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Religious Coming of Age among Students
at Antebellum Georgia's Evangelical Colleges

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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By Pearl J. Young

Growing up within an evangelical Christian household meant familiarity with its theology and adherence to its expectations and practices. Yet, according to the same theology, children of converts could not be considered Christians (or members of the church) unless they underwent their own conversion experience. Then, what *did* it mean to be a Christian? In antebellum Georgia, many students at evangelical colleges were faced with this dilemma. Those who desired this identity for themselves had to define its meaning and implication for their future life. They had to determine how this identity would govern their daily life. Ultimately, it changed their perspective and motivation for their adult life, and the purpose of their life became focused on the hope of a future life in Heaven.

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Preface

This thesis presents the religious experiences of a unique contingent of antebellum Southerners. Students at Georgia's evangelical colleges composed a small fraction of the many people who lived within and created the culture that defined the South. The question stands why study this particular group of people.

There are three separate motivations for this study. First, this study is an outgrowth of an earlier project that considered a student at Wesleyan Female College and another at Columbia Female College in South Carolina. As I became familiar with stories of these two young women, I became curious about the other students of their circles. How unique were their experiences?

Second, I have an innate curiosity to become familiar with any institution or organization that I am a part of. This project provided the perfect opportunity to delve into the depths of early Emory history. I read and continue to discover written histories of the institution itself, but this project enabled me to study Emory from the perspective of her students.

Third, this study reflects, in large part, my own background and position in life. I was born into an evangelical family and grew up in an environment surrounded by church people and church teachings. The question I faced as a young collegian was not as much *what* I believed in, but *why* I believed what I did and *what* that meant in terms of the part of my life ahead of me. Through this project, I was able to explore this dilemma through the very similar experiences of college students who preceded me. A member of an independent, primitive, evangelical congregation, I am different in many ways from the students of this study. Yet, I cannot help but wonder how much their struggles and decisions have solidified the establishment of my own religious identity.

Introduction

The decades following the American Revolution are often regarded as an era of great religious evangelism. In the South during the so-called Second Great Awakening, hundreds upon hundreds were converted in mass outdoor revivals, and many of these converts soon developed a distinct culture and society of their own. Another generation, a “second” generation, grew up in this separated world and learned the ways and ideas of evangelical Christianity as children. Their religious pathway from childhood into adulthood involved more than a mere maturation and passive continuance in the faith of their predecessors. As these young people approached adulthood, they were faced with the question whether to take on an evangelical identity or to rebel against it, and they also needed to determine for themselves what this identity signified. This study is about the members of this generation who chose the identity of their parents and who shaped and adapted it in the process of making it their own.

A cultural understanding of adolescence did not become widespread in America until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly with the publication of sociologist G. Stanley Hall’s work *Adolescence* in 1904.¹ In the North during the nineteenth century, a period of transition between childhood and adulthood became associated with the schooling and apprenticeships made necessary by the Industrial Revolution. However, these institutions were absent in the rural South, and there were no recognized substitutes.

¹ Joseph F. Kett, "Adolescence and Youth in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2, no. 2 (1971): 283. Joseph M. Hawes, "The Strange History of Female Adolescence in the United States," *Journal of Psychohistory* 13 (Summer 1985): 52. John Demos and Virginia Demos, "Adolescence in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 31, no. 4 (1969): 632.

Nevertheless, for any person, determining an identity and its practical expression was a complex process spread over a period of time and encompassing many aspects of life. Of nineteenth-century America, one historian argues, “Coming of age was a struggle of conflicting aspirations and expressions.”² In the midst of such a culture, the emphasis evangelicals placed on youth becomes important. Historian Joseph F. Kett argues that the Calvinist teachings and heritage of the Second Great Awakening lent weight to the otherwise nebulous transition between childhood and adulthood. Because of a theological emphasis on personal conversion experiences and the need for young itinerant preachers, nineteenth-century evangelicals were deeply concerned with the conversion of the young. They themselves interpreted conversion as a religious coming of age, and as a second generation of evangelicals grew up, religious leaders began to focus their work on converting their own children.³

Because of these teachings and the attention many religious leaders paid to the rising generation, considering religious coming of age becomes an important way to study adolescence and the more general experience of coming of age in the antebellum South. Southerners’ embracing of conversion as a rite of passage meant that they were conscious of it, discussed it, and worked to cultivate it, giving us better insight into their philosophies and motives. In considering the questions and dilemmas raised in this process, we can establish a framework through which we can better understand the evangelical Southern culture with its details and principles.

² Steven M. Stowe, "Growing up Female in the Planter Class," *Helicon Nine* 17/18 (1987): 196; Anya Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 237.

³ Kett, "Adolescence and Youth in Nineteenth-Century America," 289-91, 97. Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 81.

Part of the attention paid towards the next generation was directed towards the founding of evangelical colleges. Religious leaders desired to educate their children themselves rather than sending them to secular institutions, and, beginning in the mid-1830's, they began to open colleges of their own to award liberal arts degrees. Students at these colleges ranged in age from twelve to twenty-five years and attended college for varying amounts of time, some for as little as a semester and others for as long as four years. Attendees typically came to college for one of two reasons: (1) they were sent there by evangelical parents or relatives who hoped the experience would both enhance the students' intellect and strengthen their spiritual grounding⁴ or (2) the students themselves had experienced some religious calling and sought education as a pathway to ministry.⁵ Of all the students considered in this study, reference is made to one Catholic student⁶ and one Choctaw Indian student.⁷ Almost all other students had been raised in or had significant exposure to an evangelical environment and were familiar with its religious doctrine and expectations before they entered college. These students typically attended the institution corresponding with their own denominational background.

⁴ Dolly Burge to her daughter Lou, January 3, [1860?], Burge family papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University (MARBL); Iverson L. Graves to his son Henry, Graves family papers, MARBL; Sallie Love Banks, *Memories* (Pasadena, CA: House of Printing, 1969), 29.

⁵ For example, Young John Allen was adopted at a young age by his religious indifferent aunt and uncle. One friend later wrote, "His foster parents were not members of the church. They were strictly moral and in every way worthy people but gave him no religious instruction." In 1853, he was dramatically converted at a revival and felt a deep calling to preach. Subsequently, he paid his own way through college, a place he felt would prepare him to fulfill this calling. Young John Allen to Mary Houston, October 20, 1854, Young John Allen papers, MARBL; Adrian Arthur Bennett, "Allen, Young John William," in *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 351-52; Warren Candler, *Young J Allen: "The Man Who Seeded China"* (Nashville, Tenn: Cokesbury Press, 1931), 24-25. See also, George Gilman Smith, Autobiography, George Gilman Smith papers, MARBL, 37.

⁶ Robert Archelaus Hardaway Recollections, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collection Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (SHC), 11.

⁷ Robert W. Lovett to his parents, January 31, 1842, Robert Watkins Lovett papers, MARBL. Robert's observation may be of interest: "There is a full blood Indian sent here to school by a society in Mobile, who I have heard intend to keep him here until he graduates. He belongs the Choctaws. He was converted some months passed and got off, and thought that he would try and get educated and go back to preach to 'his people'."

These evangelical colleges became home to large numbers of young people from evangelical families. While in college, students had some degree of independence to make their own decisions about dress, finances, manners, religion, and character while still depending on their families for money, advice, and reputation. This provided the ideal environment for them to begin to question their heritage and beliefs.⁸ The academics of the college play less of a role in this study; much of the coming of age process took place on the student's own initiative in contexts outside the classroom and away from direct faculty oversight.⁹

To better understand the nuances of the coming of age experiences of students, this study is primarily based on unpublished student accounts from the antebellum era – letters to and from students, diaries, journals, notebooks, scrapbooks, memoirs, and other memorabilia. Many papers from the antebellum era were destroyed during the Civil War or by fires which ran rampant throughout the late nineteenth-century. Some of the diaries, letters, and books have survived by sheer chance.¹⁰ Others were preserved because their subjects were either famous or connected to Emory University in some fashion.¹¹ Thus, the sampling of students in this study is a mixture of exceptional and

⁸ Elizabeth Hopkins Walsh, "Wesleyan Female College and Christian Education for Women in the Antebellum South" (University of Georgia, 1992), 2-3.

⁹ In a few cases, I also included experiences that immediately preceded or followed a student's time at college if these experiences were critical to his coming of age.

¹⁰ For instance, during the Civil War a far-seeing minister transported Oglethorpe's "libraries and apparatus to the mountains beyond danger" and begged General Sherman to spare the college's buildings. What papers did survive the war were destroyed when school officials decided to burn old books and other items in order to free up space in the library; the diary of Benjamin Hunter was only spared because a student wanted some memorabilia. H. Erschel V. Johnson and Sam. H. Talmage to Reverend Henry Cleveland, December 1864, Confederate Miscellany, MARBL; "Antebellum diary returned to Oglethorpe," *The Stormy Petrel*, Vol. LXXXIII, Issue 1, August 31, 2007.

¹¹ For example, Young John Allen and his wife Mary Houston became missionaries to China, Atticus Haygood later became president of Emory, and Loula Kendall (Rogers) became an authoress; then, the step-brother of Margaret "Lou" Burge, good friend of Henry Graves, became a member of Emory's Board of Trustees while Ella Anderson married James Osgood Andrew Clark, later awarded an honorary degree at Emory.

ordinary students. Although their collective experiences cannot represent the totality of student life at Georgia's antebellum colleges, understanding how these students came of age sheds light on the types of questions young people faced in this era. All of these student manuscripts are supplemented by letters and other documents from parents and school officials, college catalogues, contemporary newspaper articles, published biographies, and published histories of the individual colleges.

This study opens in the mid-1830's when Georgia's four main evangelical colleges were founded, and it closes in 1861 with the outbreak of the Civil War. Following the tradition established by Donald Tewksbury and carried on by Anne Lide, Mark Swails, and others, this study considers Emory College, Mercer University, Oglethorpe University, and Wesleyan Female College as the evangelical colleges of Georgia. In 1835, the Presbyterians were the first evangelical Georgians to found their own college, Oglethorpe University, in Milledgeville. Both Emory College (1836) in Oxford and Wesleyan Female College (1836) in Macon were established by the Methodist Church. And, 1837 saw the opening of Mercer University in Penfield by the Baptists. According to Tewksbury, these evangelical colleges together with the University of Georgia (1785) and LaGrange Female College (Methodist, 1847)¹² were Georgia's only antebellum colleges and universities.¹³ Throughout this twenty-five year period, students were concerned about the same ideas and acted in very similar ways;

¹² LaGrange Female College was excluded from this study because it did not officially become affiliated with the Methodist Church until 1856. See Walter Y. Murphy, *LaGrange College – Georgia's Oldest Independent School, Founded 1831* (New York: The Newcomen Society of the United States, 1985).

¹³ Tewksbury defined a permanent college or university as an institution that awarded a degree in liberal arts, was open at the beginning of the Civil War, and was in operation in 1932, the year his study was published. Donald George Tewksbury, "The Founding of American Colleges and Universities before the Civil War, with Particular Reference to the Religious Influences Bearing Upon the College Movement" (Teachers College, Columbia University, 1932), 5-7.

however, their life and behavior did change as they themselves matured.¹⁴ Therefore, rather than offer a chronological argument, this study traces the trajectory of a young person's coming of age experience within the college context.

Much scholarship has been devoted to collegiate education in the antebellum South, but neither evangelical students' experiences nor the combination of male and female students have been studied in much detail. Studies such as Ralph Reed's *Fortresses of Faith: Design and Experience at Southern Evangelical Colleges, 1830-1900* and Donald Tewksbury's *The Founding of American Colleges and Universities before the Civil War* have examined the formation and institution of colleges in antebellum America.¹⁵ Other works such as those by Mark Swails and Elizabeth Walsh have considered the various activities and curricula of Georgia colleges in terms of Southern culture.¹⁶ A number of studies have focused on the experiences and lives of the college students themselves, but these have largely emphasized the secular students and their culture to the exclusion of the large contingent of evangelical students in the South.¹⁷ As one historian notes, "The public colleges of the South were remarkably secular institutions," and denominational colleges were established in response as places

¹⁴ The same phenomenon has been observed in the state schools of the South. See, for example, Michael Sugrue, "'We Desired Our Future Rulers to Be Educated Men': South Carolina College, the Defense of Slavery, and the Development of Secessionist Politics," in *The American College in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Roger L. Geiger (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), 96-97.

¹⁵ Ralph Eugene Reed, "Fortresses of Faith: Design and Experience at Southern Evangelical Colleges, 1830-1900" (Emory University, 1991). Tewksbury, "The Founding of American Colleges".

¹⁶ Mark Swails, "Literary Societies as Institutions of Honor at Evangelical Colleges in Antebellum Georgia" (Emory University, 2007); Walsh, "Wesleyan Female College and Christian Education".

¹⁷ Robert F. Pace, *Halls of Honor: College Men in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004); Lorri Glover, *Southern Sons: Becoming Men in a New Nation* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2007); Christie Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South* (New York: New York University Press, 1994). Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters*.

with “a notably more intense piety.”¹⁸ In view of this dichotomy, it becomes important to consider the evangelical students separately. Furthermore, the majority of studies focused on student experience have considered either male or female students and have reached somewhat disparate conclusions.¹⁹ Yet, as Atticus Haygood would later point out, “Emory and Wesleyan... had substantially the same founders.... They have had the same friends, and very much the same constituency.”²⁰ Therefore, it seems fitting to consider male as well as female students in order to trace commonalities in their experiences and to better understand the society as a whole.

Like Lorri Glover’s *Southern Sons: Becoming Men in the New Nation*, this study traces the growth and development of a specific generation of young people in a certain location. Glover’s work considers the generation of young men who matured between 1790 and 1820 following the American Revolution. She argues that this generation was the first to think of themselves as Americans; therefore, it is important to consider how the first generation of Americans matured when the republic was still being established as a permanent institution and how this generation developed the concept of sectionalism out of the nationalist spirit of their parents.²¹ In the same way, this study considers the generation that came of age following the Second Great Awakening. In studying the living and experiences of evangelical young people between 1835 and 1861, we can better understand the intricacies of their formative years and how a second generation of evangelicals reckoned with their religious heritage. This study answers two interrelated

¹⁸ Roger L. Geiger, "Introduction: New Themes in the History of Nineteenth-Century Colleges," in *The American College in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Roger L. Geiger (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), 20-21.

¹⁹ For example, the aforementioned works as well as Anne Lide, "Five Georgia Colleges from 1850 to 1875" (Emory University, 1957); Frances Rees, "A History of Wesleyan Female College from 1836 to 1874" (Emory University, 1935); Swails, "Literary Societies as Institutions of Honor".

²⁰ Atticus G. Haygood, *Seney Hall* (Macon, Geo.: J.W. Burke & Co., 1881), 6.

²¹ Glover, *Southern Sons*, 3-4.

questions: How did this generation of evangelicals take on their own religious identity?
How did this influence their subsequent living and experience?

This study explores the growth of individual college students from their perspective, focusing on the questions and dilemmas raised at each stage of their coming of age. The first part considers their dilemmas and response to faith, beginning with a conversion experience and continuing with prayer and participation in revivals. The second part examines their behavior as students, emphasizing their struggles to establish a holy standard of living and their attempts to work this standard into their daily life. The third part deals with their thoughts regarding life after graduation and how it would be guided by their newly developed identity.

Chapter 1: Conversion

For evangelicals in the nineteenth century, conversion marked the beginning of one's identity as a Christian. More so than other Christians, evangelicals emphasized an individual experience of conversion that came through a personal seeking of God's mercy and a clear revelation from God Himself. Conversion literally means "a turning around," and, for evangelicals, conversion was a dedication to live a new life for God according to His way.²² For many converted in the revivals of the Second Great Awakening, this change corresponded with a shift from the predominant secular culture to an evangelical one. For many in the second generation, however, conversion marked a change in perspective, the beginning of a new life with a new and personal purpose and direction.²³

Evangelical Christianity spread throughout the southern United States through revival meetings and itinerant preachers. Initially founded as Anglican colonies, the Southern states in the eighteenth century had largely been settled by religiously indifferent people. Following the American Revolution, evangelical preachers came to the South as missionaries and held large outdoor revivals, converting Southerners to a religion that was highly personal and deeply influenced many aspects of their lives.²⁴ By the 1830's, the evangelical faiths of the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians had gained a significant number of Southerners.²⁵

²² Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 4-5; Curtis D. Johnson, *Redeeming America: Evangelicals and the Road to Civil War* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 1993), 55; Thomas Kidd, *The Great Awakening: Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), xiv.

²³ Johnson, *Redeeming America*, 5; Hugh T. Kerr and John M. Mulder, eds., *Conversions: The Christian Experience* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1983), ix.

²⁴ Edward L. Bond, "Anglicans in Virginia," in *Major Problems in American Religious History: Documents and Essays*, ed. Patrick Allitt (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 83-84; Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 5; Johnson, *Redeeming America*, 4.

²⁵ Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 261-66.

This season of revival, often called the Second Great Awakening, began to wane around 1830. In the subsequent decades, converts from these revivals began to raise families in an environment and culture set apart from the “world” and all its evil influences such as drink, gambling, and dancing. Rather than live in a frivolous society centered around reputation, these children grew up in a faith-based community with meetings held in their home and devotion centered around family prayer times.²⁶ At the same time, evangelical leaders began to shift their focus away from the more spontaneous revivals and home meetings to organized denominations and religious institutions, transitioning out of the home into newly constructed, permanent buildings. As part of this move to strengthen and maintain their influence in America, evangelicals began to found religious colleges, both to educate the young and to train men for the ministry.²⁷

Because evangelicals believed that conversion was a personal experience, a person could not be born into the faith. The children of evangelicals were still expected to undergo conversion to be considered true Christians, but this now took place within a different context. For the generation that came of age between 1835 and 1861, new questions had to be considered and new dilemmas resolved. Many among the first generation had converted from a background of religious indifference to one of great zeal and piety; their conversion corresponded with a dramatic change in lifestyle.²⁸ However, the second generation had been nurtured within the evangelical community and was familiar with the evangelical faith. For example, Emory student Asbury Mixon grew up

²⁶ Allen P. Tankersley and Ralph McGill, *College Life at Old Oglethorpe* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1951), viii; Robert Elder, "The Very Southern Saints: Reconsidering the Distance between Evangelism and Honor in the Deep South, 1800-1860," in *Masculinity and the American South Symposium* (University of Warwick, 2008), 2; Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 91.

²⁷ Tewksbury, "The Founding of American Colleges", 55, 103, 09.

²⁸ James Craig Holte, *The Conversion Experience in America* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), vii.

in a household where he was encouraged “to pray much and draw near to God” and to “remember your Creator while you are young.... Pray much and the Lord will bless you.”²⁹ While at Emory, Robert Lovett wrote his grandparents, “But dear Parents, it is to you I owe who I am.... Thank our Heavenly Father that I ever had pious parents.”³⁰ Robert acknowledged that his character and knowledge stemmed from his religious childhood. Numerous students at evangelical colleges were children or grandchildren of ministers. Several students were even named after famous religious figures: *John Emory Rylander*, *(Frances) Asbury Mixon*, *John Wesley Simmons*, *Samuel Pearce Richards*, and *Isaac Barton Ulmer*.³¹ For this generation, the conversion experience became a rite of passage, an experience that allowed them to become full church members.³² But, it also marked the beginning of a process of defining for themselves what it meant to be an evangelical.

In this process, the ability to testify to the moment of conversion became paramount, and students interpreted certain religious experience as such. Emory student G.L.P. Wren described conversion as finding “peace with God.”³³ Wesleyan student Loula Kendall wrote of herself as “the wild romping little girl who *once* ridiculed those

²⁹ Sarah Clayton to Elijah and Charlot Mixon, September 12, 1837, Sarah to Asbury Mixon, April 21, 1839, Elijah Mixon papers, MARBL. As much as possible, I have adhered to the original spelling, punctuation, use of italics, and sentence structure. For the sake of clarity, I have taken the liberty of altering the wording or spelling in a few cases.

³⁰ Robert Lovett to his parents, September 22, 1838, Lovett papers.

³¹ John Emory and Frances Asbury were important Methodist itinerant ministers, and the teachings of John Wesley were foundational to the Methodist faith. Samuel Pearce was a Baptist pastor in Birmingham, England while Isaac Barton was a prominent Baptist preacher in Tennessee. All these men, with the exception of John Wesley, were contemporaries of the parents of these students. Wendy Hamand Venet, ed. *Sam Richard's Civil War Diary* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2009), 5; J.J. Burnett, *Sketches of Tennessee's Pioneer Baptist Preachers* (Nashville, Tenn: Press of Marshall & Bruce Company, 1919), 37-40.

³² Frederick Dreyer, "Faith and Experience in the Thought of John Wesley," *The American Historical Review* 88, no. 1 (1983): 17, 19; Johnson, *Redeeming America*, 5.

³³ G.L.P. Wren diary, April 22, 1858, George Lovick Pierce Wren diaries, MARBL.

who professed religion, now feels its *blessed* and *glorious* influence.”³⁴ Another Emory student saw conversion as the moment where “we... quit the army of Satan and joined the trust of God.”³⁵ If possible, students marked the specific time and location of their conversion; the more specific, the more respected their testimony could be. Wesleyan student Laura Haygood, for example, forever held January 28 as a holy anniversary, following her conversion on that date.³⁶ In his testimony, Emory student Young J. Allen wrote, “I well remember, and will ever, when it was that the barbed arrow of conviction pierced my hardened heart.”³⁷ According to their interpretation, conversion became a definite experience that marked the beginning of their life as a true Christian.

While conversion itself was a single event, the path leading up to it could often be confusing and lengthy.³⁸ For second-generation young people, conversion often was the result of a struggle to find God for themselves. As the grandson of a lay Methodist minister and the son of two devout parents, Emory student George Gilman Smith had a religious upbringing, including baptism as a young child, participation in revivals, attendance of Sunday School, seasons of repentance, and the like. However, these served more as a religious education without leading directly to what he termed a “genuine” conversion; he would later admit that even at age fourteen, “I was not a Christian.” Yet, at a particular moment, “by God’s amazing mercy” he became a transformed man and “then I began a religious life in earnest,” deciding, among other things, to attend Emory College to be educated for the ministry. George did not grow up ignorant of religion and

³⁴ Loula Kendall, diary, December 5, 1855, Loula Kendall Rogers papers, MARBL.

³⁵ R.N. Hardeman, “Townie” Autograph Album, Emory College General Records, 1834-1914, Emory University Archives, Emory University.

³⁶ Oswald Eugene Brown and Anna Muse Brown, eds., *Life and Letters of Laura Askew Haygood* (Nashville, Tenn., Dallas, Tex.: Publishing house of the M.E. church, South, Smith & Lamar, agents, 1904), 20-21. *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 3, 1962.

³⁷ Young John Allen to Mary Houston, October 20, 1854, Young John Allen papers.

³⁸ Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 33-34.

God, but he could not consider himself a true Christian until a particular moment in time. For him, this moment marked a definite shift from an indifferent and passive consideration of Christianity to a definite acquisition of a religious identity.³⁹

The struggle to know God and gain a definite experience of conversion troubled students even while in the religious environment of the evangelical college. In late 1854, for example, Wesleyan student Mary Houston was not yet a church member, not out of objection to it but because she had yet to “know that God hath not forgotten but hath forgiven and blest me.”⁴⁰ The following month, she promised that “still will I struggle to obtain that blessed prize Religion.” Yet once she knew God’s blessing for herself, she could confidently tell her fiancé that “I have since felt, and strongly too,” the folly of her past and the mercies of God who delivered her from them.⁴¹ The ability to testify to her conversion gave Mary the necessary assurance and confidence to claim the identity of a Christian.

Regardless if the conversion experience preceded enrollment in colleges or not, it became an iconic turning point in these students’ evaluation and understanding of themselves. A number of students entered college as converted Christians, some with the intention of becoming ministers. However, many students did not so enter as evidenced by the fact that some students earnestly prayed for and endeavored to convert their unconverted classmates. In 1858, Emory student G. L. P. Wren wrote, “Today... eight were added to the church and one new [soul] converted and I was really happy to see that for I have been praying for George [for] some time.”⁴² After reading about the

³⁹ Smith autobiography, 35-37.

⁴⁰ Mary Houston to Young J. Allen, October 16, 1854, Allen papers.

⁴¹ Mary Houston to Young J. Allen, November 15, 1854, November 28, 1854, Allen papers.

⁴² Wren diary, April 22, 1858.

conversion of “an Old Infidel,” Emory student Young John Allen noted, “Oh! How much like one I now know – may the same God who turned that sinner unto His testimony turn and convert this one also.”⁴³ In the eyes of these already converted students, the spiritual status of their peers became a defining point of their identity. Numerous students remembered being intensely preoccupied with the state of their souls during their collegiate careers, and one Emory student later admitted that he had “made a mistake in not becoming a [Methodist] in early life.”⁴⁴ For some, but not all, students, their religious experience would become a vital part of their identity.

While students understood conversion itself to be the experience of an individual, the experience was by no means isolated. Numerous students were influenced by their peers and converted during revivals or through the encouragement of their classmates.

One instance at Wesleyan Female is illustrative:

During one of the revivals Lulu Bonnell, our President’s daughter, was converted; she went back and... led [Miss Russell] to the altar for prayer. Miss Russell was converted and her work in influencing other girls to seek salvation was wonderful.

One evening she called at my room and asked me to take a walk with her. I have always thanked her for the interest she took in me, for that afternoon she gave me an earnest talk and convinced me of the truth that, “Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation.” It was soon after this that I was baptised and became a member of the Methodist Church...

Witnessing a remarkable change in the life of Miss Russell encouraged Sallie Love to also convert and assume an evangelical identity.⁴⁵

⁴³ Young J. Allen, “Book of notes, extracts, observations, examples, illustrations &c,” Allen papers.

⁴⁴ Virginia Ingraham Burr, ed. *The Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1848-1889* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 27. Julius A. Peek in Frank L. Little, “Oxford in the Fifties,” *The Emory Phoenix* XXII, no. 8 (1908): 273.

⁴⁵ Banks, *Memories*, 39.

In many respects, the choice of a religious identity governed the rest of a student's experience, both positively and negatively. Religious life had to be integrated into daily life, and numerous dilemmas about behavior and activities had to be resolved on a personal basis. Students who publicly declared their faith sought to live distinctly from the unsaved. As such, the rebellious behavior of some students also affected the collegiate environment and created additional conflicts that needed to be resolved.⁴⁶

Conversion marked the beginning of one's own religious life, something distinct from that of one's community and family, coinciding with a journey out of childhood and into adulthood.⁴⁷ The subsequent struggles to understand and interpret the meaning of conversion and the Christian life define a period of adolescence,⁴⁸ a time to fully form this new identity. For each student, the result would be something personal, something different. However, the questions and dilemmas considered and raised shed light on the culture and development of an ideology for young people in the antebellum South.

⁴⁶ Such behavior ranged from skipping chapel and missing prayers to fighting with knives and threats of duels. See, for example, Hardaway Recollections, 17; Wren diary, April 3, 1858; Elizabeth Gertrude Clanton Thomas diary, April 23, 1851, Elizabeth Gertrude Clanton Thomas diaries, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

⁴⁷ Kett, "Adolescence and Youth in Nineteenth-Century America," 291; Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters*, 18.

⁴⁸ Here adolescence is loosely defined to be the period of time, beginning with the adoption of a new identity and culminating with a full understanding and definition of it.

Chapter 2: Religious Life

Following their conversion, students were often eager to live in a way that reflected their new religious identity. One such student aspired to be “praying, Bible reading, God fearing.”⁴⁹ Students deepened their religious experience by reading the Bible and praying individually. Together, they encouraged one another through prayer, religious gatherings, and revivals. Such acts of piety demonstrated their commitment to the evangelical identity.

Evangelical faith had long been characterized by a holy life with religious practices. Evangelicals believed that God desired them to live in a manner worthy of their calling as Christians and placed much emphasis on the influence of religion on their life. Unlike more liturgical faiths, the evangelical faith focused on the subjective experience, that is, the deepening of faith through religious activities. Converts of the early nineteenth century revivals often read religious books and prayed for further enlightenment. Many gathered in small groups to worship and pray together. Referring to one another as “brother” and “sister,” they established spiritual families in which they were responsible to one another and encouraged one another.⁵⁰

For the college students of the next generation, a primary means to expand religious experience was to read the Bible. Faculty and parents taught students that scripture reading was a source of encouragement and inspiration for a godly living.⁵¹ Many students were familiar with the Bible from childhood, but following their

⁴⁹ Smith autobiography, 37.

⁵⁰ A. Gregory Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 204, 79, 84, 87, 132, 66. Heyman, *Southern Cross*, 94; Johnson, *Redeeming America*, 86-89.

⁵¹ Thomas diary, April 24, 1851. Dolly Burge to Lou Burge, January 3, [1860?], Burge papers. See also E. Brooks Holifield, "Let the Children Come: The Religion of the Protestant Child in Early America," *Church History* 76, no. 4 (2007): 762-63.

conversion, it became the guide for their religious life. After rejoicing over her conversion experience, for instance, Mary Houston wrote, “I now know my true duty to my God and also henceforth promise myself to abide by his sacred word.”⁵² Ella Clanton began reading the Bible as part of her conversion experience, and by May 15, she recorded, “I have read as far as the eighth chapter in second Corinthians since the first of April.”⁵³ Similarly, George Gilman Smith wrote after his conversion, “I had never read Paul’s Epistles. Now they are the joy of my life.”⁵⁴ Habitual Bible reading was a self-imposed duty for Emory student G.L.P. Wren who frequently noted his progress in his diary; for him, a day was not complete without “reading a chapter in the Bible [as] my last duty.”⁵⁵ Now acknowledged Christians, students appreciated the Bible as a source of inspiration and instruction.⁵⁶

In addition to scripture reading, students also fasted as a declaration of their piety and as a means to focus on God. Students sometimes fasted of their own accord and, at other times, participated in school- or church-sponsored fast days. G.L.P. Wren admitted that fasting was not easy, but he still “hoped to prosper” by it.⁵⁷ Wesleyan student Loula Kendall concurred and earnestly strove to imitate “the spirit of Christ [to] try to be pure and think much of holy things.”⁵⁸ In addition to abstaining from practices outside the sphere of the sacred, students often spent their fast days in prayer. Oglethorpe student Benjamin Hunter, for instance, noted a faculty-led prayer meeting on “the day of fasting

⁵² Mary Houston to Young J. Allen, September 5, 1854, Allen papers.

⁵³ According to Ella’s account, she was converted, that is, “obtains religion,” on April 12, 1851. Thomas diary, April 12, 17, 24, May 15, 1851.

⁵⁴ Smith autobiography, 37.

⁵⁵ Wren diary, March 29, 1858, *passim*.

⁵⁶ Mary Houston to Samuel Lay, May 8, 1854, Allen papers.

⁵⁷ Wren diary, June 4, 1858.

⁵⁸ Rogers journal, April 4, 1856, Rogers papers.

and prayer.”⁵⁹ Participating in a religious exercise such as fasting marked an individual’s desire to connect with the infinite.

For many students, prayer was both a means to connect to God and to publicly testify to one’s identity as a Christian. As Emory student Robert Lovett noted, prayer was an integral part of college life; “we have a prayer meeting once a week among the teachers and students and also a public prayer meeting on Sabbath nights in the chapel.”⁶⁰ Students prayed in private for each other and for their own spiritual development. In the evening, Ella Clanton, for instance, prayed to thank God for His oversight, writing, “[I] retired to rest after giving thanks to the god which has watched over us so kindly throughout the day – and throughout life.”⁶¹ For these students, their religious identity corresponded with private prayer; thus, they felt free to request others to pray on their behalf. For example, George Palmer told a classmate leaving Emory, “*Let us remember each other when on our knees before the throne of mercy imploring His blessing.*” Another wrote, “When alone at night’s still hour/ You bend your knee in prayer,/ To ask mercy of Mighty Power/ Think of me, then, and there.”⁶² Students were also encouraged to pray in public prayer sessions. After mentioning his attendance at a church prayer meeting, Mercer student Samuel Richards added “Bro. Landrum called upon me to engage in prayer and for the *first* time I attempted public prayer.” For Samuel, his first public prayer marked a definite step in establishing his identity as a Christian.⁶³

⁵⁹ Benjamin T. Hunter diary, February 21, 1857, Old Oglethorpe University, 1833-77, Archives, Philip Weltner Library, Oglethorpe University.

⁶⁰ Robert Lovett to his parents, July 6, 1839, Lovett papers.

⁶¹ Thomas diary, April 24, 1851.

⁶² George T. Palmer, June 8, 1858, Sallie Hall, July 12, 1858, Dawson album.

⁶³ Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 166. Samuel P. Richards diary, April 22, 1847, Samuel P. Richards papers, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

All the schools held mandatory prayer meetings, but students also gathered among themselves to pray for particular matters. Prayer symbolized a nontrivial friendship as they shared in this “social”, or communal, religion.⁶⁴ Recognizing the importance of prayer and appeal to God for blessing in their gospel work, students gathered during revivals to pray for each other and for their classmates.⁶⁵ During a series of revival meetings, Ella Clanton wrote, “The girls had a prayer meeting up stairs in the fourth story. An excellent one too at that.”⁶⁶ At Emory, Young John Allen, John Norris, Robert Harris, J.B. Hennicult, Atticus Haygood, John Wesley Simmons, and G.L.P. Wren formed a prayer group that met “by the old log in the grove.” During a revival, Young wrote, “We had regular prayermeetings in the grove, where indeed the revival began.”⁶⁷ Nearly two years later, G.L.P. recorded, “I went down into the grove where many of us met for the purpose of prayer.”⁶⁸ These gatherings were distinct from those mandated by the college for Young wrote in his diary, “prayer meeting at 8 o’clock A.M. and also in the grove at night” and later “prayer meeting in the grove again.” Fellow student Frank Smith credits this meeting as the source of the conversions of friends, calls to missionary service, and consecrations to God.⁶⁹ Much like the prayer gatherings of the previous generation, these meetings gave students the opportunity to encourage one another in their spiritual pursuit, to consider their future and their goals, and to pray for mutual friends.

⁶⁴ Cf. Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home*.

⁶⁵ Young J. Allen, “Book of notes,” Allen papers.

⁶⁶ Thomas diary, April 17, 1851.

⁶⁷ Young J. Allen to Mary Houston, October 10, 1856, also Young J. Allen to Mary Houston, August 3, 1856, Allen papers.

⁶⁸ Wren diary, April 16, 1858.

⁶⁹ Young J. Allen, “My Dedication to God,” November 9, 1856 in “Book of Notes,” Allen papers; *Emory Phoenix*, May 1908, 271-72.

Many revivals rose up at evangelical colleges where groups of newly identified evangelicals were eager to assert their new identity and share it with their fellow classmates.⁷⁰ As early as 1838, Oglethorpe University President Samuel. K. Talmage felt that “circumstances are eminently favourable for a great work of grace among our beloved pupils.”⁷¹ At Georgia’s evangelical colleges, students were keenly aware of the spiritual atmosphere and eager to nurture it. In 1847, Mercer student Samuel Richards observed a paucity of church attendance and concluded that an awakening was necessary to cultivate a proper spirit of devotion.⁷² When a revival spread from Emory to the nearby community, Robert Lovett eagerly wrote, “Religion is in a prosperous condition.”⁷³

Students took revivals seriously and eagerly told of the spread of their faith, particularly to other students. Ella Clanton wrote, “Tonight we have a glorious revival. [Six] have been converted. ...all the girls or at least a good many of them joined the church.” Robert Lovett wrote home to his parents, “A large number has joined the church and embraced religion.... Nearly all the students in college have gotten in the church and most of them have been converted.”⁷⁴ Young John Allen wrote his fiancée, “I was greatly blessed and encouraged last night while struggling with some friends at the altar, two of whom were converted there after the congregation was dismissed and gone home.”⁷⁵ Revivals presented an opportunity for students to help their friends also take on a religious identity and become part of the converted community.

⁷⁰ Geiger, "Introduction," 21.

⁷¹ S.K. Talmage to Rev. J. Furman, September 1838, Old Oglethorpe.

⁷² Richards diary, Mary 27, 1847.

⁷³ Lovett to his grandparents, September 22, 1838, Lovett papers

⁷⁴ Richard Lovett to his parents, June 14, 1841, Lovett papers

⁷⁵ Young John Allen to Mary Houston, April 24, 1856, Allen papers.

After conversion, evangelical students sought to have a life of piety. Like the evangelicals that came before them, students turned to each other for inspiration and encouragement in their quest to lead a pious life. As students prayed together and encouraged fellow students, they established a religious foundation for a standard of behavior and living to correspond with their evangelical identity.

Chapter 3: A Different Standard

For young evangelicals, a new religious identity required not only pious living but also a specific standard of behavior. These students aspired to be separated from the secular world and to be considered holy and religious people. Each one's choices about his personal and private life reflect his particular choice of identity and the extent to which he allowed religious beliefs to govern it.

From a theological perspective, evangelicals can be characterized by their emphasis on individual conversion and on a sharp distinction between themselves and the unconverted. Historian Curtis Johnson argues, "...antebellum evangelicals of all camps agreed that one's faith should shape one's behavior, not just on Sunday but during the entire week, in all phases of life."⁷⁶ Furthermore, conversion was more than a turn of the heart to God; it was also "a belief that lives needed to be changed."⁷⁷ During the revivals of the early nineteenth century, new converts were encouraged to leave their former manner of life behind for a life that would give them the most opportunity to glorify God. The tenets of the Southern honor culture – gambling, racing, drinking, politics, status, and outward appearance – were condemned in favor of a culture of humility, introspection, submission, and sobriety.⁷⁸

The atmosphere of the evangelical colleges consciously reflected this evangelical culture. They were founded in response to the secular state colleges, which evangelical leaders viewed as places of deism, infidelity, and frivolity that could not produce godly

⁷⁶ Johnson, *Redeeming America*, 4.

⁷⁷ Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*, vol. 1, A History of Evangelicalism: People, Movements and Ideas in the English-Speaking World (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 19.

⁷⁸ Elder, "The Very Southern Saints: Reconsidering the Distance between Evangelism and Honor in the Deep South, 1800-1860," 1; Johnson, *Redeeming America*, 91-92; Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home*, 3-4, 92, 105.

leaders and citizens.⁷⁹ The male colleges – Emory College, Mercer College, and Oglethorpe University – were specifically founded in towns geographically distant from the “evil” influences of the city. Mercer’s catalogue described its location in Penfield, Georgia as “a small, unassuming village, from which are debarred, by law, the most fruitful sources of temptation to dissipation, whilst the moral and religious influences are eminently conservative of the character of young men, and promotive of good order and industrious habits of study.”⁸⁰ Oglethorpe was founded in like manner.⁸¹ When liquor shops opened outside the limits of Oxford, Emory’s school officials moved to expand the town’s borders because of “the baneful influence of liquor shops” and to “exclude such temptations” from Emory students and townspeople.⁸² Unlike its male counterparts, Wesleyan Female College was opened in the established city of Macon, but college officials still desired to cultivate a separated, religious atmosphere. The faculty noted in their college catalogue, “...we are grieved, if one who has long resided in our ‘College family’ leaves without becoming a Christian.”⁸³ Even in the city, female students felt “closely confined” because they were not allowed outside the college grounds without supervision; Sallie Rogers later humorously described this lack of freedom, saying, “We could no more have young men come to see us than we could fly off to the moon.”⁸⁴

Having taken on an evangelical identity, many students desired to live for God and to be a witness to His goodness. As converted Christians, they were challenged with

⁷⁹ Reed, "Fortresses of Faith", 13-24; Christopher H. Owen, *The Sacred Flame of Love: Methodism and Society in Nineteenth-Century Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 43.

⁸⁰ Catalogue of Mercer University, 1856-57.

⁸¹ Tankersley and McGill, *College Life at Old Oglethorpe*, 6.

⁸² Reed, "Fortresses of Faith", 13; Erik Blackburn Oliver, *Cornerstone and Grove: A Portrait in Architecture and Landscape of Emory's Birthplace in Oxford, Georgia* (Atlanta: Bookhouse Group, Inc., 2009), 15.

⁸³ Catalogue of Wesleyan Female College, 1853-54.

⁸⁴ Margaret Graham to her father, October 29, 1842, William P. Graham papers, SHC; *The Adelphean*, June 1931.

the commission to lead a sanctified and holy life; what this meant was for them to determine. After one religious experience, Robert Lovett wrote, “I have determined to lead a new life and be a better man. I want to be fully the Lord’s and to discharge my duty.”⁸⁵ Students were not content with just a life full of religious activities, but they also wanted godliness to penetrate their entire life. When religion did not have full control of her heart, Loula Rogers worried she had returned to her old manner of life. “I believe Mr. Smith thought I had backslidden,” she wrote. “I want to be a devoted Christian.”⁸⁶ Ella Clanton remembered being greatly encouraged by the minister’s exhortation “to go on, to press towards the mark of our high calling.”⁸⁷ Similarly, Oglethorpe student George Barnsley aspired to holiness, believing that this would bring him into “a higher sphere of life.”⁸⁸

An important aspect of this standard was a pressing need to be separated from the secular world. These college students were already physically separated from much of the world by the mere location of their institutions, but they knew that this was temporary and artificial. These students sought a separation that was not necessarily physical but was unquestionably moral.⁸⁹ One Emory student, for example, wrote, “I hope to firmly

⁸⁵ Robert Lovett to his parents, June 14, 1841, Lovett papers.

⁸⁶ Rogers journal, September 10, 1850.

⁸⁷ Thomas diary, April 24, 1851.

⁸⁸ Henry W. Brown to George S. Barnsley, June 25, 1855, George Scarborough Barnsley papers, SHC.

⁸⁹ It is important to distinguish between evangelical and peace church teachings on separation from the world. Members of peace churches, including the Mennonites and Amish, believed that church people should form an alternative community apart from the ordinary social order. Everything was internal, and these people had little, if any, interaction with persons who were not members of their community. In contrast, antebellum evangelicals believed in a moral rather than physical separation from the world. They continued to live within the greater social world, but they lived by a different standard, following their own convictions of right and wrong and of proper behavior and deportment. cf. Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home*, 135.

to withstand every inducement which this world's gawdy allurements can present or its fretful ambition offer."⁹⁰

Unlike the first generation, this generation of students had grown up in an environment free of many of the characteristics of the Southern honor culture; profanity, drinking, smoking, gambling, and novel reading had never truly been a part of their lives. Thus, as they came to terms with their own identity, they were forced to redefine "the world," finding a rationale to explain their chosen behavior. Some wanted to live for something other than "the treasures, the riches, the honors and glories of the world."⁹¹ For others, being different was a matter of living a restrained life. George Gilman Smith described his former, wayward days in this way:

I am sure I did not hate God and that I would have been pretty pained at any disrespect to Jesus Christ or the Church. I was simply so taken up with the delights of a boy's unrestrained life that I did not try to obey a law which interfered with it. I look upon with great regret to the non-religion of those early days. I never gambled, or drank, but alas I had ceased to pray or read my Bible. ...I always sought pleasure.

George felt that the difference between this life and his life after conversion was obvious:

I was a transformed man that day.... I began a religious life in earnest... I took a class in the Sunday School. I kept out of the world, was much alone, read good books.... I had not the slightest desire for old sins and oh how I loved the Sanctuary I had never read Paul's Epistles they were now the joy of my life.

In addition to refraining from evil activities (such as gambling,) George now participated in new activities, being alone and reading good books, a change he associated with his religious transformation.⁹²

⁹⁰ Young J. Allen? to Father & Mother, March 22, 1857, Allen papers.

⁹¹ Young J. Allen to Mary Houston, May 7, 1857, Allen papers.

⁹² Smith autobiography, 31, 36-37.

Students were concerned that their deportment would match their standing as Christians separated from the world. They wanted their religious identity to make them noticeably distinct. G.L.P. Wren noted the scriptural text of two sermons: “Blessed are they who walketh not in the way of the ungoldly”⁹³ and “Ye are the light of the world.”⁹⁴ These must have made a great impression on him for he followed the latter text with this explanation: “All persons may be lights either for good or bad.... Look at those infidels such as Voltaire, Hume and Paine see what an influence they have exerted over the world where they have been. Now we may infer from this the reverse may prove true, that much good may come by the works of good men.”⁹⁵ For Wren, a Christian’s living testified of his person and influenced others, consciously or unconsciously. Robert Lovett believed similarly. He disapproved of his roommate’s conduct but hoped that his own example would influence his fellow classmate “to be honorable and highminded.”⁹⁶

Having giving themselves to live a life for God, students had little trust in their individual ability. This absence of self-confidence resulted in a rhetoric of humility. The secular Southern culture of honor celebrated the individual who exhibited pride and belief in his ability to maintain and elevate his reputation.⁹⁷ These students rejected this outright, instead admitting their failures and shortcomings and shamelessly crying to their God for assistance. One young person wrote, “...only let me know that my Father in heaven smiles on my weak endeavors... it is my duty. God help me to do it faithfully.”⁹⁸ These students realized that this new standard of living was hard to meet, but they had

⁹³ Psalm 1:1 – “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”

⁹⁴ Matthew 5:14 – “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.”

⁹⁵ Wren diary, March 27, 1859, May 5, 1859.

⁹⁶ Robert W. Lovett to his parents, May 1, 1839, Lovett papers.

⁹⁷ See for example Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home*, 113, 20; Pace, *Halls of Honor*, 11-17.

⁹⁸ Matt to Mary Houston, January 26, 1856, Allen papers.

trust that God would have mercy and bring them through. Wesleyan student Ella Anderson admitted her struggles in living a godly life, writing, “I have been wayward and forgetful often and for long at a time of those promises I made then, but God has been infinitely patient.”⁹⁹ Similarly George Gilman Smith confessed, “I had my ups and downs religiously, but I did not wilfully and deliberately intermit any of my duties nor yield to temptations. I had my conflicts, I had my defeats, I had my hours of delight and my victories.”¹⁰⁰

Having assumed a religious identity, students were eager to demonstrate their piety through their daily life. They created a new standard for their life, one that would set them apart from the secular world and exhibit their Christian virtues. By establishing a new standard for themselves, these evangelical colleges students now faced the immense task of living according to this standard, a process that involved questioning and redefining their beliefs and their standard.

⁹⁹ Ella Anderson Clark, *Golden Days in the Old South*, 76, James Osgood Andrew Clark papers, MARBL.

¹⁰⁰ Smith autobiography, 37.

Chapter 4: Daily Life

Formulating a new standard entailed living according to it. As these evangelical students endeavored to lead a godly life, many aspects of their daily life became opportunities for them to live out their faith and testify to their identity, or conversely to betray their faith and deny their identity. Whether confronting common moral issues, preparing for various occasions, or simply engaging in the everyday activities of a student, students often raised the question of what they should do, how they should do it, and why this was so. Making these decisions constantly reshaped their standard of behavior and brought new questions to light. Thus, their religious identity became more and more definite as the students passed through their collegiate careers and matured in their religious experience.

For nineteenth-century evangelicals, distance from the secular world was not only theoretical or philosophical; it served as a practical testimony of their faith to those around them. While a common culture did develop, each person's experience was necessarily different as each had to decide for himself how to act and think. Historian Nathan Hatch argues that the various religious movements of the nineteenth-century "challenged common people to take religious destiny into their own hands, to think for themselves, to oppose centralized authority and the elevation of the clergy as a separate order of man."¹⁰¹ Evangelicals emphasized the "priesthood of the believers,"¹⁰² that is, the idea that every person had a valid and particular religious experience. This belief

¹⁰¹ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 58.

¹⁰² Noll also uses term "dedication of all the believers". Noll, *The Rise of Evangelism*, 17, 19. This idea is central to the definition of "evangelical" outlined in the introduction. This doctrine was based on passages such as 1 Peter 2:5, 9: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up into a spiritual house, an holy priesthood.... But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people...."

gave an individual the right to testify and pray in public. It also implied that each individual had to establish the path of his own experience, including the details of a holy life and its materialization in the larger community.

Typical nineteenth-century southern college students had far different concerns. The goal of their lives was to establish their own place in a world of honor, and many of their actions were consciously made to achieve this end. Male college students often associated the vices of college life, including dancing, drinking, and smoking, with the adult world they were striving to enter. Furthermore, pranks, violence, and other misdemeanors brought them the attention and prestige that they sought in a society centered on reputation.¹⁰³ Similarly, college girls sought to cultivate outward beauty and musical talent as a means to improve their image among their peers and within society. High marks, and even a college education itself, symbolized their gentility and sophistication.¹⁰⁴

With an evangelical identity, college students of Georgia's evangelical colleges established a different standard, one that would allow them to glorify God through their living. Each student sought to apply his own standard to his particular daily life. Like secular students, evangelical students had some guidelines: the rules of the college, expectations of elders, and examples of holy living in others. While these surely informed their decisions, part of the coming of age process entailed making their own decisions and judgments. If secular students felt sufficient autonomy to defy rules and

¹⁰³ Pace, *Halls of Honor*, 60-64, 84, 92; John Mayfield, "the Soul of a Man!": William Gilmore Simms and the Myths of Southern Manhood," *Journal of the Early Republic* 15, no. 3 (1995): xvii; Sugrue, "Introduction," 98.

¹⁰⁴ Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters*, 56; Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*, 87, 93; see also Pearl J. Young, "Genius Uncultivated Is Like a Meteor of the Night!": Motives and Experiences of Methodist Female College Life in the Confederate States of America," *Methodist History* 47, no. 3 (2009).

precedents to gain the honor they sought, the question remains how evangelical students chose to approach their daily life.

As they matured, students needed to establish their own positions on moral issues, including the use of tobacco. An agricultural product of the South, tobacco was widely accessible and was an essential part of southern life. While it was expressively prohibited in many colleges, secular students freely defied such regulations.¹⁰⁵ For evangelicals, however, smoking proved to be a troublesome issue, something that had to be considered and evaluated against their standard. Traditionally, evangelicals had associated tobacco and smoking with the secular world and had rejected the use of tobacco in their everyday life. Wesleyan student Mary Houston struggled with this heritage, admitting to “indulging in the Virginia weed” but also consulting her fiancé regarding her decision to no longer do so.¹⁰⁶ In their memoirs, both Wesleyan student Sallie Love and Emory student George Smith mentioned their only smoking experience as one of curiosity. George wrote, “Billy Bessent used to steal cigars from his fathers store and we boys gathered in the stable loft and tried to smoke. I made an attempt to learn but made a dismal failure.” Although he admitted to have been “poisoned” by tobacco once, he made sure to save his religious reputation by adding that his only experience “cured” him of the desire to smoke.¹⁰⁷ Not every student concluded that smoking was an evil; Oglethorpe student Benjamin Hunter, for example, valued smoking to the extent that he noted in his diary every day he smoked.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Mark Swails notes that Mercer University did prohibit its students to smoke, but her rules also allowed students to chew tobacco. Swails, "Literary Societies as Institutions of Honor", 40. Pace, *Halls of Honor*, 62-63. Henry W. Brown to George Barnsley, July 25, 1854, Barnsley papers.

¹⁰⁶ Mary Houston to Young John Allen, January 22, 1855, Allen papers.

¹⁰⁷ Smith autobiography, 14-15.

¹⁰⁸ Hunter diary, March 28, etc.

Another common moral cause of nineteenth-century America was that of temperance. Societies promoting abstinence and temperance became increasingly popular in the North and West, supported in many cases by the Protestant churches themselves; one contemporary history of Methodism included the charge, "Temperance must be practiced."¹⁰⁹ Branches of these and other temperance societies were established at Southern college campuses, but they proved to be largely ineffectual as college students refused to be influenced by their message and continued to include alcohol in many of their festivities.¹¹⁰ For some evangelical students, the conflict between collegiate drinking practices and evangelical disapproval of strong drink proved problematic. Students at both Mercer and Emory recognized incompatibility between their religious beliefs and drinking; antebellum literary societies at Mercer debated this issue at least sixteen times and at Emory at least six.¹¹¹ In 1842, for example, Emory's Few Society debated over the question, "Is a Christian morally bound to take the Washington temperance pledge¹¹²?"¹¹³ In this topic, settled in the affirmative, students recognized temperance as both a moral issue and one that could challenge their Christian standing. Some students took a definite stance on the issue: G.L.P. Wren referred to temperance as the "noble cause" and Young John Allen wrote of joining a local chapter of the Knights

¹⁰⁹ Young J. Allen, "Book of Notes," Allen papers.

¹¹⁰ Leo P. Hirrel, *Children of Wrath: New School Calvinism and Antebellum Reform* (Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 117-32; Pace, *Halls of Honor*, 62.

¹¹¹ For a detailed analysis of debates as indicators of students' values, see Swails, "Literary Societies as Institutions of Honor", 152, also chapter 6: "Debates as Indications of Students' Values."

¹¹² Unlike other temperance societies, the Washington Temperance Union was not specifically religious. The Washington temperance pledge was one of complete abstinence from any alcoholic drink.

¹¹³ Swails, "Literary Societies as Institutions of Honor", Appendix 2, Parts A-E.

of Jericho, a society promoting abstinence from alcohol.¹¹⁴ However, other students remained indifferent, making little or no reference to the issue.

Many students also remained indifferent to another moral issue: slavery. The decades leading up to the Civil War were filled with much contention over slavery both as a political and a moral issue. The Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches eventually broke ties with their Northern counterparts over slavery, and school officials, such as Emory President Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, played active roles in these controversies.¹¹⁵ Students were cognizant of slavery as an issue but tended to treat it only as an academic subject.¹¹⁶ Slavery served as a topic of debate in their literary societies throughout the antebellum era, but students found questions like these “of little importance,” probably because they concurred with the prevalent pro-slavery view of their professors and society.¹¹⁷ Many students did not see slavery as a concept that affected their religious life or required specific consideration. Students filled their diaries, journals, and letters with detailed descriptions of religious experiences and musings on daily activities; however, the topic of slavery is curiously absent.

One dilemma unique to evangelical students was the question of novel reading. While novel reading was generally considered unsophisticated, evangelicals often

¹¹⁴ Wren diary, March 30, 1859, cf. April 9, 1859; Young J. Allen to Mary Houston, April 4, 1855, Allen papers.

¹¹⁵ Richard Wright, "Ambivalent Bastions of Slavery: The Peculiar Institution on College Campuses in Antebellum Georgia," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* LXXX, no. 3 (1996): 475-79.

¹¹⁶ Robert Pace makes a similar argument for secular students. He writes, “Although not all students came from slaveholding families, they generally accepted slavery as a part of the college atmosphere.... For most students... slaves were a rather invisible but useful part of their college experience.” Pace also describes incidents involving both students and slaves, but such behavior was not found in this study. Pace, *Halls of Honor*, 48.

¹¹⁷ Few society minutes, May 17, 1856 as quoted in Swails, "Literary Societies as Institutions of Honor", 161, also 59-61.

considered the reading of novels a moral sin.¹¹⁸ Samuel Richards wrote of a sermon consisting of “a tremendous, sweeping, unqualified denunciation against *novel* reading.” The text, he noted, was “*Redeeming the time*, because the days are evil,”¹¹⁹ but he also concluded that “some of [the speaker’s] remarks were very good, but in some things he was too violent and went too far, *I think*.”¹²⁰ With such a conviction, Samuel went on to become the owner of a prestigious book and stationary store. However, other students came to other conclusions. Future authoress Loula Kendall set aside time to read wholesome books but also confessed that she intended to “indulge” in reading novels.¹²¹ G.L.P. Wren filled his diary with notes from his various readings of history and religious books, and Young John Allen and Atticus Haygood each kept a detailed “Index of Notes,” containing topical notes from the vast amount of religious and non-fiction books they read. Even the simple activity of pleasure reading became an opportunity to express religious piety, or a secret moment distanced from their religious identity.

Numerous occasions also presented themselves as opportunities for students to solidify their religious identity through their standard. Evangelical students realized that pious people, for example, observed the Sabbath; yet they still had to decide for themselves what constituted breaking the Sabbath.¹²² The colleges required students to attend prayers and religious services and to avoid rowdy gatherings but beyond this gave no specific guidelines as to how the remaining hours were to be spent.¹²³ Both Young

¹¹⁸ Walsh, "Wesleyan Female College and Christian Education", 25; Leonard I. Sweet, "The Female Seminary Movement and Woman's Mission in Antebellum America," *Church History* 54, no. 1 (1985): 51.

¹¹⁹ Ephesians 5:16.

¹²⁰ Richards diary, April 4, 1847.

¹²¹ Rogers journal, August 28, 1855, November 28, 1856.

¹²² Jewel L. Spangler, "Becoming Baptists: Conversion in Colonial and Early National Virginia," *The Journal of Southern History* 67, no. 2 (2001): 282; Johnson, *Redeeming America*, 119-24; Owen, *The Sacred Flame of Love*, 46.

¹²³ Catalogue of Oglethorpe University, 1859-60.

John Allen and his fiancée Mary Houston wondered whether writing letters to each other violated the Sabbath. Young reassured himself with the hope that “to commune with one so loved and so dear” was acceptable.¹²⁴ Nearly two years later, Mary admitted, “‘Tis Sabbath night, – and though an hour which should be devoted to religious worship of the heart rather than any action by any part of the body yet I do not feel ‘tis wrong now to pen my thoughts to thee, for they are not of the world but of other things.’”¹²⁵ In establishing a pious testimony, these two felt guilty for indulging in personal emotions on a day they believed ought to be devoted to God. Wesleyan students Anna Gatewood and Loula Kendall “tried to spend the Sabbath as it ought to be spent” by reading religious books, including *The Path of Life*, *Christian’s Pattern*, *Biblical Antiquities*, and Biblical literature.¹²⁶ Some time after his conversion, Mercer student Samuel Richards finally felt confident to write, “The Sabbath is truly a ‘day of rest’ to me now, and I can truly say that I enjoy it.”¹²⁷ For these students, Sabbath-keeping was a state to be achieved, not an activity; on this holy day, they sought to live in a particularly holy fashion, considering all their activities according to this standard.

While the Sabbath was a religious day, birthdays marked a different kind of occasion. Birthdays served as milestones of growth in the physical life, something particularly important for these students as they came of age. Mercer student Samuel Richards remarked, “the day finds me, as makes me just twentythree years of age! I am truly advancing in years.” Oglethorpe Benjamin Hunter made a similar observation: “My *birth day* – twenty-two years old today.” Apparently Loula Kendall’s birthday was of

¹²⁴ Young John Allen to Mary Houston, November 14, 1854, Allen papers.

¹²⁵ Mary Houston to Young John Allen, September 21, 1856, Allen papers.

¹²⁶ Rogers journal, January 13, 1856.

¹²⁷ Richards diary, October 11, 1846.

more significance to herself than to those around her for she lamented that no one remembered her birthday or gave her any gifts.¹²⁸ Yet, what was an occasion for celebration of progress for these students became a day of religious reflection for others. In anticipation of her birthday (as well as his own,) Young John Allen wrote his fiancée Mary, “Let’s set it apart as a holy day, of fasting and prayer, of renewed consecration and devotion to God – and thereby begin the new year of life with a closer walk, and sweeter communion, a holier, more confiding trust in the Lord.” For Wesleyan student Eliza Clanton, her birthday provided the opportunity to ponder the question, “To what end am I destined?”¹²⁹

In addition to special occasions, evangelical students also supplemented their academic experience with different forms of entertainment. Like their counterparts at secular institutions, students attended and hosted local concerts, soirées, and dances. For students such as Lou Burge, such entertainment provided much-needed diversion from the monotony of schoolwork and college life.¹³⁰ Christmas break at Wesleyan Female was particularly memorable for Loula Kendall; “we had tableaux, charades, &c three nights, and went to a concert one night and downtown Monday.”¹³¹ Oglethorpe’s graduating class of 1858 invited friends to “commencement ball” because commencement meant “there’s time for naught but pleasure now.”¹³² While many students enjoyed such festivities and the colleges permitted them to the extent that they were often widely publicized, some students objected to such activities. Young John Allen called one party “unmercifully boring.” One classmate later claimed, “[Young]

¹²⁸ Richards diary, March 3, 1847; Hunter diary, February 18, 1857. Rogers journal, August 31, 1855.

¹²⁹ Thomas diary, April 4, 1851.

¹³⁰ Lou Burge to her mother, August 4, 1862, Burge papers.

¹³¹ Rogers journal, January 11, 1857.

¹³² Invitations, Old Oglethorpe.

had no extra time to indulge in what the world calls ‘the amenities of life’... I never knew him to visit a lady or attend one to church or to be present at a social entertainment or to visit a college friend.” This classmate interpreted Young’s indifference to social activities as loyalty “to higher and more sacred demands,” an observation (fair or not) that linked choices of extracurricular activities with piety.¹³³ Mary Houston’s uncle was appalled to learn that she had quit dancing, writing in a nota bene, “Mary you stated that you had quit dancen that is something that I did not expect to hear of you. Have you joined the meetin?”¹³⁴ Her uncle assumed that Mary had made a decision based on her own judgment of piety, an act which demonstrated a personal commitment to her religious identity.¹³⁵ After G.L.P. commented on “the best [lovefeast]”¹³⁶ he ever attended and mentioned his school day, he noted, “Being a tablow in town tonight my chum is gone so I am by myself.” While one student valued the local entertainment, his roommate considered his religious and academic activities to have greater priority.¹³⁷ In the same way they approached the Sabbath and their birthdays, students had to decide what type of diversion would be appropriate for them as Christians.

All this carefully considered activity did not preclude mischievous behavior on campus. Entering the adult world, religious or otherwise, presented its challenges, and some chose to react rebelliously. On secular campuses, pranks and fights were rampant; students engaged in mischief for its own sake and sometimes for its violence and threat of

¹³³ Young J. Allen diary, January 4, 1855, Allen papers; Frank Little to Warren Candler in Candler, *Young J. Allen: "The Man Who Seeded China"*, 33.

¹³⁴ This question asks whether Mary has become a church member, a move that would have required her to have a conversion experience.

¹³⁵ John Germany to Mary Houston, February 13, 1855, Allen papers.

¹³⁶ A lovefeast was a special gathering among evangelicals within a congregation. In particular, various participants gave their testimonies, speaking either on their conversion experience or on subsequent spiritual experiences.

¹³⁷ Wren diary, June 14 and 30, 1858.

danger.¹³⁸ At the University of Georgia, for example, some students used their spare time to spread rumors of a tutor living with his fiancée and even published obituaries for a person still living.¹³⁹ At evangelical campuses, some students found creative methods to avoid mandatory activities and to make their professors' lives difficult. At Oglethorpe, Benjamin Hunter observed, "Some ruffian *tarred* the Professors door knobs and recitation rooms &c."¹⁴⁰ and some five months later, "Recitation Rooms daubed with tar. Students had an indignation meeting¹⁴¹ &c."¹⁴² If doors could not be opened and blackboards could not be used, at least some students could temporarily gain the upper hand for their own purposes. Wanting to avoid or postpone exams, the president of one of Emory's literary societies threw a feast for the faculty, hoping that they would become lazy after eating so much.¹⁴³ According to one Emory student, Z.K. Winberig perennially missed school prayers, always creating excuses with "an air of injured innocence at the merriment, equal to the best acting I have ever seen." While this certainly enabled him to miss prayers, it is also likely that he enjoyed the opportunity to cause the faculty to have "a sliver of a smile" at his misbehavior.¹⁴⁴

Numerous college students heard of fights and "scenes" on campus. Walking near the gate to his college, G.L.P. Wren once stopped to watch a knife fight between two

¹³⁸ Historian Lorri Glover summed it up, writing, "Boys attending the University of Georgia rolled cannon balls down hallways to disrupt classes, drank excessively, and caroused as much as the small town of Athens would allow. They also committed more serious offenses such as fighting, keeping pistols, and stabbing one another." Glover, *Southern Sons*, 73, see also 72-77.

¹³⁹ William Jones to his brother, March 12, 1847, Joseph Bartram Jones papers, MARBL.

¹⁴⁰ Hunter diary, January 21, 1857.

¹⁴¹ It is not clear from the context whether or not the indignation meeting was of students protesting the school and its professors or of students indignant about the prank itself. Either way, this was a public scene in which the whole school became involved, both voluntarily and involuntarily.

¹⁴² Hunter diary, June 22, 1857. Benjamin Hunter does also record on the next day that two students were expelled from the school, probably because of this incident.

¹⁴³ John Emory Rylander to his fiancée Ann, March 16, 1855, John Emory Rylander papers, MARBL.

¹⁴⁴ Hardaway recollections, 17.

students and a stranger.¹⁴⁵ At Oglethorpe, Barton Ulmer recorded multiple robberies on campus, including this one:

The other night a student rooming in what is called the “new Thalian Hall” was visited by someone; and in walking around the room [the visitor] struck the bed. This woke the student (Parsons), and asking who it was, and receiving no answer, shot twice before the robber could get out of the room. He got away but bled like a hog... Some think he bled enough to have died by this time.

This student had a loaded shotgun in his room, a clear violation of the school’s prohibition of “fire arms, sword canes, dirks, or any deadly weapon,” and he had little qualms about defending himself and his possessions. Such a scene constituted an odd enough event for Barton to describe it to his parents, but such behavior was also a common enough reality that students could make fun of the situation and the robber who “bled like a hog.”¹⁴⁶ The threat of violence was even present at Wesleyan Female where Eliza Clanton “heard *Mike Nisbett* was to fight a duel on my account with some one.”¹⁴⁷ As such accounts confirm, these colleges were comprised of a spectrum of students from those deeply concerned about their religious identity and behavior to those who saw college as an opportunity to break free of restriction.

Students followed the example of those around them and often grouped together to make these decisions regarding their daily life. At times, this could have undesired consequences. Emory student John Emory Rylander admitted his failure in studying, writing to his fiancée, “The fact is I have done less this term than any since I have been in college. Neither of my texts are agreeable. I don't like mental philosophy and astronomy tangles my brain....” However, he found this excusable because all his classmates were

¹⁴⁵ Allen diary, February 15, March 29, April 13, 1855; Wren diary, March 27, April 3, 1858.

¹⁴⁶ Ulmer, March 20, 1861, Isaac Barton Ulmer papers, SHC. Old Oglethorpe catalogue 1859-60.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas diary, April 23, 1851, cf. April 4, 1851.

doing the same: “I would not have you understand, from a previous remark, that I am falling below the standard of my class. None of us are doing as well as formerly.”¹⁴⁸

Such a comment suggests that this student relied on the encouragement and example of his fellow classmates to succeed. Students did group together to pursue common interests such as literature and religion and to encourage one another. A former classmate lamented the fact that Mary Houston had transferred from LaGrange Female College to Wesleyan Female, writing that Mary and her encouragement motivated her to attend church and Sunday school and she could not find the inspiration to do so without her.¹⁴⁹

Throughout the day, evangelical students were constantly forced to assess how and whether their actions and behavior corresponded with their developing religious identities. Each student had to decide for himself the appropriate activity and deportment for his chosen identity and the degree to which his religious beliefs would govern his life. Over time, this process solidified his religious identity, both by making it more defined and by making it a definite part of who he was.

¹⁴⁸ John Emory Rylander to Ann, March 16, 1855, Rylander papers.

¹⁴⁹ Dessie to Mary Houston, March 29, 1856, Allen papers.

Chapter 5: Looking Ahead to Adult Life

The journey through college and the establishing of a religious identity influenced many evangelical students when it came time to consider their future careers and family lives. As the conclusion of their education approached, their chosen religious identity and its corresponding standard of behavior became increasingly influential in their conceptions of adult life. Students interpreted careers and married life as opportunities to testify to their evangelical faith and to further develop their religious experience.

In the early nineteenth-century South, secular culture centered around ideas of honor and reputation. Men in the secular community sought fame and avoided shame. Political office and business success brought status, and duels saved reputation. Their lives were governed by the intense desire to establish a name for themselves. Unlike these Southerners, the evangelical community sought righteousness and feared guilt. Evangelicals desired their actions to be deemed just rather than honorable. Furthermore, they feared blame rather than demotion.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, they sought to live in harmony with fellow evangelicals and also venerated the career of the minister, a man who explicitly devoted his life to the faith.

At Southern secular colleges, graduates saw their marriage and choice of career as a means to establish their place in the Southern honor culture. Young men selected careers that would boost their reputation and expand their influence. Historian Lorri Glover argues, “In fact, southern men often thought of their public lives as performances. And careers provided an obvious venue for acting out the authority and self-confidence required of men.”¹⁵¹ In this context, a working woman symbolized economic stress and

¹⁵⁰ Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home*, 4.

¹⁵¹ Glover, *Southern Sons*, 150.

low status.¹⁵² Therefore, young graduating females sought to secure wealth and their status in society through advantageous marriages. For both young men and young women, marriage served as a definitive statement in a competitive, reputation-based culture.¹⁵³

As evangelical students developed their religious identity and reached the end of their college careers, they began to move away from their innocent and youthful impressions to more practical considerations of life and its meaning. Their religious identity forced them to reject the honor- and performance-based goals of the secular community. Unlike many of the previous generation of evangelical converts, many of them did not see ministry as the primary way to accomplish this end. Instead, they sought other opportunities to testify to their faith and to expand in their religious experience. While many of them chose similar paths to their secular contemporaries, they did so with a different purpose.

For many students, college began as a time of innocence and pleasure. Of his college days, Emory student Robert Hardaway recalled, "Life... is young and fresh. Hope is strong and our prospect is bright. Friendship seems pure and true and unselfish."¹⁵⁴ Yet, as students matured and passed through numerous experiences, they began to conclude that life was serious and full of difficulties as well as joys. As one student from the University of Georgia wrote, "The dream is past; the spell is broken and we must soon part."¹⁵⁵ In like manner, Wesleyan student Sallie Anthony wrote a classmate, "Yet I may wish your life as blest/ As mortal life may be./ But earth is not a paradise/ Nor life

¹⁵² Sweet, "The Female Seminary Movement," 50, 52-53.

¹⁵³ Glover, *Southern Sons*, 116-18, 32; Jabour, *Scarlett's Sisters*, 152.

¹⁵⁴ Hardaway recollections, 14.

¹⁵⁵ George C. Walker, J.M. Oliver, Rush family papers, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia.

a stormless sea.” Another admitted, “such perfect happiness is not to mortals given” while a third wrote, “You must not wish me to dream life away. God never intended that.”¹⁵⁶ Over the course of their college experience, students realized that they were about to enter an unpredictable adult world, one that could “be ever strewn with flowers” but could also contain “the thorns of life.”¹⁵⁷

Such a transformation in thought reflects the process of coming of age. In addition to this general realization, evangelical students also had an additional challenge to consider. Part of their religious identity included a separation from the world, which world was about to expand to include “Satan, sin, and strife.”¹⁵⁸ Emory student J. Lewis wrote to another, “[You are] soon to mingle in the bustle of active life with those whose hearts may have no pulsation in unison with your own.” He realized that he would be entering a world he believed to be counter to his identity, but he felt sure of his religious identity and the standard he had established. So he concluded, “Trust in God and do your duty and all will be well.”¹⁵⁹ Robert Lovett was even more confident, writing, “God has promised to take care of me, and if I do my duty, I need not run mad about the future.”¹⁶⁰ Similarly, another wrote, “May you ever keep the sacred influence and peace of Religion burning as a vestal fire upon the altar of your heart and your career will terminate in triumph.”¹⁶¹ With their religious identity guiding them, these students felt ready to face

¹⁵⁶ Sallie Anthony, October 16, 1857, Randie Ralson, June 5, 1858, Julia E. Lundie, Autograph Album of Julia E. Lundie, Autograph Albums, Archives, Lucy Lester Willet Memorial Library, Wesleyan College.

¹⁵⁷ Clara Smith, April 23, 1859, Lundie Album.

¹⁵⁸ Walter Scot Bird, June 27, 1858, Dawson Album; Reed, "Fortresses of Faith", 13.

¹⁵⁹ J. Lewis, Dawson Album.

¹⁶⁰ Robert Lovett to his parents, September 26, 1842, Lovett papers.

¹⁶¹ N.W. Miller, July 7, 1858, Dawson Album.

the adult world of both the unknown and secular culture. Their faith, as one student put it, would lift them above life's sorrows.¹⁶²

For most male graduates, leaving college also marked a transition into a profession. Like most graduates of state colleges, the graduates of Emory, Mercer, and Oglethorpe left college to enter the ranks of medicine, law, politics, business, education, agriculture, and ministry. Graduates of Wesleyan Female and other female institutions did not expect to work, and, in many cases, they married professionals, including the male graduates of evangelical colleges.

Students in general saw their future career as a way to express and strengthen their chosen identity. For a secular student, a career signified a means of building reputation and establishing a name for himself. For example, University of Georgia student John T. Hunt wrote, "Let us build ourselves a monument, a name which time will not let die. Let us remember the maxim 'What men have done, men can do.'"¹⁶³ Evangelical students instead saw their careers as opportunities to testify to their pious living. Emory student R.N. Hardeman explained his feelings, writing, "Let us endeavor to prove ourselves worthy of the name we bear – and do something for the cause of Jesus."¹⁶⁴ They earnestly desired their identity to be known and recognized by the world around them. For example, one student encouraged another, "While on Earth and pursuing the various duties of life... may you place before the world the example which you have shown to College-friends.... May, He, who holds in his hand the destiny of all things, so direct our course."¹⁶⁵ Still another wrote, "My highest aspiration is to conduct

¹⁶² J.T. Hopkins, June 25, 1858, Dawson Album.

¹⁶³ John T. Hunt to Dug, April 5, 1856, Lucius Horace Featherston papers, MARBL.

¹⁶⁴ R.N. Hardeman, July 4, 1858, Dawson album.

¹⁶⁵ Plyton A. Height, June 1858, Dawson album.

myself during my college life, as you have during yours. And I pray that the same kindness, and gentleness of disposition, and above all genuine Christian devotion, which has been the characteristic of your college course may mark your future life.”¹⁶⁶

According to these students, a proper Christian life was characterized by kindness, gentleness, and devotion, attributes cultivated during college and expressed throughout adult life.

A number of these evangelical students experienced a call to ministry or missionary work while in college. Musing on his day and that evening’s class meeting,¹⁶⁷ G.L.P. Wren wrote, “I feel greatly encouraged to serve the Lord.”¹⁶⁸ Such a commission was an outgrowth of his daily religious walk and life experience. Both Young John Allen and Atticus Haygood found inspiration in the book, *Methodism in Earnest*, an account of Methodist itinerants. Among his notes on this reading, Young resolved to be counted among those “Christians desirous of being useful, faithful servants of our God.”¹⁶⁹ Prayer among friends (and classmates) caused both Young John Allen and John Wesley Simmons to consider becoming missionaries; licensed to preach some four days before graduation, Young was appointed to the work in China and John to California. After due consideration, Young wrote his parents, “I am fully persuaded... that my heavenly master has called me to proclaim his gospel to a dying world.... I cannot enjoy religion unless I give my consent to perform this responsible work.”¹⁷⁰ A fellow classmate later recalled the moment of their calling, writing, “Together, they

¹⁶⁶ G.F. Pierce, July 1, [1858,] Dawson album.

¹⁶⁷ Among Methodists, the class meeting was a small, intimate meeting of about twelve people. According to Schneider, their point was “to induce and deepen the way of the cross in the soul of the believer.” Here, believers held each other accountable and encouraged one another in their spiritual pursuit. Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home*, 79-82.

¹⁶⁸ Wren diary, March 26, 1858.

¹⁶⁹ Young J. Allen, “Book of Notes,” Allen papers.

¹⁷⁰ Young J. Allen? to Father & Mother, March 22, 1857.

received the call by the old log in the grove where they went to pray during the big revival of the spring of 1858.”¹⁷¹

Not all students experienced such a calling. In fact, Wesleyan student Alice Culler was both surprised and horrified at her classmate Mary Houston’s commitment to foreign missions. Her biographer sums up her feelings: “Alice wondered how Mollie¹⁷² could waste her life like that; but she had to admit that it was fine of Mollie to be brave enough to start off to goodness knows where.... Perhaps the bravery would atone for the foolishness.”¹⁷³ While Alice felt such a calling to be odd, Oglethorpe student Ben Hunter gave such a future serious consideration, both calling a meeting of the Missionary Association at his school¹⁷⁴ and attending numerous gatherings of the Bible Association.¹⁷⁵ Ultimately, these evangelical students had the full responsibility to adapt their religious identity from the small, separated world of the evangelical college to the larger world of adulthood.

As students began to imagine themselves as evangelicals in the wider world, they also started to consider marriage and its role in their testimony to their religious identity. The church, school, and community had clear perceptions of marriage and attempted to direct students accordingly. G.L.P. Wren wrote of the president’s speech on matrimony, which “put some of [the boys] in a notion to get married soon,” and Loula Kendall’s autograph album includes a teacher’s entry on the characteristics of matrimony.¹⁷⁶ A well-meaning friend sent Benjamin Hunter a tract entitled “Advice to Young Married

¹⁷¹ Frank L. Little, “Oxford in the Fifties,” 272.

¹⁷² Mary Houston also went by the more informal name, “Mollie.”

¹⁷³ Mary Culler White, *The Portal of Wonderland: The Life-Story of Alice Culler Cobb* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1925), 39-40.

¹⁷⁴ Hunter diary, April 16, 1857, cf. January 27, April 23, 1857.

¹⁷⁵ Hunter diary, March 15, May 17, 1857.

¹⁷⁶ Wren, diary, March 23, May 5, 1858; R.B. Clayton, “Matrimony,” Friendship’s album of Loula Kendall Rogers, Rogers papers.

People” on his twenty-second birthday.¹⁷⁷ Under such pressure, marriage was a common topic of consideration. After hearing of his hometown friend’s marriage, John Dudley Tatum began to consider his own marriage prospects, writing home, “I am sorry to hear of so many getting married during my absence. I am affraid every lady will be married before I return, tell them to hold until I return.”¹⁷⁸ Oglethorpe student Robert Fleming advised a friend to marry “a lovely wife, *the guardian angel of every man’s existence.*”¹⁷⁹ Engagements among students were common as students often wrote about their friends’ lovers; one such remark reads, “Several of our boys have their hearts centered [at Wesleyan Female]. Miss Rylander's SweetHe- is one of my particularly friends. So is the Cousin of Miss Lundy &c.”¹⁸⁰ While at Emory, John Emory Rylander remained preoccupied with thoughts of his sweetheart; he assured her, “Already is my life consecrated to you: and for a few months past all of my action has been of such a nature as to prepare me to make you happy.”¹⁸¹

Students desired their marriage to be in harmony with their religious identity. Evangelicals encouraged their young people to marry within their own denomination, so as to solidify their religious community.¹⁸² These students were coming of age within an evangelical world at the same time they were looking for future spouses. George Gilman Smith’s dilemma following his conversion is illustrative. Uncertain how to deal with his past and his sweetheart of the time, he wrote in his diary,

I wrote to Belle and confessed my love for her – I frankly told her all that I had intended to devote my life to the service of my God as an itinerant

¹⁷⁷ Hunter diary, February 18, 1857.

¹⁷⁸ John Dudley Tatum to unknown, January 26, 1856, John Dudley Tatum letters, SHC. This letter was written by John shortly after he left Mercer University for the University of North Carolina.

¹⁷⁹ Robert Fleming, autograph album of Dave, Old Oglethorpe.

¹⁸⁰ Young J. Allen to Mary Houston, March 3, 1957, Allen papers.

¹⁸¹ John Emory Rylander to his fiancée Ann, March 16, 1855, Rylander papers.

¹⁸² Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 139.

Methodist preacher, that I loved her, that next to my God I loved her better than all beside and if she would consent to in time to become mine, I would be truly happy, if not that I could breathe no reproach for perhaps she would be happier in some other position.

Having solidified his religious identity, George now saw marriage as another support for the most important part of his new life: his religious identity.¹⁸³

The question of marriage to an unconverted person presented a clear challenge to a student's decision to lead a pious life for God. Even though they were engaged, Young John Allen worried that Mary Houston's lack of a definite conversion experience would make them incompatible. "I feel my destiny is yours," he wrote, "that 'we are one and inseparable' and should act in harmony and in a manner to render each other happy." A common religious identity was one matter Young felt necessary for their marriage to be harmonious; therefore, "with earnestness have I poured out my heart in supplication for thy conversion."¹⁸⁴ Emory student Nick Featherston faced a similar dilemma; initially, he found his sister's prospective union with an unconverted man problematic. In his counsel to her, he questioned which biblical promise should apply: "the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife"¹⁸⁵ or "he that loveth father or mother or husband or wife more than me, is not worthy of me."¹⁸⁶ In this case, Nick was willing to alter his standard, concluding, "We have not long to live in this world; and we can afford to live most any way, if by so doing we obtain a life of happiness hereafter." Through this experience, Nick decided a life of happiness superseded a need to be particularly pious.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ George Gilman Smith diary, April 26, 1855, Smith papers.

¹⁸⁴ Young John Allen to Mary Houston, March 16, 1855, Allen papers.

¹⁸⁵ 1 Corinthians 7:14.

¹⁸⁶ Matthew 10:37.

¹⁸⁷ C.N. Featherston to sister Katie, May 21, 1859, Featherston papers.

As students matured, they moved away from developing their religious identity to considering how it would influence and expand beyond their college years. They began to determine how their careers and marriages would allow them to continue to uphold their religious identity and to follow their standard of behavior established while at school. At this juncture, their religious identity expanded from their image among their peers to a testimony and stance in the greater world. These decisions would serve as the basis of mid-nineteenth century Southern evangelical culture.

Chapter 6: A Destiny beyond Time

For these evangelical students, considering the future after graduation entailed more than choices about careers and future family life. As students looked ahead, they became increasingly cognizant of a life beyond this earthly life. Their life on earth had a destiny, a goal, that was not earthly; instead, it was a preparation for the one to come. During college, conversion itself served as an inspiration to establish a godly manner of living. Over time, however, students shifted their focus from their conversion experience in the past to thoughts of another life in the future. This belief in an afterlife became the motivation to continue leading a pious life according to their evangelical standard.¹⁸⁸

Attention to the afterlife was essential to antebellum evangelical faith. In many ways, this destiny governed the entire Christian life of an evangelical. These Christians recognized the mortality of the physical body but also believed that the soul was immortal.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, they were motivated to forsake the secular world in order to best prepare their souls for eternal life with God after death. This same belief caused many evangelicals to attempt to convert their family members lest the household be split in the future with some going to heaven to be with God while others suffered eternal condemnation.¹⁹⁰ It was such a belief that empowered a significant number of evangelicals to shift their focus from practical occupations to religious activities in anticipation of the second coming of Christ.¹⁹¹ Because they viewed the next life as their

¹⁸⁸ Leonard I. Sweet, *Health and Medicine in the Evangelical Tradition: "Not by Might nor Power"* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1994), 179.

¹⁸⁹ E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2003), 262.

¹⁹⁰ Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 127-28.

¹⁹¹ In the early nineteenth century, William Miller determined that Christ would return on October 22, 1844. He encouraged Christians to forsake all their earthly concerns, so they could focus on preparing for this event. Some of his followers went so far as to give up their jobs and sell their property. On that particular day, numerous Christians went to the mountains in order to meet the Lord. This day has been

true destiny, evangelicals devoted more attention to preparation for this other life than to their status and vocation in the present age.

Students at evangelical colleges likely had already considered ideas of life and death when they had encountered sickness and the threat of death. Because of the prevalence of disease and the lack of proper healthcare, illness and death were commonplace at nineteenth-century American colleges, and in society in general.¹⁹² Yet, at some point after their conversion and adoption of a religious identity, students would have had to reconsider this threat to their existence and who they understood themselves to be. Death and illness both demanded an ideological explanation and affected beliefs central to students' religious identity.

Students were concerned that one died as a Christian. This concern motivated them to live piously so that they could die assured of their Christian status and as a testimony to their friends and relatives.¹⁹³ Musing on the death of a childhood friend, Emory student Young John Allen wrote, "Thank God she has flown to [the] heavens – she was a Christian, died in faith, in triumph and laid down to rest in peace."¹⁹⁴

Similarly, Wesleyan graduate Lou Burge yearned to leave her life of suffering in a pious fashion. Reflecting on the passing of another, she wrote, "to... die without one hope for the future, nothing attractive beyond the grave. God grant that death grant me not thus, not shrinking from the future but rejoicing in the hopes of an eternal heaven beyond the

termed the Great Disappointment as no one witnessed Christ's visible appearance. While Miller's teachings represent an extreme preoccupation with Christ's second coming, many other evangelicals were also eagerly anticipating and preparing themselves for this event. See Edwin S. Gaustad, *A Religious History of America* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1966), 151-52.

¹⁹² Swails, "Literary Societies as Institutions of Honor", 85; Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2008), xii. Dolly Burge diary, June 29, 1863, Burge family papers.

¹⁹³ Sweet, *Health and Medicine in the Evangelical Tradition*, 179, 84-85.

¹⁹⁴ Young J. Allen to Mary Houston, March 16, 1855, Allen papers.

grave.”¹⁹⁵ Similarly, in fear of her sister’s death, Loula Kendall became desperate for a sure conversion, pleading, “Oh my God... *teach* me to be a Christian.”¹⁹⁶ Even in the face of economic trouble, Robert W. Lovett resolved to “try and live right knowing that ‘man lives not on bread alone, but &c.’”¹⁹⁷ Students were determined to remain firm in their religious identity through trouble and adversity as well as good times.

Central to this belief of the afterlife was Heaven, the place where Christians would be with God and with each other after ending their course on earth. Students were taught that such a future was a promise to genuine Christians; Heaven would be a beautiful place of rest without sorrow where all loved would be reunited.¹⁹⁸ Students looked forward to spending eternity with God’s presence. As one student wrote, “Were I in *Heaven* without my God/ ‘Twould be no joy to me.”¹⁹⁹ Robert Lovett defined Heaven as the place of union for those “who have lived for & at last died in the Lord.”²⁰⁰ While students had always known this promise, their experiences and encounters with sin and woe caused them to more eagerly anticipate a beautiful future with God.

At times, students often feared death and were unsure how to confront it. Death created an emptiness that seemed impossible to fill.²⁰¹ For example, Wesleyan student Loula Kendall admitted that she was afraid to even acknowledge sickness among her classmates. In June 1856, she wrote, “I have heard of so many deaths and sickness this

¹⁹⁵ Lou Burge diary, January 7, 1862, Burge papers.

¹⁹⁶ Rogers journal, September 27, 1855.

¹⁹⁷ Matthew 4:4 – “But [Jesus] answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Robert Lovett to his parents, January 31, 1842, Lovett papers.

¹⁹⁸ Dolly Burge to Lou Burge, January 3, [1860?], Burge papers; Jennie to Mary Houston, April 29, [1856], M.H.H. Lay to mother, December 1855, Allen papers.

¹⁹⁹ Young J. Allen, “Book of Notes.”

²⁰⁰ Robert Lovett to his mother, May 16, 1839, Lovett papers.

²⁰¹ Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 146.

year, that it frightens me to see any look badly.”²⁰² In their diaries, both Emory student G.L.P. Wren and Oglethorpe student Benjamin Hunter briefly and abruptly mentioned the passing of a fellow student, perhaps feeling a sense of inability and unwillingness to confront the situation. Benjamin’s entire entry for the day reads, “Results of examination announced. News of Adam’s death came.” This comment on the passing of Adam seems out of place with his notes of other developments, church attendance, and school occurrences.²⁰³ Mary Houston took such avoidance to the extreme. Following the passing of her mother, sister, and brother-in-law, she left one college, a place “associated in [her] mind with many sad moments,” and enrolled in Wesleyan Female, a place away from her home and those dreaded memories.²⁰⁴ Yet students could flee from death for only so long. As they matured and developed their own individual identities, students began to come to terms with the idea of death as well.

During this process, students turned inward, finding comfort in God’s care and the promise of another life to come. Such a move represented the culmination of a process of turning from self-effort and strength to a reliance on religious experience for guidance. As the passing of his beloved Libbie became inevitable, Mercer student Samuel Richards resigned himself to the will of God, writing, “Might she but die with the hope of the child of God... that we who lose her *now* may hope to join her in a brighter home above!”²⁰⁵ Likewise, Emory student Robert Lovett comforted his parents, writing, “We might

²⁰² Rogers journal, June 1856.

²⁰³ Wren diary, May 24, 1858; Hunter diary, June 24, 1857; Swails, "Literary Societies as Institutions of Honor", 88.

²⁰⁴ Dintque to Mary Houston, February 15, 1857, Allen papers.

²⁰⁵ Richards diary, September 3, 1846.

lament over our sad condition, but when contemplating this subject hope... bids [us] look to the *rest* that is prepared for the good.”²⁰⁶

Such experiences also caused students to reconsider life and to find their own understanding of its meaning. As they approached the close of the collegiate career, students grew out of their youthful, naïve expectations of life, realizing that life brought trials and sorrow in addition to success and joy. The passing of a friend led Young John Allen to note, “Oh! how sad the news – it warns me of my own decay.”²⁰⁷ The combination of the coming of age process with observations of trials and suffering caused students to become cognizant that life was fleeting and man mortal. As they struggled to make sense of the brutalities of fate, students such as Oglethorpe student George Barnsley concluded that “life has some higher objects than the gratification of selfish passion.”²⁰⁸ Mary Houston similarly observed that there must be more to life than “a seeking of pleasures which were but momentary; and from which no good ever resulted.”²⁰⁹

Students’ religious identity empowered them to look for meaning in life after death, causing them to direct their course towards a future in eternity.²¹⁰ Emory student Warren Bush advised a fellow student, writing, “From the very bottom of a sincere heart, to you as a friend, as a brother, I would say remember, that, life is to prepare for death.”²¹¹ Classmate Plypton Hight concurred, “While on Earth and pursuing the various

²⁰⁶ Robert Lovett to his parents, March 29, 1841, Lovett papers.

²⁰⁷ Allen diary, March 13, 1855.

²⁰⁸ Sister to George Barnsley, June 25, 1855, Barnsley papers.

²⁰⁹ Mary Houston to Young J. Allen, November 2, 1854, Allen papers.

²¹⁰ E. Brooks Holifield, *Health and Medicine in the Methodist Tradition: Journey Towards Wholeness* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 91.

²¹¹ Warren Bush, July 2, 1858, Dawson album.

duties of life; May you ever keep in view the End.”²¹² At the conclusion of their collegiate career, such students had determined that their earthly life had a destiny outside of time, and, in one way or another, this life ought to be a preparation for the next. By the close of his college years, one Emory student wrote another, “Trust more in the future than anything which you may find here! For all earthly joys, are perishing.”²¹³ The promise of a better future made students willing and eager to continue to pursue the godly living they had developed as college students.

With such a goal, graduation or leaving college marked less a time of farewell than a temporary separation between friends. Because of limited transportation and the dictates of Southern rural life, these nineteenth-century students had little hope of seeing each other again after they left college. One Emory student wrote, “Sad do I feel to know it indeed can be; That you again, I never – no never may see.” A secular student concurred, writing, “We must forever part.”²¹⁴ While students would continue to keep in touch through correspondence, the end of their school days marked a transition into separate paths, which were unlikely to overlap.

Like their secular counterparts, evangelical students desired to be remembered by one another even when they were separated by physical space. Several University of Georgia students wrote to George Rush, “Dear George, remember me as your friend and brother Demosthenian.”²¹⁵ Both Oglethorpe student E. Calhoun and Wesleyan student M.B. Bellamy wrote poems to fellow classmates with the refrain, “Remember me!”²¹⁶

²¹² Plypton A. Hight, June 1858, Dawson album.

²¹³ Tom, December 31, 1858, Dawson album.

²¹⁴ J.H.P., Dawson album; J.E.D. Marion, January 24, 1844, Autograph Album of Olive “Princess” H. Norton, Richards family papers.

²¹⁵ Rush album, *passim*.

²¹⁶ E. Calhoun, Dave’s album, Old Oglethorpe. M.B. Bellamy, July 9, 1858, Lundie album.

However, friendship for evangelical students did not merely depend on the memories of those involved. They believed that their parting was temporary, and they eagerly anticipated a joyful reunion in Heaven. Friendship, as one Wesleyan student defined it, was “begun on earth – renewed above.”²¹⁷ Similarly, Wesleyan student Loula Kendall wrote to a fellow student, “Hope’s sweet enchanting voices sing ‘We part to meet again’!”²¹⁸ Emory student J. Lewis wrote, “After our separation meet we in Heaven” while classmate Plypton Hight concurred “that we shall meet, if meet we do, to dwell together in the ‘Realms of Bliss.’”²¹⁹ One Emory student went so far as to claim that the parting of friends strengthened one’s faith in a future life, writing to another, “It is much better that there should be frequent partings here, that we may be reminded of the hereafter, that we may not forget that we have here ‘no comforting city.’”²²⁰ The hope of a life to come caused these students to regard their graduation and the rest of their life differently.

As they matured, secular students also became conscious of man’s mortality, but there was little that they could do about it. One student at the University of Georgia warned his friend of the “stern realities of life,” but his only hope was that he and his friend would be remembered, that is, “our friendship be handed to posterity.”²²¹ A fellow student, John T. Hunt, lamented the blindness of fate:

The future is all dark & gloomy to me. Oh! that I knew my future destiny!
That is hidden from me by an impenetrable veil. I can’t raise the curtain
to take a pass at the scenes which await me. I can’t penetrate the future. I
can’t control the past. Hence I must *carpe diem* – for that is all we can
claim.... Let us, therefore, be among those who “will do or die.”

²¹⁷ Ida L. Winship, Rogers album.

²¹⁸ Loula W. Kendall, Lundie album.

²¹⁹ J. Lewis, Plypton A. Hight, June 1858, Dawson album.

²²⁰ A.G.H., July 3, 1858, Dawson album.

²²¹ George C. Walker, Rush album.

In the face of mystery, he embraced chance and the hope of fame.²²² Realizing that man's days are finite, many secular people lived for the present moment, a time of life that could never be recovered once passed. Furthermore, these secular students valued the time of youth as the epitome of their life, causing them to spend the rest of their life looking backward to a glorious youth. As one University of Georgia student wrote, "Let us never forget the golden sunshine of our college days."²²³

In contrast to their secular peers, these evangelical students had a hope for the future, a hope of another life beyond the mortal one. Therefore, they chose to live with the future in view, directing their lives in such a way that would prepare them for a better life in heaven. On the brink of graduation, they anticipated a godly life guided by the standard of behavior established while students and leading to another life above. This hope in the future became the guiding motivation to maintain a strong and a definite religious identity and a strict and pious living.

²²² John T. Hunt to Dug, April 5, 1856, Featherston papers.

²²³ George C. Walker, Rush album.

Conclusion

The election of Republican president Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and the subsequent firing at Fort Sumter, South Carolina in 1861 would mark the beginning of a new era in American history. As war became increasingly inevitable, students and their colleges also got caught up with war fervor and regional loyalty. Male students from Emory, Mercer, and Oglethorpe rapidly formed military units or returned home to join local regiments to defend their homeland. Mercer student Isaac Barton Ulmer described the atmosphere to his father in this way:

...the boys are leaving almost daily. The Junior Class, I think, will disband entirely.... I think, (you may not agree with me tho') that it is absolutely detrimental to the mind to try to study now. For the attention can not be fixed on a text book for any length of time. I greatly hoped to finish my education at this place, but now I see no probability of it. College may close in less than three or four weeks, and when that happens it will hardly open again, that is, until the war closes.... If there is any company at home, I would like to join it. I think it is my duty and I know it is my pleasure.

Less than one week later, Barton reported actual plans to close the college.²²⁴ Pleas from parents to continue education were of little avail. Henry Graves' father wrote, "The spring time of life will soon pass away, and every hour neglected or lost can never be regained, whereas if you should seek military honor or fame that comes with man there will be time enough after you have done with your school."²²⁵ Yet, within months, Henry joined the army; even had he stayed as his younger brother Dutton did, Emory itself closed in the fall due to the paucity of students.²²⁶

²²⁴ Issac Barton Ulmer to his father, May 13, 1861, May 18, 1861.

²²⁵ Iverson L. Grave to Henry Graves, May 5, 1861, Graves papers. cf. Father to Robert C. Eve, March 28, 1861, Emory Records.

²²⁶ Richard Harwell, ed. *A Confederate Marine: A Sketch of Henry Lea Graves with Excerpts from the Graves Family Correspondence, 1861-1865* (Tuscalosa, Ala: Confederate Publishing Company, Inc., 1963), 15, 22.

Unlike the male schools, Wesleyan Female College remained open and thriving throughout the war. As Ella Anderson later wrote, “The college was kept open during all of these trying days, and went on regularly with its work, with the exception of two or three weeks when General Sherman passed by on his march to the sea, and of two days when General Wilson took possession of the city.”²²⁷ Loyalty to the Confederacy became increasingly important in female student social life and students became more and more occupied by the war.²²⁸

When the Civil War broke out, the generation of evangelicals who came of age between 1835 and 1861 became part of the generation who fought the war. By 1861, evangelicals composed a large contingent of Southerners. Their values become important when considering motivations behind the war and reactions after the war.²²⁹ This second generation had become more integrated into the Southern honor culture, embarking on similar career paths, and they shared a common support for the Confederacy. While superficially they acted much like their secular peers, their motivations and goals for their lives and actions still remained distinctly different. Looking forward to the blessings of a future life with God, they sought to live a life that pleased God according to a specific standard of behavior. As with everything else, they understood the Confederate ideals in terms of their religious identity. In order to comprehend evangelical motives and

²²⁷ Ella Anderson Clark, “Reminiscences of Old Macon and Wesleyan Female College,” James Osgood Andrew Clark papers; Young, “Genius Uncultivated...!” 189-91.

²²⁸ Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle*.

²²⁹ Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 261-66; Owen, *The Sacred Flame of Love*, 90, 189.

conceptions of the Civil War and Reconstruction, it is imperative to consider the development of their religious identity.²³⁰

The process of coming of age within the evangelical faith also sheds light on the social implications of coming of age in the American South. Given society's rules and expectations, young people still had to claim an identity of their own and develop a manner of living that testified to it. Becoming evangelical had a different meaning for the second generation of young people. Unlike their parents, they had been raised within evangelical culture and were already familiar with its theology and requirements. Yet, those who chose to identify themselves as evangelicals had to establish their own standard of behavior and find a motivation to continue living in this way. During this process, they became more willing to adapt to the surrounding society and act like their secular peers because they associated their religious identity with a particular sense of purpose rather than mere outward behavior.

As they graduated from college and entered the adult world, evangelical students brought with them a full understanding of their religious beliefs and its implications. Conversion and subsequent spiritual experiences substantiated their theological knowledge as well as their interest in living for God. Through a period of experimentation and assessment, they each established and defined an individualized standard of behavior that governed many aspects of their daily life. This particular identity created in adolescence influenced their vocational and marital decisions and resulted in a future-oriented outlook directed heavenward.

²³⁰ Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1987); Daniel W. Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

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