when a small cohort of authors made one final attempt to bring children into the still-controversial cause.

Abolitionists needed help. From the beginning, these zealous reformers believed that they could not defeat slavery without the help of children serving both as fellow workers and
crucial catalysts within their environments inside and outside the home. Even armed with a belief that children were the hope of the slaves, abolitionists needed to convince others, abolitionists and those they hoped would become abolitionists, of the need to recruit more workers. Specifically, abolitionists needed to explain the importance of recruiting children, and abolitionists needed to answer the question, “Why Children?”
CHAPTER 2: WHY CHILDREN?

Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.

Isaiah 11:6

Abolitionists were quickly frustrated by the difficulties of reaching adults. Even during the enthusiastic days of the Second Great Awakening, an evangelistic revival which burned through the Northeast and especially the state of New York along the Erie Canal throughout the 1820s, abolitionists found adults, even recent converts, difficult to recruit. As a result, abolitionists began to reach out to children, believing that children had an innate innocence and natural hatred of slavery which made them perfect recruits for the abolitionist cause. These same abolitionists also feared that the world would in time corrupt children into an acceptance of slavery as it already subverted adults. These abolitionists feared that they were in imminent danger of losing this young generation and pressed the urgency of cementing abolitionist beliefs in these children while condemning their own generation’s inactivity against slavery. Abolitionists urged parents to adopt that mission as well.

In all of this, abolitionists displayed a strong sense of optimism that youth could and would accomplish the mission of freeing the slaves. Abolitionists in this work demonstrated a powerful pessimism that adults were not up to the task, seeing these adults as people unable to listen, set in their ways with their beliefs already fully formed by the world around them. They

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41 Inspired by title page of an abolitionist work entitled Gertrude Lee. Full citation: A Lady, Gertrude Lee; or, The Northern Cousin (Cincinnati, OH: American Reform Tract and Book Society, 1856), title page.
simultaneously saw the opposite in children, seeing innocent people still forming their beliefs and willing to act in the interest of others rather than focusing solely on their own self-interest.

Abolitionist authors tackled the question of what children could do and encouraged them to believe that every voice mattered in the fight against slavery. With that in mind, American abolitionists from the beginnings of the antebellum struggle over slavery sought to win the battle in the present by winning the battle for the future, recruiting trustworthy young warriors for the cause. The men who drove the effort to recruit children led this effort during the 1830s especially utilized the *Liberator* and the AASS children’s magazine *The Slave’s Friend* to great effect, with occasional, scattered mentions during the 1840s as the effort to recruit children became more fragmented and less organized. At this early stage of the movement, women often struggled to gain a foothold as abolitionists in general, and especially in leadership or teaching roles. Male opponents of antislavery efforts decried their femininity as inappropriate for reform efforts and made multiple efforts to silence women during the 1830s. This included a group of men storming a meeting of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1835, attempts to discredit antislavery petitions due to their female authorship, and the infamous outcry against the Grimke sisters as they spoke to meetings consisting of gentlemen and ladies alike in 1838. As women struggled to have their legitimacy as reformers recognized, male authors took the opportunity to construct the rationale for converting children to abolitionists.


As reformers and social critics examined all aspects of the world around them, childhood as a social construct was also undergoing major development in antebellum America. Children experienced this period of time as both adults in progress and innocents to be sheltered from the corrupting influences of their transforming world. Literature played an important role in the lives of antebellum children, as children were both a target market for publishers as they expanded their own market presence and a target market for moralizing authors seeking to influence the developing American nation by shaping the beliefs of its youth through clearly stated standards and expectations. Both the marketed targeting by publishers and the moral targeting by authors offered a complication to the sheltering of antebellum youth, with parents attempting to shield their children physically from the experience of their fallen world, yet willingly bringing reading material into their own homes which starkly presented all the problems of that world through words and pictures. This content dealt with every issue of the day, including the market, schooling, temperance, abolition, prisons, peace, phrenology, Catholicism, the teaching of natural science, and even philippics about the dangers that Santa Claus posed as a false idol for American youth.44

While earlier Americans, and especially Puritans, were well known for their consideration of children as little adults, childhood in the antebellum United States was undergoing a change in perspective, with adults seeing children more as adults in training than adults with a smaller stature, with historians such as Anne MacLeod describing these children as “adults-in-process, apprentices to the rigors and demands of adult life,” seeing “childhood primarily as a time of preparation” in which children engaged in learning and becoming the

adults they would grow to be. Building on this idea, Steven Mintz described antebellum childhood as a protracted period of doubt, restlessness and confusion, mirroring the national experience in its own way. Childhood in these times offered new opportunities for employment, schooling, religious choice, geographic mobility, and generally provided a time where everything seemed to be up in the air. In response to the turbulence surrounding all of these opportunities, middle-class parents and societal reformers invented modern childhood, transforming the home into a place that sought to shelter children physically from the tempestuous cacophony of corrupting influences offered by the outside world.

While parents sought to keep the influences of the world from physically entering the safe haven of their home, the events of the day never failed to cross the threshold into the home. In one major case, James Marten wrote that the Civil War affected children all across the then-current or former United States, influencing the books produced for children in the North, family relationships, and infiltrating play for all children. All the while, the war produced greater responsibilities for children, whether it was filling in parts of roles for fathers absent due to the war, or the fighting occurring at or near their home, and also politicized them with the unavoidable issues of the day.

This is the environment in which abolitionists who recruited children worked. They sought to help craft the moral character and activity of children while also shaping their economic decisions. They took full advantage of the opportunity to take the subject of slavery into living rooms that would otherwise never experience the institution directly through

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literature, meetings, and the testimonials of the children they recruited while fully involving children into the most tumultuous issue of their day.

Historians have also described the changing understandings of childhood through time as a form of social construct in which the definition and understanding of childhood is shaped by the child’s environment, influences, relationships, and economic situation. In *Huck’s Raft*, Steven Mintz described the most important influences on children as their relationship to their parents. In this relationship, the parents became increasingly involved in the psychological development of their children, and especially their social class, the latter of which Mintz described as “the most significant determinant of children’s well-being.”

Gail Murray offered children’s literature as a shaping factor in the environment of children, noting that children’s books revealed the dominant culture of the time, reflected behavioral standards, and reinforced gender-role expectations. In the shifting tides of the antebellum United States, each of these would be deeply important in showing children the culture they were entering into and how they were to behave in that culture.

Abolitionists sought to construct childhood as a period that formed the child’s impulses to reform the evils of their world rather than be corrupted by them. Abolitionists sought to affect the child’s moral development through literature, meetings, and their peers. They clearly sought an audience based on class, with materials portraying middle-class families and the life they led to gain understanding with their readers and to reach the group most practically available to join a reform movement so intrinsically tied to the wealth of upper-class people and so indifferent to the lives of lower-class Northerners.

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48 Mintz, *Huck’s Raft*, ix-x.
As the nation transformed, so did the nature of childhood, with literature geared towards children playing a key role in that evolution. Children’s literature focused on moral teaching for children, demonstrating to them the standards and expectations they were to meet in this changing society. As the literature grew, children also became a target market for authors and publishers. Most importantly, children’s literature served as a bridge between the safe haven of the home and the corrupting influences of the rough and tumble world beyond the front door, allowing children to be both physically sheltered at home from the evils of the world while encountering them through the written word.

Anne MacLeod described the literature of this hectic antebellum time as focused on children’s moral training as American authors focused both the hopes and anxieties of the developing republic onto the youthful generation, with a strong focus on the family as it developed in middle-class America, education, and a calm sort of public virtue as opposed to the turbulence found outside the home. While some of these works called upon children to make instant decisions based on a desired sense of morality, authors also took a long view on children’s moral development, hoping to develop a long-term sense of morality at a time of tender conscience for children.\footnote{MacLeod, American Childhood, 89, 110.} Bernard Wisby described a literature of child development really written for their parents and mainly produced by evangelicals from the Presbyterian and Reformed traditions. This reflected both the fears of cultural critics of the deleterious effects of the anxieties created by the nation’s tumult as well as more personal fears that mothers spoiled their children far too much and too eagerly. To counter this, writers wrote to reinforce evangelical traditions and create stability in a world of turmoil.\footnote{Bernard Wisby, The Child and the Republic: The Dawn of Modern American Child Nurture (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), ix-x, 4, 12.} Joseph Illick, in American
Childhoods, described this antebellum period and its effects on the family as a time of dramatic change with motherhood gaining added importance due to the absence of fathers from the home during their workday. With this in mind, and the ideal of the home as a sanctuary, authors stressed as their goal the “primary principle of family government, the obedience of the child.”52 This stability would be the key to strengthening families in an age when everything outside the home, and even within it, seemed to be caught in an undefinable pattern of constant change.

Other historians have noted the emphasis authors placed on standards and expectations for young people to know their roles in the society shaping around them. Gail Murray pointed out that children’s books at the time upheld traditional gender stereotypes, such as the adventurous boy and the selflessly domestic girls while introducing new moral concepts to children, such as the peace movement and the movements for temperance and abolition.53

Paul Ringel has combined this drive to inculcate standards for children with the emerging market presence of those same children, showing that “American production of children’s magazines, books, and toys first became economically sustainable” in the 1820s, and that these editors sought to carve out their livelihood by simultaneously maintaining and transforming old formats of works for children, reflecting their new societal and market realities. Based upon beliefs that shaping a child’s environment could and would shape their behavior, and that children could then freely act on their own newfound beliefs, authors for children set out to create a sort of American manner within the young generation, including such concepts as polite manners, Protestant morality, and tasteful displays of consumer goods. While market pressures precluded many authors from altering their presentation of assumed

53 Murray, 37, 43-48.
gender roles, antebellum children’s authors, especially reformers, did push the envelope concerning children’s agency in making decisions and affecting the world around them with the beliefs and practices they learned.\textsuperscript{54}

Abolitionists built upon this foundation in decidedly northern, middle-class ways. While the moral teachings of most children’s authors would be universally accepted in both major regions of the nation, publications desiring a national audience found it necessary to avoid antagonizing slaveholders at any cost. For example, the American Sunday School Union’s periodical for children, the \textit{Youth’s Friend and Scholar’s Magazine}, never mentioned the topic of slavery from any perspective, even in passing, though the magazine did contain frequent mentions of the peace movement, temperance articles, the dangers of Catholicism, philippics about the evils of Santa Claus, and teachings about the beginnings of prisons in the United States. This carried through into the recorded minutes of editorial board meetings, which also show that the topic of slavery was never broached, apparently a bridge too far. Other papers with national circulation would follow the same approach. Even though circulation of written material was largely a Northern phenomenon, as the next section will attest, the mention of anything that could be regarded as a writing against slavery was too risky to include in a publication.\textsuperscript{55}

In the antebellum era, publishers and readers alike experienced an explosive emergence of mass media as authors strove to point the nation in the direction it should go. Technology and new means of distribution combined with targeted writing and marketing to shape antebellum reading into a phenomenon which boomed almost entirely in Northern cities among

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Youth’s Penny Gazette}, American Sunday School Union Papers, Series III: Youth’s Penny Gazette, 1843-1860, Reel 233, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.
white middle-class children and their families. A small cadre of historians have endeavored to uncover the important trends in this outburst of print material and its distribution, which had profound effects on moral suasion efforts aimed towards children.

The new abundance of reading materials served as a means for enculturating middle-class Americans. David Paul Nord attributed this to evangelicals with a desire to reach all Americans with the same message, thus expanding and using this media to bring Americans together in common belief.  

Similarly, Ronald Zboray argued that this expansion of print served as a means of developing a national culture transcending various boundaries, including geographic, ethnic, and religious boundaries, with readers and publishers motivated by “the need to create order out of social chaos.” Zboray developed this argument further, noting that families and churches were the real centers of emphasis on reading as well as driving forces for enculturation of a national culture.

Historians have also noted other aspects of the emerging antebellum culture that authors encouraged through this new mass media. Kristin Van Tassel demonstrated that the literature of antebellum America challenged agrarian myths while advocating for the emerging middle class, arguing roughly that farmers were unsophisticated, ignorant fools who lacked the ability to measure up to the advances of that growing, urban, middle class, showing the growing divide between traditional farmers and the middle class. Antebellum authors responded to other aspects of the developing nation. Mary Templin illustrated literary responses to financial changes in the early republic, including concerns over a greater reliance

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58 Ibid, 84-92.
by many on credit, possibly overextending themselves and their families, and a real concern with the effects of the Panic of 1837. Accordingly, Templin indicated that antebellum authors used literature as both a commentary on the changing financial apparatus of the times as well as way to provide a common morality to undergird the financial transformation before it could rip the nation apart and damage families. Templin focused especially on the moral environment middle-class women were to provide in antebellum homes.  

New methods of distribution played a major role in the expanded availability of reading materials. David Paul Nord described the centralization of material through what he termed “umbrella societies,” in which larger societies for a given cause would distribute materials to smaller, local societies, which served to make materials available more affordably for smaller societies while also standardizing the literature available.  

Ronald Zboray showed that the growth of reading became a largely urban phenomenon, but also one centered on locations near railroads, with that new transportation method serving as the key to moving large quantities of reading materials around the nation, and especially the northern part of the nation.  

James Marten also noted this northern emphasis in *The Children’s Civil War*, pointing out that publishers produced voluminous amounts of material for northern children, but much less for Southern children.  

So, then, reading among children became a largely Northern phenomenon. Margaret Cassidy built upon this, providing a focus on printing technology and investment, and showed that technological advances such as steam-powered rotary presses and cheaper papermaking techniques combined with improvements in transportation to make drastically

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61 Nord, *Faith in Reading*, 41.
greater amounts of reading material easily available to the reading public, with publishers able to produce single volumes with content targeted to each member of the family.64

To accomplish this task, publishers produced a variety of materials, each of which would be used heavily by abolitionists in their work to reach children. This included books, newspaper columns, pamphlets, and magazines intended to introduce the young middle-class reader to the travails of slavery.

Abolitionists seized upon the urgency of reaching children immediately. One of the very first issues of the Liberator contained a letter which pointed to the urgent need to reach children due to the difficulty of convincing adults. The author, U.I.E. of England, proposed a Juvenile Department for the Liberator, and indeed offered the first submission,) with the purpose of guarding young people from false impressions. Most importantly, U.I.E. argued that this would preserve the future by reaching the young before it was impossible to sway them, as settled thoughts and prejudices had made reaching adults impossible.65 This combined the idea of youthful possibility with the impossibility of reaching adults, giving abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and others a reason to jump into this arena from the earliest days of the abolition movement and the Liberator itself.

Abolitionist men argued that children were born innocent of the stains of slavery. Preserving this innocence drove their efforts to reach children before it was too late. Along with believing that children were originally innocent of the crime and effects of slavery, these men argued that every child was an abolitionist due to their innocence and moral purity. Accordingly, they sought to establish in children a foundation of truth that would last a lifetime

65 Liberator, January 22, 1831
and change their nation. Due to the newfound physical separation that fathers and their children experienced during the workday, which led fathers to focus solely on the moral training of their children rather than training children in chores or in a trade, fathers adopted a romanticized view of their children. Although fathers may or may not have been active in childrearing in colonial times, their role seems to have changed somewhat in the antebellum days. For abolitionists, this meant portraying fathers as key figures in their stories, with children running eagerly to discuss the moral issues of the day when their fathers returned home while still utilizing the energetic earnestness of the children as the driving impetus which stirred up such discussions.66

In a story in *The Slave’s Friend*, a children’s magazine published by the American Anti-Slavery Society for a short time, entitled “Children Are Abolitionists,” the author used a fictional girl just short of three years old to make this point. In the story, Adeline, “an intelligent little girl,” asked her mother to read the copy of the *Slave’s Friend* which had recently arrived. As they read and discussed the magazine, Adeline asked her mother if she considered herself an abolitionist, and responded to her mother’s positive answer by asking if she could also be an abolitionist. After her mother’s questioning about whether Adeline could support children being taken from their parents never to see each other again, Adeline cried, “I am an abolitionist! I am an abolitionist,” showing that this young girl could easily and naturally see the troubles of slavery.67

These abolitionists described the character of children as sweet and morally pure, and thus naturally opposed to slavery. In an 1831 poem entitled “Childhood’s Heart,” submitted to

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67 *Slave’s Friend*, 3, No. 28 (1838), 11-12.
the *Liberator*, Alonzo Lewis, a lawyer from Lynn, MA, portrayed the outward appearance of his young three-year old son, then ventured to analyze the inward character of his child. Lewis challenged the Lockean idea that the child’s mind was a *tabula rasa* which would be filled by experience as he grew with a romanticized approach adopted by some men as the newest idea about children. In Lewis’s poem, he expressed this romanticized approach by challenging those “who would describe the child’s soul as a barren, sterile thing, or essentially a blank slate to be improved upon,” Lewis argued instead that the child’s heart was a “lovely spot,” “rather like a forest’s glade,” and while it could be improved upon, such improvement merely lopped off branches to help the inner goodness already present to grow to fruition.

In 1837, during his lone year as the Children’s Agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society, a position which consisted mainly of organizing youth into Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies, speaking to abolitionist meetings, and publicizing AASS publications, Henry C. Wright composed a letter to the *Liberator* expressing his belief that “children are opposed to slavery. They are by birthright abolitionists.” Wright argued that children instinctively withdrew from violence until taught to embrace it through the example of other people. Using the same principle, Wright argued that children would actively embrace abolitionist beliefs once people showed them the realities of slavery in terms of “its effects on domestic life, on the bodies and souls of men,” as well as the overwhelming power slaveholders maintained over their slaves. From there, Wright believed that it was a simple matter to convince the innocent to make the decision to remain innocent, writing:

> Should not all abolitionists take advantage of this peculiar tenderness of little children, to give them a just horror of slavery and the sin of slaveholding? How easy to teach children to be kind to everything that has life, and how easy and

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68 Mintz, *Huck’s Raft*, 76.
70 *Liberator*, January 14, 1837.
71 Ibid.
how delightful to instruct them in the gentleness and compassion of our blessed Saviour! God pours into their hearts all the gentleness of his own love. How easy, too, to fix in them an everlasting abhorrence of all cruelty and injustice!72

Building on this idea, Wright included an anecdote of a little girl who discussed with her mother a visit to the South in which the girl encountered a woman her mother described as kind and witnessed the way this woman brutally whipped her slaves. Following the visit, the girl asked her mother how anyone who treated another person like that could be described as good or kind. Wright then ventured on to argue that pouring kind words upon slaveholders only taught children to accept slavery and the violence inherent within it, thus ensuring that slavery would continue. Wright called upon parents to watch their terms and to actively train their children to build on their “innate perception” of the difference between men and things, and the need to treat all as people and not property.73 Since everything in the world around them taught children to embrace violence, and subsequently slavery, Wright appealed to parents to “Do all you can to put an end to all slavery” by instructing their children to embrace abolitionist principles.74

In *The Envoy*, a book published by the Pawtucket Juvenile Emancipation Society, John Neal used a rare twist to demonstrate that the undiluted moral character of children immediately recognized the perils of slavery. In a story entitled *Instinct of Childhood*, Neal described a scene in which a mother bird is struggling fiercely to escape the cage that she and her children were in. As the father arrives home, the unnamed girl asked what the trouble can be, and her father explained that the father of those birds is in another cage, and the mother bird has grown tired of their separation. Her father cemented this explanation by asking his

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
daughter how she would feel if he were taken away. Later in the story, Neal revealed that the family owned slaves and faced a similar predicament to that of the bird, as they had allowed their slaves to start a family, and then broke up that family by sending the father to another plantation. Immediately, the daughter made the connection to the earlier case of the birds, taking her father to the birdcage and sealing his understanding simply by pointing to that cage. The father chastened her not to talk of such things until she was older, and the daughter’s repeated questioning earned her an early trip to bed. On her way out, the daughter invoked the Golden Rule of treating others as you yourself would be treated. Although the story ended at that point, it showed the idea that this young girl could instinctively understand the troubles of slavery and easily apply other lessons to understanding the difficult moral situation of slavery. Of course, as far as can be discerned from the story, her family rejected her understanding due to their own dependence upon slavery, but this helped on its own to build the abolitionist case that children begin with a pure understanding of the evils of slavery and are taught through life experience to embrace and perpetuate it, thus making their efforts to reach children even more important.

Abolitionists also pursued this conversion of children because they believed that lessons learned in childhood were not easily lost and would drive decisions made later in life as children stayed upon that righteous path. Using the example of a young girl captured by Native Americans and held through the age of eighteen, an author in the *Slave’s Friend* showed that this girl and her mother could find one another simply by singing one verse of a song the mother taught the girl years before. In a story more directly pertinent to the abolitionist cause, the author included the story of John Newton, claiming that Newton’s memory of hymns

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taught to him as a child by his mother led to both his conversion and departure from his career as captain of a slave-trading vessel. The author specified then that this was their reason for children to read the *Slave’s Friend*, remember its hymns, and keep all of it in memory for later use in life.\(^76\)

In contrast to their idealistic view of childhood, these abolitionists had an equally pessimistic view of the prospect of reaching adults. Abolitionists believed them to be entirely too difficult to reach and convince, if not actually impossible, largely due to the effect of a world corrupted by slavery upon the formerly good inner character of these adults, who had been convinced one way or another by the world to accept slavery.

Years prior to the *Slave’s Friend* piece discussed above, future abolitionist Henry C. Wright testified in his own journal to the importance of reaching children first, stating that “what is said to children has ten times” the effect as words said to adults, and that “The habits of feeling-thinking-speaking + acting which are formed under 10 years of age have a bearing on all our future lives.”\(^77\) Beyond stressing the profound effect teachings could have on children, though, Wright expanded upon the idea by stating that change may come in later years than ten, but that God has taught us not to look for it. In other words, Wright believed that it was imperative to reach children or reach no one at all, in this case with his preaching, but this conviction would carry through into his abolitionist work with children.

William Lloyd Garrison published his own statement of this belief in the preface to his 1835 publication of poems, *Juvenile Poems: For the Use of Free American Children, of Every Complexion*. In that preface, Garrison addressed the demonstrated difficulties of reaching

\(^76\) *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 20 (1837), 4-5.
\(^77\) Henry C. Wright journal, vol. IX, 1834, Henry C. Wright Papers, Boston Public Library, 140.
adults, arguing that every missionary effort expended on adults resulted in “little service to the cause of righteousness or freedom” and argued that:

The only rational, and certainly the most comprehensive plan of redeeming the world *speedily* from its pollution, is to begin with the infancy of mankind. If, therefore, we desire to see our land delivered from the curse of prejudice and slavery, we must direct our efforts chiefly to the rising generation, whose minds are untainted, whose opinions are unfashioned, and whose sympathies are true to nature in its purity.\(^78\)

Combining these ideas of innocent children and difficult adults, abolitionists pressed the need to train this next generation to battle slavery before it was too late. Even with the distrust abolitionists professed for adults and their ability to adopt abolitionist beliefs, the reformers still apparently understood the practical reality that children could not be fully active apart from the involvement of their parents. With that in mind, abolitionists stressed the need for parents to be actively involved both in reform training and in the religious education of their children. In this way, abolitionists rested their hopes in the next generation to do better about slavery, with special hope that these Christian children would feel their responsibility to become abolitionists. Henry C. Wright and the AASS made public and private indirect mentions of this responsibility, while the women who assumed the responsibility of reaching children in the 1840s made it a much more direct emphasis of their work.

In a theme familiar to parents of many ages, reformers called upon parents to embrace their responsibility in training their children, stressing frequently the idea of Proverbs 22:6, which instructs parents to “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” The *Slave’s Friend* tackled this in a simple and straightforward piece called “Imitation,” which portrayed a young girl snuffing cocoa as she had watched her mother do,

and then tying in a story from Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on Virginia* in which he “spoke of the children of slaveholders acting like their parents in being proud, cruel, and abusive towards their poor slaves. They are tyrants in miniature.”  

Never to be accused of excessive subtlety, the *Slave’s Friend* concluded that parents must “take care how they act before little children.”  

An author for the *Ohio Observer* built upon this idea as well in a piece entitled “The Hope of our Country—Where is it?”  

This author made an evangelistic plea for the heart of the country by stressing the power of example upon the minds of children. Primarily, this uncredited author noted how quickly a negative influence could lure children from the straight and narrow path of righteousness, that often even one week of bad influence could undo years of solid moral training.  

This author pleaded with parents to be watchful of the influences available to their children.

More than the importance of setting an example, though, these abolitionists emphasized the importance for parents to take the most active role in the moral training of their children. In his journals, Henry C. Wright played the role of social critic, offering a brief commentary in which he complained that no nations took less care to the moral training of their children than Christian nations, which created a condition where no nation was less committed to their religious ideals than Christian nations.  

Here, Wright deplored the lazy parenting of Christian parents who seemed to have no care for the moral instruction of their children, even though the prevailing view of the time was that the home was both a refuge from the corruption of the outside world and the center for the moral training of children. While Wright did not talk about

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79 *Slave’s Friend*, 2, No. 15 (1837), 7.  
80 Ibid.  
81 *Ohio Observer*, Feb. 10, 1846.  
82 Ibid.  
83 Henry C. Wright journal, vol. IX, 1834, Henry C. Wright Papers, Boston Public Library, page 141.
the demise of Christianity directly, his brief statement offered that there was a serious problem in middle-class parenting, implying that the moral future of the nation might be lost due to lazy Christian parents.

Other reformers and social critics took their observations to public forums, writing directly to parents about the importance of performing their parental duties, and focused their commands and criticisms especially strongly towards mothers. In a somewhat indirect approach, the *Slave’s Friend* republished an excerpt from the *Sunday School Journal* describing an honest child, quoting Proverbs 22:6 to commend her parents. In the story, this ten-year-old girl was walking down the street when she spied someone dropping a coin. Concerned, she picked up the coin and tracked down the man to return his lost shilling. Due to her protests, the man took the coin, gave her a penny as a reward, and she bought herself a toy. Hearing the story, the girl’s mother told her that “an honest penny is worth more than a dishonest shilling.”

In this case, the story reinforced parental habits, or presumed parental habits, without a direct confrontation, and quickly reinforced the mother’s important responsibility as a dispenser of wisdom.

Later authors took a more direct approach to proclaiming the important job of parents, and especially mothers. An uncredited piece frequently reprinted from the *Quincy Herald*, entitled “Fountains of Vice,” called for mothers to keep their children inside by the hearth, learning lessons from them rather than the lessons of the street, which included lies, falsehoods, gambling, theft and violence. Since the lessons of the street were much more prevalent than lessons at home, this author encouraged mothers to show their love for their

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84 *Slave’s Friend*, 3, No. 31 (1838), 9-10.
85 *Cleveland Herald*, May 12, 1845; *Cleveland Herald*, September 23, 1845; *Raymond Gazette*, August 1, 1845; *Raleigh Register, and North Carolina Gazette*, June 24, 1845; *The Weekly Raleigh Register, and North Carolina Gazette*, June 27, 1845.
children by loving their home above all else, and to “sink the roots deep among your domestic treasures” and to “set an example in this, as in all things” for their children to follow. The author concluded with a simple and direct charge for mothers to make sure their children loved their home and above all, their mothers. Notably, fathers escaped any mention of responsibility in the piece.

Reporting on a Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society meeting in Hingham, MA, the author spent most of the short article praising the “ladies” of the society for the amenities and comforts they made possible for the successful meeting and expressed hope that women in other towns would follow suit. Most importantly, the author noted that greater participation really depended upon encouraging the young, making sure to “train them up in a way which they should go,” alluding again to Proverbs 22:6 the theme verse and mission statement of this entire part of the abolition movement. This author, then, took a broader approach, reaching beyond parents, but still emphasizing women while relying on a verse expressly written to parents to call for greater recruiting of young people to the abolition movement.

For children, the call was quite simple: grow up into good, wise people of faith and character, or essentially another way to paraphrase Proverbs 22:6. In a note of dedication to her readers, Ann Preston began Cousin Ann’s Stories for Children with a simple admonition and promise, “I want you to grow wiser and better every day. Then you will be happy, and God will bless you and keep you.”

Abolitionists expressed a deep disappointment with their contemporaries’ acceptance of slavery and refusal to end it. Therefore, they declared that the next generation absolutely

86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 Liberator, November 16, 1838.
needed to do much better in the fight against slavery. The *Slave’s Friend* took the lead in this venture, beginning with a short story of two men, George and Mr. Douglass, talking over an Independence Day celebration. George struggled to celebrate the holiday, constantly thinking over the hypocrisy of celebrating freedom while hundreds of thousands labored in slavery. He confided to Douglass that he would have the people give up celebrating independence until all were truly free, leading Douglass to express his belief that the current generation was much more active than those who came before, and stated his “prayer that the children of this age may be wiser, and more consistent, than their fathers were!”\(^90\) Even without a direct command, the author clearly expressed a belief that the children could do better as they grew than their parents had done.

In another piece, the *Slave’s Friend* attributed their faith that the next generation would do better in fighting slavery not just to hope, but to action taken by children. Noting that children also sent signatures on abolitionist petitions to Congress calling for actions such as the elimination of slavery and the slave trade in the nation’s capital, the author quoted the concerns of a Congressman from Tennessee who was more alarmed by signatures from children than from older men, pointing out that the old man would soon die, but the child would grow up to be a man and remember how his petitions were treated, comparing it to ancient stories of Hannibal’s father making him swear eternal hatred to Rome as a young boy.\(^91\) In this way, the author was again able to express hope in the next generation, providing encouragement to join the cause and remain active in the fight against slavery. Henry C. Wright privately encapsulated this view with the simple phrase “The little children are the hope of our

\(^{90}\) *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 16 (1837), 9-11.

\(^{91}\) *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 18 (1837), 7-8.
country.”92 From there, Wright stressed the need to protect children from the idolators of the world, lest they grow up to turn the United States into “a fountain of death to the world,” and completed his thought that the children could still create a fountain of life for the world with the admonition “Let us look to the children.”93

With their hopes to end slavery placed squarely with the children, abolitionists began to present some opportunities for children to serve in order to show that children could, in fact, combat slavery, even if the measures might seem small in comparison to things adults could do. Again, the Slave’s Friend took the lead in presenting this idea to children.

In 1837, during his year as the Children’s Agent of the American Anti-Slavery, Henry C. Wright used the Slave’s Friend to teach that children had a crucial role to play in the fight against slavery. With one piece comparing the smaller voices of children to that of a hummingbird, the Slave’s Friend continued this claim, arguing that a “still small voice” would indeed be heard, and would indeed end the institution of slavery.94 Another piece taught that children could love and pity slaves and slaveholders alike, taking the time to pray for each one in their respective needs to end slavery.95 Describing a conversation with a four year old boy in Pennsylvania, Wright taught the boy about the difference between slave punishment and the Golden Rule, and then explained to his written audience that children could love the slaves and pray for them, which would bring the children themselves closer to the heart of God.96

An 1849 song entitled “There’s a Good Time Coming,” from an anthology collection titled Anti-Slavery Songs built upon this theme. The song continually noted that violence would

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92 Henry C. Wright journal, vol. 4, 1834, Henry C. Wright Papers, Boston Public Library.
93 Ibid.
94 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 15 (1837), 1-2.
95 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 22 (1837), 14-16.
96 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 23 (1837), 7-11.
not end slavery, but words would. In something of a change from earlier writers, this songwriter portrayed the battle against slavery as a long-term battle with its foundation as words. The author encouraged children to patiently join the battle with their pens in hand. Phrases such as “Wait a little longer” reflected the long, seemingly fruitless struggle abolitionists had waged for nearly two decades by that point, especially with the lack of abolitionist activity among children by this time. Certain that abolitionists would eventually win the fight against slavery, this anonymous songwriter simply ended each stanza with a repeated refrain of “Wait a little longer,” a far cry from the pleas for immediate action abolitionists so regularly made. ⁹⁷

Abolitionists built upon this idea by teaching children that, while individual small voices could make a difference, voices together would have dramatic effects against slavery. Taking a story from English abolitionists, an uncredited author in The Slave’s Friend related a response to a young girl who had chosen to remain anonymous but stated her belief that her small voice could have no impact against slavery. In response, the Welsh clergyman detailed the compounding effects of little dewdrops upon leaves on a mountain tree as they fell to the ground, joined together into streams and rivulets and rivers until becoming the sea and at last the ocean. ⁹⁸ The Slave’s Friend author directly likened children to those dewdrops, promising that those small voices together would combine to create a sea of glory from across the United States. ⁹⁹

Fresh with hope for the idealistic young generation, abolitionists laid the groundwork for their campaign to reach the children for the cause of freeing the slaves before the world

⁹⁸ Slave’s Friend 3, No. 27 (1838), 12-14.
⁹⁹ Ibid.
could corrupt them to the point of accepting slavery. Believing that it was urgent to reach children, abolitionists energetically set out to do so from the earliest days of the antebellum movement, seeking to develop that morally pure character of children into a permanent characteristic before it was too late, and thus setting the children on the way they should go. Convinced that children would not let go of these lessons, abolitionists strove to create an army of zealous young converts to win the battle against slavery in both the short and long terms.

Abolitionists then set forth to create the kind of motivated converts of children that they believed adults could never be, combining both the energy of youth with its earnest zeal in an effort to bring children together with adults into a cause that would shape and drive their entire lives. Their next step was to lay out specific things children could do to combat slavery, even at their young ages.
CHAPTER 3: WHAT COULD CHILDREN DO?, OR THE ABOLITIONIST CHILD

Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it.
Proverbs 22:6

Do any of my young friends ask, what can I do? I answer, you can read and circulate the Slave’s Friend; you can ask your playmates to do the same; you can learn the beautiful hymns these little books contain; you can treat the people of color kindly; you can give and collect money for the Anti-Slavery cause; you can pray God to break the rod of the oppressor, and let the oppressed go free. All this, and much more, can be done by the free children of this land on behalf of the poor slaves.100

Abolitionists encouraged children to shape their entire lives around the battle against slavery. Abolitionists utilized moral suasion strategies, seeking to persuade their audience to adopt abolitionist views through works which showed their readers the situation of the slaves, offered Bible lessons about slavery and the need to oppose it, and suggestions for actions that children could take. Abolitionists espoused methods which mimicked the roles played by adults, such as joining Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies, distributing literature and raising funds for various abolitionist causes. Abolitionists also encouraged children talk with friends and family about slavery, provided materials for children to use in talking with friends, and especially taught children to provide an example for the world around them of an abolitionist at work. Overall, abolitionists urged children to shape their free time, their family time, their school time, and their own finances around the battle against slavery.

From 1835 -1844, abolitionists encouraged children to join Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies, imitating an action that men and women converted to the cause were already taking, and the same action that children were already taking in joining other reform causes, such as

100 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 17 (1837), 5.
the Temperance, Peace movements as well as societies for the Bible and missionaries and anyone approaching the goal of training up a child in the way they should go. These societies provided a place for children to meet with other like-minded children for mutual encouragement in the fight against slavery as well as a place to learn more about the institution and ways that they could contribute to the struggle. As early as their second anniversary meeting in 1835, the American Anti-Slavery Society urged the creation of these Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies, rejoicing in the report of the 2nd Annual Meeting over the formation and cooperation of these societies, and expressed hope that these societies would form in all parts of the country, a goal happily endorsed through publication in the *Liberator*.

Male abolitionists led this early effort to organize children and reshape their childhood, largely as a product of their times. Since most of this effort took place during the 1830s, when female abolitionists were struggling to gain a foothold of recognized legitimacy in the movement, men led the efforts to create juvenile anti-slavery societies and convert children to the cause. Women began to make inroads in the 1840s after the divide between abolitionists which resulted from the sending of female delegates to the London World’s Anti-Slavery Convention of 1840, though this never manifested itself in a manner modern Americans would consider an expression of real equality between the genders. Accordingly, at the height of efforts to instruct children on the way they should go and the things they could do to help free the slaves, this part of the movement was driven publicly by men.

Leaders and organizers expressed various goals for the juvenile societies, including financial goals, educational goals, and behavioral goals. As we will see in other aspects of

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101 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 17 (1837), 4, 10.
103 Ginzberg, 28-34.
juvenile abolitionism, these goals took the shape of their time, with earlier years involving the less concrete educational and behavioral goals, and efforts in the 1840s focusing on financial goals. In Boston, a society formed as the Garrison Juvenile Society in early 1834, and the address at their first anniversary discussed the need for education, and for children to emulate the example of the society’s namesake, William Lloyd Garrison, in his kindness and suffering on behalf of the slaves.\textsuperscript{104} At an 1841 address to the JASS of New York City, the society expressed its plain goal that every child in the city would join the society, pay a penny per month, attend monthly meetings, and make sure to treat children of color as equals.\textsuperscript{105} Abby Kelley stated the financial goals very concretely in a letter to ED Hudson, stating that the formation of a society might yield many new subscribers for the \textit{Liberator}.\textsuperscript{106}

To further their goal of organizing children into societies, the AASS in 1837 appointed Henry C. Wright as their Children’s Agent, noting his reputation as the “Children’s Preacher” and his unique talents for speaking to youthful audiences.\textsuperscript{107} Wright’s journals indicate several years of thought regarding children, Christianity, and their mutual connection to American society, providing ample preparation for such a task. Wondering at times why Christians were obsessed with educating their children in a way that opposed their faith while non-churchgoers raised their own children in ways that perpetuated their own beliefs, Wright expressed concerns with schools teaching natural science, believing that it would take children away from the Christian faith, and expressed concerns with the material focus of Americans. Wright took up preaching to children on behalf of the American Sunday School Union in 1834 and began to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[104] \textit{Liberator}, May 17, 1834 (Address by Rev. Collier, not WLG).
\item[105] \textit{Emancipator}, December 2, 1841.
\item[106] Abby Kelley to ED Hudson, August 6, 1840, Abby Foster Kelley Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society.
\item[107] \textit{Slave’s Friend} 2, No. 20 (1837), Inside Front Cover.
\end{footnotes}
organize children for temperance work that same year. As he became an active reformer, Wright encountered abolitionists and began a quick turn into abolition work through late 1834 and early 1835. By the time the AASS and Garrison sought to organize children, Wright was an outspoken abolitionist, even to the point of calling upon Garrison to refuse any pleas for compromise or toned-down language. Eventually, this connection between abolition, teaching, and children seemed to point almost inevitably to Wright teaching children about slavery and the need for children themselves to join the abolitionist cause. Wright began teaching children about slavery in 1837, the same year as his appointment by the AASS as their Children’s Agent, providing the AASS with an experienced youth worker who was already engaged in the work of speaking to children and organizing them. With Wright’s appointment, organizing Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies became the major focus of the AASS in their children’s work that year.¹⁰⁸

In an issue devoted to the formation of Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies, the *Slave’s Friend* took children inside the formation of the Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society of Chatham Street Chapel, a Boston auxiliary to the American Anti-Slavery Society.¹⁰⁹ This issue detailed the meeting that formed that society, both to show children what could be done and how to do it.¹¹⁰ In a room filled with children and adults alike, prominent abolitionists rose to speak about the need for such a society and to propose a prepared constitution, which was adopted. Most importantly, these abolitionists presented several practical options that children could take in the anti-slavery cause, such as reading and distributing the *Slave’s Friend*, collecting and donating money to the cause, reaching out to their classmates, and offering prayer on behalf of

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¹⁰⁸ Henry C. Wright Journals, vols. 1, 2, 5, 6, 10. (1834 and 1835), Henry C. Wright papers, Boston Public Library.
¹⁰⁹ *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 17 (1836).
¹¹⁰ *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 17 (1836), 2.
the slaves. In his address to the newly-formed society, Mr. R.G. Williams called upon children to consider the slave at all times, including any time they had a desire for something as simple as a one-cent candy, and to turn that desire into one that worked for the slave, either by contributing the penny to the cause or purchasing a copy of the Slave’s Friend, and to take a moment both to thank God for their own freedom and pray for that of the slaves. For those reading the magazine, the speaker pleaded for such societies to be “formed in every city, town, and village in the country” and to “Try to get every little boy and girl to become members of them.” Along with the calls for constant thoughts of the slaves, these abolitionists then sought to make abolitionist thought a universal part of American childhood.

In a more personalized example, the Slave’s Friend published a story written by Henry C. Wright titled “Little Harriet” in which the titular character was a little Christian girl who belonged to one of five Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies in New York City. As a devoted young abolitionist, Harriet understood that the slaves suffered greatly while working for nothing and that their masters refused even to let them read a Bible or hear an evangelistic message. Further, because of the painful punishment slaves received, Harriet no longer ate sugar, equating it to the blood of slaves. After some reported conversation from a society meeting laced with religious language, the author of this piece, Henry C. Wright, placed the abolitionist cause squarely in the faith of each man, woman, and child, proclaiming that “Anti-Slavery Societies are Christ’s societies. … Christ is an anti-slavery Saviour. The gospel is an anti-slavery gospel. Every real Christian has an anti-slavery heart.” With this powerful

111 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 17 (1836), 5.
112 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 17 (1836), 11-12.
113 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 17 (1836), 12.
114 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 23 (1837), 3.
115 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 23 (1837), 3-4.
116 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 23 (1837), 5.
message combined with his conclusion that “We must all be anti-slavery before we can dwell with God,” Wright sought to make abolition the center of each child’s faith, and the axis of another area of children’s lives.\footnote{Slave’s Friend 2, No. 23 (1837), 6.}

Wright’s appointment sparked a rapid growth in the number of Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies, often from his own personal efforts, either through personal speaking at meetings or at a distance through correspondence. Answering a letter from a seven-year-old girl named Sarah in the \textit{Slave’s Friend}, a member of a Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society in New York City, Sarah expressed her belief that God hated slavery as well as her hope that everyone would become an abolitionist.\footnote{Slave’s Friend 2, No. 22 (1837), 14.} Wright answered with his belief in the genuineness of her beliefs and added his own call for all children to become united as abolitionists as well.\footnote{Slave’s Friend 2, No. 22 (1837), 15-16.}

Wright spoke often to juvenile society meetings. One meeting, which Wright reported to have over 100 children present, consisted of a series of pictures showing slave children torn from their parents’ grasp as they were sold further south, along with a lengthy discussion of kidnappers in various Northern cities. Wright called for children to love people regardless of color, and to demonstrate that love with their actions.\footnote{Henry C. Wright Journals, vol. 11(XXXIV), April 30, 1837, Henry C. Wright papers, Boston Public Library, 26.} Wright took Angelina and Sarah Grimke to a meeting with the Boston Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society, giving the children the opportunity to hear from women who converted to abolitionist beliefs after growing up in a South Carolina slaveholding family.\footnote{Henry C. Wright Journals, vol. 11(XXXIV), June 7, 1837, Henry C. Wright papers, Boston Public Library, 189.} The sisters recounted various fears that their slaves had shared with them, such as a fear of eating, lest they fatten up to the point that their white owners would eat them.\footnote{Slave’s Friend 3, No. 26 (1838), 12.} The \textit{Slave’s Friend} reported that the story brought the children to
tears, as did further details like the story of people capturing a girl from her home in Africa and stealing her across the ocean, with a collection taken soon afterward, and each child given a copy of the *Slave’s Friend*.123

With this encouragement, organizers formed Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies across the route of modern-day Interstate 95 from New York City to Boston, Philadelphia, PA, Newark, NJ and major cities in Rhode Island, with offshoots in cities such as Salem and Lowell, MA. The *Slave’s Friend* reported an anniversary meeting of a New York City JASS at the end of 1836, noting that the 40 boys and girls who comprised this society were all from the same Methodist congregation. This led the author to note that Methodists made excellent abolitionists and to plea for all Methodists to join these young people.124 Numbers and membership rolls for these societies no longer exist, so it is impossible to determine concretely how many children joined these societies, but this was clearly a major push of the AASS which had some success.

The *Slave’s Friend* later mentioned a Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society formed at Boston’s Chatham Street Chapel, noting that this group, even at their formation, raised money for 1000 copies of the magazine and distributed all of them.125

The longest-lasting and most prolific of the Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies was formed in Pawtucket, RI. In 1837 alone, this society raised 1000 dollars for the abolition cause, enough to purchase over 15,000 copies of the *Slave’s Friend*.126 Of course, this made the Pawtucket society an instant example for other societies. This society, composed almost entirely of little girls, carried on an annual Anti-Slavery Fair through 1844, raising large amounts of money for

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123 *Slave’s Friend* 3, No. 26 (1838), 13-14.
124 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 13 (1837), 15-16.
125 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 18 (1837), 3; *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 19 (1837), 3.
126 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 19 (1837), 8-9.
the abolitionist cause. In 1836, this group pledged $50 to the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society, but actually raised $100.75 for the cause.\textsuperscript{127}

Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies engaged in various activities to support the abolitionist movement. These activities included regular meetings, various levels of participation in anti-slavery fairs ranging from preparing and contributing items for sale to putting on the fair themselves, and even preparing a publication for distribution. These fairs functioned as gatherings that brought abolitionists together, but their main purpose was to serve as a fundraising sale, featuring goods imported from Europe as well as goods produced by abolitionists. Consumer historians such as Lawrence Glickman have suggested that such fairs “helped found modern consumer society” by serving as the nation’s first example of holiday shopping, serving as the first source of must-have Christmas gifts and Christmas trees, with even Harriet Beecher Stowe considering these fairs as the “most fashionable shopping resort of the holidays.” Juvenile abolitionists took part in a variety of fundraising activities for the cause.\textsuperscript{128}

At a typical society meeting, the children would gather in the afternoon or evenings for essentially a small church service mixed with activity to support the cause. Different families would host the meetings, which could be weekly or monthly or some other timeframe according to the schedule set by that society. The records of the Boston Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society provide a prototypical picture of a JASS meeting. These meetings typically began with the singing of a hymn and a reading from an abolitionist periodical such as \textit{The Youth’s Cabinet}, which was very popular among young Boston abolitionists.\textsuperscript{129} Then there would be a

\textsuperscript{127} \textit{Liberator}, August 20, 1836.
\textsuperscript{128} Jeffrey, \textit{Great Silent Army}, 108; Glickman, \textit{Buying Power}, 81.
\textsuperscript{129} This periodical ran from 1837 to 1845, and is extremely difficult to get hold of, due to a large number of periodicals which shared the same name, though published at different times than this one.
collection which raised a small amount, always less than a dollar, and often some activity like sewing items to contribute to an anti-slavery fair. Some meetings would include discussions around a provocative theme such as “is it ever right to kill?”, although notes on those discussions are perilously difficult to obtain. At other times, the society would discuss topics such as products made with free labor or slave labor to guide the children’s consumer choices as well as their families’ choices.\textsuperscript{130}

Societies formed in other cities held similar meetings. An account of a meeting in Providence sounded very much like the Boston meetings, with children agreeing to meet weekly during their free afternoons, sewing and making other goods for sale in support of the slaves. While some children sewed, others read aloud from the \textit{Slave’s Friend} or other periodicals.\textsuperscript{131} In other cases, Henry C. Wright spoke to many meetings, such as one in New York City reported by the \textit{Slave’s Friend}, with a young girl relating to her mother how exciting it was to have someone preaching a message to the children, and how thoroughly she understood everything Wright said.\textsuperscript{132} In Pawtucket, Rhode Island, children experienced a mix of the same activities as other societies, such as reading, singing, sewing, Bible lessons, and taking up a collection with prominent abolitionists like Henry Brewster Stanton and William Goodell visiting to speak to the children.\textsuperscript{133} In Philadelphia, some “unruly boys and men” came to disturb a JASS meeting, though the speaker, Samuel Levick, pressed on with his presentation.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{130} Records of Boston Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society, 1837-1838, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.
\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 1, No. 3 (1836), 9.
\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 2, No. 24 (1837), 8-9.
\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Liberator}, December 26, 1835.
\textsuperscript{134} Hugh Foulke, \textit{The Life of Samuel Levick, Late of the City of Philadelphia} (Philadelphia: William H. Pile’s Sons, 1896), 36.
Along with their adult contemporaries, Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies both participated in and held Anti-Slavery Fairs to raise money for the abolitionist cause. The Garrison Juvenile Society held at least two such fairs in 1833 and 1836 in a room of a Boston meeting house.\(^{135}\) An 1840 fair held by the Young Ladies and Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society of Newport, Rhode Island raised $64 for the abolition cause.

Children in Salem, MA joined with the Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society for a prolific sale in 1838 which raised a total of $474.37, although the society did not provide a breakdown of funds raised or earned from the contributions of various societies (which indeed led to a falling out between the different abolitionist societies in Salem).\(^{136}\) These efforts seem to have amounted to very little for the juveniles of Salem in terms of money to distribute or further opportunities to join in the cause. Mentions of children disappear from the Salem FASS records after the 1838 fair, although the society itself continued the tradition annually.\(^{137}\) Most importantly, though, the Salem FASS account books indicate that no distribution was made to the juveniles, and that this female society saw itself as the sole distributor of abolition funds following the fair, with the only large distributions going to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society and the *Liberator*. No one in Salem received a large distribution of funds, and the funds themselves dried up as the next few years went by.\(^{138}\)

The Juvenile Emancipation Society (later Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society) of Pawtucket carried out the longest run of anti-slavery fairs for a juvenile society, beginning in 1836 and running through 1844 as the last juvenile anti-slavery fair remaining. The Pawtucket society

\(^{135}\) *Liberator*, November 9, 1833; *Liberator*, October 29, 1836. Unfortunately, no further details in these pieces.

\(^{136}\) Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society Record Book, 1834-1846, Volume I, Phillips Library, Salem, MA.

\(^{137}\) Salem FASS Box 1, Folder 3: Correspondence, May 1839-December 1839, Phillips Library, Salem, MA.

\(^{138}\) Salem FASS Account Book, 1834-1848, Phillips Library, Salem, MA; Salem FASS Account Book., 1835-1865, Phillips Library, Salem, MA; Salem FASS, Box 2, Folder 7, Bills and Receipts, Phillips Library, Salem, MA.
was one of the most prolific at raising funds through their fairs, often raising $50-100 through sales at the annual event, which went to support different abolitionist causes, such as the *Liberator* or the work of keeping the local anti-slavery office open. The peak of this society’s work, and maybe any juvenile society’s work, occurred in 1840, when the Pawtucket society published a children’s book, *The Envoy: From Free Hearts to the Free*, that discussed both slavery as well as strategies for approaching different people in conversation. The Pawtucket children were the last ones holding such fairs by 1841, and although their notice for the 9th Annual Fair in 1844 confidently expected a full turnout with limited advertising due to their recurring presence in the public sphere, this fair also came to a quiet end.

Abolitionists urged children to reach their world to convince their friends and family to join the abolitionist cause, encouraging them to utilize every moment with other people as an opportunity to have a conversation about the troubles of slavery. This included conversations at home in various occasions, including such nondescript ones as doing homework.

The *Liberator* and *Slave’s Friend* contained examples of such discussions for children to emulate and included discussions with other siblings as well. In 1831, the *Liberator* published a piece titled “Edward and Mary.” In this story, Edward, the older brother, returned home from boarding-school to find that his family had changed its purchasing habits, avoiding products made from slave labor in favor of products made by free labor. When Edward asked why, his sister Mary quickly explained the troubles slaves faced, including poor diets, clothing, shelter, and the ever-present danger of beatings while performing their duties. While Edward

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139 Elizabeth Buffum Chace to Maria Chapman, July 25, 1839, Boston Public Library, Boston; Harriett Henry to Maria Chapman, July 25, 1839, Boston Public Library, Boston; Pawtucket Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society to “Dear Friend,” July 24, 1843, Boston Public Library, Boston.

140 *Liberator*, August 20, 1836; September 10, 1836; October 6, 1837; September 4, 1840; September 11, 1840; January 8, 1841; September 18, 1840; September 24, 1841; October 1, 1841; September 9, 1842; September 1, 1843; July 26, 1844.
challenged this notion as a sort of straw man for Mary to argue with, Mary pressed her claims that slaves were created equal to white people but were denied advantages that she and her brother enjoyed, like education. Mary explained to her brother that slavery would collapse economically if everyone just stopped buying products from slave producers. This apparently convinced her brother to learn more, as he left the room to go ask their mother to tell him about Thomas Clarkson, a British abolitionist.141

In another 1831 example, the Liberator shifted its focus from northerners convincing one another to portray abolition attempts by slaves in the South, publishing a story in which a young slave begged his young master, Charles, to intervene and stop the sale of his mother. Unfortunately for Henry, Charles did not believe this could or would happen. Henry pleaded desperately, asking what would become of him when his mother is gone, and Charles told him that he would personally take care of Henry, and would get his father to guarantee not to sell Henry’s mother. Without further discussion or explaining how Charles would convince his slaveowning father not to sell a particular slave, the story ended on that cliffhanger, but still provided an example of a personal, face-to-face discussion about slavery while showing the personal perils slavery provided.142

The Slave’s Friend recounted one tale of a son convincing his father to free his slaves, sharing the story of James A. Thome returning to Kentucky to share his newfound abolitionist ideals with his father. The elder Thome immediately went to his slaves to start a work day and declared them free, with no animosity or resentment shown by either party. While this is the only example abolitionists provided of a son convincing his father, they did not note that Thome would have been a college-aged young man returning home from the contentious

141 Liberator, May 21, 1831.
142 Liberator, July 14, 1832.
episode at the Lane Seminary in Cincinnati and was a very active abolitionist employed at the
time of writing by the American Anti-Slavery Society.\footnote{The Lane Seminary Debates took place in February and March of 1834 at Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio. The debates consisted of 18 days of meetings in which theological students from across the nation, including every slave state and the Arkansas territory, examined slavery through their own experiences and the Bible. At the conclusion of the meetings, nearly every student in the seminary, including several who owned slaves or whose parents owned slaves and one student who himself had been a slave, declared themselves to be abolitionists. Thome became a very widely-utilized agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society.} For abolitionists, this example as provided demonstrated that an earnest young man could persuade his father easily to free slaves. At the same time, it also clearly demonstrated the paucity of evidence around tangible efforts to reach fathers and perhaps the lengths abolitionists needed to go to provide such an example.\footnote{Slave’s Friend 2, No. 13 (1837), 10-11.} Just as Thome’s father earned his living from the work of his slaves, it was likely that the fathers of middle-class northern youth earned their pay working for a company with some level of connection to slavery or slave-produced products, which created a barrier to convincing fathers of the need to fight slavery. If this young Kentucky man could reach his slaveholding father, surely northern readers could reach their fathers as well.

At times, parents might strike up a conversation with their children about slavery and turn over the leadership of the discussion to their children. The \textit{Slave’s Friend} related such a talk between a father and his children in which the father instigated the discussion by asking “What is slavery?”\footnote{Slave’s Friend 3, No. 35 (1838), 11-12; specific example on page 11.} His sons and daughters carried out the questioning after that, creating essentially a quick reference fact book about slavery, including things such as the number of slaves, annual growth of slavery, and restrictions on slave worship.\footnote{Ibid, 12.} In this family, the discussion stayed on an informational level without any calls for decisions or family members proclaiming their allegiance to the abolitionists, but it showed that a simple family discussion could be an opportune time for a discussion about slavery. In this case, the father initiated the
discussion, which helped children and their parents to see both that fathers could be involved in abolition work and that truly any moment could become one to discuss slavery.

This effort peaked with the Juvenile Emancipation Society of Pawtucket’s 1840 publication, *The Envoy, from Free Hearts to the Free*, which led off with a poem entitled “The Charge.” This poem empowered children to be that fearless envoy with the abolitionist message, and included a brief survey of tactics to use with each family member. The author commanded the children to reach their mothers with the idea that babies were bought and sold, and to see that very idea reach the warm hearts of their mothers. The author instructed the children to consider the pride their fathers had in their daughters, and then to tell fathers about slave fathers who had no power to protect their daughters from any attempts to spoil them. Regardless of the person, their money, or their position of authority, parental or otherwise, children were to take their earnest love for the slave and convince people of the slaves’ desperate need.

Children learned that any home occasion might be an opportunity to be confronted with the reality of slavery. Early abolitionists taught children to initiate in-home conversion efforts with dual aims of persuading mothers both to join the cause and to reach their children, which could even mean the child initiated the discussion. In one piece, a child simply heard their mother describing slavery and was inspired to begin asking questions about the troubles of slavery. The child asked if the master loved their slaves, to which the mother simply answered “no.” While the story never clarified who the mother was originally talking to, nor did it indicate a decision on the part of the child, it portrayed mothers as available and willing to

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147 *The Envoy*, p. iii
148 Ibid; Specifically, “Tell him of fathers who can have no power to stay the spoiler from the daughter’s bower.”
149 Ibid.
150 *Liberator*, June 4, 1831.
have such conversations, and opened up an avenue for abolitionist discussions to occur within the home. In another such story, a mother used a shame argument to initiate a discussion on slavery when her son Henry threw away his bread, telling Henry that it made her think of those poor slaves who lacked even that unwanted piece of bread, which caused Henry to apologize and reconsider the issue.\textsuperscript{151}

Henry C. Wright pointed the issue to mothers, telling the story of a woman brought into a slavery discussion by her son’s geography homework, which contained the words “slave states.” When the boy asked what that meant, the mother took the time to tell him all about slavery, telling him how owners kept people, punished them, broke apart families, and prohibited Bible reading, which prompted the boy to ask “Why, ma, haven’t they got the Bible there?”\textsuperscript{152} Wright then used this platform to encourage children, should they meet a slaveholder, to encourage that man to read the Bible and pray for understanding, especially the parts about thieves, liars, and murderers, and trust God then to convict their conscience to the point that they freed all their slaves.\textsuperscript{153}

Abolitionists also encouraged children to meet with their peers, either to read or for informal abolition meetings. Abolitionists took this approach in the earliest days of recruiting children, before attempting organized work such as societies, but really emphasized this when the formal efforts of Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies were nearing their end. Abolitionists offered this strategy one more time years after every JASS had vanished from the map in the \textit{Anti-Slavery Alphabet} of 1846.

\textsuperscript{151} \textit{Liberator}, September 1, 1832.
\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 2, No. 23 (1837), 11-16; quote from page 12.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid, 15-16.
Of course, the *Slave’s Friend* took the lead in sponsoring this approach with a short story called “Reading the Slave’s Friend,” in which a little girl took the time to read the periodical to her friend, asking repeatedly “now a’nt you an abolitionist?” The *Friend* did not report on a decision by the other child to become an abolitionist, but showed that one little girl could make the choice to read the magazine to her friend.

Any child could start such a meeting, whether born free or slave. The *Friend* told the story of a young slave boy who made the decision to run away and escape slavery, eventually reaching Salem, Massachusetts. The boy, Lot, was taken in by a man who secured his freedom and sent him to school, where the former slave became not only one of the top students, but also a leader who brought his fellow students together for a meeting in which he spoke on the about slavery. Rather than showing the speech leading to mass conversions, the story emphasized Lot’s continued excellence as a scholar, showing also that a child, white or black, could be an excellent student while simultaneously working as an abolitionist.

The *Anti-Slavery Alphabet* made this claim plainly in its introduction, stating to the little readers in poetic form:

> Sometimes, when from school you walk
> You can with your playmates talk,
> Tell them of the slave child’s fate,
> Motherless and desolate.

So even something as mundane as the walk home from school was an opportunity to introduce friends to slavery and persuade them of the need to end that institution. Anytime children found themselves around other people was to be an opportunity to talk about slavery.

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154 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 24 (1837), 13.
155 *Slave’s Friend* 3, No. 28 (1838), 1-3.
In addition to meeting together in Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies and reaching their friends and families, children could use spare moments as opportunities to learn more about slaves or to distribute abolitionist materials. Abolitionists provided examples of children distributing materials as examples for other children to follow and promoted reading materials as options for children to read and distribute.

Abolitionists praised children who distributed abolitionist literature. In an 1835 *Liberator* advertisement for a book entitled “Juvenile Poems for the use of Free American Children of every complexion,” the paper went beyond noting that the book was available for sale at the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Office to emphasize that some copies were passed around by volunteers.¹⁵⁷ This book would serve as a collection of every abolitionist poem published for children in the *Liberator* and a source of many such poems featured later in the *Slave’s Friend*.

The *Slave’s Friend* offered the simplest reason to include children in the distribution of materials: no one would refuse little children. In a story subtly titled “Little Tract Distributors,” the *Friend* told the story of a young boy who took some anti-slavery tracts from his father and made the enterprising decision to board a steamship in order to pass them out and give the passengers something to read. According to the piece, “No one refused to take one.”¹⁵⁸ The *Friend* took the opportunity to stress what good little children could do, and that their work could convince all people in the United States to become immediate abolitionists, bringing a jubilee to all the land.¹⁵⁹

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¹⁵⁷ *Liberator*, September 12, 1835.
¹⁵⁸ *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 6 (1836), 6.
¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 6.
Abolitionists also stressed getting written materials into the hands of children. In a short story reminiscent of the legend of Johnny Appleseed, the *Slave’s Friend* told of a New Hampshire man who took it upon himself to pick up a parcel of the magazine to distribute to every child he saw. Somehow, this man ran into a slaveholder who expressed his concern that this man was raising up a generation to hate him, with the distributing man correcting the slaveholder that he was actually raising a generation to hate slavery. This piece ended by employing Proverbs 22:6 as an admonition to get these materials to children to ensure that they continued down the straight and narrow path of fighting slavery.  

Abolitionists published advertisements and recommendations for different publications children could read to deepen their knowledge of slavery and its troubles. As noted above, the *Liberator* advertised a collection of poems available for sale. As 1836 arrived, the *Liberator* published a recurring advertisement featuring the collection of Juvenile poems, a memoir of a young African-American boy who died in Boston just shy of his seventh birthday, and address of the New York Young Men’s Anti-Slavery Association, as well as the brand-new *Slave’s Friend*. The *Emancipator and Weekly Chronicle* advertised that a publication called *The Youth’s Cabinet*, mentioned earlier as a periodical used at JASS meetings in Boston, was available for purchase. These works were normally advertised as available for purchase through mail order or at certain local anti-slavery bookstores.

Abolitionists made a variety of recommendations for young people, including two papers known as the *Juvenile Reformer* and the *Sabbath School Instructor*, the *Slave’s Friend*,

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160 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 24 (1837), 12.
162 *Liberator*, January 9, 1836; *Liberator*, February 6, 1836; *Liberator*, February 13, 1836; *Liberator*, March 9, 1836; *Liberator*, March 26, 1836; *Liberator*, April 9, 1836; *Liberator*, July 9, 1836; *Liberator*, July 12, 1836; *Liberator*, July 23, 1836; *Liberator*, August 13, 1836; *Liberator*, September 10, 1836; September 24, 1836.
163 *Emancipator and Weekly Chronicle*, June 11, 1845.
and the Pawtucket Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society publication *The Envoy: From Free Hearts to the Free.*

While these were short, straight-forward, and impersonal advertisements, some abolitionists made personal recommendations, such as that made by John Wattles in a letter home to his daughter, when he recommended that she look at and emulate Little Eva of Uncle Tom’s Cabin.

Along with recommendations for reading material, abolitionists also requested that children involve themselves in the movement financially. This included raising funds as well as making wise purchasing decisions that avoided products made by slave labor in favor of products made by free labor.

Abolitionists applied the idea that people’s taste for sugar had resulted in the rapid growth of African slavery to renew the Revolutionary ideal that market pressure could be used for activist purposes. Abolitionists proposed that children make purchasing decisions based on sweet products produced by free labor instead of slave labor, thus using people’s taste for sweetness as a tool in the fight against slavery rather than one which perpetuated the institution. Put more simply, free sugar could fight slavery. This proposal brought the transformations found in the Market Revolution alongside the reforms springing from the Second Great Awakening into a purpose which promised to have a great, direct effect upon slaveholders and their finances, and offering a societal transformation by turning consumerism into a virtue rather than a vice. This also connected antebellum reformers to their Quaker

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164 *Liberator*, June 6, 1835; *Liberator*, June 20, 1835; *Liberator*, September 18, 1840.
165 John Wattles to Beloved Daughter Celestia, August 1835, Wattles Family Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH.
166 For more on the idea of taste influencing the growth of slavery, see Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power* (New York: Viking, 1985), esp. pages xxiii-xxv.
forebears and contemporaries, who were already seeking to use free produce as a weapon against slavery.\textsuperscript{167}

The \textit{Liberator} led off this effort in 1832 with a series of stories titled “Aunt Margery Talks.” The namesake character of this short serial, which ran in the Liberator in April and May of 1832 with one more episode appearing in 1833, Aunt Margery, was an abolitionist staying with her sister’s family for a short visit. This serial demonstrated a practical example of moral suasion in action, here with a special targeted emphasis on the ability of children to resist slavery economically. The serial still included several of the other options that abolitionists presented, showing that abolitionists often presented multiple options simultaneously in a comprehensive approach to fighting slavery. Margery especially focused on the children’s ability to act as economic agents against slavery, including some consumer education to help the children make antislavery buying decisions with a special focus on the effects that children’s buying decisions had on the slaves themselves.

On the first night of her visit, she noticed her nephew George looking at pictures of slaves, and marveled that she never saw such things as a young girl. After George exclaimed that he wished he were older so that he could whip the slaveholder into submission, Aunt Margery gathered him and his sister Catharine for a talk about things they could justly do at that time, without waiting for the future. Aunt Margery started to teach the children about things they enjoyed which were provided by slavery, such as cotton and rice, but especially sugar. Emphasizing that sugar was the key ingredient for their molasses candy, Margery taught

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
George and Catharine that a simple decision to stop buying slave sugar would make slavery unprofitable and undesirable for slaveholders. Seeing the late hour, Margery ushered the children downstairs to sleep, promising to talk more the next evening.\textsuperscript{168}

The next evening began with Margery summoning another young girl, Susan, to come and chat with her, George, and Catharine. This time, Margery began with the story of a young slave girl whose family evening was interrupted when her master burst into their slave quarters with a slavetrader to take the girl away from her family, never to see anyone she loves again. Margery turned to little Susan to personalize the story, saying:

\begin{quote}
Perhaps they might take away Catharine or George, or mother, or perhaps the man would buy father, and put iron chains round his legs and arms, and drive him off with a great whip, like that George showed me in the picture the other day, to some place that he had never seen, and put him in the dark jail till somebody else bought him.\textsuperscript{169}
\end{quote}

As their talk continued, Catharine expressed that she would be worried even to go to school, prompting Margery to let her know that “If you were a slave, you would not know what school was.”\textsuperscript{170} Instead, Catharine, as a slave, would be working in some way to produce sugar. Catharine and her fellow children felt terribly about the treatment of the slaves, leaving Margery ready to repeat the previous night’s application that Catharine and her siblings could give up some of the things they loved, like sugar, to support the slave. In response, Catharine said, “I do not think I shall want any more sweet things that are made with slave sugar.”\textsuperscript{171} With that, they promised to talk again, this time learning the particulars of sugar production.

\textsuperscript{168} \textit{Liberator}, April 21, 1832.
\textsuperscript{169} \textit{Liberator}, April 28, 1832.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
Their third discussion began with a curious question from George, “What is this great lump of something you have here, aunt?” After the children expressed concerns that it was some sort of stone and possibly harmful to them, Margery convinced them to take a taste, explaining that this was maple sugar, with no slaves involved in any part of its production. Margery taught the children that many vegetables have sugar, and that France used sugar from beets a great deal. After a lengthy explanation of the process used to make maple sugar and the great willingness that these sugar workers had for their work, Margery told the children that she had intended to describe the process of making cane sugar that evening, but the late hour would prevent that this time.

On the fourth evening, Margery taught the children about the process of growing, harvesting, and refining cane sugar. She told the children that this backbreaking process required not just strong men, but women, and children, as early as they could pick up and work a hoe. Margery described the hard work in the searing Caribbean heat, with drivers right there to ensure that no one slowed down, no matter how much fatigue bore down upon them. Even after sunset, Margery taught, the work did not end, for there was still grass to gather for the master’s cattle, and that even Sunday did not bring an end to the work. Catharine observed that there was no time at all then to rest or to learn. Also, Catharine added, these days of talks convinced their mother not to buy slave products any longer. Apparently, then, the discussions with the children succeeded in reaching their mother, who began this serial as someone refusing to bother considering slavery in her purchasing decisions.

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172 Liberator, May 5, 1832.
173 Ibid.
174 Liberator, May 12, 1832.
The final two pieces in the serial built on different themes. In a letter to Susan, George, and Catharine, Aunt Margery argued that it was plainly wrong to dislike someone based on the skin color their Creator has given them, and then provided examples demonstrating that slave children were just as good, talented, and gifted as white children. In their final talk together, Margery approached the topic of slavery on a racial basis, tracing its origins in North America back to Columbus and the Spanish desiring sugar but not desiring the labor it required, and needing a labor solution in place to replace the natives, who were dying at an alarming rate. As the children again swore off cane sugar, Margery exhorted them that they could help slaves be restored to liberty once they were older.

As abolitionists worked to organize children as fellow workers, authors for the Slave’s Friend published a series of short articles to educate young consumers about sources of sugar and other products. In one such article from the first issue of the Slave’s Friend, this decision was meant to show thankfulness for a life apart from slavery, with one of the actions of that grateful life being not to “eat any sugar or other things that the slaves are compelled to grow.” In another piece reprinted from the Genius of Universal Emancipation, the decision became more personal, as a young girl named Margaret refused sugar plums prepared by her grandmother, knowing that they would have a lovely, sweet taste. Margaret refused to eat them because she kept the slaves’ toil in mind and could not bear to support their enslaved labor even in the form of a family gift.

Reprinting a portion of a story called An Evening at Home, the Slave’s Friend recounted a family discussion where the family concluded that slavery existed solely to

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175 *Liberator*, May 19, 1832.
176 *Liberator*, February 23, 1833.
177 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 1 (1836), 12.
178 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 6 (1836), 9.
produce rice, cotton, and sugar for American women who would not give a passing thought to the source of the products they enjoyed.\footnote{Slave’s Friend 2, No. 13 (1837), 7.} Even though Henry, a young boy in the family, grew overly excited, declaring his desire to frighten all the ladies of Louisiana to end slavery by taking his whip to them, his mother was able to convince Henry and the rest of the family that pity combined with wise purchase decisions would produce a better end to slavery.\footnote{Ibid, 7.}

In another issue, the \textit{Friend} described a conversation between a mother and her children regarding different purchases the mother made for the family, with this turning into an opportunity for the family to discuss slavery. The daughter, Frances, noticed that the rice just purchased was smaller than the rice they have used before. The unnamed mother told her that this was East Indian rice, not made by slaves. Though neither was certain whether the taste would be as good as their previous rice, the mother successfully assured her family that it would taste sweeter knowing that no slave had to toil to grow the rice.\footnote{Ibid, 8.} Frances expressed her gratitude for her mother’s decision, with her brother Peter sharing that he was also glad that their mother bought linen for his new shirts rather than slave cotton, asking his mother “We would not eat nor wear slave products if we can help it, will we, mother?”\footnote{Slave’s Friend 2, No. 14 (1837), 6-7.} Of course, his mother answered that they will not, and the \textit{Friend} seized the opportunity to mention Proverbs 22:6 with this example of a mother showing her children the way they should go.

To this end, and to the idea of making this a driving principle in children’s lives, Reverend R.G. Williams included this note in his address to the forming Chatham Street Chapel Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society:

\footnote{Slave’s Friend 2, No. 13 (1837), 7-8.}
When you feel a desire to spend your money for confectionary, or for any unnecessary thing to eat or drink, to wear, or possess, then think of the thousands of poor slave children who are naked, hungry, ignorant, whipped, and destitute of the good things you enjoy. Do not spend a cent for any foolish thing, but put it into the anti-slavery treasury.\textsuperscript{184}

The \textit{Friend} added to children’s knowledge the idea that sugar did not have to come from brutal 18-hour days working with sugar cane, or even from beets produced by free labor, but could also be made from the sap of the Butternut tree. The author was quick to point out that the seasonal opportunity for tapping this tree was very brief, and that the sugar might not have as desirable a taste as maple sugar, but would be a strong and persistently available source of sugar that children should look for.\textsuperscript{185} Surprisingly, after this strong emphasis, abolitionists stopped advocating for these consumer decisions by children for almost a decade.

Picking up on this theme years after it had been a major focus, organizers for a Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Fair in 1847 briefly renewed this consumer focus with a simple instruction to “refuse to take candy, sweetmeat, pie, or cake” to avoid promoting slave labor. Here, we can see that the general idea of using emerging markets to strike against slavery had not vanished completely, but no longer received lengthy explanation or time, even in its briefly renewed outreach to children.\textsuperscript{186}

Abolitionists provided children with a thorough consumer education designed to provide them with several reasons to make these consumer decisions, including reasons based on economics, reasons based on principles, and reasons based on faith, encompassing all the common moral suasion approaches with the idea that one would stick for each reader. One

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\textsuperscript{184} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 2, No. 17 (1837), 11.
\textsuperscript{185} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 3, No. 28 (1838), 9-10.
\textsuperscript{186} Anonymous, \textit{The Anti-Slavery Alphabet} (Philadelphia: Merrihew & Thompson, 1846), 3.
\end{flushright}
such offering from the *Liberator* shared the testimony of a child who no longer could stomach the thought of Christmas candy, not because of eating too much, but rather the child could not bear the idea of enjoying the taste of sweets while so much suffering endured. This child in particular took the time at Christmas to ponder whether slavery could possibly be for the glory of God, but did not make a specific call for other children to join in their personal boycott.\(^{187}\)

The *Slave’s Friend* made this effort an important focus in their efforts to mobilize children, taking several approaches to this issue. In their earliest, “The Petition,” the magazine presented a petition said to be from slaves to the people of the North which validated this connection reformers sought to build between reform work and market pressure. These enslaved people described their backbreaking labors, and summed up their situation in their plea for market pressure from the North:

> ’Tis because you love our sugar,  
> And so very much you buy;  
> Therefore day and night we labor,  
> Labor, labor till we die.\(^{188}\)

If only white people could leave sugar behind, the slaves argued, the slaves might experience freedom, and could enjoy rest, enjoy the Sabbath, raise enough food for their own nutritional needs, see their tears turn into smiles, and work the same way white people did, instead of waiting for their labor to take their lives. Of course, the opposite was true at the time of writing, with the love of sugar in the North killing slaves in the South.\(^{189}\)

In another case, the *Friend* included a dialogue between father and son which laid out an economic case to change from cane sugar made by slaves to beet sugar made by free labor,

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\(^{187}\) *Liberator*, February 15, 1834.  
\(^{188}\) *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 13 (1837), 9.  
\(^{189}\) Ibid, 9-10.
following the example of the French. As the father agreed with his son that this would make
the labor of slaves easier, the father delved into unit pricing for beet sugar, helping his son to
conclude that a pound of beet sugar would cost only seven cents. The pair did not mention the
price of a pound of cane sugar, but did note that a man in Philadelphia was preparing a place in
the city to produce beet sugar, which helped to indicate that this operation would take less
space and require less labor to produce.\footnote{Since the massive need for labor was a major cause
influencing the use of slaves on sugar plantation, a greatly reduced and relocated need for labor
would strike at the heart of the perceived need for slavery.}

Finally, Henry C. Wright shared the story of Little Harriet with readers of the \textit{Slave's Friend}. Harriet was a five-year-old Christian girl from New York City who made her decision
to forsake cane sugar into an article of faith. This girl was taught by her mother to hate all
forms of sin, and especially the sin of slavery, like all well-raised children.\footnote{After seeing
some pictures of the treatment slaves received while working to process sugar, Harriet resolved
to eat no more sugar, refusing to eat something made by “poor whipped slaves.”} When it
came time for the collection at her JASS meeting, Harriet answered that she had four cents to
contribute as a gift from her mother for abstaining from sugar.\footnote{So, Wright provided his
readers with several reasons to abstain from cane sugar. Even though this bluntspoken
firebrand did not directly call for children to follow this example, Harriett’s story gave all
children an example they could emulate.}

Besides withholding their money from slaveowners by boycotting cane sugar, children
could take positive actions to raise money for various groups associated with the abolitionist

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{\textit{Slave's Friend} 2, No. 14 (1837), 14-16.}
\footnote{\textit{Slave's Friend} 2, No. 23 (1837), 3.}
\footnote{Ibid, 3-4.}
\footnote{Ibid, 4.}
\end{footnotes}
cause, including different societies, the *Liberator*, or other options like a school in Cincinnati or clothes for people in need. In fact, this was an essential commitment that each child made upon joining a Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society, pledging to pay a penny each month in order to be a member.\(^{194}\) In some cases, the society’s constitution declared raising funds to be the sole purpose of the society’s existence, as indicated in the Constitution for the JASS of Newark, New Jersey, which stated in its second article “The object of this Society shall be to collect money for the antislavery cause, to read and circulate Slave’s Friend, to do all we can to raise the collerd (sp theirs) people respect.”\(^{195}\) For at least some organizers, organizing youth into abolitionist societies was simply an avenue for raising funds for the abolitionist cause, and the financial commitment was the centerpiece of a child’s involvement.

The amounts collected were not enormous, but contributions this size coming from children and their work were still a significant contribution, and cash-strapped abolitionists were certainly not about to raise their noses to children’s contributions. Some seem extremely small, such as the ten cents one child included in a Letter to the Editor published in the *Slave’s Friend*.\(^{196}\) Other contributions were much larger or more frequent, with the children of Pawtucket, Rhode Island serving as frequent contributors while the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society was a frequent recipient, and adults sometimes receiving funds as well.

The children of Pawtucket, Rhode Island were frequent financial contributors to the abolitionist cause, contributing in various ways, including local contributions as well as national ones. While the amounts were not always reported in the *Liberator* or other publications, those that were reported tended to be substantial. For example, on a pledge of

\(^{194}\) *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 17(1837), 7-8.

\(^{195}\) Harmonic Society of Newark, 1830-1836, January 9, 1838, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, NJ.

\(^{196}\) *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 4 (1836), 8-9. The date of the letter preceded initial publication of the *Friend* itself, but the periodical did not indicate the original source of the letter.
$50, the Pawtucket juveniles raised $100.75 at their 1836 fair, with $50 of that going directly to the American Anti-Slavery Society. The Pawtucket children also pledged $25 to the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Convention of 1836, and were able to meet that pledge successfully. The next year, the society sent $25 to the Liberator. After raising another $100 in 1839, the Pawtucket Female Juvenile Emancipation Society exceeded their $25 pledge to the Liberator, instead sending $50. This group raised $110 at their 1840 fair featuring The Envoy. That same year, the Pawtucket children, hearing of the pecuniary troubles of The Herald of Freedom, sent $10 to allay their difficulties. These children dedicated the efforts of their 1843 fair to keeping the local anti-slavery office open.

Children raised money in other cities as well. The JASS of Portland, Maine raised $6 for the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1836, while the Juvenile Anti-Slavery Sewing Circle of Boston raised $25.61 participating in an antislavery fair a few months later. The young ladies of the Hanover Juvenile Society similarly raised $6 later in 1837. Children in Centreville, Massachusetts contributed to the Liberator through a Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Sewing Circle, and young men from Albany, New York made frequent contributions to that abolitionist paper in the early 1840s.

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197 Liberator, August 20, 1836; Liberator, September 10, 1836.
199 Liberator, November 17, 1837.
200 Liberator, September 20, 1839.
201 Liberator, January 8, 1841.
202 Liberator, July 23, 1841.
203 Letter regarding 8th Annual Pawtucket Fair, July 24, 1843, Boston Public Library, Boston.
204 Liberator, October 1, 1836; Liberator, January 2, 1837.
205 Liberator, December 15, 1837.
The most frequent recipient of funds raised by children was the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society (MAASS) with money coming from several towns in the state between 1837 and 1840. As the first offering, the Uxbridge JASS sent $20 to the MAASS, followed by $10 from Marshfield and $10 from the JASS of Boston.\(^{207}\) JASSs from Plymouth and Salem joined the effort in 1838, joined by the Boston Female JASS that summer.\(^{208}\) Boys and girls from Danvers sent money from their separate societies that fall, with another Boston contribution that winter of nearly twenty dollars.\(^{209}\) Children from Mansfield and Essex contributed in the spring of 1839, joined by Groton that summer.\(^{210}\) Finally, 1840 saw contributions from children in Weymouth, Foxboro, and Mansfield, with Mansfield as the rare town appearing twice in these records regarding children.\(^{211}\)

In other instances, primarily in 1839 and 1840, juveniles raised money to provide society memberships or travel expenses for adults and this effort served as the only mentioned focus for juvenile fundraising at this time. Several antislavery agents who lectured for Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies received lifetime memberships to the MAASS as a result of children’s fundraising efforts, with one seeing some expenses defrayed to the 1840 abolitionist meeting in London. This began in 1838, in Salem, Massachusetts, with two local societies providing memberships for three women, Eliza J. Kenney, Clarissa C. Lawrence, and Susan G. Roundey.\(^{212}\) Plymouth did the same for H.N. Loring the following year, with Salem providing a membership for William Dodge that year as well.\(^{213}\) Rhode Islanders raised funds in 1840 to send men to London for the grand conference, with Pawtucket providing $25 and Newport

\(^{207}\) Liberator, May 19, 1837; Liberator, July 7, 1837.
\(^{208}\) Liberator, January 19, 1838; Liberator, June 15, 1838.
\(^{209}\) Liberator, November 30, 1838; Liberator, December 21, 1838.
\(^{210}\) Liberator, May 3, 1839; Liberator, June 7, 1839.
\(^{211}\) Liberator, January 3, 1840; Liberator, June 5, 1840.
\(^{212}\) Liberator, January 19, 1838.
\(^{213}\) Liberator, April 5, 1839; Liberator, July 12, 1839.
providing $40 to send C. Lenox Remond to the gathering.\textsuperscript{214} Finally, the children of West Andover, Massachusetts provided the funds to make Philo Pettibone a lifetime member of the MAASS.\textsuperscript{215}

Children provided charity for other efforts as well. When an 1835 fire destroyed the home of a large family with many children, a local Juvenile Sewing Society provided each child with two suits of clothing.\textsuperscript{216} A Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society of Whitesborough, New York sent $15 to aid colored schools in Cincinnati, Ohio.\textsuperscript{217} The children of Pawtucket, Rhode Island donated a dozen copies of \textit{The Envoy: From Free Hearts to the Free} for a fair in Millbury, Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{218} Children in Lynn, Massachusetts donated twice to the Samaritan Asylum for Children of color, $25 each time, in 1838 and 1839.\textsuperscript{219} Overall, the children’s financial efforts were very energetic for the short time that eastern men focused on organizing and mobilizing children, and constituted a variety of ways for children to contribute to different aspects of the abolitionist cause.

Abolitionists also encouraged children to be an example to those around them in their attitudes and conduct. Abolitionists urged children to both feel and demonstrate pity and kindness for the slaves. They also instructed children to treat all people as equals without consideration of skin color. Lastly, abolitionists encouraged children to be active in the work of abolition, letting their beliefs spill out into action.

In \textit{The Liberal Primer, or Child’s First book}, an 1833 reader published in Indiana, the author set forth a very deliberate and meticulous path for young readers to learn the skill of

\textsuperscript{214} \textit{Liberator}, May 1, 1840; \textit{Liberator}, June 5, 1840.
\textsuperscript{215} \textit{Liberator}, April 10, 1840.
\textsuperscript{216} \textit{Liberator}, May 2, 1835.
\textsuperscript{217} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 3, No. 29 (1838), Inside Back cover.
\textsuperscript{218} S Sisson to Abby Kelley, August 9, 1841, Abby Foster Kelley correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA.
\textsuperscript{219} \textit{Liberator}, August 31, 1838; \textit{Liberator}, June 21, 1839.
reading, teaching the alphabet in various fonts and capitalizations, different syllables, different words, short poems and moral stories, until the book reached its next to last offering, a short work entitled “The Poor Negro.” In a call for pity for this fugitive man, the story stated that he was running away from some “cruel-hearted master” who had enslaved him for no reason other than the color of his skin. Describing those who traded in slaves as “unfeeling white men” and decrying the painful separation of children from their families along with the lifelong sense of hopelessness it created, the author concluded with one simple admonition, “Let us pity the fate of the poor Negro.” With the placement of this story, it appeared that the author took prospective young readers through a step-by-step process of learning to read with a real aim of converting the new readers to abolitionist beliefs.

In a poem and commentary entitled “The Thankful Child,” the Slave’s Friend encapsulated this idea along with all the things abolitionists asked children to do in manifesting pity and kindness towards the slaves. After expressing poetic thanks for being born a free child, the poem’s subject declared that he would show kindness toward the slaves by giving his money to an Anti-Slavery Society, by avoiding slave sugar and other slave-manufactured products, and being kind to children of another color, making sure to consider them equal to himself. This, the narrator concluded, would help him obey his conscience and God.

The Slave’s Friend provided more practical examples of pity and kindness in action. In “The Canary Bird,” a New Orleans father confronted his family upon his return home with the question whether it was right to shut up their bird in a cage like a prisoner, and whether it would be better to set it free. Their consciences stricken, the children hurriedly set their bird

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220 Unknown, *The Liberal Primer, or Child’s First Book* (Philomath, IN: S. Tizard, 1833), 34.
221 Ibid.
222 Ibid.
223 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 1 (1836), 12.
free. The author encouraged his readers to do the same, even for something so small as a bird, as a key part of being an abolitionist. In another issue, the *Friend* told the story of a boy selling his beloved dog to buy a Bible, and challenged children to consider giving money to provide Bibles for slaves who had none of their own.

Abolitionists taught children to treat all people equally. Beginning with a symbolic story in the *Liberator* called “The Two Dolls,” in which the main character was praised for choosing a black doll over a white doll after hearing that the insides of each were the same, abolitionists sought to convince children to adopt this attitude and then to put it into daily practice.

The *Slave’s Friend* published a series of letters from African-American children in Cincinnati to make the point that “children of color can learn as well as white children.”

With that foundation established, an issue a few months later contained these resolutions:

*With God’s help I resolve*

1. Never to call a colored person a NEGRO. *They do not like to be called so; and they think it is calling names.*
2. Never to call a colored person, that BLACK FELLOW, or BLACKKEY, or DARKEY. *It is insulting to call them so.*
3. Never to call a colored man a BOY. *This is often done, and it is insulting and foolish.*
4. To speak to colored people, and of them, just as I do to and of white people.
5. Always to have respectful and kind feelings toward colored people.
6. Never to laugh at peoples’ mistakes, or at the wit of those who hurt others’ feelings.

As the *Friend* developed this idea in later issues, the magazine contained stories of children putting these ideals into practice. Relating the story of a young boy named Theodore,

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224 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 7 (1836), 15-16.
225 *Slave’s Friend* 3, No. 27 (1838), 4-5.
226 *Liberator*, April 9, 1831.
227 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 4 (1836), 11-13.
228 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 7 (1836), 4-5. Caps and italics from the original.
the *Friend* shared that this seven-year-old boy went to school each day, and daily witnessed a young African-American boy forced to sit by himself in a seat dubbed the “nigger’s seat” by the teacher. Troubled by this and the teasing heaped upon the boy by the other children, Theodore approached his teacher with one simple request: “Let me sit on the nigger’s seat, sir; I want to be with that dear little boy.”\(^{229}\) The magazine went on to report that this young Theodore had grown up to become an active abolitionist who treated all people as his equals.\(^{230}\)

In another tale, the *Friend* told the story of Charlotte and Peggy, two girls growing up under the same roof as good friends. Peggy’s mother was a domestic helper (the piece is not clear if that relationship is a slave or free one) and employed by Charlotte’s mother. The story described both mothers as kind, pleasant, pious women, and expressed that it was truly no surprise that the daughters would be fast friends since their days as babies. Both girls shared good things like toys and books together, and Charlotte was often there to provide comfort for Peggy after the latter experienced rough times of mistreatment from white people. The *Friend* asked its readers to consider how beautiful this picture was, and to make sure they did not grow up into people who mistreated others.\(^{231}\)

Abolitionists encouraged children to engage in the fight against slavery in all areas of their lives, and indeed, to shape their lives around that battle both at home and at school, in family times and free times, in their reading, in their thoughts, and in their financial lives as well. If these young abolitionists could achieve that focus, then abolitionists would have created an energetic and dedicated young generation filled with thoughts, plans, and action aimed at ending that peculiar institution.

\(^{229}\) *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 12 (1836), 14-15.

\(^{230}\) Ibid.

\(^{231}\) *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 22 (1837), 1-3.
CHAPTER 4: GOD, CHILDREN, AND SLAVERY, OR THE TRUE CHRISTIAN

*Train up a child* in the way he should go,  
And when he is old he will not depart from it.  
*Proverbs 22:6*

I believe that God is my Father: that he is Father of all the colored boys and girls: that we are made of the same blood; that we are in the eyes of God brothers and sisters: that God loves a colored child as well as he does a white child. I believe that Jesus came into the world to save sinners: that black people are not greater sinners than white people: and that all will go to heaven, if they repent, believe in the Savior, and love their neighbor. I believe that in heaven all people, white and black, will sit together in heavenly places. I believe that it is wrong to make colored people sit in a corner in the house of God, as if they were not fit to worship God in the same seats with their white fellow sinners. I believe that a person does not love God who hates his brother. I believe that it is right to be kind to the poor slaves, to pray for them, and to try to persuade slaveholders to give them their liberty: that it is right to say that slavery is a dreadful sin, and that it is wicked to have hard feelings toward any colored people, to abuse them, or to wish them any hurt.\(^{232}\)

Americans of the 1820s and 1830s found themselves living in turbulent times the likes of which they never expected, and they lacked examples and precedents that would teach them to cope with their new challenges. They encountered a world where work increasingly took place apart from the home, which separated families during working hours while creating a dependency upon employers rather than the old self-sufficient lifestyle their parents once expected. Since these jobs were often found in cities, a gradually increasing number of Americans found themselves relocating, living in apartments or houses, finding that any urban living situation was far from the quiet pastoral, independent ideal many previous Americans once sought. All this change gave many Americans a great deal of uncertainty about every aspect of their lives.

\(^{232}\) *Slave’s Friend* 1, no. 2 (1836), Inside cover.
Many of these unsettled Americans sought answers in Christianity, and a wave of revival swept across the North, especially in New York along the Erie Canal, with preachers such as Charles Finney extolling an evangelistic message that people could find their hope and salvation in Christ. Many of these unsettled Americans, as well as scores of people searching for answers due to other reasons, responded to this gospel call, and Protestant churches saw explosive gains in membership, especially Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists. This Second Great Awakening sent shockwaves throughout the nation as these zealous new Christian converts came to believe that their newfound beliefs should shape every area of life and every aspect of their society. This led to tremendously energetic movements to reform their world as these motivated believers organized themselves to campaign for peace, to transform prisons, to eliminate alcohol, and most powerfully, in the effort to abolish slavery. The explosive growth of evangelical Christianity stemming from this revival created a fervent desire in converts to transform American society into one reflecting their beliefs. Their fervency led discussions and controversies over reform measures to become overwhelmed with debates over Bible interpretation, leading to a greater unwillingness to compromise or even begin discussions as the antebellum era wore on. Nothing characterized this transformation as ferociously as the debate over slavery in the United States.233

Early abolitionist efforts to recruit children reflected this intense desire to match belief to practice. Abolitionists knew that they were recruiting largely from a base of evangelical Christians and that this Christian foundation gave a potential common ground to engage people on all sides of the slavery debate. Accordingly, abolitionists taught children that every true

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Christian was an abolitionist and centered their own Christian teaching for children around this idea. In this aspect of their moral suasion efforts, abolitionists wrote that all people, regardless of skin color, were equal in the eyes of God. Abolitionists taught children what the Bible had to say about slavery, and developed theological teachings for children. This included a foundational belief that slaves were human beings just as white people were and that, due to the humanity of slaves, slavery was a sin in the eyes of God. Abolitionists applied these biblical teachings to children’s lives, training children that obedience to the Golden Rule of treating others as well as yourself meant in this case to seek the freedom of slaves.

Abolitionists also understood that most of their readers would have no practical experience living near slavery, and so they went to great lengths to impress the horrors of slavery upon the hearts of these readers in order to make the connection between their Christian faith and abolition impossible to deny. Overall, abolitionists taught children explicitly that striving for the end of slavery was an inevitable result of true Christian faith.

This theological training was very specifically a product of the 1830s and waned as the Second Great Awakening itself waned in many areas of the North, and splintered even in the Burned-Over District of western New York, where the revivals continued to thrive but also grew into new and unexpected directions with the birth and growth of Millerites, Mormons, and the utopian Oneida Community. When the evangelical fervor of the revivals generally diminished at the end of the 1830s, abolitionists abandoned the theological training of children.

While we often consider the moral training of children in this era as the role of mothers, abolitionists defied the separate spheres arrangement in their work for children. This theological training was a male-dominated arena in which every credited author seeking to reach children in this way was a man, although many of these works lacked a credited author.
The *Liberator* pioneered this area of teaching with a small handful of pieces, but the American Anti-Slavery Society carried out the bulk of this theological training of children through their children’s magazine, the *Slave’s Friend*. One woman, Eliza Follen, served as the only known exception as she took over this part of the movement in 1839, following the death of her husband Charles. Eliza Follen took up his work as a theological teacher for children, greatly outproducing him in spiritually-minded abolitionist materials and abolitionist materials in general.

Abolitionists worked to develop a core belief in children that slaves were human beings who deserved equality with white people. Abolitionist authors laid out this belief with examples of people treating African-Americans well, with simple teachings about the humanity of slaves, with plain statements of racial equality in God’s eyes, and by spelling out the problems of prejudice in practical living. In their work with children, abolitionists focused on the same verses they used in reaching adults, but in shorter writings and rarely in the sort of point-counterpoint debates they liked to put together in writing to adults.

The *Liberator* launched this effort in 1831, with the publication of a serial titled “An Evening At Home,” in which an English family home became a hub of abolitionist discussion between siblings and their parents. This serial portrayed an ideal scenario for abolitionists in both recruiting children and deploying them as fellow workers against slavery by showing family discussions about slavery that moved their children to sympathy for the slaves. The serial also taught children about direct actions they could take and concluded with the children of the story then engaging a slaveowner directly with a biblical debate about slavery. The episodes contained within “An Evening At Home” served as an encouragement that children could indeed instigate discussions about slavery within their own family as well as an
encouragement that moral suasion within the home worked as an effective strategy to convince family members of the perils of slavery. While the serial initially focused primarily on the horrors of the slave experience and economic measures to take against it, both of those turned out to be tools utilized by the abolitionist family to transform the debate into a matter of Christian faith above all else.

“An Evening At Home” opened in the Morrison family home with the abolitionist ideal of children initiating a discussion about slavery as soon as their father arrived home from another day of work. The children especially insisted on attending an anti-slavery meeting the next morning. As their daughter Helen begged her mother for permission to attend, her younger siblings stormed into the room and took over the discussion until her brother Henry exploded with indignation that his sister Emma cared nothing about what kind of sugar she ate, and who was hurt to get her that sugar. Mr. Morrison reminded his son that he also did not care until someone sat down to share the lessons about slavery, and then declared that it was time to teach young Emma about slavery. Mr. Morrison taught his daughter about the ease with which families were torn apart, the branding slaves received, the punishments they received, the inability of slaves to testify in trials, even on their own behalf, and capped his teaching by telling the terrible circumstances of the slaves’ forced voyage from Africa. All of this brought Emma to tears and led her to wonder aloud how anyone gained the right to treat other people in this way, although she was apparently too overwhelmed by it all to make a decision to join the abolitionist cause that evening. In this way, the first installment of the serial showed children taking action within their own home to stir up a discussion about slavery, even though some of the children were not fully convinced of the need to combat slavery.\footnote*{Liberator, September 24, 1831.}
The next several installments focused on translating sentiment into action and were devoted to the educating children about the consumer aspect of abolition, explaining the reasons that West Indian sugar dominated English markets and the need to make educated consumer decisions that would fight slavery economically. In the second installment, the family discussed how slavery continued in the Empire even after the abolition of the slave trade itself and concluded that the continued existence of slavery was solely due to the cheap price of West Indian sugar, which remained popular because English women loved to enjoy it in their tea. This upset young Emma and led to Henry brandishing some form of whip and proclaiming his desire to bring slavery to a forceful end. A later installment concluded that buying West Indian sugar just enabled plantation owners to continue the institution, and proposed the idea that buying less of that sugar would leave less work for slaves to do, and give them more time to spend bettering themselves. While still not exactly proposing and end to slavery, the discussion reflected the idea that consumers could directly affect slavery in simple, peaceful ways.

The serial concluded with children taking advantage of exactly the sort of face-to-face opportunity abolitionists strove to encourage children to engage in. The Morrison family had a guest over for dinner in their home and this guest, Mortimer, owned slaves. This situation led the family to press Mortimer about the need for slavery to end. The discussion began with an argument over which party deserved remuneration, with Mortimer making the typical slaveowner argument that a forced loss of property required remuneration, and the family insisting that the people who had been wronged through their press into a service that should never have been lawful needed the remuneration. Emma argued forcefully that she would give

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235 *Liberator*, October 15, 1831.
236 *Liberator*, November 5, 1831.
the slaves everything she loved in the world to help their new lives, even her volume of
scripture stories. This mention provoked Mortimer to invoke Old Testament arguments that the
Jewish people owned slaves, leading Mr. Morrison to quickly draw distinctions between
slavery as portrayed in the Old Testament and slavery as practiced in the West Indies, noting
that slaves of Israel could marry, were expected to receive the same food and treatment as their
owners, had their spiritual needs properly taken care of, and that no one was forced to return a
runaway slave. The discussion ended quickly soon after this point, with just one more surge of
disagreement about the intention of slaveowners to prepare their slaves for freedom, as
Mortimer claimed would be proper, or whether the owners would do everything in their power
to avoid that preparation and perpetuate their labor system, with Mr. Morrison offering one last
time that this system stood in direct defiance of God’s stated wishes for slaves and all
people.237 While the family did not convince Mortimer to free his slaves, they both took
advantage of their opportunity to engage the slaveholder in a debate over slavery, and their
Christian faith became the foundation for the entire discussion, giving both common ground to
debate the slaveholder and tacitly noting that the two interpretations could not easily, if ever,
reach a common ground. Crucially, the Morrison children both employed the Bible and
watched their father do so in order to combat slavery, tying their Christian faith directly to the
fight against slavery.

The Liberator made another offering in 1833 with the religiously-titled “Monday
Morning in the Millennium.” This story portrayed a discussion between a Rhode Island father
and son discussing past times where slavery existed as nearby as Connecticut, a revelation
which shocked the son, and showed a disconnect between values of American commerce and

237 Liberator, November 12, 1831.
their Biblical understandings about slavery. The father and son each described the beautiful morning they were experiencing, ascribing the beauty of the day to the goodness of God. The father told his son a story about Ishmael Judson, a former slave trader who plied his trade between Africa and Brazil. The father claimed that men such as Judson were fewer in number due to the power of the Gospel, but also that Judson and his descendants were still active in opposing laws for the abolition of slavery as well as any law with potential benefit for free African-Americans, claiming that such an abolition would burden them with great financial loss. In response, the father and others argued that God was “a jealous God” who would bring the punishment for their sins on the sinful generation as well as subsequent generations. Both father and son viewed Judson’s actions as despicable, and the father brought special criticism for Christian leaders of the day who offered “with a faint voice, they did not believe he was altogether right.” Instead, abolitionists sought for children to take their faith and speak with a strong, clear voice that slavery was absolutely and indisputably wrong, and this piece ended with its only reference, vague as it was, to the Millennium, simply stating that the “season for worship has arrived,” and that the glad notes from hymns already played in the land.238

From its inception in 1836, a particular focus of the Slave’s Friend was Bible teaching. The Slave’s Friend included different verses and passages from both the Old and New Testaments to teach children what the Bible had to say about slavery, and especially the need to end it immediately. The Friend routinely gave Bible verses without explanation or context, fully believing that a simple reading of a verse or collection of verses would immediately convince young readers of the evil of slavery.

238 Liberator, August 24, 1833; Exodus 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 5:8-10.
From the first page of its very first issue, the *Friend* devoted valuable space to these Bible teachings, beginning with a story entitled “The Collection Box,” where a little girl named Anna asked her father for money to put in a collection box the family had set on their fireplace so that she could give that money to the poor slave, as the box was adorned with a picture of a female slave. The box also contained two Bible verses, Hebrews 13:3 and Jeremiah 22:16, which were intended here to discuss the proper reaction to the slaves’ captivity, with the Hebrews verse calling on readers to think of themselves as fellow captives with the slaves, and the second offering an Old Testament verse where God praised a man for considering the poor and needy. From the story, this was a habit for the two-year-old Anna, as she already had some sort of understanding of the need to help the slaves.\(^2\)\(^3\)\(^9\) As she aged, and as readers encountered Anna’s story, these Biblical references would reinforce her ideals of helping slaves and give her reason to continue her abolitionist habits.

That first issue contained another section plainly titled “Texts on Slavery.” This section presented several verses without commentary to show that the Bible taught that slavery was a very present sin and was so plainly so that it required no further comment. Simply reading these verses was to convince readers of the evil of slavery. This included a verse from Genesis in which Joseph described his entry into Egypt as one where he was stolen away from his land as well as including two of the Ten Commandments, “Thou shalt not covet” and “Thou shalt not steal.” Including the New Testament, the *Friend* listed the often-used Acts 17:26, stating that God made all men of the earth of one blood, a verse abolitionists relied upon heavily to teach the common humanity of all people of all skin colors.\(^2\)\(^4\)\(^0\) With no explanations offered for the verses here, this collection was most likely intended to be a list of verses children could

\(^{239}\) *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 1 (1836), 1-3.
\(^{240}\) *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 1 (1836), 6-8.
memorize as a quick reference guide to opposing slavery, or else made so plainly evident by other abolitionists teachings as to be handy.

The *Friend* translated the story of Moses to the abolitionist cause, sharing briefly how the Egyptian princess saw baby Moses floating in his basket and brought him out of the water, and had him brought up in the Pharaoh’s palace. Mentioning that this gave Moses the opportunity to be educated and grow up to be a man, but eliminating more controversial parts of his story, the *Friend* reminded its youthful readers that Moses led the Israelites through the Red Sea. The *Friend* called this princess a good princess, and asked why ladies of the South could not be as compassionate and kind as she, specifically asking why they could not teach the slaves to read, or even simply avoid beating them? Here, the author did not offer an elaborate explanation, but used the Bible text as an opening to ask pointed questions while encouraging children to agree that Southerners could certainly do better than their current ways. The story also gave readers opportunities to see people raised in slavery rise up to treat slaves humanely and in Moses’ case, to lead slaves to freedom.

In a brief story that may be one of the speediest versions of immediate emancipation portrayed by the *Slave’s Friend*, a brother and sister engaged in a “Little Dialogue.” William asked his sister Ann if slavery was wicked. Upon her positive answer, he asked for proof from the Bible, and Ann answered with three Bible verses. With that response, William declared that he wanted to see all slaves freed, educated, and going to Sabbath Schools. Intending here to show the power of the Bible to convert people to abolitionism, William only required three verses to be read to him with explanation for none. It would be that evident to hearers,

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241 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 2 (1836), 16.
242 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 3 (1836), 7-8; Acts 17:26, Acts 10:34; Exodus 21:16.
abolitionists believed, that even the briefest opportunity could change a young person for life and show they the way they should go.

Often, the Slave’s Friend printed a verse without explanation. The magazine’s 21st issue listed the Eighth Commandment, “Thou shalt not steal” in the middle of a page, though the issue then turned to mention briefly that abolition meant to stop stealing people. In a similar vein, the Friend’s seventh issue included the 82nd Psalm, simply placed without commentary, so that readers could notice the psalmist’s words right at the end of the page and ask reflective questions as to who the poor, fatherless, and needy would be in this antislavery magazine:

Defend the poor and fatherless:
Do justice to the afflicted and needy,
Deliver the poor and needy:
Rid them out of the hands of the wicked.

In other cases, the Friend offered stories with more explanation provided to link the Bible texts to the fight against slavery. Using a verse from Second Thessalonians, the author linked Paul’s admonition that “if any would not work, neither should he eat” to connect to slaveholders, claiming that they indeed did not work, and therefore had no right to eat. Singling out South Carolina, the Friend wondered how slaveowners in that state might take Paul’s command.

In 1838, the Friend delved into the contentious argument between slaveholders and abolitionists over the proper interpretation of the epistle entitled “Philemon.” In this epistle, Paul was sending a converted slave, Onesimus, back to his master as a brother in the faith. The

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243 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 21 (1837), Inside back cover.
244 Slave’s Friend 1, No. 7 (1836), 6-7.
245 Slave’s Friend 3, No. 28 (1838), 7-8; 2 Thessalonians 3:10.
*Friend* specified that Paul told Philemon to treat Onesimus well, not treating him as a servant but a brother. Showing that the *Friend* was aware of the different interpretations offered in regard to this epistle, the *Friend* noted that many said Onesimus was a fugitive slave returned by Paul’s command, but argued that such interpreters merely guessed that to be the case. Baldly offering their own guess as fact, the *Friend* wrote that Onesimus was treated well after this, and indeed became a minister. For an abolitionist, this would be a stirring reminder of the potential that a slave could reach once freed, but the magazine did not explain how they arrived at this rarely-encountered viewpoint.

Abolitionists were not content to lay only a general foundation of biblical teaching and added the specific theological teaching that slaves were human beings in the eyes of God. They approached this topic with relatable examples and then further developed the theological ideas of equality for children to embrace. Abolitionists then noted several problems created by prejudice, teaching children that such an attitude and its attendant behaviors ran counter to the ideals which God set forth in the Bible.

Abolitionists used practical examples that children could easily identify with, by using both famous figures and the familiar figure of a schoolteacher. In a piece entitled “Washington,” the *Slave’s Friend* told an apocryphal tale of the first President walking down the street in Philadelphia, where he incidentally “met a colored man, who made a bow to him.” To the shock of his walking companion, Washington bowed to the other man, answering the other man’s surprise by asking “do you think I would not be as polite to a black man” as to a white one? With this story, the *Friend* encouraged children to be so polite

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246 *Slave’s Friend* 3, No. 31 (1838), 16; Philemon.
247 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 2 (1836), 4-5.
248 Ibid; Acts 10:34.
themselves, and follow Washington’s example as he followed God’s example, being no respecter of persons in terms of treating people differently.

Another relatable example for children was the schoolteacher. In a very short piece, the *Friend* described a sort of idyllic schoolhouse where Mr. Thomas was “not ashamed to teach children of color” and parents embraced the idea of a biracial school.249 Using the same Bible passage, and noting Thomas’s love for all of his children (as long as they were good children), the author commended the school, and offered the same Bible teaching in the form of a question as the Washington piece: “God is no respecter of persons, and why should I be?”250

As well as showing children that it was possible to treat children of color as equals, abolitionists produced several pieces to teach that people of color were equally human as white people. The *Slave’s Friend* offered that all humans had bodies and minds, and then wrote that slaves did as well, with the body in bondage but the mind yet free. The *Friend* lamented that such minds were kept in purposeful ignorance and used this as a basis for their call to free the slaves.251

Reminiscent of the famous tagline from the *Liberator*, Eliza posed the question “Am I Not A Man And a Brother?” In this poem, Follen questioned how the land of liberty could bear the stain of being the land of the slave, noting that white and black people alike bowed and prayed before the same God, pointing out that “He’s the Father of all.”252 Follen pressed Americans not to talk of things like freedom and peace while slavery still existed here, including a plea from an African-American character asking, “Am I not a man?....Am I not a

249 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 23, 1-2.
250 Ibid.; Acts 10:34.
251 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 15, 9-10.
brother?” With that, Follen admonished Americans to expect no blessing from God while this institution remained.

Abolitionists combined experience and theology in stories and writings designed to instruct children that slaves were created to be equal by God, that slaves were accepted equally by Jesus, and that white and black people would be equal in eternity. The second issue of the *Slave’s Friend* opened with the creedal statement found at the beginning of this chapter, teaching each of these things clearly. This creed included direct statements that God was the father of “all the colored boys and girls,” that white and black children were considered equally as brothers and sisters by God, that white and black people of all ages had equal opportunities to repent, believe in Jesus, and spend eternity in Heaven together. With this, the authors of the *Slave’s Friend* laid out their foundational belief in racial equality in firmly religious terms, bringing this right into the realm of each child’s Christian beliefs.

In a heartrending short story, the *Friend* described a young blind boy taken to an Asylum for blind children, sponsored initially by a rich citizen and then funded by the Massachusetts legislature. Some friends took this young boy to the Asylum with high hopes that they could teach him, but the school refused on the grounds that he was black. His mother had built up his hopes, and the heartbroken boy wept all the way home, his hopes completely destroyed. The *Friend* posed and answered one simple question: “Now would Jesus Christ have turned this dear boy away so? I know he would not.” Here, using Jesus as an example of inclusion and a challenge for children to live up to, the abolitionist writer was able to argue for Christian children that their ultimate example was one to emulate in this as well.

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255 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 2 (1836), IFC.
256 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 3 (1836), 5-6.
Abolitionists also portrayed a sense of hope that God would ultimately accept black children into Heaven regardless of their treatment here on Earth. In a story borrowed from the Cincinnati Daily Gazette, “The Little Negro Boy,” the Liberator recounted the story of a young slave child terribly disturbed that he could not wash away the color of his skin, no matter how hard he scrubbed or how often he bathed. This slave boy looked upon the white skin of his master’s son, desperately wishing that the white boy’s hope could be his as well. The author of this piece expressed his hope that the boy’s sins, though not his skin color, would be washed away just as much as the white boy’s, and that he could cross that final Jordan River with peace.257

In another anecdotal story, the Slave’s Friend told the story of a little Boston girl named Catharine. At four and a half years old, Catharine was painfully aware of the things people said about her and the color of her skin. One day, this heartbroken girl asked a poignant question during a sewing lesson, “Mrs. T., when I die, and go to heaven, shall I be black?” In a twist, the teacher told her that she would not, that she and white people would not know any differences then. Although the teacher apparently left the question of skin open, Catharine accepted her answer with a simple answer: “I wish I could die!”258 The girl’s poignant cry did not explore every possible question, but it pressed readers to sympathize with Catharine’s pitiful plight. Further, it showed that abolitionists intended to focus on racial equality in this life and the next as both a goal and a source of hope in the nearly impossible mission of fighting slavery.

Not solely focused on eternity, abolitionists also tackled the practical problems created by racial prejudice to give children an idea of the actions required to turn ideals of equality into

257 Liberator, November 10, 1832.
258 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 23 (1837), Inside Front Cover.
realities in their own lives. Using both stories that children could easily identify with from their own experiences as well as stories that might be more difficult to think of from experience yet still garner sympathy, the *Slave’s Friend* presented powerful stories to immerse children into the experience of black children and adults to convince children of the problems of prejudice and the need to practice racial equality.

Abolitionists shared the problems that free black children faced living with white children. In the “Story of Poor Jack,” the *Slave’s Friend* related a story reportedly used by a young woman confronting youths who were “vexing a poor colored lad who came along in their path.”259 The lady told them the story of Jack, a young Sabbath School student who showed great effort in his studies with excellent potential for his future. As time went on, though, Jack began to study less, smile less, and gradually withdrew from other students. When his teacher pressed him for the reason, Jack shared the experiences he had with other classmates. While Jack loved his teacher, he believed that he could not excel or even amount to anything for one simple reason. In his words, “But I’m a nigger! I’m nothing but a nigger!.... Why, when I go along the street, the white boys hoot at me, and hallow, nigger! Nigger!.....I can never be anything else, and it is all because I’m a nigger; I’ve tried to be good as long as I can, and it’s no use to try any longer.”260 Jack’s teacher was able to convince him that she loved him, and more importantly, that God loved him, and did not see the same kind of limits as the other people did. The *Friend* applied this to its young readers, admonishing them that despising anyone because they look differently makes God angry because “God loves the colored ones as well as the white ones. He says so in the Bible.”261

259 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 5 (1836), 11.
261 Ibid, 14.
The *Slave’s Friend* used the heartbreaking idea of missing children to offer another aspect of the problems created by prejudice. To this end, the *Friend* shared the account of a four-year-old white child lost in Kentucky. 300 neighbors turned out to search for this little boy, who they found peacefully eating blackberries. Everyone rejoiced, and the *Friend* seized the opportunity to relate a story from abolitionist James Birney. Near the same area, claimed Birney, a Kentucky native, a slaver took a baby from its mother’s arms because the extra weight was slowing her walk to the slave steamboat, and quickly gave the baby to a bystander along the road as a gift. The *Friend* asked if there would be such a manhunt if the original child had been black, and argued that there would not have been, because the black child would only be considered as property and certainly not a person worthy of sympathy. Of course, there had been no such manhunt in this case. Asking if this were right, the author proclaimed that “God loves all his children, whatever color they may have, and that he is angry with men who treat children of color worse than they wish their own children to be treated.”

Invoking the Golden Rule into this story, the author challenged white children not to accept a view that viewed black children as anything less than themselves, punctuating this challenge with a reminder that God was angered by people who failed to do this.

Abolitionists tackled this issue again in one of the longest short stories the *Slave’s Friend* ever published, telling the story of a family named Prejudice, and focusing expressly on a girl in the family named Mary. At six years old, Mary went to live with her aunt. One day, Mary and her aunt saw an older African-American woman pass by the window, with Mary exclaiming “I do not love that woman at all!” When her aunt asked why, Mary blurted out

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262 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 18 (1837), 5-7.
263 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 22 (1837), 4-10; reprinted from an unlocated Sabbath School book.
“Because she is black; I do not like anybody who is black.”²⁶⁴ Her aunt, Mrs. Lovegood, called this very wicked, explaining to Mary that God made this woman as much as he made either of them. To emphasize the point, Mrs. Lovegood called the woman into their home to talk. It turned out that Mrs. Lovegood and the woman, named Lilly, were friends, and Lilly offered Mary an apple as she entered the home. Lilly told the story of her children, two of whom were now dead, and the third living in slavery. As Lilly’s tears appeared, Mary wept along with her. Immediately after Lilly left the home, Mary promised never to be “so foolish and naughty” and that she “will not hate colored people any more.”²⁶⁵ Mrs. Lovegood then went to get her Bible and teach Mary some verses to cement the lesson she had just experienced, like 1 John 1:15 and Acts 17:26, teaching that anyone who hates their brother is a murderer, and that all humans were made of one blood.²⁶⁶ Somehow, Mary maintained some level of dislike, but this changed when she came down with scarlet fever. Mary’s prejudice was broken for good when Lilly came and nursed her back to health over the course of a week. Finally, the experience of meeting someone of another color and Lilly’s expression of love for Mary broke her resistance, and she made one lasting promise not to hate someone for having a different skin color.²⁶⁷

Here, the process of breaking prejudice was a lengthy one requiring personal contact to broke the ice, some Bible lessons to build upon the idea, and finally seeing the real character of the disliked person shining through that taught everything abolitionists were seeking to get across to young northern children.

Abolitionists developed theology lessons and added them to their stories of interracial relationships, teaching that slaves and any person of color were made in the image of God, just

²⁶⁴ Ibid, page 5.
²⁶⁵ Ibid, pages 6-7.
²⁶⁶ Ibid, 8.
²⁶⁷ Ibid, pages 8-10.
as white children were. Abolitionists assembled this belief in terms of internal similarities between white and black people, including the concept that each was made in the image of God, adopting a traditional Christian view which taught that the image of God included such demonstrable attributes as intellect, emotion, and will. To this, abolitionists added teachings that white and black people all had souls, and that all originated from the same blood to teach children that it would be simply ridiculous to live with prejudice towards someone intended to be considered exactly the same as themselves.

Professor Charles Follen published a brief statement in the *Slave’s Friend* in 1836, in which he quoted Genesis 1:26 with God saying “Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness, using the text as a basis to argue that slavery denies the image of God in men as some men refuse to recognize their Father’s likeness in others simply due to the color of their skin.” While Follen did not develop this idea any further in this writing, his brief work here shows that the *Friend* was dedicated to this theological application in its earliest issues, and he clearly included this important theological concept.

In another issue that same year, the *Friend* invoked a picture of an afflicted mother who prayed during her times of trial as a different way to demonstrate that the slaves understood their predicament and brought their troubles to God in prayer just like the white readers of the magazine, with the same expectation that God could and would answer them. The *Friend* developed their argument with the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah indicating that God was the slaves’ only source of comfort, like the white children, and that God loved the slaves, and asked the children to have this same sort of pity for them.

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268 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 7 (1836), Inside Front Cover.
269 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 8 (1836), 1-2; Jeremiah 31:15
A third installment in the *Slave’s Friend* led with the above image, pointing out that men and women ask this very sort of question to their owners, with the Friend asking the follow-on question whether a slave was a brother or sister to the one who held them in bondage, answering that indeed “All men are the children of God.”\textsuperscript{271} For once, the magazine did not indulge in the opportunity to immerse children in the slave experience by sharing the responses of slaveowners who heard that question from their slaves.

Abolitionists sought to convince children that slaves were actual human beings by demonstrating that slaves had souls just as Christian white people understood themselves to possess. This idea, familiar to their presumably Christian readers, would help those readers identify personally with the slaves they sought to free by identifying those slaves with white children in that familiar concept that people were composed of eternal souls.

Some pieces developed their argument with just a plain statement that slaves had souls. One such piece occurred in one of the last issues of the *Slave’s Friend* in a piece called


\textsuperscript{271} *Slave’s Friend* 3, No. 30 (1838), 1-2.
“Dialogue on Slavery.” This piece featured a father and son discussing slavery. They were especially concerned that American slavery was worse than slavery elsewhere due to the chattel principle in a nation that proclaimed itself as a free land of liberty and equality. The father described a horse as a slave, with the owner having a right to its labor and to dispose of the horse as he saw fit. While the father saw this as terrible treatment of the horse and sympathized with the horse’s experience, he concluded with a note that the laws of Louisiana allowed slaves to be treated the same way. As his son realized that slaves were treated like horses, the father argued that this made the slave’s treatment worse than that of the horse, because “brutes have no minds.” Horses, then, could only suffer physically, while “slaves have souls, and they are kept in heathenish darkness”, meaning that they were deliberately allowed no biblical teaching or gospel message. This time, the abolitionist author won readers’ sympathy for the horse in order to make larger points about slavery, both that there should be considered to be a clear distinction between animals and slaves, and then directly that slaves had human souls.

In a different approach, the *Friend* tackled the issue of slaves and souls with a tale called “The Dying Child.” In this tale, a woman’s daughter lay dying in her sickbed, and her mother received one of her own friends, who then refused to pray for the girl, stating “no, no, it is only a child” which prompted the sick girl to fire the words as powerfully as she could “yes, I am a child, but I have a soul!” The author described this woman as an unfeeling one, and related that same sort of unfeeling to those who traded “little children of color, and treat them as if they had no souls,” adding that each one of those children could add the words “I have a

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272 Slave’s Friend 3, No. 36 (1838), 4-5.
273 Ibid, 5.
274 Slave’s Friend 1, No. 6 (1836), 12.
soul!” Without delving too deeply, the *Friend* explicitly argued that Jesus died to save all people, and that slaves had souls intended for salvation. As the author concluded, he added the idea that Jesus would never trade people with souls as slaves, and inferred that children must not support the institution, either. This author, too, taught that slaves had souls mostly by proclaiming the belief, but developed it using evangelistic ideas familiar to evangelical readers.

In a brief question and answer “Anti-Slavery Catechism,” the *Slave’s Friend* dealt with the issue of human origins as the reason to see people of every skin color as equals, attributing different skin colors as an adaptation to different climates as humans dispersed around the globe. The author of this brief piece ended with a quote from Acts 17:26, stating that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on the face of the earth,” arguing that the common background as beings created by the same God eliminated any rational basis for slavery or racial bias.

Through the ages, Christian theologians have argued that man was created in the image of God, though their understanding of that idea has been hotly debated. Most Christian theologians traditionally agreed that man was created with intellect, emotion, and will in a way that separated mankind from the animal kingdom. In terms contemporary to abolitionists, the renowned evangelist of the Second Great Awakening, Charles Finney, described these as intellect, sensibility, and free-will. While Finney used these terms to describe man’s moral obligation to obey God, abolitionists adopted them to proclaim the equality of races and press the immediate need for slaves to be freed.

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275 Ibid.
277 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 5 (1836), 4-5.
Abolitionists took varying approaches to apply the theological concept that slaves were made in the image of God. Some argued that slaves had the intellect and ability needed to learn, if only someone would afford them the opportunity. In “The Swamp and the Tombstone,” the Slave’s Friend told the story of a twelve-year-old African-American apprentice named Jack who had never been taught to read by his master and who also did not own any books. One day, Jack saw some school children playing, and began an exchange of marbles for reading lessons by one of the boys. They carried this out for several days before the white boy canceled the lessons, telling Jack that his mother felt that having a black child touch his books defiled those books too much for anyone to use. Prior to that heartbreaking moment, Jack had been learning and flourishing. Jack refused to stop learning, though, even resorting to visiting cemeteries in order to read the tombstones. Finally, the boys found Jack and took him to their Sabbath School, where he was welcomed with open arms and provided with lessons all week long.²⁷⁹ While the story did not dwell on the matter, it showed plainly that the African-American child could learn as well as a white child with even a limited opportunity to learn and that white children had a responsibility to make sure those opportunities existed.

An anonymous author built upon slaves’ ability to read, contributing a story called “The Happy Man” to the Slave’s Friend. This tale described a middle-aged black man who said to someone he encountered “I read good book, that makes me happy.”²⁸⁰ As the narrator conversed with this man, the man told him that there were things he had struggled for a while to understand, but he kept reading and working until he came to an understanding that God would destroy him unless he received comfort from his wearying burdens from Christ. Then

²⁷⁹ Slave’s Friend 1, No. 8 (1836), 7-10.
²⁸⁰ Slave’s Friend 2, No. 14 (1837), 5-6.
the man began to build his story with texts from the Bible, fully convincing the narrator that he was completely able intellectually to read, understand, and explain what he found inside the book.281 This provided another case where the writer did not go into a theoretical discussion of intelligence as something white and black people held in common, but simply did so by providing an example that could easily be understood to show that very thing in action.

In a similar vein, the Friend published an account of British naval officers visiting a Moravian missionary school in Barbados. To their astonishment, the children were filled with theological questions for their visitors, with one child expressing a frightened disbelief that his classmate had no belief in the resurrection of Christ. The officer asked the concerned eight-year-old whether he believed it, and received the immediate answer, “Yes, massa. Jesus says ‘I am the resurrection and the life.’”282 With further questioning, the concerned boy provided answers from Job, and then paged through his Bible to show the officer where those passages and verses were found within. This proved to the officer that the black child had indeed learned, that he could read, and subsequent examinations of other students convinced the officer that the level of learning these children showed would make many white children and their parents blush with embarrassment for their own level of learning.283

Speaking to children they presumed to be Christians, abolitionists wrote plainly that slavery was a sin before God. To make their point, abolitionists defined sin as disobedience to God and used the Bible and stories to show that slavery fit that definition. Abolitionists also showed different issues of this sin in the practice of life. Lastly, abolitionists taught children that God would punish people and the nation for the sin of slavery.

281 Ibid.
282 Slave’s Friend 1, No. 12 (1836), 8-9; John 11:25.
283 Ibid.
Christians have often pondered what sort of conduct was acceptable and what sort was unacceptable. In response, abolitionists posed the question “Can a Christian own slaves?” Characteristically, the *Liberator* spurred on this discussion in 1832 with a short untitled poem which featured one long rhetorical question:

'Canst thou, and honor’d with a Christian’s name,
Buy what is woman-born, and feel no shame;
Trade in the blood of innocence, and plead
Expedience as a warrant for the deed?'

In 1835, as future children’s worker Henry C. Wright began to formulate his own abolitionist ideas, he approached this question in his journals. With his characteristic bluntness, Wright asked if a slaveholder could be a Christian, if such a one could pray, and if a slaveowner could thank God for his own liberty and that of his family. Wright firmly concluded that “He cannot without mocking God. He is a bare Hypocrite.” At a dinner that same evening, Wright offered also that slavery prevented men from following God, and indeed taught them that they were not bound to do so. Combined, these two passages indicate that Wright thought slavery was clearly a sin, and that it was a sin that had the additional effect of preventing men from living in obedience to God.

Abolitionists also showed families working through the idea of slavery as a sin. The *Slave’s Friend* offered a dialogue between a father and his daughter to explain this concept. The daughter, Helen, initiated the conversation by asking the difference between a crime and a sin. Her father responded that a crime is disobedience to a law made by man, while sin is disobedience to God. With that understanding quickly established, the two launched

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284 *Liberator*, January 7, 1832.
286 Ibid.
immediately into a discussion about the place of slavery, concluding quickly that slavery was both illegal and sinful. Neither Helen nor her father developed the idea of slavery being against the law, but they did expound upon the idea of its sinfulness, with the father explaining that slavery teaches us to hate our brother, while God commands us to love our brother, and that “Slavery tries to undo what God has done, and what he called good.”287 As they continued, the father offered that those who kept their fellow men in bondage disobeyed Jesus Christ. As Helen called this “awful wickedness,” the father turned to an evangelistic appeal for slaveholders to repent and be forgiven for their sins, stating that it was the only proper approach for them to take.288 The fictional characters of this story left no doubt that there was no acceptable way for one to call themselves a Christian and own slaves, and once again combined an evangelistic appeal with a call to end slavery, combining the two ideas into one inseparable whole.

In theological works, the stories of Moses and Jesus have often been utilized to describe deliverance from different forms of slavery. Abolitionists followed suit. In a lengthy piece, the *Slave’s Friend* used four biblical pictures to draw a picture of slavery as a sin, beginning with the Pharaoh of Egypt, moving on to Moses, and then to Satan as the great Slave-Holder, and Jesus Christ as the Great Liberator. Noting that Pharaoh kept many children of Israel in bondage until God struck his land with plagues, the *Friend* noted that there were many small Pharaohs in this country. The *Friend* held up Moses as an example of a good man who chose to suffer with the suffering rather than enjoy the comforts available to him. Expanding the scope of their discourse, the *Friend* argued that Satan, the Great Slave-Holder, held power over the souls of millions in the United States, both white and black, and wondered much why

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287 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 20 (1837), 8-9.
288 Ibid.
anyone chose so willingly and eagerly to be his slave. Mixing an evangelistic appeal with the call to be an abolitionist, the *Friend* called Jesus Christ the Great Liberator who came down to offer freedom to all those enslaved in sin, using the opportunity of a magazine devoted to fighting slavery to make an evangelistic appeal, and couching all of this in evangelical language.289

Henry C. Wright reported an address to the Boston Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society in which he spoke for an hour and a half to the children about the sinfulness of slavery. Wright provided the outline for his lecture, with subtly titled main points of “What is slavery,” “In what consists the *sin* of slavery,” and “What to call the sin of slavery.”290 Wright argued that children could not conceive of any possible circumstance in which it could be right before God to hold a slave for even one moment. Wright then related that the children of his audience would tell anyone asking that “the essential sin of slavery consists in holding and using man as property” and that “God never gave to man a right to have dominion over man…………….under any circumstances.”291 In his usual plainspoken style, Wright concluded that children would say that “slaveholding is theft and robbery, and slaveholders thieves and robbers.”292 Independently convinced of the efficacy of his message, Wright did not include anecdotes from children making these claims, but his address itself speaks to the idea abolitionists presented that slavery was clearly a sin in the eyes of God.

The *Friend* also told the story of a four-year-old girl, recently baptized, coming to grips with the issue of slavery. In a discussion with her pastor, Mary asked her pastor if all children belonged to God. He answered that they do, leading to a rather long question for a child her

289 Slave’s *Friend* 2, No. 15 (1837), 4-7.
290 *Liberator*, April 7, 1837.
291 Ibid.
292 Ibid.
age: “Who are they that steal little children from God, and hold, and use them as property?” Calling such people manstealers, Mary and the pastor discussed slaveholders and their relationships with God, leading the pastor to say “Slaveholders do not tell the truth when they say they love God, while they hate little children and make them slaves.” This led Mary into a habit of praying for the slaves, and eventually she added Henry C. Wright to her prayer list in his role as the AASS Children’s Agent.

Eliza Follen developed the belief in the sinfulness of slavery one step further, writing in two different decades that slavery cast doubt on the genuineness of slaveowners’ professed faith as well as that of the United States as a Christian nation. In an 1839 poem titled “Where is Thy Brother?”, Follen posed a series of questions to slaveowners, bringing up different aspects of slavery, such as the backbreaking labor, the rending of families, and keeping from slaves all of the blessings that God had bestowed upon the land. The series of questions build to this final stanza question:

When, at the Judgment, God shall call
‘Where is thy brother?’ Say!
What mean ye to the Judge of all
To answer, on that day?

More directly, in the Liberty Cap, Follen called the faith of slaveowners fraudulent, writing that “some who call themselves Christians say they do, that their Gods had marked one race of men with a black skin to point them out as slaves.” Follen continued, “We pretend to be a Christian nation” while ignoring all commands to treat our neighbor as ourselves, ignoring the poor and suffering, and even creating that suffering for the slaves. Follen wrapped up this

293 Slave’s Friend 3, No. 26 (1838), 14-16.
294 Ibid, 16.
295 Ibid, 16.
essay calling upon all Americans to make their hearts into a place where slaves find sympathy and freedom, and never to cease laboring until every slave was free.\footnote{Ibid, 6-8.}

Abolitionists were not content to discuss the sin of slavery as merely an idea. Instead, abolitionists writing in the \textit{Slave’s Friend} also shared practical examples immerse their readers into the slaves’ experiences. In a familiar theme, the \textit{Friend} told the story of three lost Canadian children. One of the boys had found his way home, and recounted that he and the other two boys were found by Native Americans who took the children back to their camp. While going with their hosts on a hunting trip, the three boys were lost in the woods again, with the narrator found three days later by the Indian hunters and returned to his father and mother. The story expressed hope that the other two children had been found, but did not seem to know for certain. Important to the subject of slavery, the \textit{Friend} noted that little children of color were caught daily and sold into slavery, and no search party ever went to bring them back to their parents. The \textit{Friend} argued that these children had the same feelings as did white children, that their parents had the same fears and more, and that God personally loved them as well, and reminding readers that “he who committeth sin is of the devil” and would pay for their sins of slavery at the final judgment before Christ.\footnote{\textit{Slave’s Friend} 1, No. 3 (1836), 10-12; 1 John 3:8.}

In that same 1836 issue, the \textit{Friend} told the tale of “a little negro boy and a dog.”\footnote{\textit{Slave’s Friend} 1, No. 3 (1836), 14-16.} In this tale, the boy was sent up the mast to bring down the ship’s flag, lost his grip, and fell into the sea. The boy called for help, receiving none, until the captain’s dog took mercy on him and jumped into the water to attempt the rescue. Since this dog was one of the captain’s favorites, its action motivated the captain to send a rescue boat out to bring the two back onboard, at
which time he beat the young boy “most shockingly” for dropping the flag. The author, after pointing out that the dog was much better and compassionate than his captain, referred to a biblical quote, “Thou shalt love him as thyself,” pointing out that the captain would not have his own children treated this way, but offered no instance of love or caring at all for the boy simply due to the color of his skin. In fact, the captain clearly loved the dog more than the child.\footnote{Ibid; Leviticus 19:34.}

Similarly, the *Friend* worked to explain the emotional trauma created by slave traders. One author, responding to his six-year old cousin, provided a poignant impression of slave traders in his attempt to explain their work to his cousin. The author, apparently a resident of Tennessee provided a brief account involving a young child stolen right from his mother’s arms and whipped for having the nerve to scream. This child caught his breath, struggled to reach his mother, and was whipped again, then saw his mother beaten for her own tears, and torn away forever. In a second account, the same author related the story of a slave wagon in Nashville, with a driver on horseback driving one child before him and one behind him, and several others forced somehow to push his wagon. The author related that the sight made him weep, and he knew that his sympathetic cousin would feel the same after even this brief vision of slavery in action.\footnote{Slave’s *Friend* 2, No. 21 (1837), 1-3. The author identified himself as “Amos.” Given the date of writing and his known affiliations with Nashville, it is possible that the author was Amos Dresser, one of the Lane Seminary students who created a furor with their 1834 Debates and experienced personal hardships in Tennessee for his abolitionist work. For some accounts on Dresser’s abolitionist experiences in Tennessee, see *Alexandria Gazette*, August 22, 1835; *Nashville Republican Extra*, August 24, 1835; *Philadelphia Enquirer*, August 24, 1835.}

A different article in the *Friend* used a Chatham Street Chapel meeting in Boston of deaf, mute, and blind students to illustrate another example of slavery in action. In this instance, the author showed the different ways that these children did learn, including sign...
language from deaf and mute children, Braille reading by blind students, and a great ability of all students to answer questions. Reminding the readers that they had no such difficulties, the author took them to the subject of slavery, noting that it was against the law in slave states to teach slaves to read and write, and that the slave children did not have rights equal to the blind, deaf, and mute students in Boston, building to the idea that God intended for the slaves to read the Bible, but slaveholders, in direct opposition, refused by whipping and hanging those who attempted to teach slave children.303 With this comparison, the author sought for readers to understand that educating children pleased God in the same way as the other examples did, and refusing to do so angered him, as sin would do.

Abolitionists taught children that God would punish both slaveholders and their nation for the sin of slavery until that final day when all would wake up to a day in Christ’s kingdom where slavery no longer existed. This developed both an understanding of the serious nature of the slavery problem as well as an urgent motivation to do something about that problem before it was too late.

The Slave’s Friend pointedly told children that their sins would find them out. Whether those sins seemed great or small or the reckoning occurred in this life or the next, abolitionists assured their readers that God saw every sin and would judge each one. Recounting an English sermon based on Numbers 32:23, “Your sin will find you out,” Arguing that it was sinful to cause pain even to a fly, the Friend described causing such pain to fellow human beings as something even more wicked, including floggings, chains, starving slaves, or insulting slaves. Making his point plain, the author stated that “God is angry with those who do so,” concluding

303 Slave’s Friend 3, No. 26 (1838), 3-4.
with a poem reminding children that there are no sins unnoticed by God that will not be brought up again in their final judgment day.\textsuperscript{304}

The \textit{Friend} reminded children that God sees every action and every sin whether others acknowledge them or not, the \textit{Friend} told a story titled “The Dishonest Man.” In this story, a little girl was carrying a basket of apples when a man snuck an apple from her basket and walked away. While the girl did not notice the apple, wrote the \textit{Friend}, God saw the entire thing, just as he sees every theft, whether it involved a pin, an apple, or a person.\textsuperscript{305}

The \textit{Friend} used common childhood naughtiness to prepare children for God’s forthcoming judgment upon slavery. To this end, the \textit{Friend} published a story entitled “Leave me alone.” The title words were the response of a disobedient little boy anytime someone tried to offer him help or kindness as well as his response to any attempt by his parents to correct him. Finally, the boy became gravely ill, and the family called their pastor to visit him. As the pastor began to talk to the boy about his sins, the boy refused the evangelistic appeal, screamed “LEAVE ME ALONE!” and died. Just as evangelists made the urgent appeal to their audiences to convert before it was too late, the author wrote that slaveholders were saying the same thing to abolitionists, and pressed the children not to leave those slaveholders alone lest they perish facing God’s judgment, ending with the words “They must give up their slaves, or Almighty God will punish them forever and ever!”\textsuperscript{306}

Since abolitionists were driven to train children in the way they should go, they were not content to teach theology, Bible verses, or abolitionist ideas without training children to apply those teachings to their own lives as Christian children and abolitionists. The two most
common applications provided by abolitionists in the *Slave’s Friend* were to love your neighbor and to live out the Golden Rule as Jesus commanded, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

The *Liberator* offered a two-part entry about slavery and the Golden Rule entitled “Change of Situations, or, the Excellence of the Golden Rule.” The story, purporting to involve people from ancient Athens, primarily involved a woman named Eliza who owned many slaves, and was especially terrible towards them. Among the slaves, Eliza treated her chambermaid Mira worst of all. As Eliza took her slaves with her on a sea journey, their ship experienced terrible weather, forcing them off course to an unknown harbor whose people immediately elevated Mira to be the mistress of the ship. It turns out that this island is inhabited by escaped slaves, who unsurprisingly refused to recognize Eliza’s authority, and the inhabitants ordered Mira to treat Eliza as she has been treated for the next eight days. Mira withheld cruelty, but did put Eliza to work, and the work exhausted the owner, who fell gravely ill. Without a thought, Mira took care of Eliza and nursed her back to health. Ultimately, the colony’s judges revealed their judgment that Mira’s character rose well above that of kings. Eliza agreed, setting her slaves free and employing them in positions of great responsibility with excellent treatment. In this case, then, it took only a few days of reverse treatment for the slaveowner to see that she did not and would no longer treat her slaves in her former way, because she plainly disliked even the smallest tastes of that treatment. Readers could infer that American slaveowners would see things similarly.

In their very first issue, the *Slave’s Friend* provided an example of the Golden Rule in contemporary action, publishing the story of a young African-American girl “who loved Jesus,

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307 Matthew 7:12.
308 *Liberator*, February 11, 1832; *Liberator*, February 18, 1832.
and read her Bible a great deal,” offering this story as a quick proof of the girl’s genuine faith.\textsuperscript{309} This girl received a gift of plums from a friend and excitedly showed the gift to her mother. As her mother fretted that it was a great many plums, the little girl shared that it had been many more, but her first action was to go to a cruel white girl who made a habit of pushing her around and acting as a bully, feeling that it would show the girl that she intended to be kind anyway, and might produce a change of heart in the more aggressive girl.\textsuperscript{310} This didn’t delve into the issue of slavery, but laid a foundation for its readers of obeying the Golden Rule, one which later authors could expand upon as they converted children to abolitionists.

At other times, authors portrayed slave experiences designed to teach northern children to behave better toward others than slaveowners. In a story entitled “Little Dinah,” the author related the story of a young girl who had once been a slave, and now, as a free girl, attended every Sabbath School session and church service provided. Dinah described her old life briefly, mentioning that she had a brother and sister, and that their bed was the family’s stone hearth, plain and cold, with no blankets. These children slept near the fire, hoping not to be burned too badly, though Dinah showed scars on her leg where she had been burned repeatedly. The author then applied this to the Northern readers, asking them to be grateful for what they had, and to remember the slaves, to be kind to children of color they met, and to do everything possible in their lives to end slavery.\textsuperscript{311} This gave children a quick picture of slave troubles with the clear intention of motivating them to fight against slavery.

\textsuperscript{309} Slave’s Friend 1, No. 1 (1836), 5-6.  
\textsuperscript{310} Ibid, 6.  
\textsuperscript{311} Slave’s Friend 1, No. 12 (1836), 1-3.
At times, the *Slave’s Friend* approached this idea in extremely brief, to-the-point pieces. In one such story, a little girl speaking to her father pledged never to forget to love God, and the paper took that opportunity to tell readers that despising anyone or doing ill to anyone indicated that they did not actually love God. In another, an unnamed narrator asked a little girl what it meant to be a Christian. She answered that it meant to love and obey God. The same narrator asked a little boy, who answered that he loved his father, but would not admit to loving his mother. In response, the *Friend* reminded its youthful readers that “God has told me in the Bible, *Love thy neighbor as thyself.* Every little colored boy or girl is my neighbor. And if I do not love them I disobey God.” Finally, the author concluded with the ultimate direction of this teaching, “no one can be a Christian who does not mind God.”

Tales of simple generosity became an opportunity for the *Friend* to apply the Golden Rule to slavery. In “Old Lilly and Little Mary,” the older woman asked permission of Mary’s mother to give the girl an apple, which the mother promptly agreed to. Mary, though, could not bear to take the apple, remembering that she had been very unkind to Lilly. Without spelling out what form that unkindness took, the *Slave’s Friend* turned its attention to the readers, asking them to be very kind to all people, especially including aged people and to colored persons, because the latter suffered so greatly, and even to use that suffering as the reason and motivation to be so kind. The *Friend* assured its readers that their conscience would be pleased, but that, most importantly, their good conduct and good hearts would please God. Some offerings did not make explicit mention of slavery, but their inclusion in the *Slave’s Friend* cannot help but be intended for young readers to apply their teaching to the antislavery

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312 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 13 (1837), 6.
313 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 20 (1837), 6.
314 *Slave’s Friend* 3, No. 29 (1838), 1-3.
cause. One such example, “The Young Minister,” involved an older congregant asking a young boy to remember one saying, which happened to be the Golden Rule. The boy agreed, kept it to mind, and became “an active and good minister.”

The *Friend* utilized the violence of the whip to generate emotional identification with slaves and encouragement to apply the Golden Rule in “The Cart-Whip,” which described the terrible situation some slaves faced as an overseer followed them through their workday, striking a whip against their bare flesh, and then mentioned the terrible situation for slave children forced to see this happen to their mothers and fathers. Bringing the Golden Rule into play, the *Friend* asked its readers how they would like to see this happen to their own mothers and fathers, knowing that the slaves’ parents were as dear to them as white parents were to white children. If readers could empathize in this way, the *Friend* wrote, then they also could live out the injunction of Hebrews 13:3 to “remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.”

In a story that unknowingly evoked images of the then-future Dred Scott case, the *Slave’s Friend* presented the legal case of “Little Mary,” in which a little girl sued in Boston not to return to Louisiana. The slaveowner and her lawyers argued that Mary’s parents were slaves, and accordingly, Mary was obviously a slave. Mary’s attorneys argued that the woman consented to bring Mary to Boston, knowing Massachusetts to be a free state, and that the action of entering that free state set both the child and her parents free. The judges agreed with Mary’s attorneys, ruling the six-year-old free. Noting that her friends intended to educate Mary, the piece ended with the Golden Rule, as the author concluded that the slaveowner

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315 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 13 (1837), 4-5.
316 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 16 (1837), 5-6.
would never wish to have this debate over her own children.\textsuperscript{317} As no slaveowner would wish to have their children removed from their care or uneducated, then the obvious step for readers was to ensure that black children were educated and that slavery would exist no more.

The \textit{Friend} led off a teaching piece entitled “Cruelty” by printing the Golden Rule, plainly adding its importance to slavery: “If everyone minded the blessed Saviour, there would be no slavery, nor cruelty of any kind.”\textsuperscript{318} Avoiding any complications or misunderstandings, the next line of the piece stated that slaveholders did not mind Christ. Otherwise, they would free their slaves instantly. Accentuating the point by claiming that slaveowners mutilated their slaves, and including that a slaveowner had sent the ear of his slave to abolitionist Lewis Tappan for some undisclosed reason, the \textit{Friend} drew a clear distinction between Christian behavior and slave ownership, once again making that distinction between Christian behavior and slaveowning after connecting Christian obedience to abolitionism.\textsuperscript{319}

The \textit{Friend} included the Golden Rule as part of the 1830s rivalry between abolitionists and colonizationists, who believed that the solution to slavery was to “return” the slaves to Africa, with a piece titled “A Free Colored American.” Referring to the picture that began the piece, the \textit{Friend} wrote that this was a man, and not an African man, but an American man who “breathes the sweet air of liberty.”\textsuperscript{320} Using a rephrased version of the Golden Rule to make their argument, the \textit{Friend} argued that freedmen themselves had many objections to their proposed exportation to Africa, including a preference for living in a Christian land, and their willingness to treat people well here, regardless of their own previous treatment. To close their

\textsuperscript{317} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 2, No. 18 (1837), 3-5.
\textsuperscript{318} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 2, No. 22 (1837), 13-14.
\textsuperscript{319} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{320} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 4, No. 37 (1839), 5-6.
case, the *Friend* asked its readers “They are willing to treat others well, and why should they not be treated well?”

Abolitionists taught children that sympathy for the slave that led to abolitionist activity was a necessary and inevitable part of conversion, and that every true Christian would be an abolitionist. Accordingly, abolitionists also included examples for children to see others putting their faith into practice to see ways in which that was possible for them as well.

In her poem, “Remember the Slave,” Eliza Follen called upon every Christian to take up the cause:

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Let all who know that God is just,
    That Jesus came to save
Unite in the most holy cause
    Of the forsaken slave!
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In his own direct way, Henry C. Wright offered an inextricable link between abolitionism and Christianity in “Little Harriet.” After disclosing his own discussion with Harriet, Wright offered these blunt statements about that connection, “Anti-Slavery Societies are Christ’s societies. …… Christ is an anti-slavery Saviour.” Crucially, Wright concluded that “Every real Christian has an anti-slavery heart” and that “We must all be anti-slavery before we can dwell with God.” In his characteristic bluntness, Wright left no doubt that he believed every true Christian would join the cause.

The *Friend* mixed the new middle-class world of its readers with this combination of abolition and Christianity in its penultimate issue. Offering a resolution for children to carry out when their father returned home from work, the *Friend* contained a resolution where the

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321 Ibid, 6.
323 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 23 (1837), 5-6.
young child would sit upon their father’s knee upon his return home to tell him of all the good things from that day. This update would include the child’s lesson, their spelling, their numbers, and their Bible verses. Lastly, the child would make sure to tell their father that it was important not to hurt any creatures, and to take care to please God in everything, because God is the Father of all living things.324 The piece did not contain specific phrases relating to slavery, but stood at the opening of a magazine devoted to teaching children about abolition, and set the stage for children to consider their resolutions as they read the Slave’s Friend.

The abolitionists of the Slave’s Friend provided multiple examples for children to follow in putting their Christian faith into abolitionist practice as well as imperatives to obey in order to do so. In a racial dialogue called “The Apple and the Chestnut,” a white boy named Lorenzo verbally accosted an African-American child named Mungo about an apple and a chestnut, telling Mungo that “the apple is the white man, and that chestnut is the negro.”325 Before Lorenzo could go any further, Mungo agreed, saying that the chestnut had a hard skin with sweet kernels inside, while the white man looked pretty, but was filled with little black grains at its heart. The Friend then told its readers that they could never be abolitionists until they removed all those black grains from their hearts, reminding them that Jesus would never love white people who hated black people.326 This provided both an incentive for children to live holier lives and set abolition as a goal for children to set to be better Christian children, and something to inspire their parents to achieve as well.

The Slave’s Friend reminded children that faith meant to believe what God said, and impressed upon its readers that their times were troubled ones across the land, with mobs,
murders, and several people insulted and threatened for supporting the slaves, and offered the importance of clinging to God in those troubled times with the reassurance that God would lead them through that wilderness of troubles. The Friend then included passages from several of the Psalms as reminders to the youthful readers that God served as a refuge in such times.\textsuperscript{327} The Friend offered “Sophia, the Praying Child” as an example later in that same issue, showing a young girl who went off into her room alone to pray for the slaves, encouraging readers to emulate Sophia’s example of faith.\textsuperscript{328}

The Friend used a Sabbath School conversation to show Christian faith mixing with abolitionist action. In one story, three children engaged their teacher in a discussion about how much they should give to the antislavery cause. One child, Edward, wanted to use one cent for himself and give the other to the slaves, while his companions felt he should give away both cents. The teacher offered the story of the widow’s mite, in which Jesus was pleased with the poor woman’s offering because it was truly all she could give. Finally, a young black child named Patrick offered his opinion that spending his money on candy left him no better, but giving it to the anti-slavery collection box helped him to wake up happy and content in the morning.\textsuperscript{329}

The Friend used stories of children serving as evangelists to connect Christian faith with abolition as well. Along with a story of a young girl who took it upon herself to share her faith with a local mechanic, which led directly to his conversion, the Slave’s Friend included another brief anecdote of a minister’s daughter involved in the conversion of someone attending her father’s church. The Friend attached an encouragement to the children that they

\textsuperscript{327} Slave’s Friend 1, No. 5 (1836), 5-7; Psalm 46:1-3; Psalm 91:1-3; Psalm 76:10.
\textsuperscript{328} Slave’s Friend 1, No. 5 (1836), 10-11.
\textsuperscript{329} Slave’s Friend 1, No. 9 (1836), Inside Front Cover; Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4.
could do much good if they set their minds to, doubly able to convert people into Christians and abolitionists.\textsuperscript{330}

Abolitionists extended beyond Methodists and Congregationalists to include tales connecting Quaker beliefs to abolitionism. To this end, the \textit{Slave’s Friend} told the story of a travelling salesman who just happened to be transporting a young slave girl as one of his wares. The girl who authored the letter was a young Quaker girl in southeastern Pennsylvania, almost in Maryland, and her family heard a salesman announce his approach with a tin trumpet. After her father bought some goods, he invited the salesman to dine with the family. While her father extended hospitality, the girl and her siblings noticed motion in the cart, and found a young black girl peeking her head out before quickly hiding again. The children managed to draw the girl into conversation, and found that she was the daughter of a free family, and that Dinah, the captured girl, was taken while she was outside picking huckleberries beside the road. The tin-man lured her to the cart, offering to trade goods for berries, and snatched her into the wagon. Then they speedily drove away, tying the girl up and stuffing her into the back of the wagon. The big brother of the family urged his siblings to say nothing, and they remorsefully complied. That same brother confronted the merchant at his intended departure the next morning, saying that the man would take no more than rightly belonged to him, and that he knew about the girl in the back of the wagon. Right before the trader could take his whip to the brother, the girls got their father, who wrestled the salesman down and arrested him for the night into his barn. Ultimately, the girl was set free, the man convicted of kidnapping, and years later, the older brother married the captured girl with her parents’ consent.\textsuperscript{331} This provided an example of an entire family faithfully living out their

\textsuperscript{330} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 2, No. 13 (1837), 13-15.
\textsuperscript{331} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 2, No. 21 (1837), 4-16.
beliefs, and the marriage at the end showed how deeply abolitionists believed in racial equality, with an example of a family that did not even blink at the idea of an interracial marriage, even in the 1830s.

The *Slave’s Friend* told the brief story of an honest boy who saw an apple fall off a table while a woman was setting up a fruit stand. Instead of running off with free fruit, the boy picked up the apple and handed it to the woman, contrary to what this observer believed children of the time would normally do. The observer extrapolated from there that this honest northern boy would never steal men and sell them, since he was too honest even to steal an apple.\(^{332}\)

Abolitionists gave children concrete examples of faith to model themselves after, just as they had done in showing the sin of slavery. One such tale switched the expected positions of its characters, with a poor girl in Africa demonstrating character unknown to the Christian missionary there. In “Little Julia,” the title character was asked by the missionary to go and steal some soap, but Julia “knew it was a sin to steal, and she did not wish to do it.”\(^{333}\) With her conscience telling her that this theft would be wrong, Julia refused and confronted the missionary, asking “But what shall I say when God speaks to me about stealing? And if I burn in hell, what shall I do?”\(^{334}\) This caused the woman to abandon her quest for stolen soap, and showed that little Julia’s conscience, even without specific Bible references included, was strong enough for readers to understand that she knew of sin and how to avoid it, even if the missionary did not. A moral example such as this girl would be familiar to the children whether they had experienced life with persons of color or not. The children would have heard

\(^{332}\) *Slave’s Friend* 3, No. 29 (1838), 3.
\(^{333}\) *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 3 (1836), 13-14.
\(^{334}\) Ibid, page 14.
that stealing was wrong, and could identify with this little girl who possessed the character the
readers were supposed to emulate. Since this girl demonstrated the same sort of moral virtues
the readers were to profess and practice, they could both identify with her example and
understand that she deserved freedom just as they did.

Abolitionists instructed children that slaves could draw comfort from conversion even
amid their constant trials. The Slave’s Friend published a short piece of this sort entitled “The
Forgiving Slave.” The slave in this case had become a Christian, and when pressed by his
master about the way he rejoiced through his trouble, the slave answered that he rejoiced in
“ceasing to do wrong, and learning to do well.” The Friend’s author then reminded the
children that the slave could rejoice, “though smarting with the rod,” and offered some Bible
verses to examine, with Isaiah 1:16-17 and Acts 16:25, with the former providing instruction to
alleviate the pain of someone suffering and the latter containing the account of Paul and Silas
singing in their Philippian jail cell.

William T. Allan, an abolitionist son of slaveholders who converted to abolitionism at
the 1834 Lane Debates, recounted the story of a discussion with one of his father’s slaves in
which the slave pressed William about his father’s right to hold him in slavery, quoting the oft-
repeated refrain of Acts 17:26 that God created all men of one blood, and claiming that both he
and William were equals in their cradles. When Allan answered that the slaves could not take
care of themselves, the slave responded to him with wonderment, asking who it was that took
care of everything around them, including the corn, the pigs, and all the white people. Here,
the slave plainly knew that the biblical injunction about equality was not playing out with

335 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 14 (1837), 12-13.
337 Slave’s Friend 3, No. 30 (1838), 11-13.
actual equality, with slaves doing all of the work and masters reaping all of the rewards. This gave readers another example of a slave plainly able to think through the situation through experience and the Bible and fully comprehend the rampant injustices that made up slave life.

At least once, the *Slave’s Friend* shared an example of a slaveholder feeling the pain of his transgressions at his deathbed. The *Friend* took note of the death of former Virginia congressman and senator John Randolph, writing that this slaveholder felt a change of heart on his deathbed, shouting the words “Remorse, remorse, REMORSE!” as he drew towards his final breaths. The *Friend* claimed that Randolph was experiencing the pangs of guilt promised in the very last verse of Isaiah, which stated that transgressors would experience the pain of their transgressions at the end of their life, with the words “their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched.”\(^{338}\) With this chilling note, the *Friend* used Randolph’s story as another way to show children that the sin of slavery would be punished, and in a way that the slaveholder would clearly experience as they met their end.

In a similar vein, the *Emancipator* included an injunction at the conclusion of an address by the New York City Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society to weep with those who were weeping. In this case, especially connected to a call for all children to join the abolitionist efforts, those who wept were those who were kept in slavery, and children needed to weep along with them.\(^{339}\) Hopefully, this sympathy would translate into much-needed action on the slave’s behalf.

Abolitionists combined the Christian faith of their readers with the cruel experiences of the slaves to show the children that their Christian faith must link them inextricably to the fight against slavery. This involved teaching the children that all people were equal before God.

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\(^{338}\) *Slave’s Friend* 3, No. 31 (1838), 2-3; Isaiah 66:24

\(^{339}\) *Emancipator*, December 2, 1841; Romans 12:15.
regardless of the color of their skin, and that slaves were just as human as the white readers of the North. Teaching children that slavery was a sin before God encouraged those readers to believe that slavery was an evil which needed to be fought vigorously. The abolitionists repeatedly made mention of the Golden Rule to make the connection between Christianity and abolitionist belief simple and clear to their readers. All of this helped young readers to understand that their faith must include works to prove its authenticity, and those works must involve working for the freedom of the longsuffering slaves. In the eyes of abolitionists, it was impossible and unthinkable for their readers or anyone else to consider themselves proper Christians while failing to fight slavery with all their might.
CHAPTER 5: SHATTERED INNOCENCE AND SHATTERED INNOCENTS

Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it.

*Proverbs 22:6*

**The Slave Mother**
A woman with three little ones
Came from a lowly shed,
And out upon a lovely path
Those little ones she led.

She led those little ones along,
And not a word she said;
They seemed, as they were passing on,
Like shadows of the dead!

.....

She took her little darling babes,
And put them in the spring!
It would have grieved a human heart
To see so sad a thing.

She took her little babies there,
Until they all were dead!
But though her soul was wrenched outright,
But not a tear she shed.

The wretched mother turned away,
With none her grief to heed;
Then down the valley she returned,
Again to toil and bleed;

Middle-class children in the antebellum era assumed a generally safe and secure life. Certainly, illnesses, injuries, and other problems could and did befall middle-class children, but these children had some expectations they could reasonably trust their parents to meet. Middle-class children knew that certain things would be provided for them and could believe that would always be the case. This included basic sustenance items such as food and clothing as well as other items such as books and toys that helped children to learn and grow intellectually and emotionally. While middle-class children did not normally see their father during the day,

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they could anticipate comfortably that he would return home each and every night at a predictable time. Thus, these children knew that they would normally see their parents daily throughout their childhood. Middle-class children expected regular schooling with opportunities to read and learn their other subjects, and they would have time at home to play with toys, siblings, and friends. These children also expected to work, whether outside the home or as chores within the home, but work at a level that left time for family and play. Such children also expected some form of correction or discipline from their parents as their parents were available to help guide them into adulthood. If middle-class children looked ahead to adulthood, they foresaw a day when they would leave the family home, most likely of their own volition to pursue their own goals.341

Slave children and their families made no such assumptions, and abolitionists used every one of these middle-class expectations to draw a marked contrast between the relatively comfortable life of middle-class children and slave children to win the sympathy of northern children. Abolitionists approached children intending to erase any illusions about the conditions that slaves worked and lived in. These moral suasionists believed that replicating the pain of the slave experience would show the humanity of the suffering slaves and gain sympathy for the slaves from a young army of motivated abolitionists. These abolitionists also used this sympathetic appeal to create a new sort of American childhood that would recognize African-Americans as human beings, just as the religious teachings sought to do, while embracing the racial equality that reformers dreamed of. Abolitionists focused children’s attention on the perilous condition of slave families that could be torn apart at any moment to

help their ideas resonate with the children. Abolitionists also noted the pain and punishments that slaves faced, both to help children identify with the slaves and to create sympathy with the slaves. Abolitionists portrayed the clear differences in the ways that slave children and white children were treated as each grew up into their different roles in life. Through it all, abolitionists sought to pull back the curtain and show children that slaves lived with a constant sense of fear which had powerful consequences for slaves, a sense of fear and dread that stood as an opposite experience to their own.

While many middle-class parents in the antebellum United States sought to shelter their children physically from corrupting influences beyond their home, children’s literature typically did not shield children from any of the realities of life, including every controversial issue of the day. It was impossible to shelter reading children from the painful effects of life, including death, as nearly every work produced for children contained stories of dying children, often portrayed in heroic ways. Accordingly, abolitionists sought to immerse children completely into the slave experience, sparing none of the pains involved in the life of the slaves. This was a crucial part of their efforts to reach and convert children into fervent young abolitionists, and literature was the only practical way for abolitionists to reach Northern children with the painful problems of slave life.

This is the area of moral suasion efforts to children that women took ownership of as the fires of the Second Great Awakening burned out and men left this field in 1839. Male authors or male-led organizations utilized this approach to win the sympathy of children and their families from the onset of the abolitionist movement, and women continued several of those themes while discontinuing others and offering some new persuasive themes of their own. Within each of the painful themes of slave life that abolitionists revealed, these
differences emerged. For example, men and women each highlighted the shocking prospect of division that slave families faced, but men focused on the pain at the point that families were separated while women explored the endless nature of the threat slave families faced. Men and women equally brought attention to the constant emotional trauma slaves endured. Men and women also shared a focus on the racial distinctions taught to white children and slave children in their early years as a means of winning their young readers’ sympathy for the slaves.

Overall, while religious teaching stopped at the end of men’s participation in this part of the abolition movement, the effort to immerse children completely into the slave experience via the written word continued unabated.

This matched in general terms the approach abolitionists took in their attempts to reach adults, but with a less complete definition of the equality abolitionists sought in their work to free the slaves. While adult organizations such as the American Anti-Slavery Society included unsparing statements of their goals, noting objectives of “encouraging their moral, intellectual, and religious improvement” to remove any degrees of racial prejudice in order that freedmen might “share an equality with the whites, of civil and religious privileges.” The Lane Seminary students built upon this foundation with their customary directness, writing that their objective began with the “immediate emancipation of the whole colored race within the United States” and extended to “the elevation of both (free and slave at that moment in time) to an intellectual, moral, and political equality with the whites.” While abolitionists strove for this goal, they concentrated on primarily sentimental objectives when writing to children, focusing instead on things children could achieve, such as treating all people equally and hating slavery. 342

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As they did in other areas of training, abolitionists gave children examples of moral suasion occurring within homes. In 1831, its first year of publication, the *Liberator* published a 12-part English serial called *The Family Circle*. *The Family Circle* was the story of a middle-class family living the abolitionist ideal of a family discussion of slavery within their own home initiated by the children. The serial combined themes such as consumer education and a heavy emphasis on the Golden Rule with a powerful focus on the conditions slaves lived under while showing the children of the featured family responding sympathetically to the terrible conditions so different from their own. The *Liberator* presented this serial with a belief that all children would decide to be abolitionists if presented with the harrowing details of slave life in contrast to their own relative comforts.343

The serial began with the family’s children, Lucy and George, eager to understand the difference between slavery and their father’s work. The duo peppered their parents with questions and poems about slavery, beginning with Lucy presenting a poem selected by George which claimed it was better to suffer as a slave than it was to enslave another person. In the ensuing discussion, their father explained that some workers within slavery were sold off to new owners and reassured his children that he was in no danger of being sold into slavery. Lucy then pointed out bluntly that people of all ages were kidnapped from Africa and brought into slavery in America and shared that she wanted nothing to do with the terror of being stolen away into slavery.344 At the very least, Lucy and George left this first discussion secure in the knowledge that their father would not be forced to leave them, but also full of the knowledge that slave children knew no such security.

343 *Liberator*, June 11, 1831.
344 *Liberator*, January 22, 1831.
The serial showed several connections between different aspects of slavery as well. One evening, after Lucy invoked the Golden Rule as a reason not to own other people, the family ended up discussing the legality and conditions of slavery. The parents explained that slavery remained legal because the American people apparently wanted it to be so, since they continued to keep the institution in place, and then the family took the opportunity to dive more deeply into the conditions slaves experienced so differently than their own family. The parents gave examples that the slaves were kept illiterate, often lacking needed food, and were subject to frequent whippings, all while noting that Southern whites maintained an intense fear of their enslaved subjects. Lucy responded with great sympathy, declaring that she would rather suffer than live without knowing how to read, and then singing a favorite hymn and praying for the slaves, and so an understanding that the enslaved lacked things northern children took for granted led to real sympathy for slaves in this fictional family.

In a later discussion, the father explained again an important difference between slave labor and wage labor. The father told his children that the closest thing to liberty the slaves experienced was their occasional right to hire themselves out as labor. But even slaves with this opportunity were still forced to share their earnings with their masters, the father explained, and were punished if they failed to bring home as much as the owner expected, which sometimes led slaves to steal. This led to some moral discussion in which the father argued that no one had ever yet managed to determine how to free slaves who were willfully kept uneducated and what to do with slaveowners after the slaves were free. While the episode provided no prescriptions to solve the problem, it did show an abolitionist-minded family.

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345 Liberator, February 19, 1831; Liberator, March 4, 1831.
346 Liberator, March 4, 1831.
wrestling together with the troubling issues that slavery created for the ideal of freedom and immediate emancipation.\textsuperscript{347}

The serial brought Lucy and George face to face with the terrible fear that slavery created amongst the slaves and even among those who managed to escape their owners, portraying a lifelong, ever-present threat of a forcible return to slavery and the punishment that would ensue. The father told his children the story of two slaves who escaped on a ship from New Orleans to Boston, only to be captured again, with the woman so terrified of the return that she tried to throw herself overboard to die at sea. The father built upon this account by telling his children of the agreements between North and South for the recapture of fugitive slaves, with the entire family decrying the fact that there were no places of refuge within the United States that slaves could flee to. The father added that it was unjustifiable for the northern states to collude with Southerners to this effect in approving the Constitution. George exclaimed that he felt for his northern countrymen who knew that so many of their brethren were in chains, and longed for the ability to do something about slavery, receiving this supportive answer from his father: “Continue to feel thus, dear children, be always ready and inclined to do them good, and I doubt not the time will come, when you will have opportunity.”\textsuperscript{348}

The family’s next discussion centered around actions the family planned to take against slavery. The father taught his children that rice, sugar, and cotton were all cultivated by slaves, which immediately struck Lucy’s conscience. In response, the mother and father revealed that they had already resolved not to use products manufactured by slave labor or materials. George expressed his confusion as to how this boycott would benefit the slaves, so his father explained

\textsuperscript{347} \textit{Liberator}, April 2, 1831.
\textsuperscript{348} \textit{Liberator}, June 11, 1831.
that reducing demand for these products would lead slaveowners to deal with a massive excess of supply and a tremendous loss of income as their slave-produced goods piled up without sale. Eventually, the father taught, this would create enough financial pressure to force slaveowners to bring slavery to an end. From there, the family discussed the options available to replace slave products, and stood together to practice the purposeful purchasing of free labor products.\textsuperscript{349}

The \textit{Family Circle} provided another example of the abolitionist ideal of moral suasion within the home in practice, with children starting discussions and investigating slavery, finding in this case that their parents already held abolitionist convictions they were eager to share with their children. The \textit{Family Circle} especially demonstrated ways that abolitionists parents and children could draw upon the expectations and experiences of middle-class children to win sympathy for the plight of the enslaved.

The \textit{Slave’s Friend} established several themes to make its young readers overwhelmingly aware of the frightening and hopeless conditions of slavery and sympathy for the suffering slaves. They described slaves as living with a constant sense of despair and foreboding throughout their life in chains, recounting stories of initial entry into slavery through capture in Africa and the difficulties of maintaining even a temporary family life in America. Abolitionists taught children about the constant physical pain slaves endured, and added a sense of constant emotional trauma to children’s understanding of slavery as well.

The \textit{Slave’s Friend} argued from its second issue onward that coveting money and treasure lay at the heart of slavery. This love for wealth led people to do anything to obtain riches, even to go as far as stealing children from their homes. In a story titled “How Children

\textsuperscript{349} \textit{Liberator}, June 25, 1831.
Become Slaves,” the *Friend* featured a discussion between a boy and his mother, with the boy, named John, mentioning a hymn he enjoyed, “I was not born a little slave,” and asking his mother how the children portrayed in *The Slave’s Friend* became slaves. She answered that they were enslaved because they were black, and shared a story of three little children stolen from an African village by a white man who lured them near with trinkets the children had not seen before. As the children drew near to the man, others jumped out, gagged the children, and dragged them to their slave ship. John’s mother personalized the story for him by telling him that the father of his friend Mary Ann was one of these boys. In this case, children in Africa would live in fear that their own quiet life could turn in a moment from their familiar life to the unfamiliar life of slavery in America.

The *Friend* attributed the frightful conditions of the slaves’ voyage across the Atlantic to the love of money as well. The *Friend* told young readers that love for money led the slave traders to cram as many slaves onto their vessels as they could, leaving no space for anyone to move or even sit up straight. Adding to the discomfort and pain of the voyage, there would not be enough food and water to nourish the slaves, providing one of the many conditions which would lead slaves to die during the voyage, at which time the traders would unceremoniously dump their bodies into the ocean. Through it all, the slaves were left fearing the life ahead while mourning the loss of their life at home and witnessing deaths at sea, to the point that “they looked as if they would die of broken hearts,” and others choosing to kill themselves by any means they could find rather than live a life of slavery. Thus, the abolitionists began teaching children about the sense of despair that would never leave during a slave’s lifetime.

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350 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 2 (1836), 5-8.
351 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 2, 9-11.
The *Slave’s Friend* used the slave ships themselves to teach about slave captures and the torturous Atlantic voyage. In “Slave Vessels,” the *Friend* used a dialogue between two brothers to teach children that slaving ships were designed purely with slavery in mind. Seth invested time teaching his brother Rufus that the ship was built to be fast to avoid the British Navy off the coast of Africa, indicating that the whole enterprise was fraught with willing illegality. Pointing out large water tanks on the vessel, Seth said this could only indicate that the vessel meant to have large numbers of people on board who would need water, claiming that regular merchant vessels took water in casks rather than 120-gallon tanks. When Rufus asked if the ship could be a Navy ship instead, Seth somehow claimed an insider’s knowledge of the ship, pointing out grates designed to give a small degree of sunlight to human cargo, and describing a manifest of goods including gunpowder and other items to be traded in exchange for slaves. Agreeing on the purpose of the ship, the two brothers discussed the evils of manstealing, and their wish that all preachers would fight against slavery as forcefully as Jonathan Edwards, believing this would bring slavery to a swift ending. This story gave a different aspect to the fearfulness of slave life, noting that the slaving ships themselves were built in the United States, and showing that there was a large, deliberate and likely unlawful effort to maintain all aspects of slavery, even the banned Atlantic slave trade, because of the great demand. Further, the story reached into America’s past to claim a great reformer that lacked peers in their present day, offering a different but fearful aspect to the enduring institution, and showing how difficult it might be to overthrow it while offering a potential solution the author believed could do just that, if only preachers would go along with the abolitionist cause.

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352 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 11 (1836), 1-5.
Later abolitionists used short, easily memorized stanzas in the *Anti-Slavery Alphabet* of 1847 to give children simple ways to think about and remember the kidnapping of African children and their terrible voyage on board the slave ships. These stanzas excluded context to quickly focus on the fear slaves experienced. Under the letter “K,” the *Alphabet* writers offered this refrain:

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K is the Kidnapper, who stole
    That little child and mother---
Shrieking, it clung around her, but
    He tore them from each other.353
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In a similar way, the *Alphabet* described the voyage very plainly:

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V is the Vessel, in whose dark,
    Noisome, and stifling hold,
Hundreds of Africans are packed,
    Brought o’er the seas, and sold.354
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While the “V” entry was a simple reminder of things children may have seen already, it could bring those lessons back and give a quick reminder of the painful voyage. The “K” entry, though, played right to the emotions of the slave family violently torn apart, and brought readers right into the emotional pain slaves experienced, or could expect to experience at any given moment.

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A Slave’s Dream

I slept but a little the night I was separated from my wife and little children. I never expected to see them any more. At length I fell asleep, but was disturbed by painful dreams. My wife and children seemed to be crying, and begging my master, on their knees, not to carry me away from them. My little boy seemed to come and asked me not to go and leave him, and tried, as I thought, with his little hands to break the fetters that bound me.355
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355 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 16 (1837), 16.
In articles, stories, and poems like the one above, abolitionists described the life of a slave as one of constant pain. Whether this pain involved families torn apart, the knowledge that other people were free and slaves were not, or forms of abuse happening through punishment or the work itself, abolitionists portrayed slavery as a life of never-ending sorrow. This pain often began in an instant and haunted slaves for the rest of their lives.

In the *Slave's Friend*, abolitionists focused on the physical and mental pain of slave life as they portrayed the frightening hopelessness slaves endured. Spurred on by a word she has seen in her father anti-slavery newspapers, a girl named Ellen asked her father what the word *coffle* meant. He replied that it referred to a means of binding slaves together for movement, whether by chains, handcuffs, or other devices, and was sometimes described as a gang. Ellen’s father offered detailed descriptions of the process slaveowners employed to bind their slaves in this way, and emphasized all of this by telling his daughter of a time he watched a coffle of slaves driven through the nation’s capital, causing Ellen to recoil in horror that this could happen where Congress sits. Her father told Ellen of seeing the nation’s flag waving in the background. This outraged Ellen and inspired her to declare that the stripes on the flag reminded her of the stripes suffered by the poor slaves, and she pledged not to be a hypocrite that proclaimed freedom while her nation embraced slavery.\(^\text{356}\)

Former slave Charles Ball described the painful living conditions of slaves. In the *Slave’s Friend*, Ball described a slave home he entered, noting that the mother was away working, which forced her to leave a four-year-old girl alone to care for her one-year-old sibling. Ball saw that the children were entirely naked, but that the oldest still ran with great enthusiasm to greet her father when he entered their dwelling, especially excited that it would

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\(^{356}\) *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 14 (1837), 1-4.
now be time for a good dinner. After a pause, the unnamed father turned to Ball with one simple question which cut right to the heart of a great trial of slave life, asking “Did you leave any children at home!”

The *Friend* examined slavery on a broader international scale, detailing the various pains of torture on a slave girl in Burma. The author explained in the first paragraph that her master was a cruel one who left the girl’s whole body covered with scars and once managed to break the slave’s arm during a beating. This terror continued constantly until an episode where the slave girl’s screaming was so loud that the master locked her in a secret room. When this case was heard of by missionaries, they came quickly, spirited the girl away, cared for her, and turned the cruel master in to the government. The owner was convicted, sentenced to hard labor, but chose suicide over prison. The missionaries treated the girl and enrolled her in school, where she thrived until the lingering effects of abuse manifested again, and she succumbed to a fatal illness. Comparing this Burmese story to American slavery, the *Friend* argued that slaves in American were treated just as poorly, but with no missionaries to spirit them away, and certainly no courts that would convict a slaveowner for their cruelty.

The *Friend* portrayed the frightful and fearful conditions that punishment created in the slaves who endured it. Borrowing from an Alabama newspaper called the *Mobile Examiner*, the *Friend* told the story of a battered runaway slave girl found hiding outside a family’s home. The girl was starving and badly beaten, described as “almost a skeleton,” and almost too weak to stand on her own two feet. The Miller family took her in as quickly as they found her, which only happened this evening because the family forgot to bring in their dog for the night,

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357 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 16 (1837), 15-16.
358 *Slave’s Friend* 3, No. 26 (1838), 5-7.
359 *Slave’s Friend* 3, No. 30 (1838), 5-7.
and the dog howled relentlessly at the door. The family gave this slave girl blankets, warmed her by the fire, fed her, and found that her master had beaten her for failing to bring home his cows from her work errand. Sending the beaten girl out to find the livestock, her master added that failure this time meant that he would whip her to death. Since she did not find them, the girl was far too afraid to go home, and found herself hiding by the Miller family home with no real hope or idea where to go. To bring home her condition, the Friend noted the Examiner’s reporting that her back had been cut into strings, with the bones of every joint showing through her skin, her face swollen, and her body seeming nearly worn out. The Friend closed with a reminder that it was terrible to see this happen to children, and even more terrible to leave them in slavery without hopes of freedom, faith, or education. In other words, it was terrible to treat a child this way in general, and even worse to deny them all the things that the evangelical middle-class readers would take for granted as normal parts of their own lives, like hope, food, security, and even just the knowledge that discipline would never go this far.

The Slave’s Friend also described the stolen childhood of slave children in the West Indies with a story the author claimed to observe back in 1834, prior to British emancipation. The Friend taught that these children began their work at five years old, doing simple tasks like gathering oranges for hogs, or hoeing, gardening, or helping to clear away the canes. All the while, though, the children were watched by an elderly African-American overseer woman whose whip and bamboo switches were to take care of their discipline. Building the fearful life of these little children, the Friend noted that these children already spent their lives trembling with fear, never to enjoy the “happy hours of childhood” like free children. Sleep was their only escape, but too much sleep brought the whips out in the early morning. These children

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360 Slave’s Friend 3, No. 30 (1838), 6-7.
361 Slave’s Friend 3, No. 35 (1838), 6-7.
dared not be late for work, since they would receive the same floggings as older slaves, and some children even rendered lame by the force of the beatings.\textsuperscript{362} The article did not include a piece at the end to make connections to the lives of its readers, but did so throughout by portraying the life of slave children as a direct opposite of the life experienced by free children, and especially sought to create pity in readers with the mention that slave children never experienced those happy times of childhood. Readers expected a childhood, while slaves could not.\textsuperscript{363}

Other authors used a combination of factors to express the painful hopelessness of slavery. In her 1848 work \textit{The Young Abolitionists}, June Elizabeth Jones created a novel filled with a family’s conversations about slavery. Jones combined descriptions of impossible living conditions with harrowing pictures of families forcibly separated and slaves brutally punished to portray slavery as an institution that deprived the enslaved of all hope to experience anything better than their current plight to share the hopelessness of slavery with her readers. Jones used elementary discussions to construct a framework for understanding slavery. In the book’s first discussion, or first chapter, young Charles asks his mother to explain slavery, which she defined as a person deprived of freedom, obligated to do the will of their master.\textsuperscript{364} As their discussion continued, Charles’ mother taught him that owners did not allow slaves to learn, even though they were people just like Charles. Instead, slaves received punishment, such as whippings or the removal of their ears or red-hot irons pressed into their face for some

\textsuperscript{362} Ibid, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{363} For more information about slave childhood, see Wilma King, \textit{Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America}, 2\textsuperscript{d} ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011).
\textsuperscript{364} June Elizabeth Jones, \textit{The Young Abolitionists, or, Conversations on Slavery} (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1846), 4.
wrong, real or perceived. This led to spirited discussion through the entire family home all the night long, with much anticipation for future talks.

In later talks, *The Young Abolitionists* focused on things much more familiar to the children in the story as well as its young readers by examining the living conditions the enslaved experienced. Jones took readers inside slave homes, writing much about the slaves’ clothing, their food, and their shelter. The evening after their first conversation on slavery, the mother and her children discussed the subject again. This time, the mother taught her daughter that slaveowners bought and sold children of any age, including girls, and sent the parents upon their unending series of tasks without allotting time to take care of slave family needs. This led to outcomes such as children living entirely without clothing and very little food.

For slaves who had clothing, the mother explained, it was made of something she called *negro cloth*, which was a very poor and coarse sort of wool. She described this as making warm but uncomfortable clothing, without mentioning the potential troubles of very warm clothing in Southern environments. Ultimately, the mother built this tale into one of family separation, describing how slaveowners sold family members apart from one another, never to see one another again, and portrayed dramatic mental effects upon those slaves, arguing that slaves would often “prefer death to this situation.” The mother taught that this even caused slave mothers to go mad, sharing one account of a distraught slave mother running up and down the street after returning home only to find that her children had been sold, screaming and pulling out her hair by the roots.

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365 Jones, 4-5.
366 Jones, 9.
367 Jones, 10.
368 Jones, 11-12.
369 Jones, 15-17.
Later, Jones set slave conditions against those of prison inmates, and ruled that slaves could only aspire in vain to the treatment prisoners received. This began at the end of their third conversation when young Charles remembered prisoners the family saw the previous day, and asked if slaveholders had great houses for slaves to live in like the prisons had for their occupants. His mother simply replied that slaves’ food was not as good as that of prisoners, and went into detail about slave lodgings. Specifically, she noted that slave dwellings were made of clay, or logs, or often in the deeper South, stakes and palmetto leaves. In any location, the mother said, the huts were “very open, frequently having neither door, nor floor, nor chimney,” and she asked Charles to think what it must be like to sleep without a bed on the cold and damp earth and remarked that these poor slaves would be glad to find something as comfortable as a prison cell.370

Their next discussion picked up where the previous left off, with Charles’ mother noting that slaves lacked beds and slept instead on one or two old blankets provided by their owners. Conceding that prisoners did indeed live a difficult life, the mother proceeded to tell Charles that slavery was yet worse, due not only to the physical trials slaves endured, but the unending nature of those trials. Here, the mother pointed out that prisoners looked forward to a day of release, when their captivity would end, and that slaves looked forward to no such thing, knowing from their earliest days in slavery that their pitiful condition would never end.371 The slaves, she taught, knew the pain of their conditions, knew the sufferings of their children, and most importantly, knew that no one cared for their plight, until “his spirit is broken by the crushing power of slavery, and he lies down in despair, feeling that a night of endless bondage

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371 Jones, 27-29.
has closed in upon (his) hopes” as well as the hopes of all slaves.\textsuperscript{372} After more conversation about the difficulties of slave nutrition, including the meager provisions and need to prepare unnourishing meals after an already exhausting day, Mrs. Selden concluded that “it is far better to die of starvation than to live in slavery.”\textsuperscript{373}

Ann Preston approached the constant pain of slave family life differently, by sharing the story of slaves in Carolina in her story “Tom and Lucy: A Tale for Little Lizzie.” The title characters were slave children who rarely saw their mother due to her arduous work schedule, often only seeing when she curled up on their cabin floor to sleep. One night, their mother did not return home. Tom and Lucy stayed up all night, frightened about their missing mother, only to be summoned to the master’s house in the morning for their double-edged introduction to slavery. Tom and Lucy saw their mother for a brief farewell as she was sold off to an owner in Florida, and the children received their first instruction in slave work soon after, as a “great whip cracked upon their shoulders bare.”\textsuperscript{374} Similarly, years later, the owner suddenly sold Lucy in the middle of her chores, leaving Tom to a desperate and futile attempt to stop the transaction that would tear his remaining family apart. Failing, Tom finally ran away to an unknown fate.\textsuperscript{375} This poetically framed story did not delve deeply into some of the details that other stories did, focusing instead on the powerful emotions the slaves experienced, with the familiar love between family members that readers could identify with as well as the terror that they could only imagine as the slave family was torn apart.

At all points throughout the 1830s and 1840s, abolitionists pressed the idea that the different pains slaves experienced led to a life of hopeless despair which led slaves to believe

\textsuperscript{372} Jones, 29.
\textsuperscript{373} Jones, 36.
\textsuperscript{374} Preston, 14-17.
\textsuperscript{375} Preston, 16-17.
that death was better than life, and indeed was probably their only hope. The constant pain led slaves to believe that there was no help coming for them, abolitionists wrote, and the constant misery led slaves to a settled condition of hopelessness that offered little to no escape.

Abolitionists pulled no punches arguing that many slaves saw death as the only hope of escape from their lives of bondage. In one short telling of a funeral for a slave child, the *Friend* simply noted that the child had died, and shared the mother’s final moments with him at the funeral, with someone overhearing the mother as she thanked God that her little boy died rather than being forced to grow up in slavery, with his mother thankful that there are “no slaves in heaven.”

In “The Slave Mother,” excerpted at the beginning of this chapter, the title character took her belief that death was superior to life in slavery for her children and turned it into action. Describing an incident purported to have occurred in Kentucky in 1831, the author took readers to a slave cabin in the earliest hours of the day, before the mother had to report for work. This mother gathered her three children, all six years and younger, and led them silently to a nearby stream. The slave mother only broke the silence to open up to her children about their hopeless condition, describing for her children what slavery was, telling them how she was stolen from her mother’s grasp in Africa, shipped across the ocean to toil constantly in America as her tears and blood poured out. The mother shared that she was beaten again the previous night, and never wanted her children to live such a life. With that, she dunked the head of each child under the water until they breathed their last, leaving their lifeless bodies along the bank of the stream, kissed them, and reported to work, knowing that she had no one to share her grief and no time to do so, because the work must go on. With this ultimate

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376 Slave’s Friend 2, No. 15 (1837), 6.
377 Liberator, January 21, 1832; Later reprinted in Garrison, Juvenile Poems, 48-51.
picture of a family shattered by slavery, the author left the readers on their own to ponder how cruel an institution must be to lead a mother to drown her own children.

Slaves had a sense that no one was there to help them in even the direst of emergencies. In one such example, the Slave’s Friend described a house fire in New Orleans, where a great crowd came to battle the blaze, and learned in the process that there were slaves chained up in the home. The owner, though, refused to hand over the keys, scolding the people for failing to mind their own business. Finally, these erstwhile firefighters broke into the home to find seven slaves beaten and chained within, and managed to save all seven.378 While their physical salvation would be good news to every reader, it still left the vivid picture that slaves lived in a condition where their owners truly did not care if they lived or died, with owners even willing to watch their home burn down rather than lift a finger to help their endangered slaves.

The Friend told a different tale of slaves living in such misery that nothing could bring them joy. These slaves instead lived on in perpetual, inconsolable misery that saw no light of hope on the horizon. One such tale, “Rose and Miss Belle,” told the story of an eight-year-old girl, Isabella, and a slave named Rose. Isabella gave Rose a silk dress for a New Year’s party, a gift that readers could certainly appreciate, and found herself stunned that the gift gave Rose no joy. Questioning Rose, Isabella learned that Rose never had a single happy moment because she was a slave, and Rose claimed that she would happily die the next day for freedom that very day.379 While Rose may or may not have expressed such hopelessness every day, the Friend made clear to readers that freedom was the only thing able to bring hope to slaves, and it was virtually impossible for slaves trapped in their present condition to believe freedom could be near.

378 Slave’s Friend 1, No. 12 (1836), 9-10."
379 Slave’s Friend 1, No. 10 (1836), 11-12.
Abolitionists showed that slaves of any age felt the unending hopelessness of their condition. In the “Little Slave’s Complaint,” Montgomery portrayed a little slave evaluating the condition of their life, noticing that there seemed not to be a living soul who cared for him, with no parents since birth, no brothers or sisters, no family to lean upon, all alone in the world with nothing to call his own. Instead, the slave had a master who laid claim to his body and work, leaving this slave with no possessions and no hope of anything better for his life. Seeing his life as one of a lonely outcast, the slave pondered why beggars and gypsies could move beyond their own rough beginnings, but he could not. This slave believed that he had no hope even if he could somehow outgrow slavery, since all his skills related to slave work, and he had no education to rely on. Finally, this slave looked with jealously at the life of a snail who could go freely to “feed on fruits” and sleep on flowers. Still, this particular slave clung to the belief that he would indeed one day live as a man and be happy, though any reader could look at these conditions and wonder how such a thing could be possible.

The Slave’s Friend included a combination of economic and spiritual factors to describe the slaves’ hopelessness in a way that middle-class readers could easily identify with. In an untitled piece, the Friend related the wages of a worker to their ability to buy goods, specifically their ability to buy themselves a Bible. Sharing that it once took English workers roughly 4000 days to do so, or 14 years counting Sabbath days off, the Friend taught that one day’s labor in the United States could now buy two Bibles, especially thanks to the work of the American Bible Society. With that, the Friend asked readers to consider the slaves whose daily labor was “worth more than enough to purchase a Bible, beside their victuals and clothes.” Still, this particular slave clung to the belief that he would indeed one day live as a man and be happy, though any reader could look at these conditions and wonder how such a thing could be possible.

\[^{380}\text{Slave’s Friend} 1, \text{No. 11} (1836), 13-15.\]
\[^{381}\text{Slave’s Friend} 3, \text{No. 30} (1838), 7-9.\]
quoting several verses that could provide comfort to the slaves if only they had an opportunity to read them. The Friend did express hope that slavery would eventually end, and implored readers to hasten that day, but offered no practical outlook that the institution would end in their near future.

Abolitionists contrasted the freedom of nature with the hopelessness of slavery. In her song “The Little Slave’s Wish,” Eliza Follen presented a slave boy’s wondrous examination of nature and the freedom he saw in the wild. This slave boy looked out at all the freedom in nature and wished that could be his, whether it be the bird who flew where it wantsed with no one to answer to, or the brook running along, butterflies, flowers, deer, or anything that did not have an owner as he did. The boy described the compliments his parents gave him, leading him to wonder what wicked thing he must have done to deserve this terrible life, and especially questioning how God could allow this to go on if God possessed the power to end slavery. The child concluded:

O, how much better ‘tis to die,
And lie down in the grave,
Than ‘tis to be what I am now,
A little negro slave!382

In other cases, a slave might find themselves in dire straits with no help forthcoming simply because they were a slave. One such example, “The Death of the Slave,” was a poem describing a slave woman who lay dying alone on the floor of her hut with no one to help her. The slave woman’s husband was away at work, her children were gone, and no one remained to help this slave in her desperate need because it was time to harvest the sugar cane, and the crop required all hands available. Though she needed help, the unnamed slave was left alone to

die. After the slave gave her dying breaths, the planter walked by, cursing his luck to have one less hand to bring in the sugar crop.\textsuperscript{383} Even this brief work was able to show readers what truly mattered for the planters, and how helpless and hopeless slave life was, with all generations included in the harvest, even as this mother and wife battled for her life.

Abolitionists used hunger to show the plight of young slaves. In the \textit{Young Abolitionists}, June Elizabeth Jones shared the travails of a starving slave boy. Jones ended a dialogue about the hopelessness of slavery with this slave boy’s poetic plea filled with questions about his painful lot in life, wondering why it was necessary for him to be hungry all day long, or possibly seeing only a small bite of food each day. This boy wondered why he not only had to be sad and hungry each day, but forced to respond to his master’s call at any time for any reason, and why he couldn’t at least have the same food that he witnessed free children enjoying. The slave boy’s mother provided some measure of hope for the starving boy, letting him know that there was hope for him after death, if only he would be a good boy while living, and this final release would take him to a place “where every body has plenty of food.”\textsuperscript{384} Even here, Jones shared for her young readers that eternity was the only hope their hungry compatriot could have.

Abolitionists especially emphasized the facts and feelings surrounding the forced separation of families to bring the hopelessness and fear of slavery to a stark contrast with middle-class life. Abolitionists described the hopelessness which stemmed from the knowledge that their family could be ripped apart permanently at any time for any reason. Abolitionists also used stories to take their readers inside the slave auctions to see stories of premeditated family separations and the slaves’ painful reactions to this awful moment in their lives.

\textsuperscript{384} Jones, 37.
Abolitionists pressed on to show their readers that this pain and hopelessness never ended for slaves separated from their families, whether by sale or by escaping to freedom, because those slaves never ceased missing their families just as readers would in their situation.

Abolitionists showed middle-class children that the family stability they took for granted was not shared by slave families, and that this insecurity created a great deal of emotional distress for slaves. Abolitionists offered some background into the nature of slavery and slaveowners’ views of slaves to establish a foundation for this fearful aspect of the institution. Abolitionists established with simple stories the fact that slavery forcibly separated families and especially the everlasting emotional pain this created for slaves. Sometimes, abolitionists did so by saying no more than a statement like this on in “The Afflicted Mother”: “Her husband and children have been torn from her;” establishing this as a foundation for the afflicted mother’s suffering.385

Abolitionists instructed children that this source of pain for slaves was caught up in the very nature of slavery itself. Abolitionists pointed to the character of slaveowners as well as their dehumanizing view of slaves as property rather than human beings to make this point. Abolitionists explained further that this was simply a natural outgrowth of the typically terrible treatment that owners granted to slaves and a general lack of care for their slaves which authors attributed to slaveowners.

Abolitionists combined themes to explain the sale of slave children. The Slave’s Friend addressed the possibilities of the sale of slave children through a dialogue between a parent and a child, with the curious child simply asking if it was possible for children their own age to be sold “and torn away from their mother’s fold,” left to live on their own in a place where they

385 Slave’s Friend 1, No. 8 (1836), 1.
know no one else or who to turn to. After the mother answered that this was possible, the child asked about the other commonly portrayed issues of slavery, including the slaves’ meager quarters, the beatings they received, and the limited rations slaves received, as the mother said this, too, was possible. Here, the author combined the idea that children were bought and sold with everything else children would hear about slavery to make that connection between the familiar of family being torn away and a life that comfortable middle-class children could only imagine.

Abolitionists maintained that slave traders were inherently dishonest. In December of 1837, the *Friend* shared a tale from Henry B. Stanton of a family of slaves promised by a trader to be sold together, which convinced the family to board his steamboat. At the first opportunity, the trader sold away the husband. The slave questioned the sale, reminding the trader of his promise, then pleaded from his knees to keep the family together. The slave’s wife and daughters raced to embrace him, but it was all in vain, with the man sent off to his new owner. The wife and mother was sold at the next stop in a similar scene, forcing the traders to physically separate the distraught mother from her daughters. As the boat continued down the Mississippi, the trader sold each daughter separately, leaving the family fully scattered across several plantations from Vicksburg to New Orleans. This was in stark contrast to the family experience of young middle-class readers, who primarily knew separation as a time when their father went to work or when different family members were in different rooms within the same home, and gave abolitionists the chance to shock their readers into sympathy for the scattered slave family.

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386 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 9 (1836), 16; *Liberator*, June 4, 1831.
387 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 24 (1837), 6-8.
The *Slave’s Friend* defined chattel slavery for its readers to show the precarious hold that slaves had on a steady, predictable life. The penultimate issue of the *Slave’s Friend* noted that Southerners considered their slaves the same as a horse or a cow, just property, not as people. Therefore, anything could happen to the small vestiges of security slaves possessed, and specifically focused on the effects on slave families, noting that a man could leave for work in the morning and return home to find that one of his children has been sold away, never to be seen again. The *Friend* offered other possibilities, such as a man’s mother sold away, leaving no one to care for his little children, even a mother, since she has also been sold. The *Friend* capped off this general story of potential heartbreak with the statement “Slavery makes a great deal of sorrow and weeping” and asking when the cruel institution would end.\textsuperscript{388} Though this piece contained no specific names or places, or even fictional recreations of either, readers could still understand the sense of fear and hopelessness which hung over slave work, knowing that even the small refuge of a slave’s home was not off limits from the misery of slavery, and the number of people living in that slave’s home could change in an instant.

Abolitionists throughout the 1830s and 1840s focused intently on the pain and sorrow created by the separation of slave families. Beginning with the idea that even animals are terrified by the theft of their young, the *Slave’s Friend* included a story titled “The Weasel and the Chicken,” where a hen caught a weasel taking away one of her little chickens and returning for more. The *Friend* noted that the farmer who chased the weasel away never saw a chicken in such distress as that hen, leaving the *Friend* to remind its readers about the humanity of the slaves, asking “how must a woman feel when her darling baby is torn away from her by slavers,” and terming such people as *men-weasels*.\textsuperscript{389}

\textsuperscript{388} *Slave’s Friend* 4, No. 37 (1839), 3-4.
\textsuperscript{389} *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 5 (1836), 7-8.
Charles Ball recalled the reaction of his mother to her son’s newfound captivity. Ball shared that his mother raced down the road after him to embrace her child one more time, begging Ball’s new master to buy her and her other children to keep the family together, with her current slave driver responding to her pleas with heavy blows of rawhide. As this continued, Ball’s master took him away quickly, until his mother’s voice became a distant memory he would never hear in person again.\textsuperscript{390}

Family separation affected slave parents deeply. A portrayal in \textit{The Young Abolitionists} brought that to readers, telling the story of a slave woman whose two children were sold away days apart from one another, the second apparently as a response to the mother’s wails over the first child, which also brought to her a flogging. The sale of her second child was the mother’s breaking point, leading her to run up and down the streets, pulling out her hair and tearing at the ground in her grief, wondering what was left for her to do in this world without her children.\textsuperscript{391}

Abolitionists wrote at times of slaves taking their concerns to God, just as readers would be taught by their parents and churches. Thomas Hall published a poem from a mother’s perspective, “The Mother’s Prayer.” In this poem, the slave mother cried out to God over her deplorable condition, telling God that they have sold her husband away, and their “prattling infants,” too, leaving her only to wonder what problems life could have for them. The distraught mother here prayed that God would take the lives of her children to spare them from their futures in slavery, and then somehow found a way to pray for the slaveowners who created all this trouble for her, for mercy and not for vengeance, while praying also that slavery

\textsuperscript{390} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 2, No. 16 (1837), 11-14.
\textsuperscript{391} Jones, page 17.
would end forever.\textsuperscript{392} This is another example of even the most hopeful of slaves finding themselves instantly despairing due to the malleable conditions of slave families. While children and mothers in the North would probably struggle to comprehend the severe pain of this mother’s family being ripped away, they could understand that the pain was profound and certainly one that they would not wish to experience, which could then motivate these young readers to join the battle against slavery and end this painful condition.

The \textit{Anti-Slavery Alphabet} punctuated this lasting concern with the pain of family separation with several entries which gave young readers a chance to witness the pain felt by each member of a slave family:

\begin{quote}
I is the Infant, from the arms
Of its fond mother torn,
And, at a public auction, sold
With horses, cows, and corn.

J is the Jail, upon whose floor
That wretched mother lay,
Until her cruel master came,
And carried her away.\textsuperscript{393}

P is the Parent, sorrowing,
And Weeping all alone----
The Child he loved to lean upon,
His only son, is gone!\textsuperscript{394}
\end{quote}

Every family experience northern middle-class children would take for granted was contrasted in the slavery experience. The juvenile abolitionists of Pawtucket, Rhode Island shared this disconnect in their book \textit{The Envoy} with a piece entitled “Appeal of a Slave Mother to Mothers At the North.” Appealing to mothers about common human sensibilities of loving

\textsuperscript{392} \textit{Christmas and Poems on Slavery for Children}, pages 6-7, “The Mother’s Prayer.”
\textsuperscript{393} Anonymous, \textit{Anti-Slavery Alphabet}, 8.
\textsuperscript{394} Anonymous, \textit{Anti-Slavery Alphabet}, 11.
and caring for their children, the author shared that she was deprived of these moments as a slave mother, having precious few chances to care for her child in times of good health or ill health. The author also found that her children were almost strangers to her, even though there remained a heartfelt connection between parent and child. The author then pleaded with readers to consider the slave auction and the terrible scenes of parents and children ripped from one another, “never to behold each other’s faces again.” This would make a northern woman’s heart melt with pity, the author argued, and missing out on every chance to see that precious child grow would crush white mothers just as it crushed the spirits of slave mothers. With this, then, the Envoy combined motherhood with pictures of slavery and the slave market to reach readers emotionally for the fight against slavery.

Abolitionists also taught that a slave family was at no time safe from separation, and any moment together could be their last. This hung over the heads of slaves during their workday, and abolitionists published several stories where slaves returned home from a brutal day’s work to find their family shattered forever, with this pain striking fathers and mothers alike. This separation, abolitionists wrote, could occur at any time in a slave’s life for any or no reason, and this created a sense of fear and hopelessness that hung over slaves every minute of every day in their forced servitude.

Abolitionists presented young readers with several stories providing heartrending examples of children forever ripped from the arms of their parents. These stories gave their young readers a clear way to sympathize with those in bondage as they lived through excruciating pain. One such story, “The Poor Innocents” offered no names, but portrayed the shattering of slave families with very young infants. The first family portrayed included a

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395 The Envoy, 24; complete story, pages 22-28.
mother nursing her three-month-old baby sold to a new slave trader who wanted nothing to do with the infant and leaving the baby with the owner from whom he bought the mother. The same story provided another example intended to shock readers of all ages, as a newly-purchased mother with a large ten-month-old boy could not keep up with her new slave trader on their fateful trek to the dealer’s steamboat. Frustrated, the trader ripped the child from the mother’s arms and handed him to a random bystander as a gift. Children and their parents could then reflect on the stark difference between their experiences and that of the slaves.

Abolitionists stressed not only the pain of forced family separation, but also wrote that slaveowners would spitefully sell away a slave’s children as retribution for perceived wrongs. The *Slave’s Friend* recounted a tale by a Dr. Torrey of an 1815 visit to Washington which led to his call to provide care for a slave woman. When Dr. Torrey arrived to care for the slave, he saw immediately that both of her arms were broken. Asking how this could happen, the slave responded that she leapt from the window when her owners refused to allow her to see her husband, and this led the masters to sell her children off to Carolina. In her distress, the mother made a painful decision which her owners compounded by selling her children away as a result, or even a form of punishment to exert their control. While this story did not delve into long-term effects, the mother was plainly going to experience years of regret for one impulsive decision with disastrous effects.

Some stories called for sympathy more directly. Another piece in the *Slave’s Friend*, bluntly titled “Taking Away a Baby,” contained a brief advertisement offering “For Sale A Valuable Negro Woman, With or Without a Child Six Months Old,” presenting the breakup or maintenance of this little slave family as nothing more than an optional feature for the buyer.

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396 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 2 (1836), 13-14.
397 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 12 (1836), 6-7.
The *Friend* asked readers if they remembered their own siblings at that age, and how sweetly they lay at their mother’s breast, then pressed those readers to imagine that sibling suddenly sold away for good, leaving them to do nothing but weep over their lost sibling and broken family. Obviously, young readers could imagine no such thing for their own family and this was to lead to the kind of sympathy for slaves which motivated abolitionists.

Employing his own newfound notoriety as a man caught spiriting slaves from Florida to the West Indies, Jonathan Walker also utilized advertisements of slaves for sale to emphasize the danger of separation that was always pending for slave families. Walker offered no explanation, believing that the ads would speak for themselves. For example, one such ad indicated that the traders were willing to sell a family together or separate, in whatever combination or lack thereof that the purchaser desired:

> “Will be sold at Public Auction, without reserve, Elliott, 35 years of age; Tom, 14 years of age, yellow; Claring, 17 years of age, with child born Aug. 17, 1837; Charlotte, 19 years of age; Mahaly, 13 years of age. Will be sold together, or separately, in lots to suit purchasers. F. H. Dolbeare & Co., Auct’rs.”

Abolitionists also used their literature to take children into the slave markets so children could experience both the transactions and the pain those transactions created and see as well that some sales which separated slave families were premeditated. The *Slave’s Friend* contained a story from the Charleston slave market of a family shattered in a slave auction sale, remarking that the father looked out with indignation into the crowd, knowing that he could not speak his mind in words, and a mother crying out “I can’t leff my children! I won’t leff my children!” The auctioneer continued on without acknowledging either parent, and the sale

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398 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 4 (1836), 3-4.
400 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 12 (1836), 5-6.
was completed without concern for the slave family. This gave middle-class children an experience of the market that they would never otherwise see, as the market to them would be a place or series of shops where they went to purchase goods, not people. The shocking difference and pain portrayed in the story would show young readers how vastly different the family experience of slaves really was, and hopefully, win their compassion for those kept in servitude.

Abolitionists brought the problems of slave families directly to children with an emphasis on stories and examples of children sold away from their parents, including this advertisement of a slave family for sale:

*From a Missouri Paper*

“For sale, CHEEP FOR CASH, a black woman, who is an excellent Servant, being a good cook; together with TWO CHILDREN, one a GIRL, between 8 and 9 years old, and the other a BOY, between 2 and 3.”

The advertisement above appeared to focus on keeping the slave family together, the earliest focus for abolitionists in this area was the sale of children and their separation from their families. Abolitionists taught children about the certainty that such sales routinely occurred, shared examples of families forcibly separated, and shared the sorrow this separation brought to slaves. Furthermore, this focus taught middle-class readers that slaveowners considered slave children as nothing more than a commodity to trade rather than a young adult to cherish and nourish into adulthood.

At times, abolitionists showed slaves seeking some form of hope after the heartbreaking loss of their families, searching even within the slave market itself. Such hope was not freedom, but the hope of finding an owner who would treat them relatively well. In a

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401 Slave’s Friend 1, No. 3 (1836), Inside Front Cover.
scene evoking some of the limited agency reflected in Walter Johnson’s *Soul by Soul*, the *Liberator* published an account of the sale of a sixteen-year-old slave, described by the author as slender and delicate, whose family had long since been sold into slavery with destinations he did not know. Already without hope of seeing his family members again, the sale of this young man began with the young slave eyeing the room of potential buyers, noting one owner he hoped would lose this auction, with the British author shouting that they did not do such things in his country. In the happiest of the possible outcomes, the friendliest of the slaveowners purchased this young slave, who would still be separated from his long-lost family, but in at least a potentially better place than the other slaveowner whom he dreaded.  

The *Slave’s Friend* spent 1836, its first year of publication, teaching children about the sale of slave children. One instance pressed this issue with a story that discussed the sale of children by using an example from nature, with an uncle and his niece observing a red-breasted robin. Eventually, Emily asked her uncle if it would be wicked for some boy to come along, climb the tree, and steal the robin’s eggs. Emily’s uncle remarked that it certainly was wicked. Emily followed up by asking if it were even more wicked for slave-traders to sell cabins full of children. Not one to miss the opportunity, her uncle quickly responded that it was, reminding young Emily of the words of Jesus, “ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Nature, opportunity, and biblical teaching combined here to teach young readers of the perils their young counterparts faced.

The *Friend* used another slave auction story to demonstrate both the forced separation of a family and the infinitely low value some slaveholders placed on children. The slaves for

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403 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 8 (1836), 14-16.
sale at this auction were Betsy, a 23-year-old woman with a three-year-old son named Caesar, a mulatto girl named Julia, aged thirteen, and a six-year-old boy named Augustus. Betsy, an excellent cook, immediately drew bids of $250, with a final sale price of $360. As the auctioneer tried to sweeten the deal by reminding bidders of Betsy’s young son, he was interrupted by one potential purchaser shouting “as for the child it is good for nothing….if I buy the mother, I will give away the child very quick,” leaving Betsy to sigh and weep, knowing that her family was to be broken apart. 404 Julia also brought a large sum at $326, Augustus was sold for $105, and the article made no mention of a final sale or other outcome for young Caesar, emphasizing through silence the market’s lack of concern for the slave child. 405

Jonathan Walker picked up on this theme with a short poem written from the point of view of a slave mother who had watched as her family was torn apart at a slave auction. This slave mother and wife called it a bitter day when slave traders forced her husband to leave in a way that he never would have on his own, but cried even more deeply for the loss of her children, whom she described as “prattling infants….sold in strangers’ hands.” Of course, this broke the poor enslaved woman’s heart, even to the point that she frankly asked God to end the lives of her children while she hoped that there would be no slavery in the next life, and maybe that death could finally bring the freedom that life never would, with the words “I pray, O God, that thou wouldst take them from the earth; I ask their death, who once from thee, more madly, asked their birth.” 406 Walker never gave this enslaved character a name or stated where he would have encountered her, but he promised that it was no uncommon sight, thus leaving his

404 Slave’s Friend 1, No. 5 (1836), 1-4.
405 Ibid, 3-4.
406 Walker, 7-8.
Northern readers with another picture of the relentless heartbreak slavery brought to enslaved families.

As middle-class readers encountered these stories secure in the safety of their homes and stable families, abolitionists challenged them with the ceaseless pain that slaves carried for the rest of their lives due to separation from their families. Abolitionists showed children that this pain lingered no matter the cause of this separation, whether it occurred due to a sale which broke apart a slave family or even an escape to freedom. For slaves, nothing ever erased this lingering pain.

The *Liberator* printed two stories depicting different aspects of the sorrow slaves felt upon separation from their families. In “Little Sado’s Story,” readers learned about an African boy rescued by the Pennsylvania Abolition Society and brought to a respectable home in that state. Even though Sado did not end up in the South living in slavery, his journey and forced separation from his family still left him weeping often, consoled only by the belief that his spirit would be united with them again someday.\(^{407}\) “The Unkind Mother” took a different approach, showing a mother in Africa selling her young girl away, never to return, despite her little girl’s pleas.\(^{408}\) Each of these stories showed readers how the pain of family separation ran deep no matter who was involved in the transaction bringing children into slavery.

At times, abolitionists portrayed slave families living lives of faith familiar to their readers but tinged with a sadness unknown to their young readers. Sophia Little offered an incident from 1839 in a piece for the Pawtucket Juvenile Emancipation Society’s collection, *The Envoy*, entitled “Lament of the Slave Bridegroom.” In this story, an unnamed Christian slave cries out to the wife he has lost to slavery, remembering nights of worship and nights

\(^{407}\) *Liberator*, July 30, 1831.
\(^{408}\) *Liberator*, April 12, 1834.
when he and Mariamne were simply able to be together, which he knew would never happen again in these days after his capture into slavery. This slave continually expressed his theological hope that he and Mariamne would inevitably see one another again, despite the best temporal efforts of those driven by money to separate them. At the same time, the slave was forced to concede that the reunion would not happen during his earthly lifetime, illustrating the lasting pain that even the most hopeful slaves experienced in this lifetime as slavery tore their families apart.\footnote{409}{\textit{The Envoy}, 85-91.}

Abolitionists taught children that even freedom could not erase the lasting pain of seeing one’s family destroyed by slavery, and that the lingering sadness led at times to a simple lasting remorse and other times to taking direct actions. The \textit{Liberator} illustrated this in 1832 with a story entitled “The Slave.” In this story, a Virginia man successfully assisted the escape of a female slave only to discover how deeply she missed the husband and children she had left behind. This newly free woman was so driven by her desire to be reunited with her family that she willingly returned to slavery in hopes of seeing them again. Instead, the slaveowner refused their reunion and sold the woman away to a plantation in North Carolina, never to be reunited.\footnote{410}{\textit{Liberator}, March 3, 1832.} This brought home for readers not only the pain of family separation but also the capricious nature of slavery towards slave families, where one act of disobedience or even an owner’s whim could break apart a slave family for a lifetime. This especially showed the nearly futile condition that dictated the life of slave families, where any effort to reunite promised no success but carried with it the potential of separation, while escaping to freedom guaranteed a permanent separation. In the face of this dilemma, readers could conclude that there was no winning solution for slaves and their families.
One such piece, “Bayler Cooley’s Family,” described a former Virginia slave who managed to earn enough money to purchase both his own freedom and some land on Long Island, and even secured a written promise from his former owners to sell his wife and five children to him should he produce $750 within three months of his release. Faced with an impossible situation but such a meaningful goal, Cooley resorted to begging immediately, as winter would preclude many farming efforts and he lacked cash on hand. The *Friend* could not say with months to go whether Cooley was able to collect the money but was able to provide a price breakdown for each member of the family. Most importantly, the *Friend* shared the father’s pain as he listed the children he knew that he could never buy, because his former owners asked for more than he could even comprehend raising. Even in the case of a freed man trying to free his family, slavery put this father in the impossible place of assigning value to each of his children. Instead of the secure, comfortable home middle-class readers would expect for themselves, readers learned that slave families had no such guarantee, and could only expect that some family members might be united again, but with no certainty even of that partial victory. Freedom still had an unaffordable price for slave families.

Even a relatively famous escape to freedom could not erase the pain a then-former slave felt knowing they were separated from their family. Ann Preston published the story of Henry Box Brown, who escaped from slavery by shipping himself to the North in a box as a response to his return home from work only to find his family, a wife and four children, had all been sold away while he worked. Brown worked several days for his master before escaping, all the while consumed with concerns for the family he felt he would never see again. Even when Brown reached freedom, the pain remained, with Preston writing that “his heart will

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411 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 11 (1836), 11-12.
always ache when he thinks of his wife and children.” Preston continued with brief notes about the conditions of slave life, especially that slaves were not taught how to read or write, making it extremely unlikely that Brown had even a possibility of hearing from his broken family ever again.\(^{412}\) For Brown, then, even freedom could never dull the emotional pain slavery inflicted.

The emotions experienced by slaves over the destruction of their families created different reactions from northern reformers. In a letter to people described as “Dear Little Friends,” Elizabeth Buffum Chace of Rhode Island described one of her sons whose heart went out to anyone he saw in distress, and never more than the time he watched a speaker talk of his experience fleeing slavery, saying that she saw his eyes glisten and entire countenance glow as her son heard the former slave describe purchasing freedom for both himself and his wife, but also sharing the heartbreak over the children whose freedom he could not purchase. Chace was especially moved by the former slave’s sentiment of returning to the South to reach slaveowners.\(^{413}\)

Jonathan Walker brought the fear of recapture or outright kidnapping felt by freed African-Americans right to the doorstep of northern children in a story titled “Whites and Indians Made Slaves,” which let his white readers know that the dangers faced by African-Americans could befall the white children just as easily, and that this had already happened. Walker related the tale of a seven-year old white boy stolen from his parents, “tattooed, painted, and tanned,” with every measure taken to make his appearance darker. Walker wrote that this boy was forced to grow up into maturity in slavery alongside African-American slaves. Finally, after twelve to fourteen years of separation, abolitionists managed to arrange a

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\(^{412}\) Preston, 22-26.

\(^{413}\) Letter to “Dear Little Friends,” Undated, Chace Family Papers (Box 1, Folder 6, Ms 89.12), John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, RI.
meeting between the boy and his Ohio parents. The parents even managed to spirit their son home, which infuriated the owner, a “pretended Christian” who screamed over the loss of his property and threatened everyone involved in the secret conspiracy with every penalty possible under civil law. Walker omitted any details as to how the abolitionists could have found the son, made the connection to his parents, or orchestrated the entire affair, but he certainly left readers with the frightening impression that no northern area was safe, and no northern child was safe, no matter their location, family, or skin color. 

Lest a norther reader forget their brotherhood with the enslaved, the *Anti-Slavery Alphabet* included this simple instruction:

B is a Brother with a skin  
Of somewhat darker hue.  
But in our Heavenly Father’s sight,  
He is as dear as you.

In another effort to introduce northern children to the unfamiliar experience of southern slaves, abolitionists explicitly taught children of the different roles in life filled by slaves and free people. Abolitionists made it abundantly clear that these different roles and treatment were due solely to race and no other factor, with slaveowners making their different expectations for white and black children clear from the earliest possible ages. In a piece that emphasized the chattel aspect of slavery, the *Slave’s Friend* discussed a letter from James Birney that claimed knowledge of slaves being sold by the pound rather than the price based on any sorts of ability, physical capabilities, personality, or any other defining characteristic, narrowing the view of slaves for some slaveowners as a transaction as impersonal as purchasing potatoes today, with

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414 Walker, 27-29.  
the weight standing as the only important trait at the point of sale, something no white child would ever expect to face.416

Most often, abolitionists focused on the early revelation of differences between white children and slave children from infancy onward. While it must have been clear to any reader that infants did not actually produce letters or compose poetry, such works were commonly used to explain the racial differences between white children and black children. At the same time, each of these works built upon the experiences their middle-class readers could take for granted and showed the terrible conditions of life for slave children, extending even to such familiar things to children as crying to their mother for help and expecting that she can arrive to help.

Some abolitionists traced these forced racial distinctions to a child’s earliest days. One such poetic letter, published first in the Lydia Maria Child’s Juvenile Miscellany, but most widely in the Liberator and later abolitionist publications, traced the development of racial distinctions in two children, one white and one black, born on the same day. The author’s argument was that these two children had very different experiences from their very first days outside the womb. The enslaved baby noted in particular that no one was there to answer his cries, while the white child knew that many people would run to answer its cries, except for those rare times when the slave mother was nearby. The slave baby also mentioned the differences in the outlooks of the different fathers, seeing that the white baby’s father planned his child’s future with anticipation and excitement, while the slave baby’s father merely groaned and said sullenly “Another slave is added now to this free land.” The slave baby continued to wonder why the white child had so many people to care for it and befriend it,

416 Slave’s Friend 1, No. 1 (1836), 4-5.
while the slave child had only his rarely-seen mother, and those times were often overshadowed by her great grief over living in slavery and sharing that future with her beloved child, and the fears of both parents that there would never be hope for anything better. The enslaved child wondered especially why this situation had to exist, since both he and the white child had the same heart and the same kind of soul inside them, expressing hopes that the white child would finally be one to grow up without hating one that God chose to make of “a different hue.”

Obviously, these thoughts were beyond anything an infant would typically scrawl on their own paper, but they served as an effective way for the abolitionist author to transport northern children into the experiences of these enslaved children who were too young to know the full extent of their slave condition but old enough to experience the suffering that went with life as a slave, and had a good hope of winning the sympathy of these children for the suffering infant slaves and their families.

Eliza Follen compared the lives of free and slave children in a short poem titled “Children in Slavery,” designed to reach parents and children by contrasting the carefree experience of free children to the constantly burdened life of slave children. This piece quickly compared several common aspects of those lives to make the slave experience more comprehensible and reprehensible to white readers, as Follen described how even the air seemed very fresh for children who could play all day long, and everything seemed full of innocence and love. In contrast, slave children prayed full of fear every day, with joys decaying and birds of prey circling over their land and homes, and while the free children enjoyed their carefree life, the slave children wept themselves to sleep at night, filled with deep woes, lacking gladness, and living a life devoid of hope.

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417 Liberator, March 12, 1831; Slave’s Friend 1, No. 11 (1836), 7-11; Garrison, Juvenile Poems, 30-32.
418 Follen, Hymns, Songs, and Fables for Young People, location 433 on Kindle Edition.
These infant authors shared striking observations about the troubles of slave parents. In the *Young Abolitionists*, June Elizabeth Jones shared a shorter poem simply titled “A Slave Baby’s Complaint.” In this poem, the slave baby shared similar concerns, such as asking why her mother had to leave her alone from dawn until night, saying that her mother’s absence filled her with hunger and fright. Perhaps even worse, no one was there to come to this little girl when she cried except “a woman that’s crabbed and old” who did nothing but punish and scold the infant for her cries. This infant, though, knew that white children experienced no such pain, as these bigger children lived a life in which people catered to their every whim and cry. Asking a question that likely already knew the answer, this slave baby asked why “they” drove her mother away, preventing her from having the same loving experiences white children enjoyed.419

Abolitionists described other aspects of this racial difference as well. In “Injustice,” the *Liberator* shared the story of a nine-year-old boy inPortland missing for days, ever since an encounter with a police officer after throwing a stone in the street. After the boy’s arrest, his parents found themselves unable to raise bond money to release their son from prison, where he remained at the time of writing. The unnamed author felt free to speculate that law enforcement would have consulted the boy’s parents had he been born white, and likely would never have incarcerated him at all, finishing with this thought “O, the crime of possessing a black skin.”420

At other times, abolitionists offered hope that people could move beyond the surface level distinction of skin color once people dealt with one another in ways that revealed the inner person. In the *Slave’s Friend*, an anonymous author composed a short piece describing a

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419 Jones, 18-19.
420 *Liberator*, October 17, 1835.
high school setting in Massachusetts. Pointing out that “one of the scholars is a black boy,” the Friend’s author wrote that many of his fellow students were shy around him, while others called him names. In this high school, that all changed when the white children found the black student’s pleasant personality, athletic ability, and scholastic skills. The African-American student made his greatest impression speaking at a school exhibition, proving himself the best speaker of them all. This caused the Friend to conclude that “the white boys did not despise him any more.”

Abolitionists did not spare children from fearsome pictures of the punishment slaves endured, graphically portraying both the methods of punishment slaveowners employed and the terror that this punishment filled slaves with. Some instances from the Anti-Slavery Alphabet demonstrate this blunt presentation:

L is the Lash, that brutally
He swung around its head,
Threatening that “if it cried again,
He’d whip it till ‘twas dead.”

W is the Whipping post,
To which the slave is bound,
While on his naked back, the lash
Makes many a bleeding wound.

In this area, abolitionists left very little to the imagination and spared few, if any, of the brutal details of slave punishments. These abolitionists offered details of slave punishment as another way to draw contrast between the discipline middle-class Northern children experienced at home with the life experienced by slaves. While Northern children were

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421 Slave’s Friend 3, No. 28 (1838), 6.
422 Anonymous, Anti-Slavery Alphabet, 9.
423 Anonymous, Anti-Slavery Alphabet, 15.
familiar with discipline from their parents, and likely had heard the proverb “Spare the rod, spoil the child” at many points in their young lives, they would find that the discipline they experienced was a small measure of normal life for the slaves, giving northern children another opportunity to ponder ideals such as the Golden Rule in its application to the life of slaves and the freedom they so needed.424

Abolitionists shared the brutal details of slave punishment in a *Liberator* piece entitled “Particular Account of the Murder of Five Negroes; Shewing How One Had Her Nose, Ears, and Breasts Cut Off, and Others Were Flogged To Death.”425 Sharing as publishers of the time often did, the *Liberator* borrowed this account from an unnamed English anti-slavery tract. Just as the title suggested, the piece told very blunt tales of slaves punished and beaten to death, though the tract did not always discuss the cause or supposed cause leading to that punishment. Using graphic detail, but no graphics, the tract portrayed two West Indian slaves placed flat on their bellies onto a wooden beam and given 120 lashes, dying from the punishment inflicted. The tract described a 14-year-old boy, thought to be too slow a worker, hung up by his shoulders and flogged to death while holding a weight on his head. The piece showed another slave killed as an iron bar “laid open his skull,” killing him. Perhaps most chilling was the tract’s conclusion, in which a female slave owner punished her female slave for some undisclosed reason, choosing to slowly dismember her slave for that transgression. The owner in this story began by ripping the slave’s teeth from her mouth, then cut off her nose, then her ears, and finally cutting off the slave’s breasts. Somehow, the slave survived these until the last one, and then she gave up her spirit. After sparing no detail, the tract informed readers that police thought to arrest the owner, but had no white witnesses to the crime, thus allowing the

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424 Proverbs 13:24
owner to avoid her own punishment, which created an environment where such abuse could continue and thrive.\textsuperscript{426} While white children might know discipline from their parents, these extreme forms of punishment would have been beyond the pale of their experience.

Abolitionists taught children of the dreadful treadmill punishment endured by West Indian slaves. In one tale from the \textit{Slave’s Friend}, the unnamed author described the treadmill as a machine going round and round that slaves needed to keep up with or see their legs dreadfully bruised. This piece cited an observer who witnessed a woman who could not keep up, with the observer seeing the skin peeled from her legs by the device, causing a great deal of blood loss and weakness for the slave. The slave’s overseer noticed the weakness as well and brought his whip to bear in order to motivate the exhausted and bleeding slave. Despite the slave’s cries, the beating continued until the treadmill finally stopped. At that time the slave dropped to the ground, too weak and weary to stir even a little.\textsuperscript{427}

In a similar story, the \textit{Friend} described an 18-year-old West Indian slave woman unable to keep up with the treadmill’s pace. This young slave woman cried out in pain, only to have her cries answered with the whip. This continued, with the slave woman becoming less and less able to keep up or even make the attempt, until she fell down, became caught in the device with an arm possibly broken. As she cried in pain, the whip answered her cries again, with the added threat from her master that he would bring her down for a real flogging if her cries did not stop.\textsuperscript{428} The story did not share the final disposition of this slave woman, but it laid bare the cruelty so often present in the life and work of slaves, and the special brutality slaves faced on sugar plantations, and dangers that children certainly did not face in their daily chores.

\textsuperscript{426} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{427} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 3, No. 28 (1838), 5-6.
\textsuperscript{428} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 3, No. 35 (1838), 15-16.
The *Slave’s Friend* vividly described the whip so often connected to slavery as one common to waggoneers, but quickly applied to slaves whenever a slave owner or driver desired. The author of this piece showed the whip as an extremely fast instrument, able to create a loud and frightening crack and able to gash the skin with every stroke. Arguing that beating slaves with the whip was by far the norm rather than the exception, the author used this to point out that “the poor slaves are, in general, treated more cruelly than cattle are treated.”429 The *Friend* took pains to point that, while cattle were occasionally beaten with a whip, cattle did not receive the same kind of flogging slaves received, and certainly never received anything like the “20, 40, 100, or 500 lashes at a time” that slaves could expect from their beating.430 Noting that animals were not treated this way, and that slaves were not only human but often fellow Christians, the *Friend* asked its readers what God must think of this, using both sympathy and belief as a way to move readers’ hearts to pity for the slaves.

Authors taught that anything a slaveowner or overseer could reach was applied to punishing slaves. In the *Young Abolitionists*, Jones offered multiple forms of slave punishment in one brief paragraph, including the lash, the paddle, a broom, or even pokers and tongs from the fireplace as weapons that owners and their wives would utilize against their slaves, arguing that slavery hardened anyone’s heart to the point that these were acceptable options to men and women alike. The mother in this story then shared the example of a young female slave in Missouri who was beaten so badly with a whip that her clothes stiffened from the blood that soaked through them. Becoming ill after the beaten, and most importantly, unable to work, this slave incurred even more wrath from her master when she found her slave exhausted and unresponsive on the floor. Gaining no answer from the slave, the master declared that she

429 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 14 (1837), 9-14.  
430 Ibid, 11.
would make the enslaved woman speak, heating a pair of tongs to a red-hot state, applying
them to the slave’s feet, then legs, then her body, and finally her throat, at which point the
slave cried out and breathed her last. The mother then explained to her angry son that this
was legal in the South, and that he certainly would not offer the resistance he so loudly
proclaimed, because this would put him on the wrong side of the law, illustrating the futile
situation so many slaves found themselves in, and producing a story which could potentially
boil the blood of any compassionate reader.

As a victim of corporal punishment for his own involvement in helping slaves run
away, Jonathan Walker focused on the beatings that runaway slaves received when they were
captured and returned to their owners. Walker taught his young readers that there was no limit
to the measures a slaveowner could take in reclaiming his lost property, noting that “When a
slave runs away from his master, he is considered an outlaw; that is, he may be killed in any
way, and there is no law to punish those who kill him.” Walker cited advertisements for the
return of fugitive slaves that offered the same price for the slave dead or alive, and claimed to
know many instances from his life in the South where runaway slaves were hunted, shot, and
“their flesh torn in pieces by savage bloodhounds, and they are left in the woods to die.”
Walker concluded here with a call upon the reader’s presumed Christian faith, pointing out that
a neighbor of his personally shot a slave through the leg, which left a wound that killed the
slave a few days later. Most important to Walker, the man attended church as though he had
done no wrong and continued to teach his Sabbath school class while owning, hurting, and

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431 Jones, 42-43.
432 Jones, 43-44.
killing slaves. Walker used an image of a slaveowner whipping his returned slave to cement this painful thought in his readers’ minds:

Figure 4.1 Graphic illustration of slave punishment
Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.

No matter how many times a middle-class northern child may have experienced physical discipline from their parents or heard the words “spare the rod, spoil the child,” no experience they could call upon would rival the everyday experiences of slave punishment. This provided a valuable way for abolitionists to draw upon something familiar to their young readers and show it taken to extremes that these prospective recruits might never have imagined, which gave abolitionists a golden opportunity to call upon sympathetic hearts in their fight against slavery.

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433 Walker, 11-12.
434 Walker, 13.
Abolitionists portrayed slavery to children as an institution that cloaked slaves in fear for every moment of that person’s life, whether that person lived in bondage or freedom. These abolitionists, especially writing for the *Slave’s Friend*, drew upon experiences wildly different from those familiar to the children and parents reading their materials to communicate this palpable sense of fear that slaves constantly lived with. To paint that picture, abolitionists wrote that this fear existed among African people who feared capture into slavery, encompassed every aspect of life as a slave, and entered every part of the decision some slaves made to run away. Abolitionists also expanded their scope to describe their fears for a nation where slavery continued unabated, including such problems as kidnappings, violence and even a rupturing of the United States as a nation.

Abolitionists taught that the fear slaves experienced predated their experiences in slavery, even taking root in the minds of future slaves back in Africa prior to their capture and sale into slavery. In one such English story, “The Negro Boy’s Narrative,” a boy named Asa-Asa described his experiences as the English reached his village, burning homes and taking away whoever survived the onslaught. Asa-Asa noted that this continued for about a month, with the English traders purchasing slaves with gunpowder, cloth, salt, guns, or whatever made the transaction possible. One fateful day, the traders came to his house. Catching wind ahead of time, Asa-Asa and his family managed to run to the woods, thus escaping the burning of their house, hiding for four days and nights until their luck ran out.435

Abolitionists described other means used to kidnap children in Africa as well. In one of those stories, “How Children Became Slaves,” a mother explained to her son how three children were stolen from their village in Africa by white men, as one white man drew the
children’s interest with trinkets they had not seen before, creating the opportunity for other white men to sneak behind the children and capture them, covering their mouths so that the frightened young slaves could not cry out. To bring that story closer to home, the mother told her son that the father of his friend Mary Ann was one of those boys, and this was his entrance into the suffering life of slavery. 436

Abolitionists showed children that seemingly harmless experiences like playing and helping their parents could turn into a life of slavery for African children. On that note, the Slave’s Friend related the tale of Zamor and Hinda, two children who spent their last day in Africa playing outside only to meet with disaster near sundown. As the two siblings talked about their fondness for their father and his stories and dreamed aloud about their futures, they found that their mother concerned about their father’s absence. Looking again towards the trees, Hinda and Zamor saw motion and ran toward it, thinking their parents were drawing near. Instead, kidnappers grabbed them and raced off for the coast. Describing the children as “affrighted,” the Friend noted that these children screamed their parents’ names and made vain efforts to escape, only to find themselves at the ocean for the first time in their lives, knowing not where they were going but full of knowledge and fear of their separation from their parents. In the case of Hilda and Zamor, the fear was to be short-lived, as Hilda contracted an illness while in the hold of the ship, and during his sister’s “burial” at sea, Zamor jumped into the ocean to die alongside his sister. This short story still provided a vivid portrayal of the fear that children kidnapped into slavery were likely to experience. 437

This fear lasted into the life slaves lived, manifesting itself in ordinary and extraordinary circumstances alike. In “The Cart-Whip,” an unnamed abolitionist writing for the

436 Slave’s Friend 1, No. 2 (1836), 5-9.
437 Slave’s Friend 3, No. 34 (1838), 1-12.
Slave’s Friend described how the slaves’ entire day was governed by both the sound and feel of the fearsome instrument, with the sound waking slaves up in the morning and reminding them through the day of their lot in life, and blows from the whip creating wounds that could terrify every slave.\textsuperscript{438}

Extraordinary circumstances created fear in slaves as well. The Slave’s Friend recounted the story of a slave owning woman in New Orleans whose house burned down in 1834 while she still had slaves chained up inside. Refusing to free them or even to give up her keys so that anyone could rescue them, this slaveowner left her slaves literally terrified for their lives, and then with terrible wounds once they were recovered from the blaze. Such a story could hardly fail to create fear amongst those slaves and any of their fellow slaves who were not in the house during the fire, but would certainly hear of this in the slave quarters.\textsuperscript{439}

Even running away from slavery carried with it a tremendous fear for slaves. Abolitionists described the bloodhound as an animal once used to hunt natives of the West Indies, but now transitioned into the merciless hunt for fugitive slaves, describing the hounds as animals whose hunting skills were strong enough “that they seldom fail to track the runaway to his hiding place.”\textsuperscript{440} Leaving fugitive slaves no place to hide, the Friend claimed that escaped slaves would give themselves up immediately rather than face the wrath of the hounds, even though the Friend pointed out that the slaveholders would never acquiesce to the same treatment for themselves.\textsuperscript{441} The Anti-Slavery Alphabet briefly described the hounds that fugitive slaves greatly feared by focusing on their ability to track the fugitives and return them to their fearful state:

\textsuperscript{438} Slave’s Friend 2, No. 14 (1837), 9-14.
\textsuperscript{439} Slave’s Friend 1, No. 12 (1836), 9-10.
\textsuperscript{440} Slave’s Friend 2, No. 15 (1837), 14.
\textsuperscript{441} Ibid, 15.
H is the Hound his master trained
And called to scent the track
Of the unhappy fugitive,
And bring him trembling back.\textsuperscript{442}

Some escaped slaves feared both slavery and their potential recapture that they would embrace any danger and refuse any escape to remain in that state of freedom. One such case, portrayed in the \textit{Slave’s Friend}, told the short story of a young boy who hid among tobacco hogsheads on a ship headed for New Orleans. This child never made it to Northern freedom, though, as his body was found suffocated among the hogsheads, apparently finding it better not to breathe than to be caught hiding aboard the ship and sent back to slavery.\textsuperscript{443}

Eliza Follen noted the fears of fugitives as well in her poem “The Runaway.” This poem told the story of an enslaved girl whose shackles slipped away one day, possibly from malnutrition, as Follen described this girl as starving, prompting the girl to take her chance at freedom. Exhausted and somewhat lost, the girl took refuge in the cellar of a house a mile away from her master, so afraid of being caught that she held her breath as much as possible. Once the homeowner found her in the morning, this unnamed fugitive slave pleaded for her life, describing the torturous life she lived, working while chained to a log and whipped all day long, and also describing her physical condition, claiming that she had only eaten one pear in three days, but would still rather starve to death than return to her painful life of slavery. Moved, this homeowner purchased the girl out of slavery “to save its life from anguish and from fear.”\textsuperscript{444}

In the \textit{Young Abolitionists}, Mrs. Selden offered an in-depth account of fugitive slaves on the run in her slavery talk with her children. Selden initially described the advantage

\textsuperscript{442} Anonymous, \textit{Anti-Slavery Alphabet}, page 7.
\textsuperscript{443} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 3, No. 29 (1838), 14-15.
\textsuperscript{444} Follen, \textit{Christmas, and Poems on Slavery for Children}, 8-11.
slaveowners already had, in that they would begin the hunt armed with weapons, bloodhounds, and the determination to kill any slave who refused recapture, and then depicted the situation as the hunt drew near to a potential fugitive. Mrs. Selden noted the emotional struggle of the slave, fearing both pursuit and capture, and then hearing the dreadful howling of the hounds, diving desperately into trees or any terrain feature that might mask their position, all to no avail as the relentless bloodhounds would lead the masters right to the fugitive slaves. Vividly portraying the scene, Selden said to her children that the slaves were fired upon, maybe even hit, but felt tremendous damage when “their flesh is torn and mangled by the savage dogs.”

Of course, the pain did not end there, as the captured fugitives faced further punishment upon their return, which would serve as a frightening example for them and their fellow slaves.

Abolitionists brought this fear created by slavery right to northern homes, showing that the troubles of slavery reached far beyond the plantations and the slave states, gripping abolitionists and their readers with fears of kidnappings, murders, and even disunion of the country, all of which helped to make slavery a direct threat to the way Northern people lived their lives, making slavery a much more tangible concern for these Northern readers. The *Slave’s Friend* made this a particular focus throughout its publication run.

Abolitionists told stories of kidnappings from Africa, from places in the United States, and kidnappings that involved both white and black children in their efforts to portray the serious dangers that slavery posed, not only ideologically, but to the everyday life of Northern families who would otherwise have no direct contact with the institution. In “Stolen Children,” the *Slave’s Friend* reported a tale of two girls kidnapped from Africa and brought to New York City by a Massachusetts ship captain, Caleb Miller. Someone noticed, and the captain was

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445 Jones, 47-49.
446 Jones, 49-50.
arrested. Arguing that the children were gifted to him, and that life would be better for them in America, Miller pleaded with the judge to no avail, and the judge ordered the girls to be removed from Miller’s custody. As a result, Miller was to be tried for piracy, and the girls raised by a New York woman, who noted that they lacked much knowledge of English, outside of a few phrases learned aboard the slave ship, which mostly entailed the ability to swear. Otherwise, the woman reported that the girls were “neat, learn fast, sing, and run about quite merrily.”447 This story suggested for its readers the fact that the kidnapping associated with slavery could be taking place in their own cities, and could potentially even be African-American children that the readers knew.

Abolitionists highlighted fears of white parents while making clear the difference scenarios faced by white and black parents. In 1836, the Slave’s Friend published devoted nearly an entire issue to a story entitled “Mary French and Susan Easton.” The two girls lived on the western shore of the Mississippi River, showing that the issues around slavery extended all the way to the frontier of the day. Mary was a white child, and loved to play with her friend Susan, the daughter of a free black family. One day, as they were out, a peddler lured the girls with shiny objects for sale. As the girls told him they had no money to purchase anything, the peddler lured them into his wagon with candy, where he stuffed their mouths with handkerchiefs, bound the girls, and took them away. On their frightful journey, the peddler cut their hair and painted Mary black to facilitate her sale into slavery. The peddler did indeed sell Mary first, separating the two children forever. At her new home, Mary protested to fellow slaves that she was white, and was told not to claim such, as that would just bring more beatings, until the night when a fellow slave noticed that Mary’s tears were washing the

447 Slave’s Friend 1, No. 3 (1836), 1-3.
blackface away. This slave helped Mary to wash at daybreak and took her to the master’s house at noon to share the story, which horrified the master, who knew that he could not keep a white girl as a slave. As the master began to work out the details of Mary’s return, Mary asked about her friend Susan, only to be told “Never mind her. Niggers are used to being slaves.”

Mary was reunited with her family when they encountered her on a search mission, but Susan never was, as her parents understood that “a free colored man traveling is liable to be kidnapped and sold or shot through the head for a runaway slave.” Thus, the *Friend* was able to tap into fears of both white and black families while showing the dramatic differences each would experience upon the kidnapping of their children, with the pain for white families being a temporary one and the pain for black families lasting for a lifetime. Such a story could strike fear into the hearts of any northern parent whose child was away from home playing, for that trip through the door could be the last contact with their child, and purely due to the institution of slavery and its insatiable demands for human capital.

The *Slave’s Friend* issued a general warning to northern parents about the danger of strangers, warning parents that “There are a great many persons at the north watching to kidnap little boys and girls, carry them to the south, and sell them as slaves.” This short piece, entitled “Kidnapping,” then gave a brief account of two unnamed Boston children walking with a strange female down Washington Street, having been lured to her by candy and sugar-plums, and promised a multitude of toys if they would return to her home. In this case, their father caught wind of what was happening and raced to his children and successfully freed them from the woman, who escaped while the father tended to his children. The story provided

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448 *Slave’s Friend* 1, No. 9 (1836), 11; italics from the original.
450 *Slave’s Friend* 2, No. 19 (1837), 5-6.
no further details, other than describing the father as a gentleman, leaving readers to ponder the
danger to their children for themselves, but making clear to every reader that this danger
existed solely due to slavery.\textsuperscript{451}

Abolitionists used the 1837 death of Elijah Lovejoy at the hands of pro-slavery people
in Alton, Illinois to warn readers about the violent lengths that slaveowners and their
sympathizers would go to defend slavery. The \textit{Slave’s Friend} devoted the entirety of an 1838
issue to Lovejoy’s martyrdom and funeral, making certain that children and their parents knew
explicitly the violence that slavery could bring not only to those in bondage, but to people in
free states opposing the institution.\textsuperscript{452} Without mention of any difference between life in parts
of the North distant from southern Illinois, the \textit{Friend} told the story of this persistent preacher,
who first stood up in print to protest the city-sanctioned burning of a colored man in St. Louis,
only to see his printing press demolished and himself forced across the river, where he set up
an abolitionist newspaper in the southern Illinois town of Alton. Residents of Alton did not
receive his abolitionist writings well, destroying another press, and then breaking up its
replacement as well. Through all of that, Lovejoy persisted, ordered another printer, and
prepared to press on. Lovejoy found trouble at the machine’s arrival, as an angry mob fueled
by guns and whiskey appeared at the store receiving the press, intending to destroy yet another
one. Lovejoy and several friends heard of this and occupied the store, where a tense standoff
was broken by the mob outside firing shots into the store and setting fire to the roof. Tending
to the burning roof, Lovejoy was shot, dying quickly. The mob promised Lovejoy’s friends
that they could go peacefully if they gave up the press. Lovejoy’s friends agreed, only to be
wounded by shots to the back in their departure. The angry mob disassembled this fifth press

\textsuperscript{451} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{452} \textit{Slave’s Friend} 3, No.32 (1838).
and threw its parts into the Mississippi River for good measure. Abolitionists argued that people needed to know of the violence that slaveowners were willing to undertake to defend their way of life and that, though not stated explicitly, this could be an approach that slavery sympathizers could employ anywhere against any opponent of slavery. To abolitionists, slavery was a clear and present danger to the safety of any American.

Abolitionists argued that slavery also threatened the continued existence of the United States. In a piece titled “Arms of the United States,” the *Slave’s Friend* offered the seal of the nation as an opportunity to discuss the danger slavery posed to the continued existence of the United States, using one of Aesop’s Fables to describe the powerful unity that the bundled arrows in that symbol represented, as one arrow could be easily broken but a bundle held tightly together could not. Moving then to the motto “E pluribus Unum,”—*Of many one*, the unnamed author argued that abolitionists loved this country, and loved the union of the states, but saw that slavery threatened, even in 1838, to undo that union and leave each state weakened and vulnerable. Making a patriotic appeal on behalf of the abolitionist cause, the author claimed that emancipation would prevent this weakening of the bonds, and that abolitionists were the true patriots who loved their country and sought the best for it, and that abolitionists were the only ones striving to keep the Union together at that time.

Rather than sheltering children from the pitfalls of slavery, abolitionists portrayed those troubles vividly to give Northern children and their parents a clear picture of the issues slavery presented, both to slaves and to Northerners seemingly unaffected by slavery. These abolitionist authors used literature to bring these issues right into children’s homes and gave them an opportunity to face the violence of slavery, the emotional effects of slavery as slaves

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453 *Slave’s Friend* 3, No. 32 (1838), 1-5.
454 *Slave’s Friend* 3, No. 32 (1838), 1-3.
faced both the lash and the forced separation of their families, the perils of running away, and
even the dangers that slavery posed for northern life. Through it all, abolitionists made clear
throughout the 1830s and 1840s that the life middle-class children might have taken for
granted had nothing in common with the dreadful time lived out by slave families.
CHAPTER 6: CHILDREN OF THE CAUSE

Train up a child in the way he should go,  
And when he is old he will not depart from it.  
_Proverbs 22:6_

I have just got a little book for you about “Little Eva” in Uncle Tom’s Cabin—
Mother will read about Eva to you in that book---
She was a very good & kind little girl.455

Abolitionist John Wattles to his beloved daughter Celestia
Recruiting abolitionists of any age was never an easy task. Joining the cause required people to take a controversial stand, and often to take a stand against their own interests or those of their employer. Despite their passionate efforts to humanize the faraway slaves, abolitionists found it difficult to convince middle-class Northerners to sympathize and stand with slaves in a faraway part of the country that most Northerners would never see in person. Slavery was a distant problem to most Northerners, and that gave abolitionists great difficulty.

Still, people did become abolitionists, and children joined the movement as well. These children took part in all the activities abolitionists promoted, such as joining juvenile anti-slavery societies, taking economic actions against slavery, reading abolitionist materials, and working to convince others of the pressing need to end slavery. Several children and parents left records of their conversions to abolitionism. These records reveal activities that children took part in as well as difficulties that children faced in becoming fully effective reformers.

As the battle over slavery dragged on and intensified in the 1850s, several prominent issues helped to make the debate even more contentious and raised the stakes of the conflict to stakes that matched abolitionist fears that slavery could rend the nation in two. The controversial Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 led to firestorms of contention across the North.

455 John Wattles to Celestia Wattles, August 1853, Wattles Family Papers, Container 1 (Series 1), Folder 17, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland Ohio.
With the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, more Northerners began to sympathize with the slaves’ plight. This sympathy joined with the increasingly stormy controversies to inflame northern passions even more as the decade unfolded, and the struggle over Kansas as well as the Dred Scott ruling riled northern anger against slavery and its potential spread to levels previously unseen.

As these problems demanded political solutions, efforts to recruit children grew sparser in the decade of the 1850s. The eastern women who had picked up the mantle abandoned by male abolitionists set it down themselves, and pair of publishers, one from Boston and one from Cincinnati, picked it up. Inspired by the success of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, these publishers produced a small handful of abolitionist books for children modeled after the bestseller. Eventually, though, the general decline of moral suasion as an abolitionist strategy in this decade eliminated the last efforts to recruit children to the cause, even to the point that the old children’s stalwart Henry C. Wright weighed in with a dramatic political pronouncement. Though the effort to recruit children seemed destined to experience a final collapse with Wright’s abandonment of moral suasion, a small handful of authors made what turned out to be final attempts to rally children to the cause.

Despite all the difficulties involved, children responded to the call and joined the abolitionist cause. While it is impossible to quantify exactly how many children adopted abolitionist principles, some abolitionists did write of their childhood conversion to abolitionism, and several other accounts related these conversions as well as the abolitionist activities that children carried out. These conversion stories and accounts of their activity each illustrated the practical difficulties that children faced, and which ultimately prevented children from adopting the role that the earliest abolitionists envisioned for them. Above all other
factors, each account of childhood conversion to abolitionism revealed that the single most important factor involved in a young person’s adoption of these principles was the involvement of a family member. While abolitionists sought to create a climate where children were the catalyst inspiring reform in their homes and their world, the children who answered the call were in nearly every case influenced heavily by a close family member already persuaded of the righteousness of the cause. Simultaneously, the world outside the home that abolitionists hoped to see children convert instead presented insurmountable barriers to abolitionist action which children, like their adult contemporaries, could not overcome.

Several abolitionists counted childhood experiences as the time they converted to abolitionist beliefs. Not every child convert went on to a reformer’s career, but there are clear childhood conversions recorded in various ways and places. Each of these abolitionists adopted their beliefs from either the influence of a key family member or from life experiences with slavery itself. Therefore, each one serves as an example of successful efforts by abolitionists to recruit children into the cause. In nearly every case, family influence played the major role in each young person’s adoption of abolitionist principles, and children raised by abolitionists are the ones whose conversion stories are recorded and accessible.

Children who became career abolitionists counted their parents as the key to their conversions, much the way abolitionists desired when they pressed parents with their theme verse for reaching children, Proverbs 22:6. In the safe haven of their middle-class homes, these young people learned the way their parents believed they should go and adopted this way of fighting for freedom for the slaves. While abolitionists set out to reach a wide range of children, they ended up essentially converting the children of the choir.
One such youthful abolitionist solely cited her father’s influence as the reason she became an abolitionist. Sallie Holley became an abolitionist and reformer due to the influence of her father, Myron Holley, who became involved with the movement in 1837. First adopting temperance principles and subsequently adding abolitionist convictions, Sallie Holley serves as a picture of parents influencing their children. While Holley adopted her principles well after childhood, around the age of twenty, she still served as an example that parents could reach their young, with one biographer stating plainly “Sallie always regarded him as the inspirer of her anti-slavery work.”

At least one career abolitionist noted the importance of the portrayal of slavery in juvenile literature to his conversion. Aaron Powell came to abolitionist beliefs due to his mother’s influence. Growing up in the rural Hudson Valley, a conservative place that had yet to see formal antislavery activity, Powell spent much time in the company of his mother reading anti-slavery pamphlets. Powell himself noted the first page of one such pamphlet as the key to his abolitionist conversion. This page was filled with an illustration of an enslaved woman clutching her baby in her arms while a slave-driver whipped her back full of lacerations with blood pouring from those wounds. This picture, Powell said, stuck in his memory over fifty years, and was the one which gave him “a vivid conception of the cruelty and injustice involved in the odious system of ‘property in man,’ ownership of men and women, created in the image of God.” After attending his first formal anti-slavery meetings in 1850 at Ghent, NY, the then eighteen-year old was greatly impressed with the main speakers, Stephen and Abby Foster, and engaged them in much conversation as they stayed at

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the Powell home, and accepted an invitation to join abolitionists by working as a travelling speaker. This created some great division within the Powell family, as Aaron’s father held no such abolitionist beliefs and considered these reformers a source of great trouble. A staunch Democrat, the elder Powell watched as his wife cultivated Aaron’s anti-slavery beliefs and agreed that all in the area had come to know of Aaron’s abolitionist beliefs, even without formal abolition meetings in the area during those formative years. Eventually, Powell’s father yielded, and Aaron served as an abolitionist speaker through the end of the movement.458

Reformers who did not grow up to abolitionist careers also credited family members with their exposure to abolitionist beliefs and subsequent conversions. Just as the future career reformers, these young abolitionists fervently adopted abolitionist beliefs and set out upon the way they were taught. As later pages will show, these reformers ended up departing from that path, not due to a crisis of faith or change of belief, but by circumstances of life that made continuing along that path impossible.

One such young abolitionist, George Chace, was born as the first son to a prominent Rhode Island reformer, Elizabeth Buffum Chace, who herself served as a reformer for several decades, first in the abolition movement and especially in the fight for woman’s suffrage. As the son of a prominent reformer, George Chace had unique opportunities to interact with a who’s who of prominent reformers as they passed through the Chace home, including William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Stephen and Abby Foster, Henry C. Wright, Frederick Douglass, Lucy Stone, and many, many more. As the son of a Quaker woman who herself adopted antislavery principles through her relationship with her father, talk about the evils of slavery was a common theme in the Chace household, and the family frequently spent time

458 Ibid, 3, 12, 15.
reading such publications as the *Liberator*, the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. George adopted abolitionist beliefs himself. His mother recounted that he loved to sit with her and read the *Slave’s Friend*, and that he donated all his spare change to the anti-slavery cause. Also, George attended meetings of his local Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society after school. In a very real sense, George Chace was the ideal example of a child adopting abolitionist beliefs and acting upon them, although his time to act on them was short, as a painful illness took his life at the age of 9.459

In some cases, personal experience with slavery combined with family experience to create young converts to abolitionism. Laura Bailey grew up as an abolitionist in Kentucky, observing slavery with her own eyes and working with her abolitionist father as he published his own abolitionist newspaper in the slave state. Laura understood suffering for the cause, as she once saw her father’s press destroyed by supporters of slavery and voluntarily agreed with her parents and eleven siblings to sacrifice for the cause of freeing slaves, even though this meant they would “be poorly clothed and often to have barely sufficient food.” Instead, Laura worked at setting type in her father’s press as he prepared his abolitionist paper, and even more personally, Laura spoke with her classmates about the perils of slavery during recess. Laura’s father noted that other children were drawn to her for her love and kindness, even if they originally did not desire to become abolitionists and even when their parents forbade them from speaking to her. Laura’s friendliness won people to her, and apparently won sympathy for the cause from many other children who expressed a desire to become abolitionists, although

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nothing formal or grand in numbers came from these statements. Unfortunately, Laura grew ill and passed away at twelve years old.460

Some abolitionists credited family members other than their mother and father as the key to their conversion. Asenath Gable was a young girl from Virginia whose parents moved to Ohio in her infancy, around 1840. Growing up as a Quaker, Asenath took an active interest early on in matters of religion and of reform and left the family faith to become a Methodist. In her new church, Asenath Gable devoured the Sabbath School library, reading tale after the of good children who died young, and she formed an emotional connection with them. At age 8, Gable began to read the Bible for herself, and soon after Asenath began to live with her uncle, William Dean, a man not only filled with abolitionist ideals but also a man who spent time actively helping fugitive slaves in their escape efforts. Dean introduced Asenath to Uncle Tom’s Cabin, and she found herself greatly affected by the story of Eliza and her escape attempt into Ohio and beyond. This combination of faith and reform built strong abolitionist beliefs in Asenath, though her career in this area of reform was cut short by her marriage at sixteen years old and subsequent move to a very rural area of northwest Iowa, at that time very sparsely inhabited by United States citizens. Though Asenath later enjoyed a lengthy career as a temperance activist, her work for abolition at this time was severely curtailed simply by the absence of people to persuade to the cause.461

At least one young abolitionist came to reform ideals completely independent of family influence as a result of her life experience living in a slave state. Jane Grey Swisshelm had a prolific career as an abolitionist reformer and author. Swisshelm noted her conversion to

461 Biographical Sketches of the Hampton and Gable Families, Asenath Gable Papers, Iowa State University Special Collections, Ames, IA.
Christianity as an event when she was three years old, and expressed her disappointment that her pastor during childhood expressed more interest in playing games like patty cake rather than discuss deep theological questions with her. Educated at a boarding school, after noting that there were no public-school opportunities for girls in Pennsylvania during her childhood, she became a teacher herself at the age of twelve, implementing a belief that corporal punishment had no place in the classroom. At 21 years old, Swisshelm married her husband, and their lives eventually took them to Kentucky, where Swisshelm would witness slavery firsthand. While Swisshelm apparently held antislavery beliefs at this time that she willingly shared with any Kentuckian who asked, she had not taken steps towards an active career as an abolitionist. Her experiences in Kentucky changed that. Swisshelm witnessed several events which had a profound impact on her thinking and developed within her a passion to fight slavery actively. This included several beatings of a slave girl arguably intended to encourage her chastity, and another Kentuckian offering that slaves were not only incapable of religious belief, but that he could “lick the religion out of any nigger.” Swisshelm was most deeply affected by experiences directly tied to local evangelical churches, such as the local Baptist pastor who owned and hired out 100 slaves, and a Methodist church member threatened with church discipline for “nailing her cook to the fence by the ear with a ten-penny nail,” which was witnessed by hundreds, though the church apparently chose not to pursue any disciplinary measures.462 While no one could expect most northern children to travel south and experience slavery firsthand, abolitionist authors did try to provide readers with a similar experience through literature, so Swisshelm herself serves as another archetype of a youthful conversion to abolition that could inspire others to make that same decision.

In their efforts to recruit children, abolitionists strove to involve children in a variety of activities, including fund-raising, gathering in Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies, reading abolitionist literature, and sharing their abolitionist beliefs with other people. Young people portrayed in these pages took part in each of the abolitionist activities offered to them. This included meetings, participation in anti-slavery fairs, reading, donating money, and in at least one case, writing an abolitionist book for sale across the North. In so doing, these young people lived out the abolitionist dream of young people striving for the end of slavery with all their might.

Two Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies in Salem, MA joined with several Female Anti-Slavery Societies in 1838 to organize a sale to raise funds for the abolitionist cause. Meeting notes from the most prominent Female Anti-Slavery Society of Salem indicate that “several members of the Juvenile Societies” were attending their meetings in a coordinated effort to organize the sale, which took place on December 25, 1838, raising a few cents less than $475, an amount which the total annual amounts collected by Salem’s most prominent FASS from 1835-1838 by $312. Despite this tremendous windfall, or possibly because of it, further efforts at collaboration either fell apart or simply never happened, and the FASS record books made no effort to distinguish how much of the money was raised by any distinct society’s efforts, preferring instead to take all credit for the fundraising under the name of the main organization. The FASS made distributions to abolitionist causes in the same way, under their own name, never distinguishing which amounts or donations came from juvenile or other societies. The FASS apparently continued this sale as an annual fair, and had a Children’s Table at the 1841
fair, but records do not indicate what sort of merchandise was at that table or which society would have staffed that table, or if the juvenile society even survived that long.  

During the 1830s, children gathered together in meetings of Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies, and sometimes in similar societies with different titles, mirroring in many ways their adult contemporaries. In addition to messages about slavery, songs, and crafts for fundraising purposes, these meetings involved much discussion of controversial issues, matters of organization, and sometimes, countering protesters and threats of violence. Samuel Levick was a young Quaker man in Philadelphia who became active in Juvenile Anti-Slavery work at the age of 20 years old. His biography contains several diary entries from the year 1839 showing his activity. In the meetings Levick attended, the juveniles discussed such provocative questions as “Is slave-holding under all circumstances sinful?” and “Is Intemperance a greater evil than Slavery?” Levick noted a couple times that these meetings were large and enthusiastic, though he did not include attendance numbers. As the year went on and meetings continued, some boys and men began to attend with the intention of disrupting the meetings but were apparently not fully successful. Levick simply continued his speech in the face of the disruptive efforts, later recording his belief that the “cause is progressing with rapid strides” and his conviction that the entire North would soon rise up against slavery. Still, those efforts were enough to cause the JASS’s board of directors to pass a motion requesting security officers from the Mayor’s office. Levick disapproved, in no small part due to his additional convictions as an advocate of peace. The meeting which led to this request for security is the

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last one in Levick’s diary concerning abolition work with youth. Levick did not record whether he left the movement because of his dismay with the request, or whether the society fell apart on its own or as part of the general withering away of juvenile societies by 1840, or whether he was asked to leave. Instead, the mentions cease without explanation, in the same manner seen in other societies whose time had come and gone.⁴⁶⁴

In both their meetings and their homes, children read abolitionist material. In each recorded case, the children who did so were heavily influenced by an abolitionist family member. George Chace in particular enjoyed the *Slave’s Friend*, and his home contained many other abolitionist works. Children and adults read at each one of their meetings, and the material was available through subscriptions, anti-slavery societies, and abolitionist bookstores. Asenath Gable read much abolitionist literature at her uncle’s home in Ohio, including *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which played the vital role in converting her to the abolitionist cause.⁴⁶⁵

Abolitionist youth raised money for the cause. Elizabeth Buffum Chace’s memories of her eldest son, George, included a note that he loved to donate money to the cause. Records of the Boston JASS indicate that they raised money for the cause weekly. These amounts never exceeded 2 dollars at a time, but that society did manage to consistently collect money for the cause. The *Liberator* contained several mentions of juvenile societies donating money as well, and this was considered a normal part of JASS activity from 1833 until the last mention of money from Pawtucket in 1841. The surviving fragments of the Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society

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⁴⁶⁵ Family Journal, Chace Family Papers, Ms 89.12, John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, RI, Biographical Sketches of the Hampton and Gable Families, Asenath Gable Papers, Iowa State University Special Collections, Ames, IA.
of Newark, New Jersey indicate this as one of their primary purposes, along with distributing literature such as the *Slave’s Friend*.\(^{466}\)

In 1840, the Juvenile Emancipation Society of Pawtucket, Rhode Island compiled an abolitionist book of their own. Titled *The Envoy: from Free Hearts to the Free*, this collection included poetry, directions for persuading each member of the family, an elegy for Benjamin Lundy, and stories designed to simulate the painful experiences of slave life. This included stories of slave auctions, slave families torn apart by their owners, contrasts between slave life and free, and the experience of a fugitive slave, emphasizing the evils of owning people as property and especially the need to help people escape that bondage. This publication received many notices in the *Liberator*, and while children did not produce the writings within, the *Envoy* was one of the strongest examples of the work a JASS could do for the abolitionist cause.\(^{467}\)

Though abolitionists dreamed that young people would be the catalyst that spurred people across the nation to fight against slavery, the world outside the home presented children with insurmountable obstacles which ultimately derailed their participation in abolitionist work. Children suffered from a lack of status in comparison to adults and correspondingly lacked real decision-making authority. While children were experiencing greater abilities to


\(^{467}\) *The Envoy*; *Liberator*, September 4, 1840; *Liberator*, Sept. 18, 1840; *Liberator*, October 16, 1840; *Liberator*, November 6, 1840; *Liberator*, November 20, 1840; *Liberator*, December 4, 1840; *Liberator*, January 1, 1841; *Liberator*, January 8, 1841.
participate in the economy, they generally lacked notable sums of money. Children suffered in some areas from diseases which attacked their population directly, and those who survived were not always in life situations which made reform work possible. There is some question as to how long Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies lasted, and this may indicate that children were a sort of transitory group enjoying temporary times of joining reform groups and then moving on with their lives. Finally, though the options presented to children involved children exerting their own sense of agency, each option really ended up dependent upon adult involvement and promotion to recruit members and remain stable and engaged in the fight against slavery.

The abolitionist alliance in Salem, MA collapsed after that spectacularly successful 1838 anti-slavery fair, and the juvenile societies found themselves little more than an active footnote in the internecine squabbles between female anti-slavery societies. As events unfolded and Salem abolitionists dealt with the windfall from that sale, the members of the primary FASS began to see themselves as the local clearinghouse for abolitionist funds, relying on their status as the earliest-founded society of those involved in the sale. This created deep divisions between abolitionist women in Salem and revealed the real status there of juvenile abolitionists as they dropped from any mentions in subsequent discussions, no longer even garnering commendations for attending meetings as they had before that fair. When the controversies began, the juveniles simply lacked sufficient status to hold their ground or even continue participating in any significant manner. Furthermore, none of the money raised through the fair was invested back into juvenile work, indicating a lack of intention by their adult contemporaries to support that work.468

468 Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society Correspondence, May 1839-December 1839, Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society Records, 1843-1865, Phillips Library, Salem, MA; Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society Bills and Receipts, Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society Records, 1843-1865, Phillips Library, Salem, MA; Salem Female Anti-Slavery
Middle-class children also ran into difficulties due to their general lack of money. While children were experiencing an increased ability to buy goods in the market, that amount was still limited, and children who had time to participate in abolitionist activities would not have been employed at the same time. Therefore, children could only donate so much to the abolitionist cause. Additionally, there have been no recorded mass boycotts by children of consumer goods like candy made from sugar cane or clothes made from cotton, and certainly nothing like the boycotts Americans carried out in the conflicts with Great Britain prior to the Revolution. Children may have carried their abolitionist beliefs into the marketplace, but without any records even of individuals making these buying decisions, their impact has to be considered extremely minimal.

Various life situations affected juveniles in ways that drastically hindered their ability to work as abolitionists. Asenath Gable married at sixteen and relocated to remote northwest Iowa with her new husband. The hardships faced by a young wife on the frontier combined with the lack of white people nearby to eliminate any work for this committed young abolitionist to perform. The work of home and farm consumed much of her energy, and the lack of fellow white settlers left very few people to attempt converting to slavery. Further, the life experience of those settlers on the Iowa frontier were far removed from slavery, and this distance would have created a major barrier to anyone receiving the emancipationist message.469

In other areas, childhood diseases limited the effectiveness of these youthful reformers. George Chace suffered from a lasting disease affecting many children in Providence, Rhode

469 Biographical Sketches of the Hampton and Gable Families, Asenath Gable Papers, Iowa State University Special Collections, Ames, IA.
Island which eventually took his life at age nine. Though George devoutly read the *Slave’s Friend*, gave money, met with reformers in his own home and attended juvenile meetings, he was unable to avoid the scourge which permanently removed his ability to fight for the slaves.  

The historical record leaves crucial questions and doubts about the lasting nature of Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies themselves. Very few records from any of these societies have survived at all, and the scraps which have survived contain minimal information. There are no records of membership rolls for these societies, and one must attempt to glean membership names and numbers from incomplete accounts of JASS meetings, and very few of these have survived. For example, Henry C. Wright organized a JASS in Newark, NJ in 1838, and the sole surviving record of that society is a small bit of their constitution, with the word “Preamble” and no preamble following, and two brief articles to that constitution, one naming the society and claiming it as an auxiliary to the American Anti-Slavery Society, and the other listing the society’s object as to “collect money for the antislavery cause, to read and circulate the Slave’s Friend, to do all that we can to raise to collard (spelling theirs) people respect.” Nothing else follows, and this JASS left no records of meetings, attendance, funds raised, or anything other than those words. The records of the New Jersey State Anti-Slavery Society from 1839-1845 include no mentions of juvenile work nor any intentions to encourage any such work.  

The lack of emphasis and records beyond 1839 indicates that the work of Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies was temporary. The utter lack of mentions of juvenile work in Philadelphia by Samuel Levick once resistance became real is telling in terms of the work continuing,

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470 Family Journal, Chace Family Papers, Ms 89.12, John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, RI.
471 Harmonic Society of Newark, 1830-1836, MG 886, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, NJ; New Jersey Anti-Slavery Society Record Book, 1839-1845, MG 134, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, NJ.
because it apparently was not worth mentioning anymore. Aside from annual notices of a fair put on by Pawtucket, Rhode Island juveniles, the *Liberator* stopped mentioning or promoting juvenile activity entirely in 1840, while the American Anti-Slavery Society ceased publication of the *Slave’s Friend* after the April 1839 issue, which had frequent mentions of JASS activity. Even Henry C. Wright’s journals indicate the temporary nature of JASS activity, noting at least four separate trips to Newark, NJ to organize a JASS there. While it is possible that Wright organized four separate juvenile societies in that city, such activity did not happen anywhere else in the North, and it seems much more likely that the Newark JASS rose and fell apart several times, with no time seeing an especially dramatic rise. Additionally, mentions of promoting or encouraging juvenile work or preparing publications for youth are absent from the surviving correspondence of abolitionists, even those involved at one point or another in promoting juvenile abolitionist work. Even the correspondence between authors and publishers seems to exist no longer.  

472 Levick; *Liberator, 1840-1860; Slave’s Friend* 4, no. 40 (1840); Henry Clarke Wright papers, 1821-1849 (MS AM 514-514), Houghton Library, Harvard University; Walter M. Merrill and Louis Ruchames, *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison, Volumes I-IV* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971-1981); Abby Foster Kelley Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA; Lydia Maria Child, *Letters From New York* (London: Richard Bentley, 1843); Lydia Maria Child, *Letters of Lydia Maria Child, With a Biographical Introduction by John G. Whittier and an Appendix by Wendell Phillips* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1883); Milton Melzer and Patricia Holland, *Lydia Maria Child, Selected Letters, 1817-1880* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982); Wattles Family Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH; Sarah Lanman Smyth: Diary, 1842-1857, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH; Mary Lukens Gilbert Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH; Sarah Josepha Hale letters, John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, RI; Wall Family Papers, 1833-1899, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA; Females of Philadelphia to William Lloyd Garrison, November 3, 1831, Ms.A.1.2.v.1 p. 44, Boston Public Library, Boston, MA; Lucretia Mott to Maria Weston Chapman, May 29,1839, Ms. A.9.2.11.114, Boston Public Library, Boston, MA; Anne Warren Weston to Deborah Weston, January 19, 1839, Ms. A.9.2.11.29, Boston Public Library, Boston, MA; Letter from Female Anti-Slavery Society of Philadelphia, November 18, 1836, Boston Public Library, Boston, MA; Catharine Maria Sedgwick Papers, 1789-1867, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA; John Parkman papers, 1839-1875, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA; Cummins Family Papers, Phillips Library Reading Room, Salem, MA; Sarah Hale Letters, Penn State University, State College, PA; Elizabeth Chandler Correspondence, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI; Letters and Portraits, Sarah Hale, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA; Abby Morton Diaz Collection, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA; Sarah Hale Correspondence, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI; *The Oberlin Evangelist*, February 4, 1852.
All of this combined to indicate that abolitionist youth worked in a very dependent state which required promotion, attention, and financial backing from adults, much different from the agency suggested by abolitionist materials. The juveniles required much attention and promotion from adults in order to succeed and were dependent upon adults even for the provision of meeting places, whether that meant meeting in family homes or public meeting halls. Either of those required adult approval and possibly financing as well. Given the dependent status of children overall, they were in no condition as a group to dramatically affect slavery, and when the eastern power brokers of the movement such as William Lloyd Garrison and the AASS moved on from promoting juvenile activity in 1839 and 1840, the remaining efforts were left to hope for random individual conversions without a mechanism such as the JASS to help disciple the new converts into abolition work. Even during this time of redefining American childhood, and the abolitionists providing an activist model of childhood in which the children would be a powerful catalyst for change in both their homes and their nations, the realities of childhood dependency prevented this model from taking root, leaving the battle to end slavery in the hands of those adults in whom earlier abolitionists expressed so little confidence.

The 1850s saw the slavery debate not only intensify but boil over in ferocity. In this decade, the issues went beyond any scope that could be solved through moral suasion efforts to reach individual neighbors or slaveholders, and the nation became embroiled in conflicts that necessitated political action. The controversial Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 created more resistance to slavery across the North than any previous episode or issue ever dreamed of, and while this offered an opportunity for abolitionists to convince their neighbors and friends of the need to fight slavecatchers, it also opened the door to violent resistance, and the law could
never be repealed by moral suasion efforts. The struggle over this law required political action from abolitionists if they wanted its repeal, and children lacked the right to vote, rendering them ineffective and unmentioned in this struggle.

The struggle over Kansas galvanized abolitionists across the North, but the increasing violence in the territory quickly outpaced anything that moral suasion solutions could handle. Indeed, efforts that could have been moral suasion missions were replaced with Beecher’s Bibles, multiple constitutions, battles between neighbors and cities, and a rushed influx of new residents to skew voting results. Kansas potentially offered an opportunity for abolitionists far away from the embattled territory to convince their neighbors, but it certainly offered very little that children could do.

Similarly, the Dred Scott decision raised alarm across the North as many wondered if such a thing as a free state truly existed. Even though the decision created major concerns among many Northerners, no one thought to reach out to children about influencing the Supreme Court, as there was very little that children could do about a completed Supreme Court ruling. While tensions between North and South intensified, this did not create a ripe opportunity for moral suasionists. Instead, it created a push for political action, once again far from anything abolitionists ever proposed as work for children.

Even with moral suasion efforts fading, and eastern women fading from the battle just as men had before, and with even Eliza Follen leaving this arena, two publishers sensed hope and adopted the mission of reaching children and training them to become abolitionists. These publishers were inspired by Harriett Beecher Stowe’s serialized national phenomenon, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. One of these publishers, John Jewett Publishers of Boston, seized upon the serial’s popularity to publish Stowe’s work as the now-famous novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. 
Jewett followed up on this by commissioning Stowe to produce a children’s version, *Pictures and Stories from Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

Ohio reformers knew of the serial’s popularity and organized the American Reform Tract and Book Society of Cincinnati, Ohio in December 1851. This group was designed to “reform all the evils of the world and bring in a form of Society in accordance with the gospel of Christ.” This new society proclaimed especially the need for a Christian group to speak against slavery, naming several Protestant institutions as defenders of the institution, including “the American Tract Society, of the Presbyterian Board of Publication, the Methodist Book Concern, and the American Sunday School Union” and proclaimed the impossibility of Christian fellowship with organizations that would countenance the continued existence of the sin of slavery.  

Stowe herself presented her famous characters as examples for children to identify with and examples that typified the general experience of slavery for white and black alike. Stowe distilled her famous work into a much shorter version that ran parallel to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, but with a real focus on poetry to introduce various sections and chapters. She presented Eliza and her family during their tumultuous journey to Canada to show young readers the emotional turmoil which led to that decision and the physical perils fugitive slaves faced in their flight to freedom. Stowe told Tom’s story to show the separation of a family and the pain it brought that slave family, even for a slave with no marks on his record who fell victim to the business failings of his master. Of course, Stowe showed in Tom’s story the physical brutality that slaves faced as well. Stowe provided Little Eva as a testimonial for young readers of the power that a young Christian girl could have against slavery. Though Eva could not prevail on her

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family during her life to free their own slaves, she provided a religious witness to her family’s slaves, who unanimously seemed to love her. Eva, then, showed young readers that a Christian girl could be a conscience against slavery even in the deep South.

In their search for authors, both Jewett and the American Reform Tract and Book Society employed a group of authors who helped to comprise what Nathaniel Hawthorne complained of as a “d----d mob of scribbling women.” The success of at least one of these women, Maria Cummins, bothered Hawthorne enough to lead him to complain that the “trash” of women’s writing such as her novel *The Lamplighter* threatened success of better works such as his own, and specified one abolitionist author in his complaint, asking “What is the mystery of these innumerable editions of the Lamplighter…?”474

These women writing after Stowe went one step farther than their inspiration, proposing children as the models of abolition in practice, harkening back to abolitionists’ original idea that children would be the catalysts propelling the cause forward. These authors focused especially on Christian girls as the conscience affecting the people around them, causing those people, North and South, to turn against slavery. In terms of their format, this small handful of authors followed Stowe’s lead, producing longer-length stories than previous writers that took readers along for a long view at their lead characters, especially their early faults as they grew and experienced life, and ultimately their conversions and subsequent adoption of abolitionist beliefs. The works between 1850 and 1857 built upon similar themes as the earlier abolitionist works but avoided the explosive issues facing that decade. While earlier abolitionist works mentioned fugitive slaves often, these works largely omitted this theme, even while debate raged around the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Even though earlier

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works covered controversial news stories such as the murder of Elijah Lovejoy in 1837, works from the 1850s avoided any such controversy, offering no commentary or moralizing regarding the struggles in Kansas, issues over state admissions, any discussion of the caning of Charles Sumner, nothing about Dred Scott and no mention of John Brown and Harpers Ferry. Works from the 1850s also tended to have a completely northern focus, taking white northern readers into the lives of white northern children to show examples of children like the readers making the decision to join the abolitionist cause.

Authors mimicked Stowe’s approach with Little Eva in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by creating main characters that their readers could identify with. These authors wrote about middle-class girls that their readers could see themselves in. These girls tended to be Christians at one point or another in the story, with some of the girls portrayed as Christians from the outset of the story and other girls experiencing a crisis conversion because of events in their lives and the witness of a caring adult. Most importantly, the girls served not only as a way for children to see themselves in the story, but the young Christian girls at the heart of the story served as the conscience of the story and the example for children and adults to follow in the fight against slavery.

Children in these stories did many of the things abolitionists asked children to do against slavery. They added abolition beliefs to their Christian faith, finding belief in Christ incompatible with an acceptance of slavery. The children of these stories worked to raise money for the cause. These children sought to reach the people around them to create more abolitionist converts. Some of the children even worked directly in the South against slavery, to varying degrees of effectiveness. These children served as examples of people that converted both to Christianity and to abolitionist beliefs. These writers also portrayed these
children as people whose belief and character influenced people around them towards those same beliefs. At the same time, authors did not make direct appeals to readers to imitate their fictional peers, though, relying instead on children to form a desire to follow the example of these written characters.

Abolitionists still put on anti-slavery fairs in this time. A child’s generosity in giving an item such an event served as an example of a child doing all that she could for the abolitionist cause in the *Edinburgh Doll*, written under the pseudonym “Aunt Mary.” The author told the story of little Mary and a wax doll she presented to an anti-slavery bazaar in Boston for the purpose of “awakening among the children, a zeal for the cause of suffering humanity; and of each who reads this simple story may it be said, as with truth it might be said of little Mary, “She hath done what she could.””

Little Mary was a girl from a well-to-do family able to afford nice things such as the titled doll, itself an import from Great Britain. The author told the story from the point of view of this doll which found itself curious why so many people were curious about “little Mary’s doll.” As the doll observed the fair and its attendees, it learned that Mary learned about slavery at home through discussions and Bible lessons and even had the opportunity to meet a fugitive slave before the slave’s recapture. Mary found herself touched with a great sympathy for the slaves and sought to do all she could to win their freedom. Mary offered her beloved doll for the bazaar, complete with an offer to make new clothes for her donated doll to help raise more funds to fight slavery. Sadly, Mary never had the chance to fulfill that offer, as she fell ill and died, which led the writer to present a simple proposition to readers: “Whate’er your hands

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may find to do, O, do it quickly now, I pray, For short may be the time for you.” Young Mary served as an example for young readers in both her life and death.  

John Jewett Publishers connected the financial rewards of a well-known abolitionist author with a story which used a young girl as a type that pictured the plight of the slaves, showing the difficulties that this young, orphaned, unwanted girl encountered in her challenging life. As they had done with Uncle Tom’s Cabin, the publisher prepared a children’s version of Maria Cummins’s bestselling novel, The Lamplighter in 1856. This excerpt from the first poem of the book gives a glimpse at the author’s comparison of Gerty and the slaves:

Ye who weep o’er little Gerty,  
Squalid, ragged, friendless, poor,  
Weep the more for slaves now mourning,  
Oft with tyrant’s lashes sore.  

This version, the Lamplighter Picture Book, told the heart-rending story of a girl, Gerty, who lived as an unwanted orphan girl in Tri-Mount City, living with the innkeeper who housed her parents at the time of their death five years prior. The innkeeper’s husband prevailed upon his wife to care for the girl, then headed out to sea, leaving Gerty to live with a woman who despised her, with the author offering this to describe Gerty’s life at the beginning of the book: “No one loved her, and she loved no one; no one treated her kindly, or cared whether she were so. She was eight years old, and all alone in the world.” Still, the author assured readers that God saw Gerty’s trial and brought someone into her life that cared for her. This person was her street’s lamplighter, and watching him do his work was Gerty’s only joy in life. For young

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476 Ibid, 6-10, 15; italics from original  
477 Maria Cummins, The Lamplighter Picture Book, or the Story of Uncle True and Little Gerty, Written for the Little Folks (Boston: John Jewett and Company, 1856), 4.  
478 Ibid, 5.  
479 Ibid, 4.  
480 Ibid, 5.
evangelical readers, the lamplighter would be the only one who reached into Gerty’s life to offer her hope and salvation.

True did manage to serve as a deliverer for Gerty despite some ill-fated attempts to help the lost young girl. After an ill-fated gift of a little kitten meant to show Gerty that someone did in fact love her, True took the young girl in as his own. True took her to church, and she met several people who proved to care for her, whether they showed that love through giving gifts, spending time with Gerty, donating clothes for the orphan girl, or praying with and for her. Eventually, Gerty converted to Christianity. Uncle True, though, passed away, and this was the ending of the Lamplighter Picture Book, which added not a plea for children to join the abolitionist cause, but rather a short sales pitch for interested readers to purchase the bestselling Lamplighter, also published by Jewett.481 For prospective abolitionists, however, the author interspersed abolitionist poetry in between new chapters or sections of text, giving readers the opportunity to connect Gerty’s story with the plight of slaves and the need of those slaves for their own deliverers.

Maria Goodell Frost responded to the call of an unnamed benevolent individual who offered $100 “for the best manuscript for a religious Anti-Slavery Sunday School book, showing that American chattel slave-holding is a sin against God, and a crime against man, and that it ought to be immediately repented of and abolished.” This offer matched the advances that Jewett offered earlier to Stowe and Cummins. Maria Goodell Frost titled the winning entry Gospel Fruits, or Bible Christianity Illustrated.482

482 Maria Goodell Frost, Gospel Fruits, or Bible Christianity Illustrated; A Premium Essay (Cincinnati, OH: American Reform Tract and Book Society, 1856), unnumbered page entitled “Premium Offered.”; Williams, 26.
Frost of wrote of a girl who had always considered herself to be a Christian until she realized that the existence of slavery had prevented her from holding a true faith. Frost opened by explaining to readers that “the Gospel spirit is perfectly antagonistic to Slavery,” and that, while the characters themselves were fictional, similar scenes occurred in Frost’s presence, and were modified for the work with the goal of a clear and practical presentation of abolitionist truth to children.\footnote{Frost, ix-x.}

The book began at the City Academy of an unnamed city, with a Christian girl named Kate sharing a bag of anti-slavery materials from England with her classmates. This opened up a discussion about slavery and especially the institution’s violation of the Golden Rule. During the controversy amongst the children, a new student was introduced: Jane Brown, an African-American girl whose family just arrived in town. Kate was the only child to reach out to Jane, offering her a seat and offering to be her friend. Over the course of the story, Kate continued to do things for and with Jane, but found her faith coming to an unexpected crisis.\footnote{Ibid, 12-19, 20-27, 29-38, 40-42, 61-62.}

The story then took readers through various aspects of antebellum life, victories and defeats alike. Revival came to this unnamed town, and Jane’s father John became both an early convert and a nightly preacher. Eventually, as revival fires roared through the city, a great number of people converted, and the town’s African-American population began a church where John served as a deacon. The revival caused Kate ultimately to convert as well, once she finally reconciled the existence of slavery with the faith she desired, and the Browns played a key role in witnessing to her as well as Kate’s eventual conversion. All of the advances from the revival came to a crashing end with the disappearance of John Brown and the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Citizens of this city learned that John had been kidnapped and sent by his
new owner to the Deep South, and the eventual passage of the Fugitive Slave Act created great fears in the town and church. Ultimately, the African-American population of the city scattered, and the young church fell apart. 485

Abolitionist authors showed that faithful Christian girls affected not only their peers in the North but would affect slaveholders exposed to their character and beliefs as well. All these girls needed was an opportunity and many slaveholders would repent as inevitably as Christian converts would become abolitionists. Authors presented this as a certainty their readers could rely on.

In one case, a southern Christian girl came to realize the evils of slavery and attempted to ease its burdens. Kate Barclay presented a southern girl named Minnie May who had a surprising personal encounter with the painful realities of slavery. May was a Christian girl described as “the flower of Savannah.” 486 May had a nurse named Aunt Ruth, a slave owned by her family. One day, Aunt Ruth went missing. May was troubled and searched high and low throughout the family home to find May, but she could not. “Though where “aunt Ruth” was they knew perfectly well,” nobody would tell May what happened to Ruth, until her suspicions put things together, and May realized that there was to be a slave market that day. 487 May ran to her mother, learned the truth, and then scurried off to her room to pray that Aunt Ruth might be saved from the slave market. Resolving to take further action, May grabbed her Bible and raced for the slave market to see Ruth before it was too late. Finding the nurse, May grabbed Ruth’s hand, gave the slave her Bible, and asked Ruth to look upwards when times grew difficult. 488 May pleaded also with Ruth’s new master to be gentle and kind, though Barclay provided a

486 Kate Barclay, Minnie May; With Other Rhymes and Stories (Boston: John Jewett & Company, 1856), 3.
487 Ibid, 3.
488 Ibid, 4.
narration explaining that the new master had a heart of stone, and was already filled with angry plans to ensure that Ruth knew the power of her new master.\(^\text{489}\) Ending there, this short story still showed Northerners that even children growing up in slavery naturally opposed parts of it, though a critical reader would notice that even May tried only to lessen the pains of the situation rather than argue freedom for Ruth, the slave.

In another, a very direct northern girl served as an abolitionist missionary to her southern relatives. In *Gertrude Lee*, Gertrude was the only child of pious parents who work as abolitionists and received a request on her 12\(^\text{th}\) birthday from her South Carolina grandmother to spend a year with them before they pass on. Gertrude and her family agreed and traveled to South Carolina. At every turn during her stay in the slave state, Gertrude found herself opposed to each aspect of slavery that she encountered. On her first morning at her grandparents’ home, a slave came to wake and dress Gertrude, only to be stunned, finding that Gertrude was already awake and dressed. Gertrude told the slave that she did not want to be waited on, revealing that she finds such a thing slothful, sinful, and lazy. Soon, Gertrude learns that she is the only one refusing that service, leading her to see those who did as lazy and sluggish.\(^\text{490}\) In response to her new situation, Gertrude offered from I Thessalonians that “if a man shall not work, neither shall he eat,” which brought her into plain disagreement with the slaveowning family, who attempted to teach Gertrude that “owning slaves does not overrule God’s commandment to work.”\(^\text{491}\)

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\(^\text{489}\) Ibid, 5.
\(^\text{491}\) Ibid, 33, 36.
Gertrude developed a pity for the slaves and provided reading lessons to a slave girl. After a discussion with her grandfather, she won his approval to continue the lessons.\textsuperscript{492} This quiet work around slaves ran into difficulties after a family trip to Charleston, where Gertrude saw a slave auction on a street corner and was horrified to see that she knew one of the girls up for sale as a neighbor from her home in Connecticut. This girl was sold, and Gertrude successfully pressed her grandfather to make arrangements to buy the girl. This he did, with the condition that the sale would take place in three months. Gertrude acquiesced, but the experience and Gertrude’s influence left her grandfather with a growing belief that his slaveholding was sinful.\textsuperscript{493}

Shortly afterward, Mr. Howard, the grandfather, delivered upon his promise and brought Kate to his home. The joy upon Kate’s reunion with Gertrude fills the Howard family with more guilt about their own involvement in slavery, with Mr. Howard ultimately admitting to several economic and moral problems of slavery. Most importantly, Mr. Howard “was convinced in his own mind, that his duty as a man and as a Christian, was not only to free the blacks on his own plantation, but to use his influence for the abolition of the slave system, irrespective of his individual claims.”\textsuperscript{494} He makes this decision public at dinner with his family, Gertrude, Kate, and their pastor, who had come to buy Kate’s freedom, confessing to his family his involvement in the sin of slavery and his new determination to free his slaves.\textsuperscript{495} Mr. Howard feared that there would be difficulties if he just released his slaves out into the world, so he transformed his plantation into a school to train them for freedom, with the

\textsuperscript{492} Ibid, 42, 56-59.
\textsuperscript{493} Ibid, 80-87.
\textsuperscript{494} Ibid, 101, 108.
\textsuperscript{495} Ibid, 115, 120.
intention of selling it eventually to finance the Northern migration of his then-former slaves.\textsuperscript{496} Gertrude Lee stood out as a remnant still calling for an effective moral suasion, demonstrating that one earnest child could confront slavery when given the opportunity, and would even be able to win freedom for scores of slaves. While many were abandoning moral suasion, this faithful remnant held fast to their belief in the strategy. More than anything, authors such as this one held up children as the ones capable of persuading slaveholders to repent of their slaveowning, and especially focused on the power of Christian girls to do so.

In contrast to that faithful remnant still seeking to persuade children to join the abolitionist cause, most efforts to do so fell away during the 1850s. There were fewer publishers involved in this work, and the few publications that did exist rarely invoked calls to action for the readers. Instead, readers were to make that connection on their own through their identification with the main characters of the few books published, or, by and large, to come to that conclusion on their own if they ever did so, with abolitionists largely abandoning the concept of reaching children.

While the early 1830s found a plethora of juvenile stories published by the \textit{Liberator}, and the second half of that decade featured \textit{The Slave’s Friend}, the 1850s saw very few works for children produced, and those produced only by John Jewett Publishing in Boston and the American Reform Book and Tract Society in Cincinnati, Ohio. Of these, only the latter continued publishing through the decade and even into the Civil War. Jewett himself fell victim to bankruptcy during the Panic of 1857. The \textit{Liberator} abandoned mentions of juvenile activity almost entirely, publishing no more juvenile stories or poems by this point, or even after 1834. The \textit{Liberator} also featured no more notices of Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies, or

\textsuperscript{496} Ibid, 120-123.
their activities and functions, suggesting that this part of the movement truly had died out with the 1844 demise of Pawtucket’s Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society. Additionally, the *Liberator* of the 1850s made no more mention of Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society monetary contributions to the abolitionist cause, also suggesting that this part of the movement had died as well. The cash books of the venerable abolitionist paper also offered nothing to suggest any more monetary involvement from juveniles.\(^\text{497}\) The only offerings at all from the *Liberator* were two advertisements for juvenile books published multiple times in 1853, one for the *Juvenile Instructor* and another advertising books from John Jewett Publishing.\(^\text{498}\)

As the 1850s raged on, even that early stalwart of mobilizing children, Henry C. Wright, abandoned moral suasion as an approach, instead taking up an aggressive tone even to simple matters, using one particular opportunity to call for drastic political action on behalf of a young girl and the slaves. In this instance from 1857, which demonstrated a child exercising her beliefs through a moral suasion approach and the former child organizer advocating a staunch political one, an eight-year-old girl, Lillie Chace, engaged in a letter-writing campaign with a national children’s magazine of the day, *Merry’s Museum*. This episode also showed the volatility of any discussion around slavery by this late point, as a simple question to a magazine suddenly turned into something much more dramatic.

Lillie Chace wrote to *Merry’s Museum* in response to a series of questions posed by the magazine in an October 1856 issue, with one of those questions stating that slavery contained some sort of positive good. The *Museum* published the opening part of that letter, with its

\(^{497}\) Cash book of the *Liberator*, volume 3, April 30-1853-February 23, 1861, Boston Public Library, Boston, MA.  
compliments to the paper, and chose not to publish the child’s challenging question: “I never knew that Slavery had any bright side and should like to know the reason of the battle now raging among your subscribers. I am only eight years old.” After the publication of her very abbreviated letter, Chace took up her pen again to challenge the Museum, asking why they “did not publish the whole of her letter” and adding that her “Mother says that a magazine which is helping to educate the children of this country should speak out against so great an evil as slavery.” Cutting to the likely heart of the national paper’s resistance to the subject, Chace stated directly that the paper needed to “try to save your Southern subscribers from being slaveholders and your Northern ones from being slaves.” Knowing that a discussion about slavery had the real potential to overshadow all other issues, the Museum responded that readers must allow the publisher to make decisions about which stories and issues would be covered in the magazine, arguing that “There are some questions, which, if once admitted into our discussions, would exclude all others.”

Unsatisfied with the Museum’s response, Chace’s brother intervened, sending the magazine a letter chastising the Museum for failing to address the great concern of the day, arguing as did his sister and mother, that “any magazine intended for the instruction of youth should speak about the great questions of the day,” even offering an equal hearing to both sides of these issues. This letter was not printed, and apparently received no response from the Museum.

499 Album, Chace Family Papers, Box 5, Folder 1, John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, RI.
500 Ibid.
501 Ibid.
503 Ibid.
With that, Henry C. Wright entered the fray, writing a letter to William Lloyd Garrison about the matter. Wright called the magazine “the Handmaid of slavery,” and then criticized the Museum’s desire to avoid trouble with Southern readers by avoiding negative talk about slavery while at the same time having no trouble telling Northern children that slavery had a bright side after all. Wright commended the heart of Lillie Chace and her desire for discussion of slavery to save Southerners from living as slaveholders, offering that all could love and honor Chace and her brother who “thus consecrate their young hearts to sympathy with the slaves.” Conversely, Wright lumped Merry and his Museum in with Northern clergy, editors, and politicians when “it throws its influence on the side of the kidnappers” and offered that it would be best for Merry to head South to “be sustained by man-stealers.”

Not one to miss an opportunity for bluster, Wright got to the heart of his new message that the Union and slavery could not co-exist, and one would have to give way for the other to survive. Asking whether the Union was for man or man for the Union, Wright concluded that the Union was for man, and questioned why it could be acceptable to enslave man in order to save the Union, a completely backwards concept to him. Wright argued that the “Union stands in a sea of innocent blood,” and proclaimed that the allowance of slavery into the territories and states of the Union was the last foul crime for slavery. Wright then thundered that the people of the North needed to take one of two powerful political steps: either compel every state of the North to accept all people as citizens “without regard to complexion,” or to take more drastic action, declaring the Union to be more morally corrupt than a band of pirates and secede in order to form “a Northern Republic, on the principle of NO UNION WITH

505 Ibid.
506 Ibid.
SLAVEHOLDERS.” Wright concluded with a call for the Massachusetts Legislature to pass laws about equal citizenship in light of the Dred Scott decision.\(^{507}\)

With that, the former organizer of Juvenile Anti-Slavery Societies, children’s author and speaker, and advocate for children in the battle against slavery signaled the dramatic shift in the abolitionist movement. In the turbulent era of the 1850s with controversy after controversy inflaming the nation, even this former staunch proponent for the moral suasion approach seized upon the efforts of two children to engage in moral suasion to call for two measures that were fundamentally political.

Still, even with Wright’s departure and the departure of almost every abolitionist from this area of recruiting and the bankruptcy of John Jewett, a small handful of authors made their final attempts to rally children to the cause. These last works offered familiar themes with varying degrees of focus, one especially focused on that relationship between Christianity and abolition, and the other offering stories of different aspects of African-American life.

The American Reform Tract and Book Society offered the only explicit Biblical teaching for children about slavery in the 1850s with *The Child’s Book on Slavery, or, Slavery Made Plain* in 1857. This book was essentially a quick-hitting fact book with one and two page segments briefly presenting various abolitionist themes, describing the number of slaves at the time of writing as greater than the number of Americans overall during the Revolution, or Jewish slaves in Egypt leading to the Exodus. The author of this work noted the importance for children to care about slavery, asking “why a negro should be a slave any more than a white person?” The authors described by-now familiar themes such as the pain of family separation upon slaves, the illogical situation in which slaves were considered property and not allowed to

\(^{507}\) Ibid, capital letters from original.
own property, and argued that it was impossible for any Southerner to be considered a “good slaveholder,” because any involvement in owning slaves meant that one denied slaves of all of their rights as a person, such as owning property, and kept people in bondage who should never have been owned in the first place.\textsuperscript{508}

More than anything, though, the Society intended this book to be a sourcebook of Biblical teachings about slavery. In this effort, the Society did provide a very thorough summary of abolitionist arguments from the Bible against slavery through both the Old and New Testaments, with the writer finally asking “Children, do not your burning, slavery-loathing hearts give these questions the answers of truth and justice?”\textsuperscript{509}

The Society taught that the Old Testament was clearly not a pro-slavery book. To this end, they directly challenged many tenets of slavery and continued debates that had already raged for a couple of decades between the different sections of the nation. The Society argued that the Old Testament forbade men to steal other men and forbid both the purchase and sale of slaves. They also argued that slaves and masters in the Old Testament were to be considered as equal partners in a labor transaction, that the slaves were never considered personal property as were American slaves, but rather enjoyed rights such as owning property, free time, and the right to be educated and learn new skills and trades just as owners could. The Society contended that the Old Testament never argued for the return of runaway slaves and that no one was born into a state of slavery, and thus any system perpetuated by birthright slavery was inherently sinful even on that aspect alone.\textsuperscript{510}


\textsuperscript{509} Ibid, 123.

\textsuperscript{510} Ibid, 93-114; Exodus 21:16; Leviticus 19:34; Exodus 23:9; I Samuel 9:8; Deuteronomy 23:15-16; Leviticus 25:10, 42, 48-50.
The New Testament, argued the Society, did not establish slavery but rather presented it as an evil managing to survive in the world. Instead, the New Testament served as a new promise between God and man, reminding people that everyone was from one blood and should therefore be considered equal. They also taught readers that God was no respecter of persons, reminding young people that God considered all people as equals. In this vein, the authors proclaimed that the New Testament taught Christians to love others as they love themselves, and that slavery could never be in obedience to this godly command. The Society taught that the New Testament reminded slaves with unbelieving masters that their duty was to reach them with the Gospel, but also reminded readers that this was not a defense of slavery, but a recognition of its existence. The Society used the New Testament to directly challenge the labor arrangement of slavery with teachings that the laborer deserved rewards for his work. Finally, in response to long-held position of the defenders of slavery, the Society offered the idea that Onesimus may not have been a runaway slave, or even a slave at all, in counter to the southern idea that the letter to Philemon was a tacit defense of slavery due to Paul’s refusal to attack the institution.511

A group of authors completed these efforts with *The Child’s Anti-Slavery Book* in 1859. This collection of stories contained familiar themes, with a comparison of life between free children and slave children, a story of a slave child who eventually gains his freedom, a story of fugitive slaves in their flight to freedom, and the story of an old woman living out her last days in freedom. The book notably lacked any real call for action from children, asking them only to hate the sin of slavery and vow never to own slaves.512

511 Ibid, 116-133; Acts 17:36 (typo in original as 18:26); 1 Corinthians 7:21; 1 Timothy 5:18, 6:1-2; Titus 2:9; Ephesians 6:5-7, 9; Colossians 4:1; Luke 7:10; James 5; Matthew 22:39; Luke 6:31; Philemon.
The comparison between free life and slave life for children, “A Few Words About American Slave Children,” drew directly on the expected experiences of Northern middle-class children to show what the slaves lacked. Specifically, the book mentioned that free children grew up free and happy with kind parents who loved them and protected them from violence with the help of protective laws. Also, these children had patient teachers, access to the Bible, and a chance at a career of their choosing. In contrast, slave children grew up in the same nation, sometimes on the same land as free children, but without schooling or any instruction in reading or writing. These children, the author wrote, faced no future at all but slavery and experienced the same cruel punishments that they could expect for the rest of their lives. Calling once more upon the expected Christian background of the readers, the author asked children to remember one great and simple truth about slavery: “that a slave is a human being, held and used as property by another human being, and that it is always A SIN AGAINST GOD to thus hold and use a human being as property!”513

Julia Colman used a teacher as a force for freedom in Little Lewis: The Story of a Slave Boy. In this story, the title character was first found practicing his alphabet until caught by his owner’s oldest son, who took his reading primer and offers a veiled threat to see Lewis shipped off to a sugar plantation, which had quite possibly been the fate of the rest of Lewis’s scattered slave family. Eventually, Lewis’s mother appeared, claiming that her new master allowed her a trip to see her children, and she attempted to run off with Lewis. The attempt failed, and his mother explained to Lewis what it really means to be a slave while giving him notes about a contact who would teach him to read in preparation for his own escape to freedom. While waiting, Lewis snuck into Sunday School meetings, and this earned him several severe

beatings at the hands of his master, who served as a minister. When the master was called to a new place of service, Lewis was sold to a new master, who allowed him a teacher. Their time together convinced the teacher of the evils of slavery, and Lewis convinced her to help him win his freedom. Miss Ford took harsh punishment to allow Lewis’s escape, and the boy made his way to Cincinnati and eventually to Boston, where the author claimed Lewis still lived as a married Christian man with three sons. 514

Matilda Thompson contributed two stories to this work. The first, “Mark and Hasty, or, Slave-Life in Missouri,” told the story of two St. Louis slaves and their family. Hasty, the slave wife, was out of sorts trying to help her owner’s wife prepare for a trip, and her sadness stemmed from the sale of her husband down to a new owner in the deep South. Her husband, Mark, was sold as a punishment for caring for their sick child and remarking defiantly to his owner that he had the same right to care for his son as the owner did for his own. To prove his own point, the owner sold Mark away instead. The painful situation became the first time that Mrs. Jennings, the owner’s wife, really considered the pains involved with slavery, and she tried desperately to head off this revenge sale. Using a story familiar to abolitionist readers, Thompson took the readers to Mark’s day of departure at the slave markets of St. Louis, which were always used by abolitionists as a particularly painful point of family separation to the point of suicide by a slave who refused to be separated from their family. With a grief beyond tears, Hasty eventually passed out from the sorrow of the moment, and fell ill, which taught her daughter Fanny how painful life in slavery was always going to be. As Hasty’s life slipped away, Mrs. Jennings promised to buy Fanny. She kept that promise, and convinced her

husband to close their St. Louis business and move to Chicago, where Mrs. Jennings became an anti-slavery activist.\(^{515}\)

Thompson also told the story of an aging former slave in “Aunt Judy’s Story: A Story From Real Life.” In this story, Aunt Judy was living her final days in Indiana, again and poor, receiving benevolent help from a Christian, Mrs. Ford, and her family. Mrs. Ford used their charity work to tell her own daughter of Judy’s story, which began with a kind master in Roanoke and encounters with George Washington and other Revolutionary leaders. Eventually, Judy’s master died and she was freed along with her family. They moved to Kentucky, where Judy married a slave from a nearby plantation. Judy’s husband desired the chance to stay with his wife, ran away from his master, and was caught living in Judy’s barn when another slave sold him out. In the process, Judy ended up in slavery while her husband escaped to Indiana, and this took Judy away from her children. Eventually, this master died and Judy was rescued from further slavery, and lived out her days in Indiana.\(^{516}\)

This last effort ended with an anonymously written piece titled “Me Neber Gib It Up,” where a former West Indian slave described the troubles he had learning to read, up to the point when his missionary teacher asked if he should give it up. At that point, the slave offered the response from the titled and quoted John 3:16, claiming that all the work was worth it just to read that one simple verse. The author made one final claim that summed up all the abolitionists’ work:

Let us hope the time is not far distant in which the colored people of our own happy land will also be free, all able to read the Bible, all possess that soul freedom with which Christ makes his disciples free. God has many dear children among the slaves,

\(^{516}\) Ibid, 109-112, 130-144, 152.
many of whom feel that slavery is worse than
death. May he in his wisdom provide for their
early deliverance from the terrible yoke
which is about their necks.\footnote{517}

With that, the effort to reach children for the abolitionist cause came to a quiet end, to be overshadowed by the secession crisis and the onset of the Civil War. The effort which began with such fervor with prominent supporters in the \textit{Liberator} and the American Anti-Slavery Society and included such firebrands as Henry C. Wright wrapped up with one final publication which sought to win sympathy for slaves while providing relatively happy endings and asking readers simply to hate slavery and refuse to own slaves in the future while hoping that slavery would soon end. This part of the abolitionist movement, which began with clear pronouncements and met with some solid successes along the way, from this point on quietly faded away in the shadows of the increasing heat of the national debate over slavery and the massive war yet to come.

\footnote{517} Ibid, 157-158.
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it.
Proverbs 22:6

On March 24, 2018, students and supporters all across the United States marched to protest gun violence in response to a school shooting a month earlier at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The main organizer’s website billed the event as one “created by, inspired by, and led by students across the country who will no longer risk their lives waiting for someone else to take action.” These intrepid students did what abolitionists dreamed children could do and became a catalyst that sparked discussion and reaction across the nation. Young people became a force for change.

Abolitionists needed help. In response to their pressing need for fellow workers, abolitionists proposed a drastically different view of childhood and child agency than Americans had seen before. This new model of child activism promised to provide badly needed workers in the present and a young generation that would grow up to carry the movement on into the future. Abolitionists believed this new model would make discussions about slavery and conversions to the abolitionist cause something that happened across the North, potentially at any time and in any place, inside homes, at schools, in markets, and even on walks to and from home.

They set out their reasoning for reaching out to children, focusing especially on the innocence of children and describing children as people born with a natural hatred of slavery. Accordingly, abolitionists sought to reach children for their cause before the world around them could teach growing children to embrace slavery for one reason or another.

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Abolitionists gave these children practical ideas for combating slavery to show young people the way they should go. Abolitionists organized juvenile anti-slavery societies for children to gather together, learn more about slavery, raise money for the cause and be encouraged by the presence of other abolition-minded children, and children gathered. Henry C. Wright traveled across the northeast organizing societies and speaking in their meetings. The *Slave’s Friend* and *Liberator* encouraged such gatherings and publicized their works. Abolitionists also taught children some things about using their own growing influence in the market to battle slavery, especially in the selection of candy and other treats. They taught children ways of raising money for the cause, whether it was participating in an anti-slavery fair or simply donating money at a JASS meeting, and children responded to these calls for action.

Abolitionists used their opportunities to train young people to sympathize with the distant slaves by demonstrating that the slaves were human just as were the readers. Abolitionists both appealed to and utilized the Christian faith of their readers to show them that God refused to see color as a distinction when looking upon human beings, instead looking at all human beings as equal beings deserving of love and mercy. Abolitionists showed children the treatment of slaves and applied the Golden Rule to ask children if this is how they would want to be treated. Assuming the obvious “no” answer, abolitionists seized upon those moments to call children to action against slavery.

Abolitionists also used the middle-class background of their readers as a means of creating sympathy with slaves, showing their readers that slaves had no guarantees of anything that those readers would take for granted. This included their opportunities for schooling and extended to things like discipline, which northern children experienced, but not to the extremes
that slaves lived through, and even to things easy to take for granted, like a child’s father returning home from work instead of being sold away, never to be seen again. While middle-class children could reasonably assume that their family would remain intact, slave children had no such guarantees, and their world could be shattered in an unseen instant.

Through it all, children responded to the abolitionist call. Most of the children that responded had family members already committed to the cause, which created abolitionist homes where the message could be fortified amongst family members but did not necessarily contribute towards spreading that message. Beyond the doorway of the abolitionist family, the world presented obstacles that typically proved impossible to overcome, and the army of abolitionist children serving as catalysts for abolitionist activity across the north never could fully materialize.

In response to research such as this, it is worthwhile to ask whether such a model has been seen since these antebellum abolitionists? This certainly remains an area of research heretofore untapped and worthy of a look from somebody.

Children have been involved in various ways reminiscent of these reformers in these later days. The children have rarely been the instigators and catalysts that abolitionists dreamed of and have more often been employed as workers or symbols for various causes. We see children employed as fundraisers for various causes, such as school fundraisers. Children have gathered money for causes such as UNICEF, and children (and their parents) have become an American institution with the sale of Girl Scout cookies each year. Commercials for Shriner’s Hospitals feature adorable children benefitting greatly from those services, and children have proven to be a highly effective means of fundraising, even though children normally possess little wealth of their own.
Children are utilized as cute actors for various causes, acting out scripts provided for them by adults at times scheduled by adults. Many churches put on Christmas programs featuring children, which offers the church a chance to present its message through the performance of earnest young children and opens the door to a wider audience as family members come to see their nephews, grandchildren, or otherwise beloved child. Videos from talent shows starring children go viral quickly as viewers fawn over the mixture of cute and powerful performances. This tends not to be an expression of child agency, as these things are set and driven by adults, and so not exactly the abolitionist dream lived out, but are opportunities that children experience as they grow.

At the time of this writing, it appears that the abolitionists adopted a unique approach and a unique model that America probably wasn't quite ready for, then or since. As many other historians have noted, the abolitionist cause was ultimately not successful in freeing the slaves, and it may have been that the United States by and large really was not ready for this message from people of any age. Regardless, the abolitionists took action on their beliefs, and they reached out energetically to children, who responded in untold numbers to this new opportunity that abolitionists offered.
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