SCHOOLING FOR SALVATION: RELIGION, CULTURE, AND THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH'S REJECTION OF JEFFERSON'S EDUCATIONAL VISION

by

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(Under the Direction of Ronald E. Butchart)

ABSTRACT

Historians have frequently noted yet rarely explained the educational deficiencies of the nineteenth-century American South. Antebellum southerners responded to a variety of cultural realities that made schooling different from other regions. Though the great spokesman for the diffusion of knowledge, Thomas Jefferson failed to motivate his southern neighbors into action. This dissertation asserts that such difference should not be dismissed as intellectual backwardness, willful ignorance, or the result of sparse population density. The boundaries of learning emerged from a variety of forces that governed the South, its culture, and its peculiar institutions.

Poised to exert their leadership over a southern culture increasingly refashioned according to their liking, southern evangelicals stood to benefit from a society that could read, write, and ponder its eternal salvation. Pursuit of the common good, while captivating many in other regions, never persuaded southern evangelicals to pursue a common education for all. This study seeks to elucidate the religious and cultural forces of the antebellum period that propelled southern educational difference.

INDEX WORDS: Education, Evangelicalism, Antebellum South, Religious press, Sunday school, Common school

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all of my teachers, those who sacrificed so much to help me learn. From many, I learned to read. From some, I learned how to write. From a special few, I discovered how to think critically and deeply. Unexpectedly, several teachers became my colleagues and showed me how to invest in others with grace, compassion, and skill. My debts to their labors can never be repaid. Most importantly, though, this work is for my first and foremost teachers, my parents, Hayden and Linda, whose lessons and love are beyond calculation and words.

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Words cannot express how thankful I am to my friends and family for their constant vigilance and care. Finally, hurrah to parents, Hayden and Linda, who have always offered loyalty, encouragement, and understanding. All that I ever accomplish is theirs as well.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson outlined the necessity of schooling for the new nation. Inspired by the Enlightenment, he admonished readers to envision and implement an "education adapted to the years, to the capacity, and the condition of every one, and directed to their freedom and happiness." For Jefferson, a basic education that buttressed the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic would undoubtedly insure the survival of the Republic, inhibiting the propensity of Virginians to overlook the responsibilities of citizenship, and reminding all of the moral acuity required as the young revolutionary experiment settled into an increasingly democratic unknown. For Jefferson, the people, rather than political rulers, were the "only safe depositories" of power, and education the most significant tool in constructing meaningful and just custody.[1]

Upon declaring independence, some founders across the American South initially agreed with such sentiment, deemed education a worthy venture, and cradled a constitutionally mandated state responsibility for the education of all. In North Carolina, the provincial legislature in 1776 required that schools, funded by the public, be established "for the convenient instruction of youth." In Georgia, the constitution constructed the following year concurred, determining that "schools be erected in each county, and supported at the general expense of the State."[2] South Carolina and Jefferson's Virginia, though, made no constitutional provisions for

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[1] Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia, 1785* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2010), 135-37.

[2] Edgar Wallace Knight, ed. *A Documentary History of Education in the South Before 1860: Toward Educational Independence*, vol. II (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1950), 136.

the state's responsibilities to educate children until 1835 and 1791, respectively. Some southern states later amended their laws offering attention to Jefferson's vision. Alabama founders emphatically stated in 1819 that "schools, and the means of education, shall forever be encouraged in this State" and the legislature would be responsible for securing land and funding for such institutions, while Tennessee's constitution explicitly created a common school fund in 1834, contending that "knowledge, learning, and virtue are essential to the preservation of republican institutions, and the diffusion of the opportunities and advantages of education throughout the different portions of the State are highly conducive to the promotion of this end."[3] State constitutions in the South seemingly embraced the vision of Jefferson, reflecting not only the unity born amid shared revolution, but also an understanding that the survival of the Republic was neither inevitable nor facile. Southern leaders generally agreed that "schools and the means of education were regarded as the moral enemy to arbitrary and despotic government" and the "surest basis of liberty."[4]

Absent from this public rhetoric and state law was, as one historian surmised and contended, "an inordinate distrust of all forms of education" inherent in the southern experience.[5] The South, exiting Revolution, seemingly shared a similar vision for schooling that would later

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[3] Ibid., 136-38; Edgar Wallace Knight, *Public Education in the South* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1922), 125-33. Knight claims that Virginia and South Carolina, though providing funds and state-level administration for public education, were "tardy in making educational provisions," in comparison to other states (129).

[4] Knight, *Public Education in the South*, 112-19. Knight, though, argued that the interest in public education was not widespread, however popular among some "leading men."

[5] William R. Taylor, "Toward a Definition of Orthodoxy: The Patrician South and the Common Schools," *Harvard Educational Review* 36 (December 1966): 413.

captivate antebellum Americans in general.[6] Despite such rhetoric concerning the purposes of education in the new nation, southerners failed to implement thoroughly and to incorporate successfully such initial pronouncements about the nature of liberty, knowledge, and the Republic. Historians have long deemed Jefferson's vision a failure in the region, concluding that without a massive groundswell of democratic ethos among the masses, such schooling was impossible.[7] Some have even agreed with W.E.B. DuBois that "public education for all at public expense was, in the South, a Negro idea" as freedpeople demanded and secured basic schooling.[8]

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[6] For a discussion of the national relationship between education, politics, and the growth of the Republic, see Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983). Kaestle argued that southerners were motivated by an ideology that combined republicanism, Protestantism, and capitalism. This ideology and the "uncertainty" the revolutionary generation passed to posterity caused many to view the survival of the Republic dependent upon the morality of the people. This anxiety and the posed solution encouraged the development of the common school. Lawrence Cremin contended that the "great crucible of American republicanism" was the movement to create voluntary societies and association for social change, in response to the revivalism of the Second Great Awakening (63). The justification for the common school, according to Cremin, was also the work of Adam Smith, who argued that governments had an interest in keeping the common folk from their own stupidity. Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980). Milton Gaither argued that among the revolutionary generation, republican ideology "fused" Protestant traditions with the work of "secular, Enlightenment-oriented thinkers," producing a masculine force of freedom, a "courageous devotion to the public good," while fighting the feminine Britain, which had weakened civic responsibilities (19). Milton Gaither, *American Educational History Revisited: A Critique of Progress* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2003), 7-57.

[7] Perhaps the idea was first posed in a critical fashion in Hinton Rowan Helper and George M. Fredrickson, *The Impending Crisis of the South; How to Meet It* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968). Using quantitative data, Hinton argued throughout that the South had "long loitered and languished" in the efforts to extend education to all. For early twentieth-century educational historians, such as Dabney and Knight, the relatively few number of public schools in the South constituted failure. Influenced by progressive ideology, they only conceived of education in such terms.Charles William Dabney, *Universal Education in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 19-21; Knight, *Public Education in the South*. William Reese contended that public schools were "repugnant" to the elites of the South and that white southerners "smirked" at the notion that schools could change society. William J. Reese, *America's Public Schools: From the Common School to "No Child Left Behind"* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 43.

[8] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: Toward a History of the Part of which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012). For analysis of the education of and educational demands made by African Americans after the American Civil War, see Horace Mann Bond, *The Education of the Negro in the Amerian Social*

In their textbook, William J. Cooper and Thomas E. Terrill deemed a 20.3 percent illiteracy rate in 1850 among southerners "a damning indictment of the educational system, or, more precisely, a dramatic indication of the lack of one."[9] Some have countered this charge, arguing instead that "it is literacy, rather than illiteracy, that needs to be explained."[10]

Even as modernization, industrialization, and reform revolutionized antebellum society and battled the social ills outside the peculiar South, southern states lagged in the implementation of such grandiose visions of schooling for all. Though academies, denominational colleges, and calls for greater reform flourished, University of Georgia President and Presbyterian Alonzo Church lamented before the 1845 meeting of the Georgia Historical Society that "the line between the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated" was increasing and the "desire

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Order (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1934); James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Ronald E. Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2010). Much of this work has challenged the notion that education was given to, imposed upon, and provided for freedpeople during and after Reconstruction, arguing instead that African Americans struggled for and demanded educational sustenance and the resultant liberty independently of whites.

[9] William J. Cooper and Thomas E. Terrill, *The American South: A History*, 4th ed., vol. I (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009).

[10] Beth Barton Schweiger, *The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).Using 1860 census data, Schweiger contends that 85 percent of Virginians could read though only 40 percent of children obtained formal education. Though she claimed that "without Horace Mann or Public schools, and given their agricultural economy, Southerners learned to read in astonishing numbers" (67), she ignored the realities of New England, which had achieved nearly universal literacy by the Revolution, without urban spaces, Mann, or systems of public education. For historiographical analysis of literacy rates, see Gerald F. Moran and Maris A. Vinovskis, "Literacy, Common Schools, and High Schools in Colonial and Antebellum America," in *Rethinking the History of American Education*, ed. William J. Reese and John L. Rury (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 17-46.

to acquire even the elements of knowledge [was]…diminishing—and the want of education [was] losing in the estimation" of many.[11]

A Vermonter who lived most of his life in Georgia, Church argued that a system of public education was the only remedy to the ignorance and inequality that pervaded southern life. Even in Massachusetts, according to Church, generations had descended into a lack of curiosity that was only recently resurrected by the development of a common school system as proposed and celebrated by many well-intentioned, passionate reformers. For Church, such an example should provide a tremendous model for Georgia, as he encouraged his Savannah audience to "educate its sons, elevate its inhabitants, by showing them the value of knowledge" and "soon produce a population which will turn those now barren hills into fruitful fields."[12]

What realities forced Jefferson and Church to repeat such a similar refrain to little avail? Was Jefferson's original design for public, common schooling trampled, as historian William Taylor concluded, by the "ignorance, prejudice and irrational fears among the ordinary citizens and planters of the counties?"[13] Was public education a "failure" in the antebellum period because the region succumbed to a reactionary force opposed to the advance of modernization, progress, and the blossoming of institutions scarred with Yankee pretenses?[14] As the new nation

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[11] Alonzo Church, A Discourse Delivered before the Georgia Historical Society: on the Occasion of its 6th Anniversary, on Wednesday, 12th Feb., 1845. Savannah [Ga.], available from Sabin Americana. Gale, Cengage Learning. April 2010.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Taylor, "Toward a Definition of Orthodoxy," 420. Taylor asserts that southerners made education a private matter to "inculcate southern orthodoxies" and to stand as the "shield and buckler of slavocracy," rather than a foundation for republican government. This interpretation echoes the work of Clement Eaton, who argued that the "splendid traditions of the eighteenth-century aristocracy" were destroyed by southern evangelicalism and political orthodoxy. Clement Eaton, *Freedom of Thought in the Old South* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940).

[14] Dabney, *Universal Education in the South*; Knight, *Public Education in the South*.

matured, many southerners, possibly as sluggards, obstructionists, or backward hotheads, ostensibly rejected the means by which the other states and communities offered a meaningful educative experience to all young citizens. These characterizations and assumptions, bound by claims of southern distinctiveness and a resistance to modernization and reform that eventually fueled civil war, have dominated the narrative of antebellum southern schooling.

According to early twentieth-century educational historians, the American South was an anomaly in the grand narrative of education, specifically its institutional and public forms that supported an expanding and triumphant democracy. Historian Elwood Cubberley noted that all southern men were "lukewarm" or wholly against public education. For Cubberley and his fellow progressive educators, the distinctiveness of the region proved a convenient foil to the grandiose underpinnings of such a universally cherished institution—the modern public school. Though charged with perusing the historical record with skepticism and a nod to the claims of objectivity, these historians found the South's educational institutions easy to cast aside, ignore, or denounce. Though interested in the larger narrative rather than southern difference, historian Bernard Bailyn criticized the Cubberleyan school for praising reformers, celebrating the triumph of public schooling, and trying to create a past usable to contemporary institutions. Limited by the same paradigms that plagued progressives like Cubberley and chastised by Bernard Bailyn, historians seemingly looked only for schools and institutions in the South recognizable to contemporary eyes, usually public in nature and inclusive in systemic goals and curricular ends.[15]

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[15] Ellwood Patterson Cubberley, *The History of Education: Educational Practice and Progress Considered as a Phase of the Development and Spread of Western Civilization* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), 673. For a critique of the Progressive tradition and its limited vision of learning, see Bernard Bailyn, *Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study* (New York: Norton, 1972). For a critique of Bailyn and the limited influences of his proposals, see Gaither, *American Educational History Revisited*. Gaither charged that Bailyn was guilty of his own

The challenges of writing an educational history of the region stem from the South's nebulous relationship to the national narrative of education. No matter the interpretation, whether inspired by Cubberly, Bailyn, or even Katz's narrative of social control, the South has been marginalized from the narrative of antebellum schooling. In arguments for either the political, economic, or social origins of the common school, the forces delineating education—democratic politics, bourgeois social control, or industrial capitalism—exclude the region.[16] The South's exceptional status in the narrative appeared, no matter how rarely, with little depth or complexity. Indeed, at the greatest convergence, the South and public education—available to all and funded by the community—have rarely made amicable partners. Historian Thomas Dyer noted that in the region public education was "a foreign concept." Others have determined that public schooling was inherently a "very un-southern idea."[17] In *Pillars of the Republic*, Carl Kaestle argued that the South's divergent pedagogical path, often portrayed and too often dismissed as offering a separate vision of education, remained only a "half-truth," while, historian John Hardin Best, in his essay "Education and the Forming of the American South," argued that the South had not resisted the educational mainstream as an outsider, but rather an

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characterization of the progressives and that he wrote in a tradition that public education, consumed with the pursuits of relevance and social reform, had forgotten true scholarship and its academic sustenance. Another revision of the narrative occurred with Michael B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968). Katz argued that public education was a story of social control, in which wealthy, prominent Massachusetts elites deliberately offered the lower classes a future of subservience in the guise of social improvement.

[16] Albeit in a separate chapter, segregated from the main argument, Carl Kaestle offered the most significant attempt to attend to the educational realities of the antebellum period. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 182-217.

[17] Thomas G. Dyer, "Education," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, ed. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Bruce W. Eelman, "'An Educated and Intelligent People Cannot be Enslaved': The Struggle for Common Schools in Antebellum Spartanburg, South Carolina," *History of Education Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (June 2004): 250-270.

integral, though clearly oppositional, complement. The southern view of American education, hesitant to offer equality and opportunity to all, nonetheless confirmed the value of learning and its relationship to personal and social mastery, according to Best. Education was an essential provision for some and entirely illegal for others. Historian Wayne Urban highlighted traditional forces, specifically the region's rural character and commitment to evangelical Christianity, which have impeded the embrace of public schooling for the region. Despite these powerful forces, though, skepticism of the systematizing and centralizing from above typical of modern institutions, indeed, appeared neither distinctly southern, nor wholly conservative, and evangelical vision certainly prompted many to pursue literacy and learning for the salvation of all, rather than barricading knowledge and truth.[18]

The story of education in the antebellum South must be a story of difference, though perhaps not a story of failure. Explaining southern exceptionalism in this period must utilize a more systematic gaze that takes Bailyn's critique seriously, allowing for voices beyond and behind the public schoolhouse to illuminate the educational story of the period. One certainly cannot assume that states outside the South were in perfect alignment with Jefferson's vision either.[19] Even still, occasional commentaries on the ineptitude of southern institutions, the

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[18] Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, xi; John Hardin Best, "Education and the Forming of the American South," *History of Education Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (Spring 1996). ; Wayne J. Urban, "History of Education: A Southern Exposure," *History of Education Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (Summer 1981). David Tyack, "The Kingdom of God and the Common School: Protestant Ministers and the Educational Awakening in the West," *Harvard Educational Review* 36, no. 4 (Fall 1966); Timothy L. Smith, "Protestant Schooling and American Nationality, 1800-1850," *The Journal of American History* 53, no. 4 (March 1967). Timothy Smith and David Tyack have both analyzed the role of religion and the development of the common school, arguing that for many reformers republican ideology fused with Christian identity. Smith argued that for many "Americanism and Protestantism were synonyms and that education and Protestantism were allies" (680).

[19] For an analysis that challenges the notion that antebellum Americans in general embraced Jefferson's vision, see Daniel Walker Howe, "Church, State, and Education in the Young American Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 22 (Spring 2002): 1-22.

narrowness of slavery-induced status quo, and the uniqueness of southern culture have generated mere fragments of the story of education.

Mostly, however, the relationship of southern education to the culture from which it grew has remained auxiliary to other narratives.[20] What occurred, or perhaps failed to occur, that left Jefferson's vision and even Church's reaffirmation seemingly unattended until the demands of the freed people following civil war remains somewhat ambiguous. Perhaps, as James Anderson asserts, in the South, public education "violated the natural evolution of society, threatened familial authority over children, upset the reciprocal relations and duties of owners to laborers, and usurped the functions of the church."[21] Certainly, though, in other regions, similar institutions (slavery excluded) fostered a very different vision of what schooling could be and who should be given access to learning. Essential to any evaluation of antebellum southern

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[20] Education is frequently used to prove arguments about the activity of marginalized groups to escape southern order or the workings of culture among the elites in antebellum southern society. For example, many interpretations have utilized the education of women in the Old South to make arguments about gender and patriarchy. See Christie Anne Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South* (New York: New York University Press, 1994); Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). For education's role in shaping masculinity, see Lorri Glover, *Southern Sons: Becoming Men in the New Nation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007). For the relationship between education and charity, see Timothy James Lockley, *Welfare and Charity in the Antebellum South* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2007); Barbara L. Bellows, *Benevolence among Slaveholders: Assisting the Poor in Charleston, 1670-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993); John W. Quist, *Restless Visionaries: The Social Roots of Antebellum Reform in Alabama and Michigan* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998). For the relationship between education and the affirmation of status among the southern middle class, see Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Jennifer R. Green, *Military Education and the Emerging Middle Class in the Old South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). All of these works have used education to challenge interpretations in a variety of fields, but none have operated under the assumption that antebellum southern education was absent, though many assume southern difference from other regions. All of these interpretations will be important and incorporated into this analysis.

[21] Anderson, *Education of Blacks in the South*, 4.

education must be an intense analysis of the conversations about learning in the antebellum period—how southerners defined, valued, and determined access to education.

Some have argued that southern culture, hemmed in yet united by the bonds of slavery, devalued the education of the masses. In *The Militant South, 1800-1861*, historian John Hope Franklin argued that the slave system not only introduced violence into southern culture, but also elevated the planter, whose identity scorned egalitarianism and whose "new station as planter, slaveholder, and arbiter of the political and social order, gave him ample opportunity to put into practice his concept of Old World aristocracy."[22] This vision most certainly found little need for mass education funded by taxation. The slave system, ironically, affirmed the value of learning and literacy. In his narrative, Frederick Douglass revealed that, according to his former master, "learning would *spoil* the best [slave] in the world" and teaching a slave to read would immediately make him of little use.[23] Critical to the identity of the planter was his ability to control the literacy and learning restricted from slaves, but also to provide education for his progeny. Education thus became a marker of freedom and independence for those who could control it in antebellum society and for those who demanded it after civil war.

Slavery inhibited the impetus for educating a community, but it also promoted other, cultural values that seemingly opposed learning in general. In *Cracker Culture*, historian Grady McWhiney noted that northern-prized "skills of the scribbler, reader, and figurer" were subordinate to "the skills of the hunter, fisher, fighter, and fiddler," which southerners cherished. In addition to such curriculum, which, for McWhiney, extended directly from Celtic traditions

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[22] John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South, 1800-1861* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 65.

[23] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003), 57.

across the Atlantic, southerners also resisted the essential components of modern institutions, such as taxation and government intrusion into daily life, that were increasingly a part of the national experience. Education seemingly was inhibited by the resistance to institution-building, the federal government, and any force that could break the bonds of respectability and honor that permeated Southern culture and hierarchy. Planters viewed education as an "individual responsibility rather than a state function" and especially resisted "programs that invested in human capital."[24] These values enabled different educative experiences, which often appeared shrouded in tradition and at times anti-intellectualism, to dominate southern culture, a culture increasingly gripped by the planter elite.

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[24] Grady McWhiney, *Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1988), 210; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 72; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1890s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). Wyatt-Brown argued that a culture of honor permeated southern life and that the code of honor was a reminder of an aristocratic past, quickly fading amid a transition to market-driven, urban-centered lifestyles; Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, the Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996). McWhiney, Greenberg, and Wyatt-Brown have all built upon and challenged the interpretations offered by historians of southern plainfolk. W. J. Cash first noted the role of honor in southern culture, and in the 1980s, Frank Owlsley revealed a division between the culture of elites and plainfolk. W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South*, Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1991). Unlike Wyatt-Brown who argued that elites conditioned conceptions of honor, Cash argued that nineteenth-century southern plainfolk, who increasingly sported an evangelical faith not wholly removed from Puritanical predecessors, retained that "curious Southern hedonism which was its antithesis" (57). Inspired by violence and emergent from the backwoods, the "southron" drank excessively, cussed fervently, wrestled, not because of aristocratic codes of honor, but because "he was a hot, stout fellow, full of blood and reared to outdoor activity, because of a primitive and naïve zest for the pursuit in hand." Franklin argued that southern planters resisted taxation with immense gusto, and the "sparse population" of the region made public education inconvenient at best and impossible at worst. Franklin, *Militant South*, 130. Historian Bruce Collins noted that the need for respectability forged the white population into a single unit subservient to planter interests and eventually what would become the Lost Cause. Bruce Collins, *White Society in the Antebellum South* (New York: Longman, 1985), 160-81. For a discussion of how southern cities circumvented the sloth of the planters in establishing schools and creating "human capital," see Eelman, "An Educated and Intelligent People," 251-52.

Some have argued that the nature of southern agricultural life, especially among white non-slaveholders clamoring for young farmhands to execute daily chores, and the population's rural character, inhibited the expansion of formal educational institutions found elsewhere.[25] Rural life seemingly prompted southerners to stand by private tutors, private academies, and charity schools longer than the rest of the nation.[26] Indeed, by 1850 the South had far more academies than in the North, though such schooling was primarily for elite youth and almost entirely secondary in nature.[27] These academies were funded by families and educated older children, while charity, or pauper, schools provided basic skills to younger children especially in the South's urban areas and were usually funded by a combination of public monies and donations. The population density and rural nature of southern existence suggested by Knight

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[25] McWhiney, *Cracker Culture*, 210; Collins, *White Society in the Antebellum South*, 105; Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father's House Are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 89. In their textbook, Cooper and Terrill argued that population density indeed inhibited the growth of public school systems in the region, in addition to the widespread opinion among the planter class that education was a personal responsibility, not a collective mission. Cooper and Terrill, *American South*, I, 244-46.

[26] Reese, *America's Public Schools*, 43; Urban, "Southern Exposure," 137. Historian Theodore Sizer contended that academies failed because they were essentially rural, schools "uniquely appropriate for a population thinly spread." Theodore R. Sizer, *The Age of the Academies* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, 1964), 40. For a more recent analysis of private academies, see Kim Tolley, "The Rise of Academies: Continuity or Change?," *History of Education Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 225-39; For analysis of charity schools, see Bellows, *Benevolence among Slaveholders*; Lockley, *Welfare and Charity*.

[27] Clement Eaton, *The Growth of Southern Civilization, 1790-1860* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 114. Knight, bent on making the South a part of the progressive vision, argued that academies "served the community in the larger sense" even though they required some degree of tuition. Knight, *Public Education in the South*, 109. Edgar Wallace Knight, "The Academy Movement in the South," *The High School Journal* 3, no. 1 (January 1920): 6-11. Fox-Genovese and Genovese's work, *The Mind of the Master Class*, outlines the ideological and curricular influences on planter education. Classical education, filled with distaste for democracy, elevation of republican mothers, and tolerance of slavery, captured the imagination of the planters. They noted that these academies educated both "middling" and elite children. From medieval literature, planters gleaned "polished manners," a Romantic critique of Enlightenment calculation, and a chivalry that rested upon violence. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholder's Worldview* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

constituted a compelling refrain continued by most historians as they explained the antebellum South's educational past.

Even as the national narrative of educational history in the antebellum period has challenged the notion that an urban character and government oversight stood as prerequisites to public schooling, historians have not adequately amended their explanations of southern difference. Some have noted that rural areas outside the South embraced common schools even before urban areas, and state-controlled school systems, in fact, followed the lead of rural communities who worked to create an educational system for their children.[28] Others have even argued that northern demands for and efforts to marshal resources for education occurred firstly and primarily without the help of state reformers, legal mandates, or tax-based funding. In her essay, "Education, Social Capital, and State Formation in Comparative Historical Perspective: Preliminary Investigations," historian Nancy Beadie suggested that "schools were important agencies of social capital formation, financial investment and corporate organization *before* state intervention."[29] If such a perspective is accurate, then the need to examine the southern experience is even more profound, as the traditional arguments for southern educational difference—scattered population, lack of centralized state effort, and the absence of government

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[28] Donald Hugh Parkerson and Jo Ann Parkerson, *The Emergence of the Common School in the U.S. Countryside* (Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 1998), 138; Carl F. Kaestle and Maris A. Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change in Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

[29] Nancy Beadie, "Education, Social Capital and State Formation in Comparative Historical Perspective: Preliminary Investigations," *Paedagogica Historica* 46, no. 1-2 (February 2010): 15-52; Nancy Beadie, *Education and the Creation of Capital in the Early American Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Beadie outlines how, despite the scholarship which points to capitalist transformation in the countryside in the early national period, historians of schooling have continued to look to urban areas, even after the work of Kaestle and Vinovskis, and the literature of social and political historians fails to adequately consider the role of schools as the most significant "universal agencies of association" (9).

funding—are less telling. The evidence offered by an organized state school system seems a less compelling touchstone of education's value among citizens.

The propensity to support community reforms, whether for schools, railroads, or other public works, stemmed directly from the growth of the market and the values associated with emerging middle-class society. In *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, historian Jonathan Daniel Wells argued that most have underestimated "the extent to which southerners not only came to embrace northern ideas about capitalism, industrialization, progress, the work ethic, and internal improvements, but also to push their region to abandon aristocratic notions of honor."[30] Historians have certainly noted the existence and indeed prevalence of benevolent societies to implement such improvements even in the antebellum period.[31] The distinction between the capitalist, industrializing North and the patriarchal, agrarian South has been a useful paradigm for many, but one must envision a confluence of values and an exchange of ideas across the

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[30] Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*. For more on the middle class in the antebellum South, see Collins, *White Society in the Antebellum South*; Frank J. Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois: Merchant Culture in the South, 1820-1865* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006). Michael O'Brien argued that even though the southern "aristocracy" was "allusive rather than definitive," the middle class in the South was ill-defined: "there were those lower than the higher, higher than the lower, but few who were explicitly middling." Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 364-79. This view was expanded by historian Jennifer Green who argued that the professional class in the South demonstrated a fluid relationship between planter elites and the middle class. Most significantly, values traversed class lines. Jennifer R. Green, "Born of the Aristocracy?," in *The Southern Middle Class in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Jonathan Daniel Wells and Jennifer R. Green (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2011), 157-79.

[31] Bellows, *Benevolence among Slaveholders*. Quist, *Restless Visionaries*. Quist concludes that reform societies existed in similar fashion both in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama and Washtenaw County, Michigan, with economic realities proving more influential on activity that any southern distinctiveness, even as some Alabama slaveholders took the lead in such endeavors. Lockley, *Welfare and Charity*; John G. Deal, "Middle-Class Benevolent Societies in Antebellum Norfolk, Virginia," in *The Southern Middle Class in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Jonathan Daniel Wells and Jennifer R. Green (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011). Lockley and Deal distinguish between the attitudes toward the "virtuous poor" and those less deserving. For a discussion of southern theological views of benevolence among elites, see Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class*, 542-49.

regions, rather than permanent distinction and an obstructed divide. Wells challenged readers to consider the similarities between the regions as both the market and the middle class grew, and others have argued that such regional differences are overstated.[32] Historian Harry Watson noted that "to insist on 'capitalism' and 'pre-capitalism' as the source of the crucial social difference between the North and South would shackle historians to a rigid and useless teleology, but it would be equally foolish to ignore these differences."[33] Nevertheless, if increasing market production in the North heightened the development and interest in social capital through community institutions, such as schools, then one must consider the role of such southern attitudes toward formal education as a part of modernization as well.

By placing the region in the national narrative of modernization or by fitting the South into the Atlantic economy, some historians have argued that "southerners appealed frequently to 'ancient' and 'medieval' societies for inspiration and occasionally for comfort in the face of these dizzying changes, but few, if any, wished to remake their society in the image of those examples. They respected traditions, but unlike their premodern ancestors they refused to be bound by them."[34] Driven perhaps by a romantic view of agrarian life, some southerners prided

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[32] Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*; Frank Towers, "The Southern Path to Modern Cities: Urbanization in the Slave States," in *The Old South's Modern Worlds*, ed. L. Diane Barnes, Brian Schoen, and Frank Towers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[33] Harry L. Watson, "Slavery and the Development of a Dual Economy: the South and the Market Revolution," in *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 47. For foundational analysis of the "market revolution," see Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[34] L. Diane Barnes, Brian Schoen, and Frank Towers, "Introduction: Reimagining the Old South," in *The Old South's Modern Worlds: Slavery, Region, and Nation in the Age of Progress*, ed. L. Diane Barnes, Brian Schoen, and Frank Towers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 12.

themselves both in a pledged disinterest in the factory system and in an ostentatious prosperity driven by market demands for slave-produced southern wares.

Whether challenged by transplanted Yankees, such as Church, or the realizations of increasingly market-oriented southerners, the boundaries placed on antebellum education were constructed amid both the economic realities of modernization and the fanciful imaginations of a traditional society that only existed in the legends of an aristocratic past. Perhaps elite academies, often with private and some public funding, continued to flourish in the South because they "assumed the responsibility for schooling and socializing elite youth and they fought to hold it," rather than simply providing the medium of learning that all white southerners preferred.[35] Even the restriction of the basic staple of literacy from slaves indirectly confirmed the power of knowledge in the southern white worldview.[36] To understand the nature of these values and the variety of educational visions shared and disputed by southern whites, one must examine what southerners considered education to be, not simply what it failed to become.

In "History of Education: A Southern Exposure," historian Wayne Urban once argued that "until traditionalism and conservatism receive the same kind of treatment" that historians have implemented in analyzing reform efforts, the narrative and "understanding of educational

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[35] Steven M. Stowe, *Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Ritual in the Lives of the Planters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 134. Stowe argued that planters transitioned away from homeschooling to academies in the 1830s and 1840s in order to sustain a visible marker of parents' control amid the "good life" of the elite and to provide constant supervision of children in a home away from home. Historian Jennifer Green argued that military academies became a marker of status for middling southerners, a means of securing one's station outside the boundaries prescribed and guarded by the planter elite. Green, *Military Education and the Middle Class*.

[36] Janet Duitsman Cornelius, *"When I Can Read My Title Clear": Literacy, Slavery, and Religion in the Antebellum South* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991). Cornelius noted how whites used literacy to establish racial superiority, while slaves probably keep their literacy secret amid a society and a government that outlawed such knowledge.

reality will be largely incomplete."[37] Though few responded to Urban's admonition and many have abandoned the interpretation of the region as strictly and wholly conservative, one must engage the debates, frustrations, and hesitations by which southerners maneuvered modernization, the expansion of democracy, and the education of the masses. In framing questions of the past, historians must examine the nature of resistance to public education and the institutions with which southerners, especially those who valued education, were primarily content. Even still, one cannot simply retell the story of private tutoring, private academies, and denominational colleges isolated and segregated from the emerging common school. The conversations about the nature of education in the antebellum South might prove more telling and important to the narrative of schooling than the study of any single institution alone. One must wonder how President Church's demands were received by the Savannah learned and social well-to-do's who gathered for such an "historical" occasion, what prompted the Georgia Historical Society to publish this speech, and what discourse, both formal and informal, subsequently emerged from this censure that might illuminate the narrative of education in the later antebellum period.

For the Vermonter Church and the planter Jefferson, the evaluation of education in the South might appear very similar—both asserted that reform was needed, that education was undervalued. If Knight's assertion that tremendous variation in opinion about education abounded in the South and if Urban correctly noted that the traditionalist forces in southern education are in need of examination, one cannot simply deem the admonitions of Church and Jefferson as isolated voices within a vacuum amid a larger narrative of educational misfortunes. Historians must consult the complexity and diversity in the debates and dialogues not only about

[37] Urban, "Southern Exposure," 136.

what was missing, but also about what needed to be created. The story of education in the South must attend to the conversations about learning and the culture in which both the calls for education and the resistance to learning and formal schooling emerged.

The Evidence

To illuminate these conversations of learning within southern culture, this work will examine religious literature. Some historians have stated clearly that a relationship between public-school promotion, reform, and religion existed, but few have utilized religious sources, such as religious newspapers and periodicals, to illuminate the conversation about learning in the South. If southerners even remotely conceived of the purposes of education for moral and thus religious ends, then these sources are essential to the story of how southerners viewed education—its purposes, its forms, and its beneficiaries. Certainly the influence of religion in educational reform is Janus-faced: some have stated that southern evangelicalism was never completely merged with republicanism as in the North, while other have noted that most southern education reformers emerged almost entirely from religious experience, training, or vocation.[38] Some religious southerners were drawn to public-school possibilities, and others were less receptive.

Attending to the discussions about learning in a religious, most specifically evangelical, context is essential to understanding antebellum education in the region. In his foundational work, *Religion in the Old South*, historian Donald Mathews argued that evangelicalism was the primary "mode" of Protestantism in the antebellum South. Mathews contended that evangelicalism afforded lower and middle class southerners an awareness of identity and solidarity with others, proffering "personal esteem and liberty" to the masses. The movement

[38] Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 208. Bill Cecil-Fronsman, *Common Whites: Class and Culture in Antebellum North Carolina* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992).

was a part of a larger religious experience in the Atlantic world that challenged the formalities of liturgy and learning that had excluded so many and promised followers that "the ordinary man or woman who might claim to have the knowledge of God" was not necessarily "deranged." In *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*, historian Anne Loveland argued that evangelicals in the nineteenth century came primarily from the middle ranks of southern society and accumulated authority, not based on wealth, knowledge, or position, but on experience, namely the conversion experience, which elevated evangelicals on their own terms, or at least that prescribed by the movement, rather than those delegated from above.[39]

Some historians have argued that evangelical religion, once a faith of egalitarian dissenters, waded into the establishment and transformed into a conservative and reactionary force, defending the slaveocracy, clinging to patriarchy, and suppressing any attempts to reform traditional institutions. In her work, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt,* Christine Leigh Heyrman highlighted the radical origins of evangelical visions for society and how such extreme positions were accommodated to slavery and the conservative demands of religious radicals-turned-planters. Within this context, the issues of school, church, and family emerged. Heyrman argued that evangelical southerners gradually viewed the "home as the church" and such a view inspired practices that moved away from the original view of the "church as a home

[39] Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977). Here, evangelical remains unfortunately abstract, though the label is applied generally to Protestant Christians who, defined by a personal, and often, emotional conversion experience, embarked on process of individual pursuit of atonement and regeneration, which simultaneously bound each adherent to a distinct religious community. Generally in the South, the major evangelical denominations consisted of the Baptist, Methodists, and Presbyterians; Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 30-64.

and its members a spiritual family."[40] Evangelicals sought mastery no matter the cost, and such a pursuit certainly influenced the development of educational values and institutions.

Contrastingly, Beth Barton Schweiger argued that historians have incorrectly settled for a dichotomy: religious revivals in the North ushered change and reform, while revivals in the South protected tradition. She lamented that "the premodern character of slavery has been so often linked to revival religion that it has become akin to a geological formation in the literature." Schweiger challenged historians to return to the work of Donald Mathews who had argued that the Second Great Awakening served to organize society, encouraged the creation of community, and, as Schweiger stated, created "denominational bureaucracies that were breathtakingly new."[41] While certainly southerners used religion, religious texts, and evangelical

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[40] Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982). Isaac established the notion that evangelicals in 1700s Virginia flaunted a "zealous defiance" upon their conversion and that their perceived rejection of sin assauged their interaction with social disorder; Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 160-61. John B. Boles, *The Great Revival: Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1996). Boles argued that evangelical support of slavery became an essential ingredient to secession.

[41] Beth Barton Schweiger, "Max Weber in Mount Airy, Or, Revivals in Social Theory in the Early South," in *Religion in the American South*, ed. Beth Barton Schweiger and Donald G. Mathews (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 31-66. Schweiger challenged the notion that "whereas other American Protestants embraced innovation, southern Protestants shunned it. Whereas other Americans either welcomed or at least sought to reconcile with modernity, southern Protestants remained fiercely antimodern" (32-33); See also David Wallace Bratt, "Southern Souls and State Schools: Religion and Public Higher Education in the Southeast, 1776-1900" (Yale University, 1999). For a contrast to Heyrman, see also Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). In terms of evangelicals' views on slavery, Stephanie McCurry posited a different position from Heyrman as well, arguing that evangelicals never truly embraced an anti-slavery position and, in fact, supported slavery and patriarchy throughout the period. For interpretations of southerners as combative to modern changes, see Samuel S. Hill, *The South and the North in American Religion* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980); John B. Boles, *The Irony of Southern Religion* (New York: P. Lang, 1994); Boles, *Great Revival: Beginnings*. Donald G. Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," *American Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 23-43. Schweiger is most indebted to the work of Donald Mathews and views southern evangelicalism as Nathan O. Hatch viewed American Christianity, encouraging the spread of individualism and modern; Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Hatch, though analyzing American evangelicals in general,

weltanschauung to frame the defense of slavery, patriarchy, and the mastery of the planters, religion also provided southerners avenues to enter a new and different world, namely the creation of educational institutions. How southerners viewed this process, negotiated the development of schools, both religious and public, and determined the access to literacy and knowledge are the subjects of this work.

Certainly evangelical sources can conceal easily important realities and inequities in southern culture, and certainly the words of evangelicals could promote a reality that was not always so real, as "southerners indulged in corn liquor and camp meetings with equal zest."[42] Often, rhetoric from evangelical writers coincided with popular opinion among the group, and in other moments, it diverged. Contributors to evangelical periodicals, leaders at religious educational institutions, and many ministers, for example, generally stood within the learned circles of society, though class boundaries are not always apparent within the confines of religious discourse. Even still, the commentary within religious periodicals offers a unique window into the culture of the region. In *Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing and Reading, 1789-1880*, Candy Gunther Brown contended that American evangelicals "forged an informal, open-ended 'canon' of texts that embedded the core values and assumptions connecting publishers, texts, and readers," and this "canon" functioned as a cultural marker and indeed cultural boundary separating the secular and sacred.[43]

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argued that after 1800, "it became anachronistic to speak of dissent in America." Sectarianism was the new reality, and evangelicals "could rarely divorce [their goal of mass conversion] from new democratic vocabularies and impulses" (7).

[42] Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation, 1861-1865* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 22.

[43] Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

The history of antebellum evangelical print culture in the South began with significance in the 1820s and 1830s following the Second Great Awakening. The sectional split of the Baptists and Methodists provided initial disruption, but later a catalyst for the growth of the industry in the South, with the last two decades before civil war witnessing an increase in the number, location, and diversity of the religious press.[44] The religious press seemingly was a product of and an encouragement to the changes, no matter how modern, that occurred across the nation. Religious newspapers were also under fairly strict control of editors, which, in the case of denominational newspapers, were usually leaders in denominational activity as well. Contributors frequently submitted treatises and letters using pseudonyms or unsigned altogether, and editors consistently reprinted articles from periodicals across the nation, in addition to minutes of association and organization meetings. Readers of these newspapers presumably varied in class, paralleling the general population of evangelicals, and probably superseded the number of subscribers. Most readers were religious leaders and laypeople, and no editor or writer expressed official church positions. Any arguments about education can only be considered a

[44] Henry Smith Stroupe, *The Religious Press in the South Atlantic States, 1802-1865; An Annotated Bibliography with Historical Introduction and Notes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1956); John W. Kuykendall, *Southern Enterprize: The Work of National Evangelical Societies in the Antebellum South* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982). In his work, Kuykendall argued that the Presbyterian split in 1837 between the Old School and New Light sects, though having little to do with slavery, influenced the development and work of voluntary societies and their efforts to a much greater degree than later Baptist and Methodist splintering in the mid-1840s. Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Snay highlighted the role of religion in the formation of southern distinctiveness, the development of sectional conflict, and eventually the formation of a southern national identity. He depicted a narrative of southern evangelicals transitioning from defenders of slavery, to advocates for slavery, to secessionists. For specific analysis of the denominational schisms, see C. C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the American Civil War* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985). According to Goen, evangelicalism had always provided Americans a sense of nationalism, and the split among the evangelical branches resulted from irreconciable theological differences and resulted in secessional fire. See also Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class*, 474-504.

part of the larger conversation about education, rather than a definitive analysis of a single, authoritative evangelical view of educational goals and access.

Certainly these realities can limit the legitimacy of some analysis in portraying individual beliefs and collective educational vision, but considered as a whole, these newspapers reflected and defined evangelical culture, a fundamental component of antebellum southern life. These newspapers and periodicals were written and compiled for a specific audience, but also designed to promote a particular set of beliefs and values.[45] By focusing on a myriad of voices within evangelical circles, this study will convey both the consensus and diversity of perspectives among southern evangelicals. Uncovering these conversations will expose the expectations that religious southerners placed upon schools, the responsibilities they assumed in constructing educational institutions, and how these perceptions related to the larger educational trends of the antebellum nation. With these discourses and debates, this work will contribute to a greater understanding of how all antebellum southerners, whether invested in or on the periphery of religious influences, perceived the purposes, means, and ends of education.

The Organization

Focusing primarily on the educational perspectives and activities of evangelicals within the context of denominational life, Chapter Two will outline the evangelical debates about the sources of authority in southern culture and demarcate the boundaries of church and state

[45] Often writers used hyperbole, hysteria, and half-truths to make a particular point. Much of the evangelical reality is built upon the crisis of conversion, and many felt justified if they prodded readers with fanciful fictions and fervent immediacy, even above the holy texts, if such a crisis was induced. Historian Bruce Collins correctly warned social historians that, when using religion, the temptation to overstate particular topics within evangelical discourse ignored what mattered most to religious leaders and adherents, and, perhaps, what limited their influence outside religious concerns. He stated that "even where evangelical churches objected to slavery and tried to undermine it, they did so without as much vigor, commitment, and certainly without anything near as much success, as accompanied the task of conversion or of regulating their own congregations' internal affairs." Collins, *White Society in the Antebellum South*, 176.

responsibilities in the creation of educational institutions. By the end of the Second Great Awakening in the 1830s, religious leaders faced a world without the passion of revivalism and sought means to continue the expansion of the denominations amid the worldly humdrum of daily chores. Presbyterians, divided over the nature and role of revivalism, split into Old Light and New Light camps in 1837, and the division among American Baptists and Methodists in the mid-1840s provided another catalyst for southern evangelicals to shore up their denominational infrastructure, including a variety of educational forms.[46] Southern evangelical leaders' fixation on salvation and the sustenance of the church cornered many leaders into educational preferences within the context of denominational control and prevented access to those outside denominational reach. Southern evangelical writers fiercely debated the roles of the church and the state within antebellum society, most specially in education. Evangelicals argued from several perspectives: some desiring state control over education, some mandating religious hegemony, and many advocating for the role of both in the diffusion of knowledge.

Chapter Three describes how evangelicals, while arguing about the roles of the church and the state, busied themselves establishing Sunday schools, theological schools, and denominational colleges from the early national period until the Civil War. Though many hotly contested who constituted the true authority for the education of children, the energies of white evangelicals followed what they perceived as the heart's primacy over the mind. From these educational institutions, they would create a new society, not necessarily out of a millennialist impulse, but certainly a society built upon sectarian values. Institution-building and soul-winning lorded over any notion of popular education for all, and many believed that only such efforts

[46] Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up*, 81-89. Schweiger noted how the schisms encouraged southern evangelical leadership to reformulate denominational ideas, structure, and practice into their own brands. She stated that the splits "[provided] an unprecendented public platform from which clergy might assert authority beyond the bounds of local churches, and even beyond the bounds of their denominations" (84).

would provide the virtue necessary to sustain the Republic, many championing that idea with gusto and rhetoric similar to northern common-school advocates. And unlike in the North, southerners conceived of this new society within the boundaries of denominational control rather than the universal, volunteering forces at work elsewhere. Though it seems obvious that religious writers and adherents would uplift religious education as sacred, many viewed the government's role as important and such debates certainly challenge any notion that southerners intentionally encouraged ignorance, anti-intellectualism, or were simply pleased with rampant illiteracy. Even still, the efforts of southern evangelicals to construct "little empires" utilized modern means and methods of organization available to them. They were not trying to return to a premodern existence; often more so in rhetoric than action, they created educational opportunities in order to catch up with other regions, compete with other denominations, and to survive.[47] Most notably, however, such "empire-building" excluded many people from formal education, learning-enabled liberty, and ideas outside doctrinal boundaries of legitimacy approved by denominational authorities.

In Chapter Four, I will outline the case constructed by southern evangelicals for Jefferson's diffusion of knowledge, notably through the support for the common school. In these goals, southern evangelical writers exhibited values associated with a growing middle class and joined a national movement to expand educational opportunity, neither of which was embraced wholeheartedly by the southern culture in which they lived, worked, and preached. Frustrated with elites who ignored educational expansion and the poor who resisted learning as a marker of

[47] "Little empires" was used by Schweiger to describe the activities of southern evangelical denominations, which "collected monies, purchased property, erected buildings, published books and newspapers, hired administrators, and filled countless cabinets with charts, graphs, statistics, reports, and minutes." Stroupe, *Religious Press in the South Atlantic States*. Such bureaucracy, no matter how ineffective or late, must be considered modern.

social inadequacy, southern evangelicals proved sympathetic to the educational visions of Yankee reformers, yet submitted to a tradition that insulated southern society from social transformation and the individual improvement that evangelical religion valued. From the 1810s to the 1860s, southerners debated ideas concerning the nature of man, of society, and of schooling, even as the major points of contention, namely slavery, led to denominational division and later to civil war. Southern religious periodicals reveal that some viewed public education as a means of elevation and of awakening the potential within citizens, while at the same time, others argued that public education made society better, more peaceable, and perhaps more comfortable for the upper classes. The rhetoric and debates concerning the development of the common school, though, exhibited a consistent frustration with legislatures, elites, and, in some cases, the poor of the region. Southern evangelical writers increasingly employed the language and ideology of republicanism to justify and to promote the expansion of formal schooling for more children. By the 1850s, writers increasingly defined public virtue not simply by the ability of widespread learning to protect and preserve republican institutions, but by the tenacity with which southerners grasped the Bible as a shield and defender of faith and of all peculiar southern institutions.

Chapter Five analyzes the relationship between education and the southern evangelical family. Increasingly, codes of honor within southern culture and evangelicalism's desire to control society turned attention to moral education—the methods and values best suited for raising the next generation of devoted adherents. The solution that most southern evangelical writers agreed was essential to the preservation of control was the southern family. Adhering to the demands of southern honor, the father embodied supreme authority, even though conflicts between the morality evangelicals desired and the morality that most displayed was not always

congruent. Southern evangelicals strongly supported and encouraged female education, as a means of shoring up the patriarchal designs of traditional antebellum society, but also as a means of converting children under motherly care. Through moral and female education, southerners at once fulfilled and challenged the planter elites' control over the hearts of white citizens. By emphasizing these particular forms of education, southerners elevated individual responsibility and respectability into the forefront of educational possibilities, admonishing adherents to take charge of their own learning and confining reformation to hearts and hearths, rather than society at large.

The synergy of evangelicalism's search for souls and honor's protection of tradition left the region with a myriad of schooling options, to which few children had complete access and in which children would receive education that accomplished little more than the imposition of another's authority or code. Given these options that required individual submission upon engaging educational institutions, many simply chose to protect their children and stood behind the authority of the family. The fierce independence demanded by honor culture, combined with the lamentations of religious folk for individual souls, kept educational visions in check and prevented any meaningful social reformation outside the home circle. Within the family, children could be provided the path to the Promised Land without subjecting the family name to social scrutiny. By protecting parental choices, southern evangelicals could ensure the future sustenance of their worldview and carve moral authority from a society not yet entirely under their care.

In 1830, a Virginia Baptist writer pondered how the success or failure of individuals was often unrelated to their birth or educational opportunities. Even "the wildest savage that roams the forest may be made a philosopher" and the child of "the most accomplished scholar and

devout Christian may be trained a savage." Like many evangelicals, this writer looked to the Bible for admonition and inspiration, finding the proverb, "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he becomes old, he will not depart from it." Unsettled by the reality that some children simply forge their own path and, in fact, do depart from evangelical and parental designs, the writer noted that educational plans must address "the whole man." Rather than simply developing the mind, heart, or soul, communities, families, and individuals must devise an educational system that addresses all facets of the internal human experience. Though a small example, the writer noted that "generations have been taught to learn by rote principles of grammar, in a language of which they were ignorant." When choosing the system for educating children, many designs had historically been proposed and many individuals had objected to changing established traditions, for "in every age there have been fault finders and innovators," as well as abundant complaints. But, in a moment of ambiguity unusual for nineteenth century evangelicals, the writer stated that despite these historical realities, "the ultimatum of intellectual and moral improvement is unknown, and many of the real improvements of one generation may suffer the frowns of the next."[48] This study seeks to understand the improvements proposed and the assumptions imposed by the southern evangelical mind that pondered the good intentions of Jefferson and the educational realities of a generation staring at civil war.

[48] "Education," *Religious Herald*, January 29, 1830.

CHAPTER 2

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER:

CHURCH, STATE, AND EDUCATION

In 1854, Baptist preacher James M. Pendleton of Russellville, Kentucky, believed that Providence was shining upon the Bethel Association, with which his two churches were united. As he addressed the crowd gathered for the opening of Bethel High School, constructed by the labor and with the monies of these Kentucky Baptists, Pendleton began his message with a tribute to Elder Reuben Ross, who, though he was too poor to be properly educated, became a beloved minister in the community. Pendleton was clear that no "antagonism" between faith and learning existed and that "religion and education should go hand in hand through all the States of this mighty Union."

Pendleton described true education as physical, moral, and intellectual training. Attention to all three components must comprise any sound curriculum; learning must increase physical stamina, inculcate moral principles, and prepare the intellect. Pendleton praised scientific agriculture, discussed the importance of engineering to a world now laden with railroads and canals, but also proclaimed the importance of training men, even farmers, mechanics, doctors, for the ministry. Bethel High School was intended to provide education under the control of the church, but the training of ministers would be its focus and sustenance, in both curriculum and financial endowment.[1]

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[1] J. M. Pendleton, "Education," *Tennessee Baptist*, May 6, 1854; J. M. Pendleton, "Education: Farmers as well as Lawyers and Physicians should be Educated"," *Tennessee Baptist*, May 20, 1854.

That religion provided a moral foundation to learning is no surprise, for many Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century conceived of learning in moral terms and religion as essential to such a foundation.[1] Pendleton's emphasis on these components of learning comprised the view of other evangelical southerners in the 1820s and 1830s as well. One Baptist contributor argued that the best education "secures the greatest degrees of excellence for the *body*, the *mind*, and the *moral sense*." All three targets of learning comprised a balanced and meaningful educative experience. Kentucky Presbyterian John C. Young similarly argued that unfortunately "many systems of education appear to be framed on the principles that the ultimate and sole object of education is, *to increase the mental power of youth*." Young worried that other, perhaps more important, features of education, such as moral and religious codes, might be ignored.[2] Clearly, these writers demanded balance and attention be given to the moral decision-making of students. While Jefferson might have maintained a "view that human nature was not fixed, that man was essentially improvable,"[3] some evangelicals, such as Young and Pendleton, were not convinced, as Jefferson most certainly espoused, that educating the mind alone was enough. A lingering hesitation to rest solely upon the diffusion of knowledge, for fear that such

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[1] Winthrop S. Hudson and John Corrigan, *Religion in America*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1999), 142. Hudson and Corrigan noted that even though only a third of the American population practiced religion consistently, religious denominations influenced politics, reinforced belief, and framed the moral understanding of most Americans. Religion was crucial to the beginnings of even the common school and to Americans' understanding of moral obligations and responsibilities. David B. Tyack, "Onward Christian Soldiers: Religion in the American Common School," in *History and Education*, ed. Paul Nash (New York: Random House, 1970). Cremin, *National Experience*. Cremin argued that evangelicals viewed the common school as their instrument to support church and community (67), but that most generally accepted the importance of education and religion, working together, in the formation of morality. David Paul Nord, "Religious Reading and Readers in Antebellum America," *Journal of the Early Republic* XV, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 241-72. Nord analyzed the work of colporteurs and the religious press in their campaigns to exact moral and religious control over the literature of American households and spread literacy.

[2] "Education."; John C. Young, "Objects of Education," *Southern Religious Telegraph*, January 1, 1831.

[3] Cremin, *National Experience*, 111.

activity may not elicit that crisis of belief evangelicals thought imperative to avoid eternal damnation, framed southern evangelical educational visions.

Even with such uneasiness, many evangelicals found worthy goals outside of religious provocation. Education, some argued, should cultivate the imagination, enhance communication skills, and mold discernment among students. Some established a relationship between education and happiness, arguing that proper schooling "opens the door" to enjoyment and "the character of [one's] pleasures." Evangelicals understood social and political effects of education as well. One writer stated that education should "make [a man] a good citizen, to establish him in the principles of political science, to make him acquainted with our history, government, and laws, to teach him our great interests as a nation, and the policy by which they are to be advanced." Another argued that spreading knowledge to the population would challenge hierarchy, that "bane of republics, castes, and clans" that threatens stability as elites pursued their own interests. The diffusion of knowledge would be "the equalizer of society" and provide relief for "the country groaning beneath the burden of aristocratic oppression."[4]

While southern evangelical writers acknowledged a relationship between liberty and learning, they were unwilling to challenge explicitly the fundamental inequities of the southern social system. Though most southern evangelical ministers came from the lower to middling ranks of society, few demanded major changes to the southern order.[5] Southern evangelicals focused not on a revolution of order, but on the recognition of relationships between the classes. One argued that the rich and poor are both ordained by God and "*ought* to meet together."

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[4] W. C. Channing, "What is Education?," *Religious Herald*, August 4, 1837; H., "The Times-- Value of Education," *Southern Christian Advocate*, November 4, 1842; Bishop James, "Education Necessary to Happiness," *Nashville Christian Advocate*, March 5, 1847; Lewis P. Butler, "Motives to Study," *Home Circle* IV, no. 12 (December, 1858).

[5] Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*, 31-33.

Though some "aristocratical [sic] houses of worship" existed, every effort must be engaged to welcome, rather than repel the poor.[6]

Throughout the period and certainly in the 1850s, southern evangelical writers consistently repeated the aphorism, "knowledge is power," affirming the relationship between learning and governance. Some viewed this idea as most important to the American experiment with republican government. One argued that the relationship between education and power

> is worthy the study of mankind, the force of which irresistible progress is about to demonstrate to the world, and compel the nations of the earth to learn. That is, the personal inalienability of human rights and prerogatives, and the conventional 'liberty, equality, fraternity' of man. With us, both as a church and a nation, we are to look to our educational systems and institutes (and almost to them alone, incipiently at least) for pure truth, unmixed with error, to be impressed upon the common mind. It is with them where the spirit of knowledge is to be armed with invincibility against the insidious wiles and practices of hypocrisy and deceit. Knowledge is the foundation of the temple of freedom as well as of fame, the ladder to whose dome of glory is best formed of the educational 'rounds' in our schools and colleges.[7]

Because of the relationship between knowledge and power accepted by many evangelical writers, most found education an essential component of their lives, a vital topic in their religious literature, and most certainly an avenue to influence their neighbors.

In addition, because of this accepted relationship between knowledge and power, evangelical writers logically concluded that those who control education and knowledge exhibit even more power. Many deemed education—the constitution and construction of schools—a worthy venture not only to empower the uneducated, but also to control and influence the

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[6] Dr. Humphrey, "The Rich and the Poor," *N.Y. Evangelist, quoted in the Christian Index*, April 17, 1856.

[7] "American Education," *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, March 23, 1852. One of the more intriguing uses of "knowledge is power" was the title of an "admirable report" of Horace Mann. The article explained an anecdote that Mann used to demonstrate this truth, narrating the efforts of Mr. Redelet in moving a 1080-pound block of granite. After calculating the force, considering the options, and the capabilities of the railroad, a conspicuous product of the human mind, Mann praised the feats of human ingenuity, which undoubtedly surpass that of brute strength. "Knowledge is Power," *Southern Christian Advocate*, August 26, 1842.

populations over which they presided. Criticizing French revolutionaries for their self-education, one stated that "when [self-knowledge] alone is cultivated, there may be a dazzling display of genius, but there is no security that it will be employed for the benefit of the world."[8] With such security and power at stake, southern evangelical writers frequently noted the importance of the church's role in bringing education to the masses. Here the "benefit of the world" most certainly remained within the confines of what deeds evangelical doctrines deemed beneficial and good. Through these efforts, evangelicals could not only exert their influence, but also provide the conditions by which children understood the world. The inculcation of religious teachings and Christian virtue marked the discussion of learning among evangelical writers. As secularism and government-sponsored forms of education spread through the rest of the nation in the antebellum period, southern evangelicals were quick to monitor the religious boundaries of educational administration.

In "A Defence [sic] of Denominational Education," Robert C. Smith of Oglethorpe University in Georgia noted the uneasy contemplation that plagued "Christian moralists" in distinguishing the duties specifically belonging to the church and those belonging to the state. As a professor at a young Presbyterian university, one would expect Smith to argue for the supremacy of the church in relating to all matters of controversy, including the education of youth. But the complexity of this relationship trumped even the strongest of denominational prejudice. Smith acknowledged that because so many civil concerns are left up to the individual Christian, God may seem to have "drawn a distinct hairline between the duties of the State and of the Church," and such obscurity might make God appear the "author of confusions." State-controlled educational institutions ultimately, though, infringed upon the right of denomination

[8] "Education in the Methodist Church," *Southern Christian Advocate*, November 4, 1842.

to inculcate morality, of parents to lean upon the system of their choosing, and of the church to "fulfil [sic] her great commission" and "reap the harvest of truth."[9] Though not rejecting the government's role entirely, Smith clearly established a hierarchy of control and of influence over young minds in which the church predominated.

For antebellum evangelical southerners, government could meet many important needs. It could secure freedoms, keep order and peace, and provide the conditions necessary for each citizen to pursue happiness, no matter how individuals designed such pursuits. Government, though, was based on a civil contract and subjected to the passing whims of a populace, which could most certainly adjust and amend the conditions by which all participated.[10] Religious leadership, including pastors, teachers, and missionaries, certainly appreciated the civil order government provided, but they also understood and preached the limitations of such temporary, if not momentary, stability. Methodist professor William A. Harris even warned that the State was "perfectly indifferent whether the citizen or subject pursues his immortal happiness or his endless ruin."[11] Only religious institutions, according to Harris, could enact a meaningful transformation of the individual and society; only through the church could one find meaningful happiness. Even as religion demanded obedience to earthly authority, true meaning, happiness, and purpose would be found elsewhere.

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[9] R. C. Smith, *A Defence of Denominational Education* (Milledgeville, Ga.: Federal Union Power Press, 1854).

[10] Even still, as Anne Loveland noted, "evangelicals were accountable to God for the faithful discharge of their political duties. This was not only because government was a divine ordinance, but because the particular government of the United States [was founded by Christian men and under Christian principles]…Worldlings might act as though they were bound only to obey the laws framed by men for the purpose of regulating society. Christians realized that they held citizenship in two governments, one earthly, the other divine." Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*, 120-21.

[11] William A. Harris, "Is Education the Prerogative of Church or State?," *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* XII, no. I (January 1858): 86.

Southern evangelicals, not unlike many Americans, perhaps "expected almost nothing from government institutions and almost everything from religious ones."[12] Some leaders objected not simply to state-controlled or state-funded education, but to a culture that overlooked its duties to heaven, its obligations to the spirit. Some ministers charged that the common schools, for example, "[trained] the pupil to eschew religion and to lean on his own understanding, rather than to seek that Divine grace which alone can guide and sustain him through the journey of life."[13] Without the reins of morality and the ability to conform behavior to its will, the religious community pondered its own precarious position in southern culture. Attending to the egalitarianism that initially dominated evangelical discourse in a culture that increasingly demanded deference to hierarchy and slavery proved a difficult task for evangelicals, a task burdened with hypocrisies and inconsistencies that many rhetorically did not entertain. Historians have duly noted southern evangelicals' propensity to praise the peculiar institution, to defend patriarchy, and to pander to elites and, later, Confederate banners.[14]

This transition from the end of the Second Great Awakening to civil war reveals a variety of assumptions and beliefs about the role of churches and governments in education. Eugene Genovese argued that the influence and control of American churches in education was

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[12] Hatch, *Democritization of American Christianity*, 14.

[13] Harris, "Church or State," 79.

[14] For more on the changes within evangelical religion during the antebellum period, see Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*. Heyrman, *Southern Cross*. Here the story of evangelical religion from Revolution to Civil War thus becomes a tale of how evangelicals, who shed their radicalism and early egalitarian notions, became masters. Intent on securing the good graces of white men in the South, the once-radical evangelicals became what they once despised. Daniel Walker Howe, "The Evangelical Movement and Political Culture in the North during the Second Party System," *The Journal of American History* 77, no. 4 (March 1991). Howe contends that historians have overstated the transformation of evangelicalism from "a democratic and liberating force" in the eighteenth century to means of social control in the nineteenth century simply by generalizing from two coexisting "sides" of evangelical thought.

profound. Entering civil war in 1860, though, southerners were not as far behind the North as one might expect. Even with the lack of formal schooling, ordinary southerners were "educated and capable of reading the Bible and following the controversies." In both regions, "the ministers presided over the educational system, but secularization was advancing markedly only in the North. In the South, religious guidance of the schools remained virtually unchallenged."[15]

In the 1830s, southern evangelicals argued that religious education reigned over all worthy forms. One *Religious Herald* writer noted that religious education was essential to happiness, as such happiness depended on one first longing for the kingdom of God:

> It is vain that we dispute about rival systems; it is vain that we contend whether this or that place is best adapted to encourage genius and enlarge the understanding;—to argue these points is to begin at the wrong end; it is to assume that education may be good without religion; it is to assume that the pursuits of science are the great objects to which the mind is to be directed. Let the mind be first prepared by religious instruction; and the pursuits of science may follow, not only as an amusement, but as a benefit…In the present day, it would be more than ever a disgrace not to give encouragement to knowledge of every kind. But let us not be dazzled and misled by a love of fame; in our anxiety to ornament and furnish the building, let us not forget that it is our duty to lay a firm and lasting foundation.[16]

Such a sentiment—that religious education warranted supremacy amid all other methods of instruction and study—was certainly expected within the confines of religious and perhaps even clerical conversation. Even though religious education remained supreme, historian William R. Taylor argued that before the 1840s, southerners generally engaged "a commitment to education as a matter of public responsibility."[17]

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[15] Eugene D. Genovese, "Religion in the Collapse of the American Union," in *Religion and the American Civil War*, ed. Randall M Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 76.

[16] "Sunday Schools," *Biblical Recorder and Southern Watchman*, August 18, 1838.

[17] Taylor, "Toward a Definition of Orthodoxy," 413.

Americans outside of the South generally took this responsibility seriously as well. Carl Kaestle described a "cosmopolitan ideology" of capitalism, republicanism, and Anglo-American Protestantism working upon the nation at large, prompting many to look toward greater state responsibility over educational institutions. Even amid this generalization, though, diversity of opinion existed. A contributor to New York's *Christian Advocate and Journal* remarked in 1849 that religious education was important as the impressionability of youth will eventually fade and "if Methodist parents wish to see their children become useful members of the Church of *their* choice, and ornaments in society," the doctrines of the Church must drive educational instruction. The author lamented that Methodists, especially compared to the Presbyterians, "generally manifest too much indifference" upon the construction of religious primary schooling.[18] To some degree, demands for educational change seemingly placed government efforts and evangelical loyalists at odds, and in the South, perhaps neither achieved any substantial, mass victories against ignorance or illiteracy.

Perceiving either stark conflict between these warring authorities or an unencumbered, welcomed partnership between church and state overlooks a multitude of voices debating the nature of education and the spectrum of responsibility that many conceived as defining the work of denominations and political institutions. For some evangelical southerners, education, no matter how important a goal, was not the supreme issue. The claim that schooling alone would "leave…prisons to rot" rested, according to many, on a faulty assumption that the "sources of vice were in the intellect, and not in the heart." One writer mockingly listed "Bacons, Bolingbrokes, Rousseaus, Voltaires, Byrons, with their sparkling wit, their sublime genius, their

[18] H., "Plea for Methodist Schools," *Christian Advocate and Journal*, July 5, 1849. Interestingly, the author repeatedly acknowledged that the purpose of education was "preparing [students] for usefulness in their day and generation."

profound reason, their finished culture, combining with hardened infidelity, gross licentiousness, or base dishonesty" as proof of the sophomoric nature of worldly learning. Though not wholeheartedly rejecting education by any other non-religious means, the author's ferocity of independence and nostalgia are telling. Southerners viewed depravity as a result of sin and education as a means of eliminating both—*only if* the churches delivered truth. No greater manifest duty existed than for the church "to exert her mightiest energies…to furnish the saving leaven of RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE for the people! to scatter sanctifying truth, in books, papers, and tracts, so widely, that they may reach every mind that is capable of digesting a thought."[19] The frustration with the Enlightenment espoused by southern evangelical writers could indeed reflect a strain of anti-intellectualism within the worldview, but it must also be considered a means to assert church and denominational authority over learning.

That even these champions of religious instruction viewed significant differences between religious and popular instruction is noteworthy, and the rhetoric of church supremacy in education is important, as many Americans viewed civil authorities best able and perhaps even most responsible to educate the masses. Many Americans at this time viewed Jefferson's "wall of separation" more as a split-rail fence, in which distinguishable sides are not only visible, but easily traversed when necessary. Religion afforded communities the spirit and institutions necessary to secure the Republic, as the Reformation and the Enlightenment seemingly reconciled their differences for the common good. No matter the reform, religion and republicanism were mutually beneficial. The gospels of Jesus and of the founders partnered with indistinguishable gusto.[20] Even among educational missionaries, ministers predominated, and

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[19] W. A. McSwain, "Sabbath Schools in Union CT, S.C.," *Southern Christian Advocate*, August 21, 1846.

[20] Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 449-64. Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to*

religion seemingly moved with the development of schooling. Since education was viewed as the "handmaiden" of religion, the founding of schools often occurred alongside the founding of churches, and ministers set aside both denominational demands and theological preferences in order to educate the masses. Religious enthusiasm, monies, and missions along the antebellum frontiers (and even in the more established communities) served educational interests, even those founded upon and buttressed by secular governments and nonsectarian cooperation.[21]

But for southern religious writers and leaders, the necessity of distinguishing between the blurred lines of education, religion, science, and the arts remained an important concern. In an 1842 address before the Few and Phi Gamma Societies of Emory College, Methodist George Pierce argued that the Bible must retain its central role in the education of youth. He called on his audience to embrace the "great conservative power of the world's happiness and prosperity" once again, and to reject the foundations of contemporary learning. Pierce found no "moral

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Abraham Lincoln (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 446-55. One writer stated that "religion is the health and salvation of all character and all institutions. Especially is this true in this country. Not that religion is not equally necessary everywhere, and among all men. But religion is especially necessary to everything American. The war of the Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Union, the Farewell Address of Washington, the ideas and institutions of the entire government, are all based upon and pervaded by a strong religious faith and sentiment. All that is peculiarly excellent in American character and institutions will pass away whenever they lose the spirit and saving health of religion." "Religion in Colleges," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, April 3, 1860.

[21] Smith, "Protestant Schooling and American Nationality," 679-705. Smith proved that "churchmen stamped upon their neighborhoods, states, and nation an interdenominational Protestant ideology which nurtured dreams of personal and social progress." The small size of many towns made interdenominational cooperation in establishing common schools a necessity. Tyack, "Kingdom of God and the Common School," 447-69. Tyack viewed "educational missionaries" as fulfilling the expectations of communities in championing common schools, but also as a means of exerting moral influence and establishing "the Kingdom of God across the land (469). Daniel Walker Howe, "Church, State, and Education in the Young American Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 1-22. For Howe, the collective embrace of education emerged only when championed by the energy of the Second Great Awakening. He argued that educational institutions thrived within the context of religion, that popular education was strongest in states with religious establishments, and that Whig reformers were able to "reconcile" the Reformation and the Enlightenment, noting that for most Americans in the early Republic, a strict separation of church and state was neither conceived nor espoused.

power" in Locke, none in science, and none in the popular, yet "infidel sentiment that the youthful mind should be let free; that no direct, undisguised effort should be made to lead it to religion and to God."[22] Even with direction, Pierce reminded listeners that they

> were not sent into the world to draw diagrams and to prove that any two sides of triangle are greater than a third side, nor to find the roots of verbs, nor to walk in admiring wonder through botanic gardens, nor to classify the minerals of the earth, nor to count and name the stars of heaven. Important as these may be…a man may be saved as well without as with them…They are relative and subordinate, and in the absence of moral principles and religious knowledge, minister to individual pride and social corruption quite as often as to purity and virtue.[23]

Though some historians have noted the marriage of religion and the state in the forming of educational institutions, Pierce and some southern commentators emphatically refuted such contentions. For them, it cannot be proven reasonable that "American Protestants enlisted the Enlightenment, along with the classics, in the service of Christ" with little or no hesitation.[24]

In his study of the relationship between religion and the common school in New York, historian Benjamin Justice concluded that sufficient evidence exists that mere "Bible use was a minority practice in common schools as early as 1830, and it actually declined precipitously by 1840."[25] Perhaps this reality weighed heavily upon the conscience of southern evangelicals, such as Pierce and Harris. Perhaps the absence of scripture in these local, government-organized,

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[22] George F. Pierce, "An Address, Delivered before the Few and Phi Gama Societies of Emory College," *Southern Christian Advocate*, September 9, 1842.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Howe, "Church, State, and Education," 14. Howe cites the work of Mark Noll in contending that states with strong religious establishments were more vigorous in using the Enlightenment in support of the common school; Mark A. Noll, "The Evangelical Enlightenment and the Task of Theological Education," in *Communication and Change in American Religious History*, ed. Leonard I. Sweet (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993).

[25] Benjamin Justice, *The War that Wasn't: Religious Conflict and Compromise in the Common Schools of New York State, 1865-1900* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005), 37-44.

publically-funded schools confirmed their most extreme suspicions. Perhaps their fears of retaining legitimacy in slave society cornered them not into the confirmation of or even partnership with state control, but into the rhetoric of separation, institutions with which they were familiar, and a hysterical need for immediate and individual soul salvation. Nevertheless, southern evangelical denominations set about their work of building church infrastructures, joining Bible societies, and establishing schools, colleges, and churches, sometimes befriending the state when convenience allowed, sometimes bickering when state authority challenged.

The relationship between southern evangelicals and the state is not easily generalized, and the collective opinion about the roles of both in popular education was certainly as varied, and perhaps even as divisive, as their opinions of theology, church organization, and "pedobaptism." Some, especially Baptists, had traditionally guarded the chasm between the two institutions. Donald Mathews argued that most early Baptists deemed state influence "unnecessary, irrelevant, and possibly dangerous." Religious liberty thus became one rallying cry for the protection of Baptist existence. Baptists' understanding of the demarcation of religious and secular authority, though, "tended to leave civil society a spiritual desert without its own life-giving well-springs of true morality."[26]

Though existing alongside churches, civil government, according to early southern Baptists, derived its power solely from man's inevitable propensity for evil, and thus, according to many, civil society should refrain from legislating faith. In *The Rights of Conscience Inalienable,* Virginia Baptist John Leland stated that "government has not more to do with the religious opinion of men, than it has to do with the principles of mathematics." For Baptists, "the things of God [were] too holy and sacred…, either to be mixed with, or truckled to the little low

[26] Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 57; Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 291-92.

politics of men." A Christian was firstly "the citizen of a better country, and a pilgrim in all others." In 1832, one Baptist writer found no principle was so widely shared than the notion that the church and state be separate. He argued that such a union would be "no more a privilege to the Church, than it was to the three worthies of old to be cast into the fiery furnace, where nothing but omnipotence could preserve them."[27]

Attending to religious liberty and excluding government interference in religious affairs had been a marker of Baptist activity since their origin in the 1700s. Interestingly, as sectional and sectarian rivalry exploded in the 1840s and 1850s, so did Baptists' tendency to use the concept of church-state separation to understand the status quo. The *Biblical Recorder* printed a critique of the British government's practice of funding the education of clergy, even, according to a proposal, Catholic priests. The writer concluded that such was the result when civil and religious authorities merge, when "unhallowed unions of light and darkness" are permitted.[28]

In defense of the split among the northern and southern Baptists, Baptist lawyer and planter John B. Miller told a meeting to "reform [the Church's] Missionary Society Constitution" that the unity of church and state breeds tyranny and inhibits the diffusion of the knowledge of the Bible. He admonished hearers to consider "those Governments, when church and state are united together, not for the Holy purpose of improving man's happiness, but to tyranize [sic] and oppress, and to retain him in ignorance, withholding from him that information which teaches

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[27] L.F. Greene, ed. *The Writings of the late Elder John Leland* (New York: G.W. Wood, 1845), 179-86. "Real Christian", "How the Christian Loves His Country And Is Therefore The Best Of Patriots," *Religious Herald*, January 29, 1828; Hoge, "What Do Christians Owe Their Country?," *Southern Religious Telegraph*, April 6, 1832.

[28] "Church and State," *Biblical Recorder*, July 19, 1845.

him that he and he alone is accountable to God for his spiritual conduct and not to man."[29] Certainly this rhetoric must be understood as a response to the challenges made by the North upon slavery and the religious bodies that supported it, not from the principled ideology of earlier Baptists, such as Leland. Baptists frequently used republicanism and the separation of church and state to denote how superior their evangelical brand was compared to Methodists, for just as the separation of powers prevents concentration and abuse, so the Baptist organization (or lack thereof) prevented anyone except for Christ to lord over church doctrine and practice.[30] The ideology of church and state separation, though consistently used by Baptists to posit their own superiority to other religious and political institutions, generally after the mid-1840s, became a much more important tool of defense, not of religious rights, of their own superiority.

Presbyterians were as adamant as Baptists about the church's leadership role, but conflicting ideas about church and state control of education were more important to Presbyterians. By the late 1840s, a significant dialogue emerged among Presbyterians of both Lights and various regions.[31] In an address before fellow Presbyterians in 1847, Philadelphia minister and Old School professor Charles Hodge asked hearers to consider who was responsible for the religious education of the young: after the family, which institution—the church or the state—was the supreme educator? He argued that "since men's social and religious natures are so implicated the one in the other; as their social and religious duties are so intimately allied; the

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[29] John B. Miller, "An Address Delivered by John Miller, At a Meeting of ths congregation of the Baptist Church of Bethel, Sumter District, S. C., on the 8th of June, 1845; to reform their Missionary Society Constitution," *Biblical Recorder*, July 26, 1845.

[30] J. Q. Adams, "Epsicopal Methodism anti-American in its Spirit and Tendency---a Dangerous Foil to Republicanism," *Biblical Recorder*, January 22, 1857. "Republicanism in the Baptist Church," *Biblical Recorder*, April 23, 1857. This was a response to a printed section of the North Carolina Advocate, which provoked the subsequent defense.

[31] For an analysis of the splintering of Presbyterians, see Boles, *Great Revival: Beginnings*, 148-64.

same things have a direct bearing at once on the interests of the State and the Church; that it is exceedingly difficult to draw the line which separates the duties and responsibilities of the two communities." Hodge analyzed five basic options. In the first, based on a European model, the church and state would work together. The second plan resembled the New England reality, according to Hodge, in which the church and state operated independently. This exacerbated rivalry and tended to cause centralization of school control. The third choice was a compromise in which religion, devoid of sectarianism and division, would predominate in state-operated schools. Hodge found this option uncomfortably lukewarm. Hodge reserved his greatest ire for the "secular plan," which he claimed was "at present the favourite [sic] system of our public men." Hodge decried as blasphemous the mere idea that one could teach reading without morality or history without the hand of the Almighty. Hodge even sided with New York "Romanists," claiming that "it is an undeniable right of the people who support a school, whose children are educated within its walls, to determine how and what they should be taught. And it is tyrannical of the State, or an irreligious or indifferent majority, to deny them the exercise of this right."[32]

For Hodge, the "delusion" of the secular plan prompted the need for swift and decisive action on the part of Presbyterians. After a temporary forgetfulness, the Church "has recognized her vocation as a teacher." Hodge warned that

> As soon as she is brought to the conviction that the State does not and cannot accomplish the object, she will hear the voice of God summoning her to her duty, and feel his Spirit through all her members rousing and strengthening her for this great work…It cannot be

[32] Charles Hodge, "Public Religious Education Enforced in a Discussion of Different Plans," *Home, The School, and The Church; or the Presbyterian Education Repository* I 1850). Hodge was the most significant spokesman for Old School Presbyterians, shrugging off any challenges to Calvinist belief. According to Hatch, Hodge's positions and conservative theology only "[held] full sway" in the South, "for reasons linked to less worthy efforts of an elite to forestall the implications of democracy." Hatch, *Democritization of American Christianity*, 196-201.

> that the present state of religious education in this country, can be suffered to continue. Good people cannot consent to have religion banished from those institutions in which the mass of the people learn almost all they ever know. We are persuaded that the time is fast coming in which all denominations of Christians will address themselves in earnest to the establishment of schools, under their own immediate control.

In calling forth this movement, Hodge deeply lamented that the "Romanists" had been the first to conclude the hopelessness of secular education.[33]

R.C. Smith, a southern Presbyterian professor, seemingly concurred with Hodge and the General Assembly. He acknowledged that education was certainly important to "all states in which the democratic element is predominant" but argued that such was one of many interests the state has for which it should not, and indeed cannot, legislate reality. Smith warned that the state, if given the right to levy taxes for popular education, would soon command children of all religious affiliations to attend secular schools. While such schools may be suitable for "especially the poorer classes," such a requirement would infringe upon the liberty of parents and churches. Smith lamented that governments lacked the "moral purity" to educate and denominations apparently lack the political will to educate, since such a task, if pursued and accomplished, would certainly mean everyone would be able to read.[34]

Earlier, Presbyterian son of Kentucky and public school champion, Robert Breckinridge argued in "Denominational Education" that individuals reside under certain authorities—family, church, government—that incur specific responsibilities, and education in all its forms should

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[33] Hodge, "Public Religious Education," 105. Another Presbyterian periodical editor included a discussion of the compromise on the issue reasoned in England and Wales, in which the state schools would allow for some religious instruction, though with such diversity of opinion, teaching would most certainly be wanting. But the foreign reporter viewed the ability to teach religious principles and morality within the confines of secular schooling possibilities. "National Education," *Southern Presbyterian*, May 5, 1853. For a discussion of French schooling, see "Primary Instruction in France," *Southern Presbyterian*, July 1, 1852.

[34] Smith, *A Defence of Denominational Education*.

not undermine the individual's obligations to each authority. Written for James Thornwell's *Southern Presbyterian Review,* Breckinridge reminded readers in 1849 that "God is not the author of confusion," delineating the clear and obvious duties mandated to the state, which in fact are the "obligations of the community to itself." He described education as "civil, purely temporal. It cannot be shown that the processes of acquiring the art of reading or writing have any thing [sic] more to do with the spiritual operations of our being" than the other daily tasks which dominate one's daily tasks. Breckinridge questioned whether "a company of boys at school, is more liable to spiritual injury, than a company of boys at a tannery or a carpenter's shop."[35] In their correspondence concerning the publication of this article, Thornwell agreed with Breckinridge, but, even though the "leading men" of South Carolina would approve, seemed rather annoyed by the endless debate:

> Such discussion as those which we have already had, can settle nothing. They either prove too much, and therefore, prove nothing, or they are directed to a wrong point. No one doubts the importance of religion as an element in education, and no one doubts that the Church is a witness to God's truth. But that her commission to teach the gospel includes a commission to teach reading, writing, and ciphering, is not so plain. In other words, a commission to teach one thing is a commission to teach *every* thing, is, to say the least of it, not self-evident.[36]

For Thornwell and Breckinridge, who were so intimately invested in public education and religious ministry, the reconciliatory nature of their suggestions, while expected, is no less telling, especially in contrast to the views of Hodge. Even within Old School Presbyterian

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[35] Robert J. Breckenridge, "Denominational Education," *Southern Presbyterian Review* IV, no. I (July, 1849).

[36] James Henley Thornwell, *The Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell*, ed. B. M. Palmer (Richmond, VA: Whittet & Shepperson, 1875), 332.

circles, to which all three and most southern Presbyterians belonged, consensus was challenging.[37]

In the 1852 Annual Report of the Board of Education of the Presbyterian Church, the role of the church and the state was officially mandated. The state's duty was to protect property and mankind, and while the state has an interest in an educated populace and possesses the organizational capabilities to provide education, it lacks the "divine warrant" to execute the task. For the Board, the inclusion of an occasional passage from the Bible in a daily reading did not constitute sufficient religious instruction, and the only way that the state could feasibly make true religious education happen was if the population was sufficiently homogeneous in theology and practice. Though some valued "the intellectual elevation of the community" that public education provided and some found "the public schools not only the least of all evils, but public blessings" as well, Presbyterians tightly gripped their divine appointment to educate the public, and they made clear that boundaries demarcating such a responsibility were unequivocal.[38] One advocate of religious colleges asked, "Will [the church] trust to the State, infected as all its agencies are, with the corrupt atmosphere of politics, will she trust to any agency not specifically and emphatically Christian, to give them the most controlling elements of all their thinking?"[39]

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[37] E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978), 193-98. Holifield stated that only a minority of presbyteries and congregations sided with the New School camp, born out of Yale with a tolerance for relaxing Calvinism, considering Unitarians, embracing the ideas of Nathaniel William Taylor. Most southern presbyterians, Holifield contended, responded to the New School with the arguments employed against Arminianism.

[38] C. Van Rensselaer, "The Three Parties in Education," *Home, The School, and The Church; or the Presbyterian Education Repository* IV (1854).

[39] Jona F. Stearns, "The Church and the College," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, July 7, 1860.

Outside of denominational conversations and consternations and perhaps Presbyterianism which had heeded the call to educate more sincerely than their Baptist and Methodist siblings,[40] some argued that to declare education a responsibility of either the church or the state singularly was absurd, and to leave education within the confines of private institutions most certainly left the masses illiterate and ignorant.[41] Even as southern evangelicals faced civil war, the line separating church and state educational responsibility remained elusive. One Methodist writer remarked that amid the clamor over the horrors of church-state unity, the most "threatening peril is, that they are too widely sundered," warning all to support the educative efforts of the state. The author charged secularists and atheists with sounding a false alarm, for encouraging a division between the church and state that prevented partnership, even when the interests of both could find solace. A writer in the *Christian Observer* argued that while politics should find no home in the pulpit, ministers were obligated to be good citizens and never falter in their support of the Confederacy.[42] The state and the church could partner in other tasks, and for some evangelical leaders, education offered such an opportunity.

Though education, in the minds of some, may not have been *the* responsibility of the churches and religious communities alone, most evangelical leaders confirmed that education was most certainly *a* responsibility of all who considered religion important. Even Breckinridge,

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[40] For a discussion of the inverse relationship between the emphasis on conversion and formal education of the clergy, most notably, the differences between the Presbyterians and the other evangelicals, see Boles, *Great Revival: Beginnings*, 119-21.

[41] "The Free Schools and University of Virginia," *The Southern Literary Messanger: Devoted to Every Department of Literature and the Fine Arts* 18 (February 1854).

[42] "The Duty of the State," *Educational Repository and Family Monthly* I, no. IV (1860); "Politics and the Pulpit," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, June 27, 1863; Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*, 11-13. Mitchell Snay correctly asserts that southern clergymen "drew a careful distinction between their roles as minister and private citizen," but also that religion and politics were "symbiotic" as civil war loomed.

who so adamantly demanded that his peers reconsider the important role of the state in educating the masses, concluded that Americans had failed to define education correctly. He contended that "to omit in education all moral training, is to train imperfectly for a time and not at all for eternity…. No man is or can be educated, whose moral faculties have not been adequately trained." For Breckenridge, the solution was to place the Bible in the hands of students, even students in public schools. He exclaimed, "Give us but the Bible, and we will purge your priesthood, dethrone your tyrants, defeat your bigots, put shame on error, and make again the martyr's blood the church's seed."[43] While southern evangelicals may have conceded the right and responsibility of educating youth to the government, few conceded that the end of such learning was alone sufficient. Few commentators embraced the Enlightenment-induced rampart that Jefferson had proclaimed the school to be, nor welcomed the tepid Protestantism of the common school conjured by some Yankee brethren, who, according to many southern evangelicals, clearly placed contemporary necessity before education's eternal mission.

With the eternal consequences of inaction severe and damning, southern evangelicals incorporated their ideas about learning and education into a variety of efforts to spread religious education. One Methodist writer used a definition of education by Anglican theologian Richard Hooker: education is "the means by which our *faculty of reason is made both the sooner and the better to judge rightly between truth and error, good and evil.*"[44] Popular religious education was essential, and no institution could fulfill the true purpose of education more thoroughly than the church. Southern evangelicals "affirmed that the training of the moral powers, the conscience

[43] Robert J. Breckenridge, "Plea for the Restoration of the Bible to the Common Schools," *Home, The School, and the Church; or the Presbyterian Education Repository* I (1850).

[44] "Sunday-School Address," *Nashville Christian Advocate*, July 12, 1860.

and the affections, transcends in importance all other ends aimed at in the education of the young."[45]

One Methodist editor received correspondence from a reader in western North Carolina, who argued that most significantly the Church needed to embrace education or be left behind. The contributor argued that "education without piety, loads the artillery of heaven with the missiles of hell. Piety without education will save its possessor; but it will not fit him as an instrument to press the victories of the gospel onward… If the church alone be uneducated, it will lose its influence and fail of its mission."[46] Both education for the mind and for the soul was essential, and the urgency to spread both to increasing numbers of people pressed upon the evangelical mind.

Even if the exact nature of the relationship between the church and the state was unresolved, antebellum evangelical writers were clear that education was the responsibility of adherents. For some, the mandate to educate the young was simply a part of the church's "great commission." Under this charge, the teacher thus became a minister of grace and of gospel, not simply the purveyor of knowledge and literacy. For Presbyterians, education was a responsibility of all church members to the covenant children. The church was almost as much responsible for the faith of children as the parents.[47] Christian nurture demanded action from adherents, at least

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[45] "Education under the Patronage of the Church," *Southern Christian Advocate*, June 30, 1854.

[46] "A Noble Thought," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, July 2, 1857.

[47] "Cieo", "The Church Must Educate," *Nashville Christian Advocate*, July 24, 1856; "The Children of the Covenant," *Southern Presbyterian*, March 1, 1850. Presbyterians asserted that "the idea that religion is to be taught at home but not at the school, assumes that a partial inculcation of divine truth absolves from the obligation of its full and thorough promulgation. Such an idea is kindred to the monstrous plea of the worlding, that religion may be good enough for the Sabbath but not for the other days of the week." The General Assembly complained that as reformers sought to educate the masses, the quality of the education declined; C. Van Rensselaer, "Work of the Board of Education of the Presbyterian Church," *Home, The School, and The Church; or the Presbyterian Education Repository* I 1850).

those interested in faithfulness. For many, the church was most essentially a school in which one prepared for ministry in this life and glorification in the next. Thus, education had to be "moulded [sic] and leavened in every part, by the word and Gospel of Christ." Schools partnered with evangelical missionary efforts within the states and around the world, as newspaper reports making evangelism and education synonymous goals frequented editorial gaze.[48]

In 1850, orthodox American Presbyterians officially affirmed that worldly knowledge "brings no good will to man, and breathes no spirit of philanthropy. The great hope of educating men is in educating them in 'the way they should go.' To educate them as heathen, as Mohammedans, as Papists, would be a criminal misdirection; and to educate them into no religion is a perversion attended by inevitable and irreparable loss."[49] The religious classroom could correct errors, but such a task might prove harrowing given the comparative illiteracy of so many southern children and adults. In order to fulfill responsibility to their own belief system and to impose such a system on others, southern evangelicals would have to construct a system of religious institutions designed to educate, to enlighten, and to indoctrinate the common people. They could certainly help the state in its effort to encourage the diffusion knowledge, especially when such increased literacy and included the Bible, but the religious end of learning must dominate intentions, planning, and access to education and in reform transcend all other concerns.

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[48] Thomas Smyth, *Denominational Education in Parochial Schools and Religious Colleges, enforced upon Every Church by Divine Authority* (Columbia, SC: I. C. Morgan, 1849). For mission reports, see Thomas Julius Oxley, "Education in Hayti," *Southern Evangelical Intelligencer*, May 29, 1819; Cyrus Kingsbury, "Letter to One of the Editors," *Southern Evangelical Intelligencer*, September 23, 1820; "Mission Schools," *Southern Presbyterian*, September 15, 1847.

[49] Van Rensselaer, "Work of the Board of Education of the Presbyterian Church."

CHAPTER 3

"THE WAY THEY SHOULD GO":

DENOMINATING THE BOUNDARIES OF EDUCATION

Writing for southern Methodists in the late 1850s, LaGrange College professor William A. Harris affirmed the supreme importance of learning. He proclaimed, "every grain of knowledge…exerts a distinct influence of the mind, and tends to shape its course and forms its character for time and eternity." For Harris, the mind and soul were synonymous. Attention to one equated attention to the other. Similarly, the neglect of the mind most certainly engendered eternal peril. Not unlike many educated, religious Americans in the nineteenth century, Harris believed that "the object of all education [was] to dignify and elevate the soul; to direct all its faculties to a pure and holy exercise for the acquisition of happiness for the glory of the Creator; to render man the most useful to himself and to his fellow beings." Education was designed for the purpose of prompting the soul to the pursuit of heavenly goals as well as temporal investment and influence.[1]

With ignorant souls in need of nurturing and care, Harris proffered a very specific boundary: education and schooling must rest entirely within the confines of the church. Any attempt of the state to encourage, lead, or provide education through either grammar schools or universities was fruitless at best and akin to sacrilege at worst. Complaining that the Bible was popularly ignored in state schools, that the state was mandating happiness rather than enabling its

[1] Harris, "Church or State," 81-82.

pursuit, and that morality was everywhere discarded, Harris found the government infringing upon the responsibilities granted solely to religion.[2]

Ironically, in delineating his definition between temporal and spiritual control over education, Harris subdued scoffers by noting that

> in the Northern States, generally, unprincipled demagogues and hungry office-seekers have made the human mind a subject of corrupt traffic and political speculation. The "love of money" being the besetting sin of the Yankee, the Church of the North yielded the education of the masses to the State. This fact accounts very largely for the existence of those fanatical *isms* and *schisms* which have so rent asunder and disorganized Northern society, and whose effects have shaken the pillars of this great republic. [3]

For Harris, sectional rivalry simultaneously proved the hidden pitfalls of secular education amid the growing common school movement and promoted the necessity of moral education within boundaries established by churches. But evangelicals in the North who championed education reform in the 1840s and 1850s often shared Harris's fear that even solid republican pillars could crumble. The impending decline of virtue, especially religious virtue, provided the impetus for their work to create a common education for all children, supported financially and organizationally by government. From this perspective, nothing could be more essential for the preservation of the Republic than the hands of the Almighty and Protestant morality upon a child, whose sinful birth and inattention to discipline needed prodding toward a living righteousness. As one historian noted, many antebellum "evangelical leaders saw Christianity and republicanism as mutually supportive and dependent upon one another," as the common school was "an instrument of their movement and bulwark of the Republic."[4]

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., 92.

[4] Cremin, *National Experience*, 67. For a discussion of the ideology of Protestantism and common schooling, see Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*.

Historian William J. Reese argued that antebellum advocates for public education agreed "that the soundest morals came from Christianity in general and Protestantism in particular; that learning without piety was dangerous; and that schools, while concerned with training the mind, should preeminently focus on shaping character."[5] Both Harris, who certainly attended to the needs of his evangelical college, and northern education reformers intended to create divinely insured order from the unsettling chaos trailing modern transformations. Both Harris and these particular common-school reformers fretted over the preservation of the Republic. Though none would dispute the hallowed place of religion in the formation of virtue and character, their concerns, and even perhaps fears, over the education of the young and the future of American society prompted seemingly different pathways, routes that, for Harris, could never, upon eternal peril, be intertwined.[6]

In his description of religion's role in nineteenth-century reform, historian Donald Mathews proposed that the Second Great Awakening encouraged an "organizing ethos" that compelled southern evangelicals to "participate in the only organization which sought them out, made them responsible for ordering a new holy community, and built the entire structure on their personal experience."[7] Religious revivalism, or perhaps an attempt to extend its effects long after passions had subsided, seemingly encouraged reform and reorganization of religious

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[5] Reese, *America's Public Schools*, 35.

[6] For the relationship between religion, morality, and order in antebellum common schools, see Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*.

[7] Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process," 35. Beth Barton Schweiger has returned to Mathews' hypothesis, suggesting that southerner's obsession with conversion prompted not a conservative retreat from the radicalism of the origins of evangelicalism amid Anglican hegemony, but rather the emphasis on the individual and personal salvation prompted social reform, not unlike the response of evangelicals in the North. Though in different forms and perhaps more nostalgic rhetoric, southern evangelicals were not wholly opposed to modern obsessions with community, organization, and reform. Schweiger, "Max Weber in Mount Airy," 31-66.

structures. In the North, this occasionally resulted in religion's partnership with associational, municipal, and state institutions and most certainly resulted in the benevolence industry of early nineteenth-century reformations.[8]

In the South between 1800 and 1860, revivalism and its subsequent waning led inexorably to the need to construct denominational infrastructure, though throughout the antebellum years such infrastructure remained insignificant at best and nonexistent at worst. Southern evangelicals' fixation on salvation and the sustenance of the church, fueled by revivalism, sectarianism, and, later, by sectionalism, limited their efforts to extend learning to the white masses. Constructing religious institutions, such as the Sunday school, the denominational college, and the theological school, constituted a southern brand of "organizing," one that rhetorically at least gave a nod to popular education, but in reality failed to extend literacy to most children and perhaps doctrine to most families. Though reformers may have cherished any supposed eternal rewards of building Sunday schools, for example, they were much more convinced that such institutions must be constructed in their own image, serving both their peculiar, earthly pursuits and perceived, heavenly rewards.

When prioritizing, southern evangelical writers and leaders were much more content making loyal, obedient, and educated denominational adherents than they were active in making them good, responsible citizens. Thus the energy of southern evangelical educational reform gravitated toward the Sunday school as a remedy to the uneducated populace and denominational higher education as a solution to the lack of institutional structure and control. Even as they believed communities to benefit from the educational work of saving souls and the

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[8] For the relationship between religious revivalism and social reform, see Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Hatch, *Democritization of American Christianity*.

denominational labor of manufacturing leaders, evangelicals clearly left many children unattended and thus left any intention of shoring up local communities and the larger republic behind. Yet, in order to understand more fully how these evangelicals conceived of learning and its relationship to individuals and institutions, the narrative must attend to the educational structures that southern evangelicals imagined and created, not simply the structures more soundly conceived or institutions most enduring. Their solution, however bound by failed diagnosis and impaired prescriptions, shaped the nature of educational enterprise in the region.

Sunday Schools: Marking the Way

The Sunday school, or Sabbath school, was not an invention of southern evangelicals, but a product of the social realities of the early Industrial Revolution in Great Britain. Anglican Robert Raikes established the schools in the 1780s as a remedy to the problems of child labor, namely that time that children spent working eliminated any chance of receiving basic literacy instruction. In this new economic reality, labor trumped learning. Examining the American Sunday school, historian Anne M. Boylan demonstrated that Sunday schools in the United States, though some began as a means of bringing literacy to children and adults primarily in urban spaces, were primarily an instrument of religious instruction. The American Sunday school most significantly "brought the standards that evangelicals believed essential to right living."[9] Though ecumenical in its origins, incorporating the efforts of a variety of evangelicals working together, the Sunday school would later be associated with specific denominations and even later

[9] Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 36. In this work, *Sunday school* will be used to denote the various types of schools designed to open on the first day of the weekly calendar. Some writers used *Sabbath schools* and still others were quite defensive of their preference for one term over the other, but *Sunday schools* will be used here in reference to all types of these schools that provided instruction on Sunday.

be controlled within specific churches. Any mission to educate working children was gradually reduced to religious and moral instruction.

Generally, the South, when establishing these schools, followed Boylan's characterization. Amid a multitude of intended goals, namely the championing of morality, doctrine, and salvation, southern Sunday school advocates implemented a variety of rhetorical devices, seeking to convince their neighbors that the Sunday school was not only a worthy institution designed to fulfill church responsibilities to lost souls, but also a means of encouraging denominational prestige and social order. Despite the high-minded intentions and overstated rhetoric of promoters, the Sunday school by 1860 proved a weak institution in the region, as the consistent lack of resources, the ineptitude and unavailability of teachers, and a general apathy among the religious community, plagued organizational efforts. Nevertheless, while the intensity of some evangelicals in promoting the Sunday school cornered many into an unfulfilled faith that such efforts could solve more profound educational goals in the region, the problems that these reformers faced in creating an institution with modern tendencies for very traditional ends reveal the larger challenges confronting ministers, teachers, and parents in providing basic education for all. Evangelicals may have imagined the Sunday school as the "one of the rail-roads upon which Jehovah's chariot wheels move," but not everyone was so convinced.[10]

Southern evangelicals initially created Sunday schools as a means of educating those who lacked the financial ability or simply the time for formal schooling. In the 1820s, the Board of Managers of a Charleston Sunday School Society within the Protestant Episcopal Church

[10] "The Work of the Lord," *Southern Religious Telegraph*, December 6, 1838. The writer noted that everything "seemed to be in LABOR" and distances that once separated nations were eliminated with technology, machines that apparently enabled an almighty God to move more freely, at least enough to make followers move as well.

explicitly stated that the object of their efforts was to instruct the children of the poor in "the common rudiments of the simplest education" and the basic elements of Christian teaching. Commemorating the fourth anniversary of the Society, Edward Rutledge noted that Sunday schools would benefit orphans in every town and that this model of schooling was intended to educate the disenfranchised: Their object was "to teach children, and those who are children in knowledge, such lessons as will render them acquainted with their letters and religion, and thus make them useful and orderly members of society."[11] Boylan argued that the Sunday school and the common school often partnered, however intentionally, to achieve literacy and learning among the local children.

Sunday School Construction

Imagining the history of the institution, southern evangelicals even noted that the first Sunday schools in the South appeared very much like Raikes' model. According to an 1854 history, the first Sabbath Schools in Virginia appeared under the leadership of Major Jesse Snead of the Richmond Second Baptist Church in 1816. Operating until the mid-1830s and often headed by military leaders, the school was designed to be free of charge and open to adults as well as children. This antebellum historical narrative praised this form of early Sunday schools "as *mere educational* institutions," finding it "incalculably beneficial." According to this report,

[11] For analysis of the origins of the Sunday school in England, see John McLeish, *Evangelical Religion and Popular Education: A Modern Interpretation* (London: Methuen, 1969); Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture, 1780-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). "Extracts from the Address of the Board of Managers of the Charleston Protestant Episcopals Sunday School Society, to the members of the Protestant Espiscopal Church in Charleston and its vicinity," *The Southern Evangelical Intelligencer*, August 12, 1820; Edward Rutledge, *An Address, delivered before the Charleston Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Society at their fourth anniversary, being Tuesday in Witsun [sic] week, 1823* (Charleston: A.E. Miller, 1823).

the school ended once all of the original teachers were no longer available to serve. [12] Though this early Sunday school was designed for basic education for all, this type of institution did not continue, as evangelicals asserted different goals, plans much more closely aligned with religious inculcation, for these schools and leaders to pursue. Later commentators would use literacy as a means of encouraging action, though the ultimate ends remained religious in nature.[13]

Though the general education mission of the Sunday school waned, the purpose of the Sunday school as an investment in the poor continued. In 1834, the *Religious Herald* printed a report from the *New York Evangelist* that detailed a meeting of the New York Sunday School Union and the Southern Sunday School Union. During the meeting, a Boston minister reminded the members that "the Sabbath school system commenced with a single object—to instruct the poor and ignorant.—God is peculiarly the God of the poor." For him, the mission of the Sunday school has been entirely forgotten, as the "tendency of the church to rise above the lower classes of society in her efforts" was so great. The meeting concluded with a plea for members to attend to African American children, so many of whom were turned away from Sunday schools and left

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[12] "First Sabbath Schools in Virginia," *Home and Foreign Journal* IV, no. 5 (November, 1854). The article also praised the importance of tracts. Colportage was a major strategy of evangelism in the antebellum South, and, after 1850, national tract societies were increasingly caught in sectional fire. For analysis of this work in the South, see Kuykendall, *Southern Enterprize*, 112-27. Generally, writers highlighted Sunday schools founded first within their respective denomination. A debate ensued concerning the origins of the first Methodist Sunday school in several editions of the Methodist journal, Home Circle. One writer pointed to a Sunday school in New York as being firstly established in 1816, while another argued that, upon John Wesley's prompting, schools were born in Virginia and South Carolina in 1785. The writer contended that these schools have been overlooked because they lacked sustenance and a religious periodical. J. J. Ormond, "Sunday-Schools," *Home Circle* II, no. XVIII 1856): 249-52; D. R. McAnally, "Commencement of Sunday-Schools in the United States," *Home Circle* III, no. XXVII 1857): 165-66.

[13] In 1854, C.W. Lane challenged Southern Presbyterian readers to consider the "forty one thousand free white adults unable to read their mother tongue" and the "vast throng of Georgians, whose necessities and destitution pleads so eloquently for a general awakening of the churches in their behalf." C. W. Lane, "To the Christians in Georgia," *Southern Presbyterian*, July 6, 1854.

destitute, waiting only for a prison home.[14] By reprinting this piece, one must assume that the Virginia Baptist editor not simply tolerated the rhetoric of helping the poor, but also supported the institutions established by the unionizing efforts of fellow evangelicals.

By the 1830s, the purposes of the Sunday school often intertwined with a general lamentation that learning was undervalued by those who needed the institution most. Presbyterian A.P. Clopton of Charlotte lamented that so many schools had closed and even after the efforts of the legislature and the Sunday schools, that so many poor were growing up without a knowledge of letters and, most importantly, without a sense of morality. A Methodist writer noted that many children existed in every neighborhood who, whether from the poverty or carelessness of their parents, were uneducated, probably unable to attend a school during the week, and who could benefit from "the cultivation of the heart" in school on the Sabbath.[15] Clearly the mission of the Sunday school as a means of benevolence to the poor permeated the rhetoric of Sunday school advocates, and the association of the institutions with those in need of charity turned some—both potential recipients and possible philanthropists—away.

In their support of the Sunday school, though, southern evangelicals were never wholeheartedly committed to a wholesale vision of social elevation and community perfection. Perhaps the need to educate the poor through the Sunday school was not as pressing in the South, as the most impoverished were also enslaved. Historian Barbara Bellows has argued that southern benevolence, including institutions such as the Sunday school, emerged not from the

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[14] "New-York Sunday School Union and Southern Sunday School Union," *Religious Herald*, May 30, 1834.

[15] A.W. Clopton, "Sabbath Schools," *Religious Herald*, January 15, 1830; "D.", "Sabbath Schools--No.1," *Southern Christian Advocate*, April 7, 1843. In a report of the Richmond and Manchester Sunday School Union, another argued that Sunday schools could ameliorate the absence of common schools and the preponderance of illiteracy in Virginia. James Wood, "Importance of Sabbath Schools," *Southern Religious Telegraph*, May 1, 1835.

millennialism that inspired northern clergy to produce and direct a perfect society, but rather denominational identity. Southerners conceived of their responsibilities not as Christians alone, but as Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians.[16] This responsibility encouraged southern evangelicals to herd potential adherents into the denominational pen, rather than pursue utopian peaks of universal literacy. Educational visions were simultaneously constructed and impaired by denominational boundaries.

Thus, conversion, not basic education and literacy of the masses, dominated the designs of Sunday school reformers, even southern proponents. Evangelical southerners, from the origin of the institution, utilized these schools as tools for the conversion of individuals and the submission of the society into their likeness. One noted that "the value and importance of Sunday schools as a means of imparting religious instruction at a period when the mind is most susceptible of impression, must be self-evident to every unprejudiced observer."[17] Conversion, in their worldview, established not only an individual's salvation in the next life, but also secured the legitimacy of the denomination in this life. One writer even argued that attention to "the cultivation of intellectual powers" before "the great aim of Sunday-school instruction—the spiritual improvement of the young" was a great evil that lurked in some schools and conflicted with denominational mission.[18] Securing salvation and the credibility of the church for the next generation was far more important than mindful efficacy. Righteousness, not reading or writing, was the purpose.

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[16] Bellows, *Benevolence among Slaveholders*, 87-88.

[17] "James Square Sunday School," *Religious Herald*, June 27, 1828.

[18] "The Aim of Sunday-School Instruction," *Southern Christian Advocate*, January 19, 1838.

In the 1820s and 1830s, southern evangelical writers confirmed Boylan's interpretation as Sabbath schools were compared to gradual revivals, referred to as the "great nursery of the church," in their role in prompting conversion. Mathews argued that the "conversion experience was the basis of Evangelical thought about man and God and was conceived of as both an act and an experience." Conversion, for southern evangelicals, was more important than knowledge and even morality itself. Southern Sunday schools thus buttressed, according to advocates, the single greatest personal reality for every individual. Evangelicals "repudiated the limitation of essential knowledge to a mere handful of people set aside either by intellect or a vengeful God. The life of Christ was free to all men, they insisted, and as good empiricists offered the proof of their own experience."[19] For these advocates, no education, however laudatory and esteemed, could dispute such experience, yet a Sunday school education could provide the conditions favorable for children to stumble upon such a happening.

Through these schools, the necessity of conversion crept into the hearts and minds of children, and "a deep and awful sense of responsibility [was] awakened in parents and teachers, and few [were] not willing to train up their children in the ignorance of the former times." The Sunday school reminded all that children were "immortal beings" and "induced the children into feeling their accountability at a very early period," and the reports contended that "a larger number [of converts] than usual" were connected to Sunday schools, either as teachers or pupils. Baptist writers in Virginia admonished readers to promote the Sunday school as a means of conversion. Absent entirely is any goal beyond religious instruction and indoctrination: the Sabbath school was "a school of piety…essential to the growth and stability of the Church."

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[19] Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 59; ibid., 60. For other discussions of evangelical conversion, see Boles, *Great Revival: Beginnings*, 131-35; Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 33-41; A. Gregory Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism*, Religion in North America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 42-77; Schweiger, "Max Weber in Mount Airy," 49-51.

Some even attacked ulterior motives, arguing that it is a mistake to believe that Sunday schools are "*chiefly* designed to make sober and respectable citizens," and that such a belief emerged only through "those who think little about eternity, or the value of an immortal soul."[20] Salvation, not sobriety and society, engendered support for the institution.

Even by the 1850s, this purpose of Sunday schools remained primarily conversion. One Alabama Methodist wrote:

> I certainly will not at this day, and in this enlightened community, attempt to undervalue the cause of education, by which I mean the cultivation of the intellect—the acquisition of knowledge. But I may be permitted to say, that if that were all the benefit conferred by the Sunday-school, it would never have succeeded out of the limits of populous towns or cities, where scholars could alone be found who could not otherwise acquire even the rudiments of knowledge….The cultivation of the intellect is doubtless of great importance, and without it man cannot perform his mission in this world. It is education which makes the entire difference between the civilized man and the savage—between a Newton, or a Shakespeare, and the red man of the forest. But this is not the sole purpose of life, or the end for which life was given. Man is not merely an intellectual being—he is also an accountable, immortal being; and no matter how important the education of the intellect may be considered, it is much more important that his moral nature should be cultivated: that he should be taught his true relation to God and his fellow-men; that he should learn the truths of revelation, the character of God, and the wondrous story of the provision made for the regeneration of his fallen nature.[21]

Absent is any notion of social elevation, helping the poor, or universal literacy. For this adherent, the Sunday school abated man's sinful nature and affirmed the position of the heart, as superior even to the noblest and the most basic processes of the mind. Some have argued or implied that

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[20] *Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia at their Sessions in Savannah, December, 1829*, (Charleston: Observer Office Press, 1830), 11; *Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia at their Sessions in Augusta, December, 1830*, (Charleston: Observer Press Office, 1831), 19; "Lour [sic] Mistakes," *Religious Herald*, March 7, 1828; For a discussion of the role of conversion and Christian nuture in the Sunday School, see Boylan, *Sunday School*, 133-46.

[21] Ormond, "Sunday-Schools," 251. Another writer stated that Sunday schools "impress upon children a regard for the Sabbath, and furnish them with modes of worship and religious instruction adapted to their age and condition. They implant religious truth in the minds of the young which will make its impress upon their future lives, and lead many of them to heaven. "Sunday Schools," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, March 19, 1857.

between the late 1700s and civil war, for southern evangelicals, "conversion began to signal accommodation rather than resistance."[22] While the social implications of conversion may have changed, the intensity of the demands and the confidence in heavenly reward that the Sunday school provided individuals remained fairly consistent among evangelical writers. Most significantly, for writers and Sunday school promoters, conversion heralded the expansion of the denomination as much as it sealed the individual for heaven. For the adherent, conversion also assured a commitment, or at least an intention, to follow evangelical precepts and to support evangelical community.[23] Perhaps more important for southern children, attention to Sunday school by evangelicals limited chances of receiving basic instruction in the rudiments of intellectual development. Security in the next life trumped literacy, competency and social responsibility in this life.

After the 1840s, southern evangelicals needed to affirm the authority of their denomination, especially as slavery increasingly made the region's relationship to national organizations and northern (evangelical) institutions uneasy. One significant marker of such authority was denominational relevance, as demonstrated through the conversions of individuals and incorporation of the community into the confines of evangelical control. Vermont Congressman turned Georgia Baptist minister, Charles Dutton Mallary argued in 1850 that the

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[22] Schweiger, "Max Weber in Mount Airy," 44-45; For a narrative of this path from resistance to accomodation, see Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*; Heyrman, *Southern Cross*.

[23] Methodist James O. Andrew argued that without Sunday schools parents "sleep on, as if anxious for the ruin of as many of their children as possible; for although they make very feeble efforts to instruct and save their children, yet whatever may be decently done to strengthen and develop their feelings of pride, and avarice, and self-indulgence, and all unholy tempers, is most assiduously performed and the parents become the devil's agents, and they are industrious and true to their vocation; and the children grow up godless, and the country is cursed with a corrupt population, who ignore God and trample the laws under foot, and who acknowledge no law but their own passions; and their parents backslide and join their children on the way to hell…and God is angry, and his curse falls upon Church and country. "A Plea for Sunday Schools," *Nashville Christian Advocate*, August 4, 1859.

Sunday school institutions were designed for the "poor and humble in intellect as well as to the poor in worldly blessings." He argued that the schools could aid in the battle against Satan, the "profound and crafty metaphysician" as well as provide a means of saving souls. For him, the schools could enable a "prayerless mother" to receive a tract from her daughter who attended a school and, after reading, weeping, and prayer, "[give] her heart to Christ."[24] The intention of the school was no longer the mental training or even conversion of the child, but was designed, by using the involvement of the child, to expand the reach of denominational influence to a new, perhaps even unaware, family.

Mallary had argued that Sunday school instruction, in addition to providing "a powerful auxiliary to the religious discipline of the fireside," was essential to community, especially a community united by shared religious principles, even principles in conflict with those shared by elites. Mallary argued that in the Sunday school

> is bound upon the children of our land the grip (if I may thus express myself) of friendship, confidence, and affection, that will do much to strangle in embryo the puffs of scorn, the high looks of pride, the alienating airs of pompous wealth and starched nobility; which if once matured, drive aloof the poor man, insult the hard hand of useful toil, beget envy, variance, and discontent, unhinge society, and wither up the sweetest prospects of rational freedom, and true republican equality.[25]

In this view, religious instruction controlled by the church offered grace to sinners and law to lawbreakers, challenging all to "[create] respect and love for public quiet and social order."[26] Throughout the period, the Sunday school was promoted as a remedy to vice, but the implications for southern society, increasingly charged with backwardness and moral hypocrisy,

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[24] Charles Dutton Mallary, *The Advantages of Sabbath School Instruction* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1850), 5; ibid., 14.

[25] Ibid., 16-17.

[26] Ibid., 14.

became much more profound in the minds of writers.[27] Advocates, like Mallary, believed that the Sunday school could solve social ills, in addition to transforming souls, but not all southerners, nor even southern evangelicals, were convinced. Sunday schools in the antebellum period leaned upon the whims, pens, and pocketbooks of soul-jangling marketers in the religious press to prop up fledgling efforts and to provide sustenance. The promotion of the institution revealed the expectations, boundaries, and connections that educational reform needed to establish within antebellum culture, in order for the Sunday school to survive.

Sunday School Promotion

No matter the beliefs of reformers or the goals of Sunday schools, the intentions of literacy, conversion, and even denominational security proved insufficient to incite widespread support and action. For some, in the final two decades before civil war, the Sunday school was promoted as fundamental to the survival of the Republic. Earlier reformers had viewed the institution as essential to creating responsible citizens, whereas southern evangelicals on the eve of national discord viewed these schools as a frontline defense against the moral and martial darts of a perceived enemy. Texan W.P. Smith commended all citizens who wished for peace, friendship, and good citizenship to support the institution. His rhetoric triggered the fears of evangelicals about the future:

> On the formation of [children's] character, the perpetuity of national blessings is suspended. If they grow up *ignorant* and *vicious*, our civil and religious freedom must die with the present generation—if they grow up *virtuous* and *well informed*, we have nothing to fear, either from domestic discord, or the world in arms against us. How then can a real lover of his country be indifferent to the propriety of Sabbath schools?…Then as it accords with the practical knowledge of the civilized world, that the character of the

[27] "Sabbath School Blessed," *Religious Herald*, November 1, 1833. Another writer demanded that the "community…awake still more to the importance of Sabbath schools as a prevention of vice, crime and juvenile profligacy and ruin, by interesting the mind in better employment." Ibid.

> man is built upon the principles instilled into the mind of the child, let our Sabbath school banners be waving.[28]

For this advocate, the Sunday school would be an expression of patriotism and insurance against social discord. The Bible was the "textbook" of morality and the source of hope for the nation, and as republicanism depended on the intelligence and virtue of the people, so the Sunday school retained preeminence as the arbiter of the national future. If the "children of the Republic [would] become well acquainted with the Bible," hope for the nation would abound, and the peoples' rights would "not be destroyed by foreign invader or domestic usurper."[29] Certainly, knowledge of the Bible by some would do little against foreign invasion, even if the Bible remained the moral guidebook of many Americans. But the fear of social discord and a changing future could muster support for Sunday school expansion.

Evangelical editors employed a variety of rhetorical devices and even invented a past in order to support the cause of Sunday schools in the region. A writer described the lives of two brothers, both of whom faced tragic familial challenges. One brother was provided access to a Sunday school, and the other, who had no such opportunities to learn the blessings of grace, embarked upon a life of crime, which ultimately resulted in prison. The writer clearly pointed to the reason for the latter child's condition: the lack of support for Sunday schools condemns many.[30] Champions of the Sunday school in the evangelical press bombarded readers with such anecdotes, hoping to supply the institution with money and energy.

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[28] W.P. Smith, "Sabbath Schools--No. III," *Nashville Christian Advocate*, March 2, 1849.

[29] "The Pulpit, The Sunday School Enterprise," *Tennessee Baptist*, September 3, 1860.

[30] "R. Y. M.", "Two Brothers Contrasted--A Plea for Sunday Schools," *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, September 9, 1852.

Increasingly after 1840, the tendency to exaggerate and invent scenarios to support the Sunday schools' importance increased. Many commentators in the southern evangelical press designed to promote the institution through a variety of fictions, notably those that appealed to readers' sense of community responsibility and even patriotic fire. A Georgia editor printed a letter from Daniel Webster to Professor Pease concerning a supposed conversation between Webster and Thomas Jefferson. Sunday schools, according to this dialogue, were the "only legitimate means, under the Constitution, of avoiding the rock on which the French Republic was wrecked" and their greater promoter, Englishman Raikes, was a hero of many. Here Jefferson supposedly concurred with Edmund Burke in arguing that one "never uttered a more important truth than when he exclaimed that 'religious education is the chief defence [sic] of nations.'" The legitimacy and reliability of this conversation is certainly questionable, but not nearly as important as what the retelling of the "conversation" reveals about the perception of southern evangelicals, their institutions, and the conceptions of educational purposes.[31] This booster was able to invent a past in order to justify religious institutions in his present. Fear over the Republic and reverence to the nation's founders could be employed to encourage devotion and duty to the Sunday school and thus to the church's quest for control.

Others were more explicit about the political role of the Sunday school. In an 1851 report from Alabama, one writer contended, "no patriot, much less Christian, can slightly regard this institution, for the future prosperity of our country depends much on its success. The places vacated by the present actors in society must be filled by the rising generation." Sunday schools, in the minds and words of many, would provide the surest protection of good government, a

[31] "Daniel Webster on Sunday Schools," *Christian Index*, September 1, 1858.

guarantee of civil freedom, and the preservation of republican institutions.[32] These appeals reflected the interests of denominational leaders to promote the growth of southern organizations from a conspicuous infancy to even greater maturity, especially in comparison to other regions. The accuracy of their historical anecdotes and the actuality of church schools to affect change were certainly secondary, in their minds, to the immediacy of the cause.

According to the evangelical promoters, the Sunday school could assuage the fears of many, procuring sustenance for the Republic and order for society. In 1854, one contributor to *The Christian Index* admonished readers to consider the transformation of a "rude settlement" of "poor spiritually ignorant settlers—a class of persons who scarcely [knew] anything but wickedness" into a prosperous town:

> Go as those gray-haired settlers, who are but entering their graves, and they will point you to the originators of their Sabbath School. All say that, had it not been for those self-sacrificing men urging us to be taught by them, we might long ere this have fallen to rise no more. We thank God that he has saved us and our children! And this has been done through the influence of the Sabbath School.—Many more instances could we relate, of the vast amount of good which has been produced by Sabbath Schools.[33]

Another writer praised the "underground" nature of the Sunday school for encouraging revival, producing "vigorous congregations" and for "[supplying]…the only means of grace for the

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[32] "Report of the Alabama Conference on Sunday Schools," *Southern Christian Advocate*, February 7, 1851. "Sunday-School Address."

[33] Miss S. F. E, "Sabbath Schools," *Christian Index*, May 24, 1854. A church officer reported, though equally nonspecific regarding the place, that after establishing a Sunday school, "many who eighteen months ago were growing up in ignorance can now read the word of God for themselves and receive regular instruction. The habits of many of the parents have greatly improved. So great has been the improvement in this respect that it has often been remarked in a neighboring town. An intoxicated man from that neighborhood is far less frequently seen and there is every reason to hope that a radical change may soon be wrought in the entire community.""Sabbath Schools," *North Carolina Presbyterian* 1859.

destitute parts of our country." The Sunday school, in the rhetoric of supporters, could tame the frontier, create prosperity, and redistribute grace.[34]

Several writers even claimed an inverse relationship between prisons and Sunday schools. Certainly the benefits of Sunday school instruction were clear, but such institutions even steered young, impressionable souls away from the misfortunes of sin. Such a path would strengthen communities, for

> it is patriotic to promote Sunday Schools. They are the friends and guardians of the commonwealth. In their tendency to prevent crime, their conservative power has long since been proved.—The inmates of our prisons, and the convicts of our penitentiary are not, as a general rule, those who have enjoyed the advantages of Sabbath-School instruction. It is cheaper to the State to prevent Crime than to punish it.[35]

Sunday schools thus could solve crime and save money. Baptists suggested not only that communities should use this burgeoning institution as "a prevention of vice, crime, and juvenile delinquency," but also that the governments provide money to Sunday schools as a means of eliminating the costs of incarceration.[36]

In Georgia, one writer lamented that more work was not being done to reinforce religious and community institutions. Demanding that pulpits be filled with those who knew the Scriptures, "Viator" argued that the strength of the entire nation depended on Sunday schools, which "have more power than standing armies; an enlightened and moral people are a safer defense than a foreign army, than thousands of soldiers that have been trained to war, but have

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[34] "The Value of Sabbath Schools," *Tennessee Baptist*, February 18, 1860. In his essay, historian David Tyack argued that for clergy on the frontier, the common school became a "Protestant paideia" that would serve the interests of religion as institutional resources remained sparse. Tyack, "Kingdom of God and the Common School," 453. Evangelical southerners, however invented and contrived, envisioned the Sunday school providing such security.

[35] "Look to your Sunday Schools," *Christian Index*, July 14, 1858.

[36] Ibid.

neither intelligence or virtue."[37] Here the rhetoric of national defense was employed to promote the institution, no matter how legitimate or imagined the relationship between Sunday schools and survival of the Republic was. While some evangelicals might have stridently demanded the state be eliminated from the arenas of church control and even educating the young, they had no problems using the collective past, political mythology, and even a public-school advocating, Deist founding father to conflate church and state responsibilities in the minds of readers, most notably if such propped up evangelical institutions and convinced the hearts of skeptical and apathetic evangelicals to do the same. Importantly, at least in their advocacy, evangelicals chose educational institutions that they could control, that could serve their own ends, and that affirmed their worldview, in order to save souls and states.

While appeals to republican ideology and social stability were often rhetorical tools, writers were certain of the security that Sunday schools provided the church. Writers frequently noted and more frequently implied the stability these schools afforded the church. Sunday schools trained children in the faith, provided organizational structure to struggling congregations, and challenged the sin of Sabbath-breaking. South Carolina Methodists in 1853 deemed the Sunday school a fundamental "part of the machinery of the church," arguing that its influence, its care, and its effectiveness even surpassed that of the pulpit.[38] The schools enabled churches to complete important, essential and commission tasks, even and especially beyond the education of youth.

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[37] "Viator", "Sabbath Schools and Colporteurs," *Christian Index*, June 29, 1859.

[38] "Religious Training of the Young," *Southern Christian Advocate*, December 16, 1853.

Sunday School Frustration

This Sunday school "machinery," though, lacked the efficiency, effectiveness, and automation that such a mechanistic metaphor implied. The imagined, contrived, and even very real opportunities afforded by the Sunday school demanded the incessant monitoring of the press, fueled by imagined possibilities of evangelical reformers and the overstatement of evangelical commentators. Despite this homespun vigilance, several challenges to the Sunday school undermined the adequacy of the institution as a means to achieve mass literacy or even mass inculcation. The pro-Sunday school expositions and treatises within the religious press revealed the often muffled protests of some evangelicals—that the Sunday school usurped the family, provided poor instruction, and imposed extra-biblical structures, such as ecumenical organizations or denominational boards of education, that may appeal to the modern gaze, but certainly not to the Lord's.

Early proponents of the Sunday school in the South battled the paradigm embraced by many that the Sunday schools were for the poorer masses. In 1830, the *Southern Religious Telegraph* included a brief statement from Samuel Miller, an important Presbyterian minister and founder of the Princeton School of Theology. In recounting his own revelation about sending his children to Sunday schools, Miller targeted an early obstacle to Sunday school construction: the perception that the institution was designed for children of lower classes. With great "astonishment and regret," Miller also lamented that "so many ministers of the gospel take so little interest in promoting Sabbath schools; and that many others, who speak frequently and strongly in their favor, are not more disposed to engage with active zeal in helping them on."[39] Another noted the discord between Sunday school instruction and ministers, asking "why are

[39] Samuel Miller, "Dr. Miller on Sabbath Schools," *Southern Religious Telegraph*, July 3, 1830.

[pastors] so often strangers in their schools, indifferent to the mode in which they are conducted, ignorant of the characters and capacities of the lambs who are there fed, and so little curious about the actual success of the exertions which are there made?"[40]

While some southerners embraced Miller's notion that the Sunday school was for all children and many ministers provided an approving nod, others resisted the contention that the Sunday school offered instruction superior to the family. One southern writer begged readers to embrace the institution as a means of benefitting all classes: "It is so cheap and so simple, that it may be easily instituted and managed in the most poverty stricken and ignorant community, while it is the valued ornament in the most polished circles."[41] Others, though, protested, as one writer recited the popular contention that "the instruction is superficial and not nearly equal to that formerly given by the parents at the fire-side; and…those schools have superseded family instruction." The author used this to suggest more support for the schools and more involvement from entire families in the administering, teaching, and attendance of Sunday schools.[42] Despite these efforts, one must consider that some evangelicals resisted Sunday school instruction in order to preserve more familiar (and, they argued, more biblical) paths to faith; others simply preferred "useless visiting and unbecoming journies [sic]."[43] For some evangelicals, the institutions did not adequately or overtly affirm the supreme authority of minister and family.

These protests by some southern evangelicals frustrated writers, as the leadership of the laity was the institution's most prized trait and its most prodigious impediment. Contending that

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[40] "The Cause of Sunday Schools," *Religious Herald*, May 31, 1837; See also F. W. B., "Sabbath Schools," *Religious Herald*, September 4, 1835.

[41]"A Sunday School in Every Baptist Church," *Christian Index*, October 14, 1852.

[42] "Sabbath Schools vs. Family Instruction," *Southern Presbyterian*, February 24, 1855.

[43] "Sabbath Schools," *Religious Herald*, May 31, 1837.

the Sunday school was more effective than pastors, proponents argued that the Sunday school could provide grassroots to established ministries and stabilize more ephemeral denominational work in remote regions. This intention required the commitment from both pastors and laity, a genuine commitment to the institution that many simply could not muster. According to one Presbyterian writer, the Sunday school teacher was "the Jabez and Boaz of [a pastor's] ministerial temple," who, in the absence of the minister, would continue "sowing divine seed, which in due time should spring up and bear fruit."[44] One noted that the Sunday school provided ministry in the absence of a pastor, which was so very important in congregations that shared a pastor with other churches, citing "a good brother [who] once observed, that a minister having charge of four churches, was a good deal like a man with four wives, had no very strong attachment to any of them, and ready to leave them without much sacrifice of feelings on his part."[45] Given the absenteeism and pluralism seemingly inherent in these religious institutions, the proposal of even greater institutional apparatus, even in the structure of the Sunday school, proved a blundering overextension. If promoters argued that the schools were more effective than pastors, some decried a doctrinal overreach of authority, but if they failed to make the case for the schools' necessity, their mission would be overlooked.

Though many advocates conceived of the Sunday school as means to remedy the problems of ever-growing national and denominational frontiers, many boosters acknowledged the common perception and even reality that the quality of instruction in Sunday schools was neither consistent nor sufficient. Some schools simply could not operate successfully through the

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[44] G., "The Importance of Sabbath-schools to the South," *Southern Presbyterian* 1850. Some even noted that Sunday school teachers were strong candidates to become ministers. B. M. Jr., "Sunday Schools in Country Churches," *Home and Foreign Journal* I, no. 12 (1852).

[45] "Sunday School Convention," *Christian Index*, August 19, 1852.

winter, opening only once spring arrived.[46] Some teachers, primarily made of laypeople with varying degrees of preparation and commitment, failed to meet standards of punctuality and devotion, and some pastors apparently failed to monitor them closely enough for some writers.[47] Even more significantly, the growth of Sunday schools was inhibited by the need for more competent teachers. One argued that

> the greatest difficulty we meet in this work is to secure the prompt, self-denying labors of the right kind of teachers. Promptness, regularity, and faithfulness in teachers are essential to the high success of the Sunday schools. Every teacher should be in his place at the hour and receive with a smile and a kind word the members of his class. A failure on the part of teachers to study the lesson and prepare themselves to explain and illustrate in an impressive and interesting way, is another great obstacle. Such neglect is wrong; it is sinful.[48]

Many complained that teachers were not found in sufficient numbers to continue the mission of the school, and many of those who were willing to teach lacked sufficient methods and clarity in instruction.[49] At least one writer in the 1850s attributed these defects in Sunday schools to the growing perception that the schools were "nurseries for the poor," causing many to overlook the institution altogether.[50]

One solution to poor instruction and porous oversight was encouraging the use of organizations such as the American Sunday School Union. Established in 1824, the ASSU "embodied the collective dreams of Sunday school workers and formed institutional networks"

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[46] "Sabbath Schools," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, September 21, 1859.

[47] "Practical Defects of Sunday School Teachers," *Christian Index*, February 19, 1852. "A Sunday School in Every Baptist Church."

[48] "Look to your Sunday Schools."

[49] "Practical Defects of Sunday School Teachers." J. F. H., "Sabbath Schools," *Nashville Christian Advocate*, March 2, 1849.

[50] "The Sabbath Schools," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, October 15, 1857.

that superseded denominational lines.[51] Through such ecumenical designs, the publications, agents, and infrastructure of this group enhanced the spread and influence of the Sunday school throughout the nation. Early in the period, the ASSU faced little criticism in the press. Southern editors confirmed the non-sectarian nature of the organization, faithfully described its investment in the region, to the contentment, presumably, of readers. Writers praised the efforts of the ASSU and southern agents and colporteurs within the organization, admonishing them to increase their efforts of creating both common schools to promote education and Sunday schools to provide religious instruction.[52] One writer, in an admonition to support ASSU schools and libraries in the "new and destitute sections" of the region, found that "sectarian jealousy and strife" threatened the primary aim of Sunday schools: "to gather together the neglected and destitute children to receive instruction in the Word of God."[53] From this perspective, an ASSU school would enable a small number of families in new neighborhoods, who might bring different denominational backgrounds, to receive religious instruction simply by pooling resources, rather than insisting upon denominational character.

Even as editors clearly supported the growth of Sunday schools, challenges to denominational authority caused some to criticize the ASSU, especially after the mid-1840s.

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[51] Boylan, *Sunday School*, 60; Per ASSU data, the South had only 6% of all ASSU schools in 1832. Boylan attributed this to rural settlement, preference for private education, and a "slavery-bred wariness of things Northern." Ibid., 30-31.

[52] "Richmond Sunday School Union," *Southern Religious Telegraph*, August 12, 1831; Clopton, "Sabbath Schools."; "Lexington Sunday School Union, Virginia," *Southern Religious Telegraph*, March 9, 1832; "The Southern Resolutions," *Religious Herald*, July 5, 1833; "To Sunday School Teachers and Parents," *Christian Index*, December 24, 1833; Only one correspondent, ASSU Southern Agent James Welch, acknowledged resistance to his efforts, noting that it was important to secure in the minds of readers that all monies contributed to the Union would remain instate. James E. Welch, "Southern Sunday School Enterprize," *Religious Herald*, December 20, 1833.

[53] "o.", "Importance of Sabbath-schools to the South No. VII," *Southern Presbyterian*, March 1, 1850. The writer most specifically was demanding help and financial aid in providing a library for the schools of the American Sunday School Union. He praised the absence of sectarianism in these schools as well.

Charges of sectarianism and funding still plagued the southern Sunday schools, despite the work of boosters and consistent coverage by editors. An 1845 ASSU report acknowledged that Georgians proposed a campaign to open over 30 schools with libraries in different counties, but only one person, a northern clergyman living in Georgia, had contributed funds.[54] North Carolina Baptists reiterated a charge from *The Tennessee Baptist* that the "unclean spirit" of "Pedoism" had crept into ASSU circles, suggesting that the organization was unsuccessful in preventing doctrinal intrusions amid its ecumenical promises.[55] While publishing ASSU minutes and budgets and consistently pledging support of the Sunday school concept, editors had no problems exposing perceived threats to denominational prestige and righteousness.[56] Denominational superiority and competition increased during the antebellum period, injuring the ability of institutional structures, such as the ASSU, to encourage Sunday school development. One writer, after conceding that the first Sunday schools were established by another denomination, asked, "What denomination is the most faithfully and zealously engaged in the mighty enterprise, and which is exerting the most influence upon the mind and heart of the youth of our land?"[57]

While northern evangelicals viewed interdenominational organizations as progress and an opportunity to exert influence, southern evangelical writers eventually expressed frustration with such ecumenical designs, if only because rival denominations refused to submit to the

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[54] "American Sunday School Union: Twenty First Anniversary," *Biblical Recorder*, May 31, 1845.

[55] "The Ism of Pedoism," *Biblical Recorder*, July 5, 1851.

[56] Boylan, *Sunday School*, 81-83. While Boylan implies that southerners in the 1830s protested the ASSU as imposition from the North, little criticism along sectional lines of the ASSU was found in the press. Much more common was frustration with the diffusion of resources or the imposition of opposing sectarian teachings. For a rebuttal of the sectarian charge, see "Sabbath Schools," *Southern Christian Advocate*, December 6, 1839.

[57] L. D. Huston, *Home Circle* VI, no. 11 1860): 692.

nonsectarian intentions.[58] Some, after trying to establish a Southern Sunday School Union, concluded that the State of Georgia was simply not ready for such efforts. Granted, support for a southern union and for the Sunday school in general were certainly different goals, but the author was clear: "Sunday schools are little republics at the thresholds of the churches, and as lovely as the sweet children of which they are comprised. They are rose-buds in the garden of our Lord…[But] Georgia Baptists have taken little or no interest in the present Sabbath School movement."[59] The author was clearly frustrated as the three year-old Sunday School Convention had accomplished very little and had even met opposition, though a few Sunday schools had easy access to books and publications that the Union intended to coordinate and provide.

The editor of *The Tennessee Baptist* viewed the addition of another organization as unnecessary, detracting from other efforts within the denomination. The great objection was that the Union would encourage "a great centralizing" that was unbiblical and unnecessary for the church.[60] The Sunday school and the efforts to organize and control its spread throughout the region were powerful enough to warrant a specific objection. This objection was not simply posed because of the Sunday schools' absence in the Gospels or its challenge to the conversion

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[58] In voicing their concerns, southern writers possibly anticipated the critiques of the ASSU's cross-denominational cooperation that emerged in the North primarily after the war. Boylan notes that the ASSU became one of many organizations competing for resources, while in the South, the challenge to denominational control remained the leading force positioned against ASSU expansion in the region. For these challenges and the success of the ASSU in other regions, see Boylan, *Sunday School*, 60-100.

[59] "The Sabbath School Convention," *Christian Index*, March 3, 1858.

[60] Ibid.; "Brother Howell's Letter," *Tennessee Baptist*, February 20, 1858; R.B.C. Howell, "Letter from Dr. Howell," *The Tennesse Baptist*, February 20, 1858; "Sunday School Agency," *Christian Index*, March 2, 1859. This suspicion of centralization manifested in the protests against the establishment of a Southern Baptist Seminary in the late 1850s. Basil Manly argued that the proposed Seminary would be diligent in "guarding against centralism and local influences, yet retaining proper energy" as well as built upon a "well-guarded" constitution and an "accommodating and conservative" organization. Basil Manly, "To the Friends of Education in the Baptist Ministry, Throughout the South and Southwest," *Christian Index*, June 15, 1859.

experience emergent from early 1800s revivalism, but from its appearance in antebellum life as a new organizational and educative norm. The efforts of Sunday school and of Union proponents must be seen, however myopic and confined within denominational circles, as both an attempt to construct control in a culture built on slavery and hierarchy *and* as a means of reform, to heave the evangelical experience into the modern world. Rather than risk citizens using the tools of education to construct their own beliefs, ideas, and lives, southern evangelicals hoped to inculcate a foundation for individual salvation and denominational superiority. In doing so, they revealed a variety of expectations within their own camp about the nature of organizing and of education.

Whether monitoring the ASSU, incorporating republican rhetoric into their arguments, or using the Sunday school to establish the preeminence of the denomination, southern evangelical writers after 1840 became much more interested in the effects of the Sunday school beyond conversion, viewing the institution as a modern tool of affirming education, denominational power, and even traditional authority. In *The Gospel Working Up*, historian Beth Barton Schweiger argued that the schisms in the 1840s thrust denominational pastors and leaders into greater roles within society. Many clerics and laypeople began the task of denomination-building, the "bureaucratization of religion" that, according to Schweiger, "was an inherently innovative and forward-looking task."[61] While the efforts of Sunday school boosters and evangelical institution-builders may indeed prove "modern," the arduous work and fleeting success in solidifying the Sunday school in the reality of antebellum experience revealed a tension within evangelicalism about the nature of modern institutions. Some southern evangelicals rejected forms of (modern) organization beyond the denomination and, for some,

[61] Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up*, 85.

beyond the individual family or individual conscience. Still, these perspectives were not widely shared among editors and were revealed mostly in the strategizing of promoters. Despite Sunday school boosters' enthusiasm, though, southern evangelicals did not wholeheartedly embrace the Sunday school, even its most staunchly denominational form. By 1860, southern Sunday schools, plagued with organizational challenges and widespread apathy, were not able to carry the banner of the general literacy or even personal salvation that promoters proclaimed.

Evangelical insistence that education affirm the boundaries of power established by denominational leaders limited the ability of the institution to affect widespread influence over the region. Despite this, Sunday school advocates certainly viewed their work within the context of sectional rivalry and denominational uprightness, securing both earthly and eternal citizenship for all. This obsession with institution-building and the assumption that the Sunday school, even amid its limitations, could meaningfully and entirely transform the Republic, limited the avenues by which southern evangelicals, and thus all southerners, could obtain basic education and literacy. Because the Sunday school movement elevated moral indoctrination over basic learning and attuned the hearts and hyperbole of evangelical writers away from more inclusive possibilities, the "organizing ethos" emergent from revivalism, however modern, failed to help southerners catch and keep up with northern movements for social and educational transformation. In their haste to define "the way" all children should go, many evangelicals imagined the southern Sunday school to be much more inclusive and more educationally profound than their clerical authority and their rush to reform would ever allow. Individual conversion and denominational ascension appropriated the organizing and reforming impulses of southern evangelicals, and the Sunday school became a platform by which evangelicals could affirm modern organization and prestige, neither of which, in their evangelical forms, rejected

tradition altogether and neither of which, in their southern forms, depended on a wholly educated populace.

Theological Schools and Denominational Colleges: Immuring the Way

Southern evangelical Sunday schools clearly demonstrated a commitment to promote the diffusion of doctrine and control at the expense of widespread access to education, but even still, the availability of teachers and organizational leadership proved insufficient. In order to mitigate these charges against Sunday schools, many evangelical writers proposed adult education and training within the confines of denominational control. Especially after the mid-1840s when northern and southern evangelicals formally and informally split, the educational energies of the denominations were siphoned by the construction of denominational colleges and theological schools.[62] Advocates of these institutions used rhetoric similar to Sunday school support, but the implications for denominational security and regional identity were perhaps even greater, or at least more compelling to adherents, as the denominational college and theological school trained not children for basic literacy and doctrine, but adults in leadership.[63]

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[62] For a discussion of the splitting of the Baptist and Methodist denominations and the (later formalized in 1861) rift among American Presbyterians, see Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 159-64; E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978); Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation*; Robert G. Gardner, *A Decade of Debate and Division: Georgia Baptists and the Formation of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995); Hill, *The South and North in American Religion*; Snay, *Gospel of Disunion*.

[63] Many of these institutions were quite fluid: manual labor schools became theological institutions, academies become universities, theological schools became colleges, etc. The distinctions between these are perhaps more important to analysis than they were in the minds of contemporaries. For the purposes of clarity, *denominational colleges* refers to any institution established by the denomination or group within the denomination for the purposes of general, most likely but not limited to higher, education. *Theological schools* refer specifically to institutions designed to train ministers. Certainly denominational schools increased the number of potential ministers within the gaze of church leaders, recruiters, and influence. Certainly, contemporaries viewed denominational colleges as an important component in the survival of the church.

In advocating denominational colleges and theological schools, evangelical writers promoted the institutions as means of social uplift and wise investment, though access certainly extended to few below the middling classes. They promoted the schools as a solution to the excesses of planter-controlled state universities, though their audiences, especially significant voices in Baptist and Methodist circles, resisted the elitism forged by leadership with too much learning. They promoted the schools as means by which the region could defend against northern naysayers and promote a southern brand of learning, though their efforts rested primarily upon the increase of denominational prestige. These tensions governed the educational efforts of evangelicals in the antebellum period, from the Sunday school to the university classroom.

That southern evangelicals pursued the expansion of higher education was hardly surprising or unique to the region or among evangelicals. Historian Curtis Johnson argued that nationally Baptists and Methodists, sects he deemed "antiformalist," claimed one college (Brown University) in 1820, but built fifty-nine institutions of higher education by 1861.[64] Though not encouraged by proximity to significant "formalist" populations (outside of their Presbyterian neighbors) or theological enemies, such as Catholic or Mormons, southern Baptists and Methodists nonetheless began numerous denominational colleges and theological institutions between 1820 and 1860. Johnson later contended that white Americans in the nineteenth century, whether in marriage partners, political parties, occupation, or location, were "enthralled by the notion of choice" and found a "dazzling array of religious movements from which to choose."[65]

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[64] Curtis D. Johnson, *Redeeming America: Evangelicals and the Road to Civil War* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 1993), 39.

[65] Curtis D. Johnson, "'Sectarian Nation': Religious Diversity in Antebellum America," *OAH Magazine of History* 22, no. 1 (January 2008): 17; For analysis on the positive relationship between Catholics and Protestants in the South, see Andrew Stern, "Southern Harmony: Catholic-Protestant Relations in the Antebellum South," *Religious and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 17, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 165-80; Cooper and Terril argued that "religion became a major force in southern higher

This reality undoubtedly pressured southern evangelical writers not only to provide educational choices, but also to provide legitimate, sustainable choices through which their influence could expand. Evangelical promotion of higher education and theological schooling revealed not only the tensions that defined the educational imaginations of their religious communities, but also the limitations induced by their desire to expand control and their choice of the denominational college and theological school as the direction of their energies.

Between 1820 and 1860, the discourse of the southern evangelical press initially portrayed the denominational college and theological school as means of social improvement and necessary theological scholarship, but increasingly became a defense of denominational and regional righteousness. Throughout the period, writers pandered to an apparently powerful sentiment that education, even of ministers, was unnecessary and often contrary to religious repute. Writers increasingly promoted institutions that utilized the models successful in the North, but also wrote extensively that such efforts would produce a uniquely southern brand. The work of evangelicals to construct denominationally-controlled higher education exposed the constraints upon the diffusion of learning to all southerners in the period. The lack of support, intra-evangelical wrangling, and an increasingly imposing sectional identity steered evangelical visions of education away from inclusive, often state-governed forms and toward more tightly controlled schooling with limited access and firmly under denominational control. The denominational college was certainly the most visible and most sustained evangelical challenge to an established state educational venture in the South.

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education" with each denomination establishing schools in almost every state. Correctly, they noted that "many disappeared almost as quickly as they were founded" and "others were little more than high schools." Cooper and Terrill, *American South*, I, 276-77.

Southern evangelicals conceived of theological schools and denominational colleges as a means of educational expansion. Evangelical writers viewed these institutions, though not designed to educate children, within the confines of denominational goals and also as a means by which the masses might indirectly learn rudimentary skills and doctrine.[66] If churches and Sunday schools were supplied with educated and trained teachers, administrators, and ministers, then, from their view, the benefits of education could be diffused. According to Schweiger, southern objections to and variations from the organizing patterns of the North must not simply be viewed as tradition demanding hesitation, but the institution building of southern religion in the period must be conceived by historians, notably as they were by contemporaries, as "breathtakingly new." Southern evangelicals constructed "little empires" that collected money, published periodicals, and trained leaders.[67] These activities, including the educational reforms promoted in the evangelical press, certainly caused some suspicion among religious communities simply because of their willingness to rest upon contrived bureaucracy, rather than authentic religious experience. Nevertheless, the work of southern evangelicals to create religious institutions of higher learning, in their view, provided a foundation essential to the larger cause of literacy, education, and evangelism. Though these institutions would assert the prestige and

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[66] One writer reinforced a common assumption: "an efficient and improving ministry underlies every achievement and all success—whether it be of individual edification, or of general enlargement and multiplication—at home, or among the unevangelized." "To the Friends of Education in the Baptist Ministry, Throughout the South and Southwest."

[67] Beth Barton Schweiger and Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the American South: Protestants and Others in History and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 52-55. Schweiger contends that "southern evangelical Protestants did not merely put themselves at the service of the political economy of slavery. Slavery shaped the message of southern churches, but it failed to dictate the organizational form they embraced, one that was mirrored similarly by denominations in the free-labor North. In his study of Georgia Methodists, Christopher Owen noted that Georgia Methodist donations for missions, tracts, and Sunday schools, per white member, were greater than those collected in Ohio, four times the amount collected in Indiana, and rivaled even New York. Christopher Owen, *The Sacred Flame of Love: Methodism and Society in Nineteenth-century Georgia* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998), 41.

authority of the denomination, many viewed this work as essential to southern survival amid increasing conflict with northern organizations and essential to the ability of the denomination to harness the moral imaginations of the southern population. In either case, the efforts, while certainly successful in establishing a variety of institutions, failed to directly expand the educational opportunities of most southerners.

Initially, some conceived of the theological education as a pointed means of social improvement, as the training of preachers would not only expand educational access to many, but also extend the reach of the denomination. By the 1830s, Presbyterians officially began to consider providing education at an earlier age and creating a Presbytery academy for those who could not afford formal schooling. Similar to those who championed the Sunday school, evangelical promoters hoped to expand the reach of denominational loyalty through education. To promote the theological school, evangelical editors and writers suggested the provision for scholarships for poor, yet promising students. In 1830 southern editor A. Converse of the *Southern Religious Telegraph* prominently featured a piece by Herman Humphrey, president of Amherst College, outlining how one might sponsor a young scholar through the trials and tribulations of completing an education for ministry. Humphrey noted that "the demand for well-educated ministers cannot be supplied in the ordinary way and that it is the duty of the church to bring forward and aid such of their pious indigent sons, as have promising talents, and as wish to be employed in the Lord's vineyard." Humphrey implored the readers to support the educative cause, to view the importance of educating beneficiaries as well as sons, and to rest assured that character will not falter by such charity.[68] Writers defended the notion that education, even of ministers, was a duty of community, rather than an attainment secured by individuals.

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[68] Heman Humphrey, "Education for the Ministry," *Southern Religious Telegraph*, March 6, 1830.

Evangelicals would revive this sentiment of social and individual improvement to engender support for the cause of denominational colleges in the 1850s. One writer, Philomathes, in a five-part analysis of the relationship between denominational and state colleges, used class-induced rhetoric to make the case for religious collegiate schooling. He argued that denominational colleges "*enlarged"* the reach of education, while state schools "*definitely bounded*" access to higher learning. Because state colleges had security of the state purse and denominational colleges depended on the donations of adherents, the cause of education in religious schools was indeed a cause, one worthy of attention and not to be taken for granted. But the college was not simply more democratic because of more widespread, conscious public investment. In the state college, according to the writer, students "are collected from every distinction of sect, a political party, the sons of our great men, who are generally so free with their father's purses, (as much so as with their reputation) and the Sons, worse still—of our overgrown rich men;--these, having little to do in any of the ordinary drudgeries of life,…conclude to spend their time as becomes their birth or wealth." The writer, in the succeeding installment, continued: state college "fathers are often too rich, or too distinguished for their sons to think of study. Such indulgent parents cannot brook the idea of their sons appearing mean, or little, and they with their heads crammed full of family distinction must make use of it. They cannot think of undergoing the drudgery of acquisition. They have enough to spare." The writer clearly charges the southern establishment with idleness, a propensity to rest on position, rather than work for virtue. From this perspective, denominational colleges were cheaper, seemingly devoid of laziness, and fulfilled a mission of social uplift. The writer admonished readers to

> Let the leading denominations be encouraged to come forward in their appropriate work. Let them draw together the sons of the middle and working classes of society, who

> coming together with better resolves and fewer temptations, will offer under a wholesome discipline, the finest material for a rich harvest of mental development.…And here too, the strongest pledge from the character of young men, who are to depend upon their own exertions for their names and places in the world for industrious and hard working students.

The writer, while unashamedly quoting Benjamin Franklin on the essential characteristics of citizens in a healthy republic, had no problem concluding that sectarian schools would best provide for a virtuous republic, whose citizens are industrious, intelligent, and moral.[69]

Perhaps this rhetoric appealed to a significant sentiment among the evangelical population. In 1847, Georgia Methodist cleric George Foster Pierce complained that as children of the wealthy began to attend college through the payment of tuition, some Methodists were less inclined to give, assuming that their "philanthropy cannot realize the dream of an absolute equality of privileges," and this withholding of gifts had increased colleges' inability "to be more liberal" and thus elevate those the college claimed to uplift.[70] While sponsoring theological students and giving money to denominational colleges may have been welcomed behaviors early in the period, proponents clearly revealed that a larger sentiment about the access to and social function of denominational schools had changed. As the institutions became more numerous, competition over funding certainly increased as well. From theological education to the Sunday

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[69] Philomathes, "The Comparative Advantages of Denominational and State Colleges Reviewed, No. I," *Biblical Recorder*, July 12, 1855; Philomathes, "The Comparative Advantages of Denominational and State Colleges Reviewed. No. II," *Biblical Recorder*, July 19, 1855; Philomathes, "The Comparative Advantages of Denominational and State Colleges Reviewed. No. III," *Biblical Recorder*, July 26, 1855; Philomathes, "The Comparative Advantages of Denominational and State Colleges Reviewed. No. IV," *Biblical Recorder*, August 2, 1855; Philomathes, "The Comparative Advantages of Denominational and State Colleges Reviewed. No. V," *Biblical Recorder*, August 9, 1855. In the *History of Wake Forest College Vol. 1*, George Washington Paschal reasoned that "Philomathes" was in fact Thomas H. Pritchard, who was an agent of the college following graduation and had been a part of the Philomathesian Society. George Washington Paschal, *History of Wake Forest College* (Wake Forest, NC: Wake Forest College, 1935), 465.

[70] George F. Pierce, "Address Delivered Before the Methodist Education Convention of Georgia," *Southern Christian Advocate*, August 13, 1847.

school, supporters of denominations' educational institutions appealed to all classes of southern white society, hoping to garner approval and financial support.

Southern evangelicals in the 1830s championed education, namely the theological school, also as a means of establishing denominational influence and individual betterment. In response to Joseph Henry Lumpkin's sermons in 1832, a Baptist writer lamented that "if it, then be admitted that the preacher must learn before he can be qualified to teach, we ask, why are those indigent, unlearned brethren, longer neglected? Are they not willing to receive improvement? They are not. If then they remain monuments of neglect, the fault will not be theirs, but it will be because Zion is at ease upon this subject."[71] Lumpkin himself mandated that education was built upon evangelical assumptions and was firmly committed to the improvement of society. For others, the greatest obstacle to such improvement of individuals and of society was monetary. One noted that in nine out of ten cases, poverty hampered even the holiest of efforts to education and another cause of education rested upon the fleeting "liberality of the churches."[72] Despite the goals of Lumpkin and others, the struggle to achieve adequate financial support for these institutions was ephemeral.

With varying degrees of success, evangelicals tried to make these institutions self-sustaining. In the 1830s, some proposed the manual-labor system of schooling to provide the region with ministers. Inspired by the work of Pestalozzi and adopted by the English, the manual labor school offered Baptists a cheaper method to begin an organized and systemized training of clergy. Adding to a widespread conversation begun by Georgia Baptist organizer Adiel

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[71] SIGMA, "Mr. Lumpkin's Education Sermons," *Christian Index*, August 25, 1832; For analysis of Lumpkin's reforming impulse, see Timothy S. Huebner, "Joseph Henry Lumpkin and Evangelical Reform in Georgia: Temperance, Education, and Industrialization, 1830-1860," *Georgia Historial Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (Summer 1991).

[72] ALPHA, "Furman Theological Institution," *Biblical Recorder and Southern Watchman*, June 23, 1838.

Sherwood about the necessity of clerical education in the Baptist community in Georgia, one writer observed that the Georgia Baptists were "maturing a plan for a manual-laboring school, where young men who desire knowledge, may obtain it with little expense." Sherwood and others believed wholeheartedly in the manual labor school as a means of educating poor southerners who desired to be ministers, finding importance in physical labor even for (and perhaps especially for) those interested in the things of the Spirit. Sherwood's forty-year career in Georgia was instrumental in organizing the denomination as well as extending education outside of the confines of elites.[73] Though the manual labor movement in the South was largely unsuccessful and many attempts failed, some were absorbed by or transformed into denominational colleges.[74] Attempts to use labor as a means of uplifting individuals and building

[73] Adiel Sherwood, born in New York and educated for the ministry in New England, arrived in Savannah on a short-term mission project. He spent 40 years on the Georgia Piedmont establishing churches, local associations, etc. He is credited with beginning the first Sunday School, the Georgia Baptist State Convention, and the first manual labor school in Eatonton and later Penfield (which became the Mercer Institute and later University). Jarrett Burch, "Adiel Sherwood: Religious Pioneer of Nineteenth-Century Georgia," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 87, no. 1 2003): 22-47.

[74] E Battle, "Education of Ministers," *Christian Index*, August 13, 1831; Spectator, "Education Cause in Our Church," *Southern Religious Telegraph*, December 28, 1832. Sherwood's school was adopted into Mercer Institute and later university, and Georgia Methodists created a Conference Manual Labor School, though within three years the school was absorbed into Emory College. Wake Forest in North Carolina and the Virginia Baptist Seminary were both instituted, as the popularity of these schools among the Baptists grew. The Hearn Manual Labor School in Floyd County, Georgia was quite successful, and South Carolina Baptists even discussed how manual labor could sustain the fledgling Furman Theological Institution. For an economic explanation of why the Manual Labor School Movement faded, see Dorothy Orr, *A History of Education in Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950), 146-49. In *Thinking Confederates*, historian Dan Frost argued that manual labor schools failed because of the "primary ideological obstacle" which barred hard labor (associated with slavery) from the life of the intellect (necessary to ministers). The religious press does not confirm this conclusion, though such an argument (albeit never referencing or implying slavery) was occasionally made. Haphazard organization and the manual labor schools' emergence from the bottom-up explain the absorption of most of these schools into universities and colleges. Dan R. Frost, *Thinking Confederates: Academia and the Idea of Progress in the New South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 6-8; Carl B. Wilson, *The Baptist Manual Labor School Movement in the United States* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 1937). Orr, *History of Education in Georgia*, 143-45. The manual labor system was later used by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions (North) and the Methodist Church in the South to provide education to the Creeks. The federal government subsidized both schools, but, according to a Baptist commentator, neither

the denomination revealed that many evangelicals believed education was a means of social and individual transformation and were determined to extend its benefits to more and more people, especially those that could affirm denominational legitimacy and save souls.

More explicitly, after the mid-1840s, to remedy financial frustrations, some promoted denominational colleges and theological schools as sound investments in larger educational and denominational pursuits. Converted at Franklin College in Athens, George Foster Pierce, who would serve as president of Georgia Female College and later Emory University, argued that financial contributions would produce results, that these schools would uplift the entire society as the "banyan tree, whose dropping branches when they touch the earth, take root until a literal forest grows around the parent trunk, so common schools spring from the college, and common schools send back to the college, and wherever the influence wanders it is productive to the country and subsidiary to its source."[75] Numerous advertisements, both paid promotions and submitted (and freely published) letters to the editor, frequented evangelical publications. Pierce and others perceived the denominational college as fundamental to the expanse of denominational influence and perceived it as a partner with the Sunday school in growing denominational control and with the common school in educating the masses.

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was successful as attendance, teachers, and interest proved unreliable. J. S. Murrow, "Schools among the Creeks," *Christian Index*, June 29, 1859.

[75] Pierce, "Address Delivered Before the Methodist Education Convention of Georgia."; Christopher Owen argued that with denominational colleges, Methodists were "no longer content to withdraw into tightly disciplined communities, but hoped, mainly through education, to suffuse evangelical values throughtout society." Owen, *Sacred Flame of Love*. North Carolina Methodists, after supporting Virginia's Randolph Macon College, decided in the 1850s that they needed their own male college. One writer argued extensively that such was unnecessary, that ministers would be distracted from their duties, that funding would be a problems, and that such endeavors should never happen simply because the other Methodists and denominational are procuring denominational colleges. "A Methodist College in North Carolina," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, October 24, 1856; Oxonian, "The College Question," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, November 7, 1856.

Southern evangelical editors, boards of education, and state organizations encouraged support of denominational education and called all adherents to give financially. One writer noted the successes of financial contributions for colleges and high schools in Georgia, but desired the denomination to "be stirred up, thereby to more liberality" as many have underestimated "the *privilege* of consecrating a liberal portion of their income to benevolent purposes." Baptists in North Carolina acknowledged that Wake Forest College had been "struggling for years to maintain a bare existence" and if the college was indeed "the pet of the denomination," then "it [deserved] to be petted." The solution involved creating permanent endowments at many of the Baptist and Methodist institutions. Pierce discussed the collection of subscriptions, which would allow one family member education at the college. Howard College in Alabama lowered the permanent fund payment necessary for tuition coverage from $1000 to $100 hoping that Alabama Baptists would "gladly avail themselves of so favorable an opportunity to secure for their children the most valuable of all earthly blessings—a good education."[76]

In addition to the commitment to raise money and use theological training to improve the status of individuals and of denominations, evangelical writers clearly wanted the religious leadership and some laity to be well-educated, schooled in theological, ecclesiastical, and even scientific traditions. In the 1830s, writers advocated a variety of knowledge. The Virginia Baptist Education Society proclaimed that "knowledge was progressive" and "from [Baptist educational

[76] Pierce, "Address Delivered Before the Methodist Education Convention of Georgia."; A. C. Dayton, ""Wake Forest College"," *Tennessee Baptist*, February 17, 1855; "Cheap Education," *Alabama Baptist Advocate*, December 12, 1849. Davidson College of the Presbyterians seemed to be the only institution not seeking funds. One writer noted that "Davidson is a *wealthy* institution—too wealthy to achieve the objects for which it was originally founded." The writer complained that the trustees were spending money too loosely on buildings, rather than the library. "Davidson College---Hard to Please," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, September 22, 1860.

institutions] future Newton's and La Place's and Milton's might go forth to shed the illumination of science and genius throughout the earth."[77] Baptists in South Carolina constructed histories of their education heroes from the previous decade. In praising the work of Richard Furman, one writer noted that Baptist ministers "labored under great disadvantages" as many did not even have a general education. Baptists were reminded that "learning held a high place in [Furman's] esteem, not only for its intrinsic worth as congenial to man's rational nature, and a source of exalted and refined enjoyment, but especially for the signal service it is calculated to render and has ever rendered to religion." The president of the Furman Institute argued that even science and literature, "when sanctified by grace, are the loveliest and most proper handmaiden" to religion and that ministers must possess and share knowledge obtained, not by the inspiration utilized in the first century, but by the patience, hard work, and diligence of study.[78] Virginia Baptist educational leader Henry Keeling concurred, stating that theology was a science and that such "science is knowledge." Ministers must know how to interpret texts, must bring a working knowledge of the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages to their study, and must have some conception of history, in order to execute their responsibilities faithfully.[79] While these values may seem quite obvious given the nature of their work and the engagement of newspaper editors,

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[77] "Virigina Baptist Education Society," *Religious Herald*, May 1, 1835; See also Philos, "Virginia Baptist Education Society," *Religious Herald*, September 24, 1830; For a brief analysis of denominational colleges in the antebellum South, see Roger L. Geiger, *The History of American Higher Education: Learning and Culture from the Founding to World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 239-40; Albea Godbold, *The Church College of the Old South* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1944).

[78] A Constant Reader, *Southern Baptist General Intelligencer*, May 22, 1835; J. Davis, *Biblical Recorder and Southern Watchman*, June 30, 1838.

[79] Henry Keeling, "When the Necessity of Theological Schools," *Religious Herald*, January 18, 1833; B. Godwin, "Ministerial Education," *Religious Herald*, July 2, 1830; Edward Baptist, "A Sermon Delivered at the Annual Meeitng of the Va. Baptist Education Society," *Religious Herald*, June 5, 1835; Adiel Sherwood, "Desirable Knowledge," *Religious Herald*, July 23, 1830.

the careful construction of arguments, especially after 1840, reveals appeasing attention and meticulous care given to a significant section of the population that decried learning altogether. As these reformers tried to extend learning to more people simply within the denominational leadership, some protested.

Especially after the 1840s breakdown of national denominations, Baptist and Methodist writers expressed frustration that many southern adherents did not share their zeal about religious education and theological training. Some lamented that advocates frequently had to justify the mere existence of an educated clergy. Some defended these educational efforts, carefully constructing the history of denominations to prove that those who argued against education were not, in fact, arguing on behalf of diffusion of ignorance: "It has been the habit…of the advocates of theological seminaries where their zeal is newly born, to denounce all who differ with them, in sentiment, as opposed to education." This Methodist writer seemingly challenged fellow supporters' tactics of persuasion, by reconstructing a past in which "the Methodists have always favored education, and have never preached against it," even though all acknowledged that God selected men from "ordinary pursuits" and uneducated stations from time to time.[80]

Some expressed frustration that the prerequisite of formal education denied respect and legitimacy to those ministers without a degree. Tennessee Baptist W. H. Wilcox expressed a more conciliatory protest:

> Do not understand me to oppose an educated ministry—I wish in my heart that I was educated; but when I see and hear such sentiments come from such a high source, it acts as a weight upon my humble efforts to teach the doctrines of the cross, it makes the impression on my mind that the time is not far distant when no minister will be supported by Baptist churches who has not a Collegiate Education. I hope you will relieve my mind.[81]

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[80] George Stokes, "Ministerial Education," *Southern Baptist*, August 6, 1847; "The Education of Ministers--Banner of Peace," *Nashville Christian Advocate*, January 8, 1857.

[81] W. H. Wilcox, *Tennessee Baptist*, March 4, 1854.

For others, the frustration was more ominous. As "the education of the rising generation is becoming an object of paramount importance to our denomination," Baptists must not "prize [it] too highly, or cultivate too carefully" for such misguided emphasis may be successfully "educating the *intellect*" and "neglecting the *heart*."[82] While even these objectors could read and write opinions regarding the subject, the sentiment that even ministers could be successful without formal schooling undermined the diffusion of knowledge to congregations and certainly quelled impulses that the masses might also need some basic formal education in the pursuit of heavenly rewards. If leading the flock could muster conversion and repentance without book learning, then ordinary laymen and laywomen could also manage their own souls without formal schooling.

In appeasing this perspective, writers even constructed arguments by manipulating language. One argued that "those who object to theological schools cannot object to theological learning," as pastors must continuously pursue the "cultivation of personal piety" through a careful and continuous study of the Bible, doctrines, history, morals, and culture.[83] Another proposed that Methodists should refer to the decision to attend a theological seminary as a "call to prepare" to enter the ministry, rather than a "call to ministry" itself. This would engender less alienation from those without education. Mississippi Methodist leader B. M. Drake explicitly expressed his fear that the institutional mandates of schooling by the denomination might upset the balance between Elders, stationary preachers, and circuit riders. He argued that the General Conference must operate as a single unit, not like individual congregations. Drake saw "the

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[82] A. C. D., "Baptist Schools," *Home and Foreign Journal* 12, no. 46 (June 1856).

[83] H., "Theological Education in the South-West," *Tennessee Baptist*, June 4, 1853; William Carney Crane, "Theological Education--A Plan which is Feasible," *Tennessee Baptist*, February 2, 1856.

distinction of caste" everywhere within the denomination and questioned how the Conference would manage "one class [of] preachers from the plough, the anvil, or the jack-plain, and another from the Theological Seminary."[84]

Here southern evangelical culture faced a symptom of its own ascendency, as denominations built upon egalitarianism negotiated their own desire for mastery over communities entrenched with, but skeptical of, gentility and aristocracy. Formal religious education, even as it was embraced as a means of social improvement and collective security, was marked with a flaunting of status that many rejected as insulting at best and sinful at worst. While promoting formal theological training, southern evangelical writers could not violate the supremacy of individual conscience of those educated and uneducated. As one detractor noted, theological schools and colleges "[tended] toward aristocracy" and the "natural disposition among the learned to direct and control everything with which they come in contact."[85] This engendered significant resistance among those for whom the conversion experience stood supreme and even a profound sensitivity to such objections among those who thought education a worthy, reasonable tool of faith.

Southern evangelicals promoted an education that could promise social improvement, secure the superiority and prestige of the denomination, and supply churches with ministers, while at the same time distinguished itself from the increasingly downward gaze of northern clerics and the excesses of planter elites that ignored the egalitarianism inherent in the doctrines of sin and forgiveness. Faced with economic shortcomings and a persistent strain of anti-intellectualism, evangelical education promoters engaged a culture, even one that supported

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[84] B. M. Drake, "Theological Seminaries: Shall We Have Them?," *Southern Christian Advocate*, November 4, 1853; "Ministerial Education," *Southern Christian Advocate*, November 4, 1853.

[85] G. F. C., "The Great Southern Theological Institute," *Christian Index*, May 18, 1858.

shared religious goals, that did not wholly embrace the educational vision they promoted. In his study of common school reform, Carl Kaestle argued that sectionalism caused southerners to turn from northern institutions and that conservatism and tradition, cemented by slavery, prompted many to resist the expansion of educational opportunity for all.[86] While such may legitimately explain some resistance to the common school and the increasing degree to which southern evangelicals pursued their *own* institutions, one must consider that the institutions within denominational boundaries looked very similar to those constructed by evangelicals elsewhere. The problems and resistance outlined in these conversations within the evangelical press reveal larger challenges to educational expansion outside of specific religious communities in the region.

Writers negotiated a fine distinction. They promoted denominational schools as a solution to narrow avenues to education that wealthy planters constructed, while at the same time creating a new elitism forged by righteousness and theology. They argued for support for both Sunday schools and denominational colleges, hoping to persuade those that would offer financial aid, but also to convince those who could only afford to offer their prayers. They decried secular institutions for promoting one sect or no sect over their own, while paving a righteous path that only *their* schools could provide.[87] And *their* schools, at least in their rhetoric and perhaps in their view, were available to white southerners of all classes.

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[86] Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 212-14.

[87] One decried the "aristocracy of religion" that invariably developed even at state colleges, as sects had "[succeeded] in acquiring control of our State Colleges." Philomathes, "The Comparative Advantages of Denominational and State Colleges Reviewed. No. III."; Charges, by denominational writers, against the major state schools were very consistent, as Baptists complained that a University professor "abused" Baptists, that Georgia Baptists rejected a perceived Presbyterian takeover of the University of Georgia, and that the University of North Carolina employed no Baptist professors (except a converted Episcopalian). "The Sectarianism of the University of Virginia," *Christian Index*, February 16, 1859; T. Henderson Pritchard, "The University Magazine," *Biblical Recorder*, March 29, 1855. The editor of the

In 1851 South Carolina Methodist, and later Wofford College president, William Wightman proclaimed, "this sort of education is the emphatic want of the age and time. We have not faith in the capabilities of mere intellectual training, apart from the vital and genuine elements of religious truth, to bless the individual or society. Education makes men *polished and powerful*, but Christian education alone, makes them *good.*" Collegiate education and theological training benefitted the intellect, sharpened personal graces, and could even lead young people to faith. But Wightman was adamant:

> I shrink not from the avowal that the development of the moral principles of our nature is a necessary part of the highest education. These principles form the main elements of the character. When properly unfolded they take hold on fixed ideas of moral obligation, and exert a salutary influence upon all the sentiments, motives, and habits of the man. Mere mental development is like the attempt of Xerxes to bind the rushing Hellespont with chains. It requires the potent voice of Jesus of Nazareth to control the waves of passion and still the wild uproar of their surging violence.[88]

For Wightman, denominational schools, colleges, and seminaries solidified the virtue and value of learning within the segregated confines of faith communities.

But arguing for a good education over a polished one was insufficient fodder for someone who needed action and money, who needed to reconcile the aforementioned tensions satisfactorily. In an 1851 address before the laying of the cornerstone of Methodist Wofford College in South Carolina, Wightman agreed that the nineteenth-century was "wonderful in physical development, mighty in science, swiftly progressive," but simultaneously feared "the engrossment of the moral and spiritual, by the *utilitarian*; to the strengthening of material

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North Carolina Christian Advocate challenged the response of UNC President D. L. Swain, who proposed that all sects be represented on campus, by arguing that Methodist students, who make up one-third of the student body, were severely injured by the discrimination against Methodism. "The University," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, March 10, 1859.

[88] William M. Wightman, "Address of the Rev. Wm. M. Wightman, D. D.," *Southern Christian Advocate*, August 22, 1851.

interests at the expense of the religious—the pampering of the senses to the neglect and destruction of the soul." Wightman peered down at the changing population of the North, filled with the "dregs and scum of European pauperism…nurtured under the sway of despotic governments" and the doctrines of "Red Republicanism." Wightman contended that

> intelligence we must have—popular, widespread, all penetrating; but not intelligence alone. Bravery we must summon up—which hangs the banners on the outward wall, and is ready to shed blood for home and household, kindred and country—but not courage alone. Religion is our great want—religion we must cherish, and diffuse, and maintain—the religion of a genuine godliness taught in the New Testament. You must find in that the palladium of your national existence, the foundation of your national strength. This is the plinth which alone will sustain your trophied column of State. Freedom springs from virtue, but virtue has its root in religion alone.[89]

Wightman used the rhetoric of security—both national and personal—to define evangelical education and interests and to muster support for his cause.

Historian Anne Loveland argued that leaders, such as Wightman, represented an important change among Methodists from those who viewed the church and state working together to an explicit "policy of noninterference," most notably to look away from slavery.[90] While the deference to slavery cannot be disputed and the rhetoric that would become Confederate nationalism was steeped in nostalgia, it is essential to note Wightman's activity from his position at Randolph Macon College in Virginia in the 1830s to his role as trustee and president of Wofford in the 1850s, was virtually the same—raising money for and securing the future of religious educational institutions. From his view, religion and religious education would not eliminate the forces of science, mathematics, and progress but simply provide the guidelines by which the Republic (and the church) would survive. Even when highlighting the problems of revolutionary France, Wightman was not looking backward to the grandiose imagination of

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[89] Ibid.

[90] Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*.

Burke or reducing education to a sinner's bench, but negotiating the denomination's place amid national forces that seemed, for many, too large to contain and too risky to ignore. Even as he defended and demarcated denominational control over education and even as he decried secular forces imposing upon learning, Wightman revealed the necessity and perhaps effectiveness of rhetoric that conflated cultural values and religious goals, the very goals Wightman claimed that denominational colleges and theological schools intended to keep pure.

By the 1850s, southern evangelical writers, perhaps prompted by the splitting of Baptists and Methodists in the previous decade, rhetorically avowed their own superiority over and difference from the very religious culture that provided the educational pattern they hoped to secure. Denominational colleges and theological schools became both an affirmation of evangelical reforming tendencies as well as a rhetorical commitment to the political status quo, both a rejection of planter elitism and a submission to the sectionalist ideology that defended it. With an audience peering backward at rival sects and sectional rivals, editors and writers used both religious and political conflicts to their advantage. One argued that a college that could avoid sectarian bias was "a *desideratum*…a veritable chimera—it has not existence, nor can it have, from the very nature of the human mind." Another argued that "the *educated* ministry" in the North was created at the expense of piety and that abolitionist sympathies resulted from learning, from "a freak of the head and not a noble affection of the heart."[91] Thus the goals of educational reform, whether in the Sunday school, the denominational college, or the theological school, attended to neither the literacy of all children nor even the salvation of all souls, but the ability of the denomination, which after 1840 was also hemmed by sectional strife, to prove its

[91] Pritchard, "The University Magazine."; "An Educated Ministry," *Christian Index*, August 5, 1857; For a discussion of how northerners and southerners used the Bible to formulate charges against the other, see Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class*, 409-504.

mettle and secure rightful control over culture. As one stated, voluntary societies of northern cities "boast of freedom from any church government, etc. We prefer organizations distinctly amenable to responsible churches."[92]

These goals were pressing. A former Mercer University student in Mississippi argued originally in the *Tennessee Baptist* that

> the time had been when the Baptists were accused of being an ignorant, bigoted sect—opposed to education. But that time is numbered with the days that were. It cannot, with truth, be said that the Baptists in general are opposed to education…We live in an age of progress. Improvement is flying onward with electric haste. We must therefore increase our efforts—redouble out diligence, or we shall fall behind those who are endeavoring to keep up with the progress of the age in which we live.[93]

Similarly, Alexander Means, president of Emory College, reported an 1846 revival among the college's 100 students, with half of the students "uniting themselves" with the church. Means rejoiced "that this great enterprize [sic] of Southern Methodism is now in the career of advancing prosperity, and is destined, under God, to exert no mean influence in sustaining the honors, and extending the future triumphs of the Church."[94] In championing the cause of LaGrange College, Alabama Methodists reported that "the cause of Education is the cause of a whole generation, by the providence of the Lord the men and women of a future day are not helpless children, dependent upon us; and to God we are responsible for the character of their mental and moral

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[92] "Union Societies," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, July 2, 1857.

[93] "Mississippi College--Patronize Baptist Schools," *Christian Index*, May 10, 1855; Another invoked a sinister and conspiratorial poisonous spirit among the Methodists, arguing that the purpose of Methodist "schools is not only to instruct children in literature and science, but also, and prominently, to inculcate and teach Methodism." The writer directly asked readers, "Are you willing for your child to come home from one of these fountains of corruption (religious corruption I mean) with its mind filled with objects to your faith?""Watcher", "Our Baptists to Patronize Methodist Schools?," *Christian Index*, February 24, 1858.

[94] Alexander Means, "Emory College," *Southern Christian Advocate*, October 30, 1846.

training."[95] Mobilized for action, evangelical writers affirmed denominational leadership in providing education and in securing the future.

In "Education: The Place and Claims of the College," the president of Methodist Emory and Henry College in Virginia, Charles Collins, lauded the authority of the denominational college in 1851. With extensive historical analysis that deemed Charlemagne the first to imagine a national education and complaints that Europe lacked any sufficient contemporary example, Collins praised education's support of "all the ends of good government," deeming such a relationship as uniquely modern, an idea that challenged the privileges of aristocracy and the influence of Catholic clergy. He affirmed the power of education to improve individuals, to make each a friend of law, order, and good citizenship. For Collins, though, "what [was] true of the individual, [was] true also of the mass." Collins contended that "the true hygiene of the social as well as the individual body, is found in the prevention rather than in medicine," arguing that schools were a better investment for governments than prisons.[96]

But improvements to individuals and society, for Collins, were always tempered by the attention to the heart. He argued that "to leave the heart uncultivated is even more dangerous than to neglect the head," while "the business of education in these days, is deemed to apply to the cultivation of the intellectual power merely, whilst the development of the religious character, especially in schools, is considered a sort of *terra sacra*, or holy ground, on which the educator may not dare to set his foot." This made little sense to Collins, as "the pure and beautiful lessons of Christian morality and piety often grow side by side with the lessons of

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[95] J. C. Krenen, "Report on Education--Ala. Conference," *Southern Christian Advocate*, March 5, 1847. LaGrange College, at this time, was a female institution supported by Alabama Methodists.

[96] Charles Collins, "Education: The Place and Claims of the College," *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church* V, no. 17 (1851): 235-264.

science; twin blossoms of the same stalk." The Bible must be central, and any attempt to remove or lessen its severity would be detrimental to education, for "no education is proper that is not at the same time Christianized."

Morality and virtue were prerequisites, even in his worldview, to the survival of the Republic. The masses must be educated:

> The theory of republican liberty therefore necessitates a large amount of intelligence and virtue among the people. Without this it cannot be maintained. Our boasted freedom will become an empty name. All the superiority, indeed, which American republicanism can claim over the tyrannical dynasties of other lands, consists in this, that on the one hand our organic laws have more clearly marked the limits of rights as existing between the individual and society; and on the other there has been sufficient virtue in both parties very generally in respect to these limits.

The common school system, therefore, should employ teachers of the highest virtue and character possible, and public funds must be available for primary schools through the collegiate level, in order for virtue to permeate the entire society.[97] This system, though, was not feasible or possible in Collins' understanding of contemporary realities.

For Collins, the reformers' focus of education funding has been centered upon the common school, whose access was always limited by slow, lagging legislatures and manipulated by the power of planters, and upon the state university, which met the needs of only a select few. Collins argued that public monies must be utilized for the private and religious academies and colleges, which "represent the middling interests" of society. If not, the government "shall be guilty of the legislative folly of clothing and nourishing the head and feet, while the body, that part which is the seat of the truly vital functions, will be left in hunger and nakedness to perish." Collins argued that, even though these institutions were privately controlled, they were publically instituted, "labor in a common cause," and fundamentally support the purpose and ends of public

[97] Ibid.

education in society, extending education to more people that state schools would allow. He rejected claims that these religious schools were "sectarian" since all public schools were run by individuals who espoused religious ideas and such ideas undoubtedly spilled into classrooms and curriculum. He argued the "only difference in the case [was], not a difference of principles, but of circumstance." The "religious complexion" of denominational colleges was "uniform," while in state schools, it "changed frequently, being subject to no law." By preventing the religious academies and colleges from access to public funds, Collins contended, the state was deeming some education more worthy than others. He contended,

> The education imparted is not made vicious or less valuable, because it is imparted by men who concur in opinion on subjects not at all connected with the business of education. Nor are the youth of the state less its citizens, or less worthy of public favor, because their literary and scientific education has been acquired at these schools. On the contrary, that branch of the public service for which the college was called into existence, has been well and faithfully performed.[98]

Collins did not ultimately challenge the idea of public education, the importance of educating all people, or the benefit of learning to society. He acknowledged the newness of the systems of learning which became increasingly important to Virginia and to the nation. What he did demand was to be a part of the system, to exert his own interests and his denominational interests into the public sphere—even demanding public money. Collins constructed his case with the language of democracy, with a firm belief that these religious institutions afforded more people more choices and more access to learning.

Certainly this can be viewed as the ascension of evangelicals to a higher social position, the sacrifice of egalitarianism for cultural legitimacy, but Collins' conceptions of education, his justifications for monetary demands, and his retelling of the past revealed a clear balance between individual's need for virtue and conversion, as well as the social implications of

[98] Ibid.

whether or not those needs were met. Even if one considers Collins' self-interest and rank, one cannot conclude except that he was writing to protect the interests of what he perceived as a middling class and the "empire" his denomination worked so diligently to construct, an empire that undoubtedly, for him, served both the nation and the Kingdom.

In their mission to establish Sunday schools, denominational colleges, and theological schools, southern evangelicals decried the apathy among "antiformalists" within their spheres of influence, posited methods to overcome the lack of resources, and battled internal notions that such efforts violated the mandates of social and biblical order. Exhausted by the randomness of revivalism and fearful of eternal consequences, many seemingly found solace in conversion by inculcation, rather than the fleeting whims of the Spirit. The Sunday school and denominational college offered both a foundation for embracing faith in childhood and solidifying its role in adulthood, even if the latter achieved only limited success and the former only occasionally achieved its goals.

In taking education and indoctrination to a wider range of southerners, evangelical efforts revealed the challenges facing southern educational reformers of all persuasions. Despite pursuing religious education that only incorporated a portion of the population, reformers and boosters most certainly intensified a conversation about learning. Contributors to the evangelical press employed rhetorical devices hoping to launch the region into a modern world in which liberty would be defined not solely by the presence of chattel slavery, but by a partnership with literacy and learning—all determined and governed by evangelical authorities. Sectarianism and sectional fire served educational advocates well, providing an impetus for denominational action in establishing southern schools and providing a means by which reformers challenged their neighbors to escape ignorance and insecurity. Thus Charles Collins and later William Harris

could conclude differently concerning the relationship between the church and state, for both perspectives supported denominational prestige through educational expansion.

The protection, preservation, and pursuit of denominational power inspired both modernizing activity through the construction of schools, organizing of associations, and the hyperbole of evangelical writers, but such activity, which needed to provide an educational foundation that the region lacked, also limited the activity of secular institutions, such as the common school, which so many evangelical writers supported and which these same modernizing tendencies affirmed. The inability of the churches to sustain a functional Sunday school education that reached all people and engendered widespread evangelical support proved these efforts problematic at best and futile at worst. Rather than a whole-hearted pursuit of education together in communities in which learning was guaranteed to all, many southern evangelicals were content to assemble like minds around established doctrinal boundaries, in the hope that such efforts could overcome the ignorance of neighbors who protested, assuage the fears of those who responded, and pardon the guilt of those burdened by sin. Thus the educational "way" they forged was perhaps liberating to souls, but only for those willing to embrace doctrinal authority and mission of the church. The "way" may have provided higher education alternatives to state institutions that pandered to elites, yet it still reached only a select few. The "way" may have been characterized as essential to the survival of the Republic and to the expansion of literacy, but the southern masses remained generally unaffected by these evangelical educational goals. This "way" may have encouraged southern adherents toward obedience and salvation, but left those in search of literacy and liberty unredeemed.

CHAPTER 4

PALLADIUM OF VIRTUE:

SOUTHERN EVANGELICALS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

In his inaugural address in 1825, Cumberland College President Philip Lindsley proclaimed that ignorance was "the parent of superstition and of oppression." Throughout history, according to Lindsley, despotic governments wielded ignorance alongside the auspicious staff and rod to keep subjects under control. Without education, people found liberty fleeting and themselves merely "beasts of burden at the pleasure of any despotic master." A classical scholar and Presbyterian at the College of New Jersey, Lindsley arrived in Nashville after turning down the presidency of several other colleges, including his alma mater. Championing the cause of education for all ages, Lindsley proclaimed learning the "grand safeguard our liberties—the palladium of our political institutions—of all our rights and privileges."[1]

Though his audience presumably valued knowledge and found the subject of higher education worthy of at least some momentary attention, it is not certain whether they shared Lindsley's voracity for the diffusion of knowledge to all. Lindsley deemed the uneducated mind degenerate and the "savage state" of ignorance in need of remedy. "Were it totally neglected in any community," he argued, "not many years would elapse before the people would become as absolutely savage as the Indian or African." Each generation must endure the same process of learning, relying not on inheritance, wealth, or status, but on a pointed, and sometimes painful,

[1] Philip Lindsley, *An Address Delivered in Nashville, January 12, 1825, at the Inauguration of the President of Cumberland College* (Nashville, TN: The College, 1825), 9-11.

pursuit of knowledge.[2] For Lindsley, education protected the individual from moral decay and political tyranny, and his advocacy, though expressed through a racist conception of progress, promised a degree of democratic virtue.

In the following year, after changing the name of the institution to the University of Nashville, President Lindsley challenged the graduates in "The Cause of Education in Tennessee" to forge resolutely into the future. He warned graduates of those who defended illiteracy and ignorance, proclaiming that "no man ever denounces, as useless or superfluous, any science or language with which he is himself acquainted. The ignorant only condemn what they do not understand, and because they do not understand it. Whenever, therefore, you hear a man declaiming against any literary or scientific pursuit, you may rest assured that he knows nothing of the matter."[3] Lindsley's unwavering demands and language may seem ordinary, given the prized nature of education inherent in a baccalaureate ceremony, but the admonishment of listeners to support and engage efforts to construct a system of common schools, trampling upon adversaries who stood only for evil and ignorance, was perhaps unexpected.

One of many evangelical clergymen who moved into the southern frontiers during the 1820s, Lindsley's vision for education in the region must have resonated with those desiring an expansion of learning. Inspired by profession and Presbyterianism, Lindsley's advocacy of literacy and learning for all was not only born out of Protestant Reformation and Enlightenment,

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[2] Ibid., 7.

[3] Philip Lindsley, *The Cause of Education in Tennessee. An Address Delivered to the Young Gentlemen Admitted to the Degree of Bachelor of Arts, at the First Commencement of the University of Nashville, October 4, 1826*, New ed. (Nashville: Hunt, Tardiff and Company, 1833), 162-63. For more on Lindsley's efforts to create educational unity and a common school for all Tennesseans, see John F. Woolverton, "Philip Lindsley and the Cause of Education in the Old Southwest," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (March 1960): 3-21; James F. Davidson, "Philip Lindsley: The Teacher as Prophet," *Peabody Journal of Education* 41, no. 6 (May 1964): 327-31.

but also fueled by the Second Great Awakening, of which many of his new neighbors were familiar. Religion provided the catalyst, the means, and the ends of literacy and learning, even in classical forms. That evangelical clergymen, like Lindsley, were on the frontline of spreading educational opportunity in 1820s Tennessee would be no surprise to historian Daniel Walker Howe who argued that the Second Great Awakening could be considered "an educational movement." For Howe, the "educational goals of Christian and secular educators were remarkably similar. In traditional republican political thought, free institutions could only rest on the virtue of the citizenry, that is, on their devotion to the common good. Religious educators inculcated the respect for the social virtues that republicanism considered indispensable."[4]

With this conflation in mind, many southern evangelical commentators from the early 1810s to 1860 increasingly used republican ideology to demarcate the new institutions they hoped to make in their own image, increasingly relied on religious fundamentals to frame their understanding of responsible citizenship, and consistently demonstrated a frustration with elites, amid codes of honor and respectability that not only kept the poor from learning and embracing "true" religion, but also kept the entire region from social and even economic progress. The perspective of southern evangelicals regarding the diffusion of knowledge to all, the increasing importance of state-funded educational opportunity, and the role of religion in state educational institutions, varied in the first half of the nineteenth century. Though some preferred religious schooling and quibbled about the natural authority of the church or the state, most evangelical writers agreed that religious education and secular education were not mutually exclusive, that even the implications of oppositional views about the nature of man, such as original sin and

[4] Howe, "Church, State, and Education," 13-14. Howe found synthesis in the person of Horace Mann, who had been able to integrate the "energy and commitment" of the Second Great Awakening with the civic objectives of the American Enlightenment founders. Religion essentially became the vehicle by which the Enlightenment, at least in terms of education, could be implemented.

tabular rasa, could coexist, and that supporting Sunday schools and common schools could be responsibility that all able evangelicals should share. Alongside their preoccupation with religious virtue and tendency to look to the past for inspiration, southern evangelicals demonstrate that "multiple paths to modernity" found traction in the Old South.[5] This chapter explores those avenues.

Old and New Forms

The shared goals of education for all and education for deference to religious authority elevated evangelical ministers, religious leaders, and even laypeople prominent within religious organizations and secular reform societies battling for Jefferson's "diffusion of knowledge." Despite Lindsley's call for change and the efforts of many evangelicals to reform, many southerners were content with traditional forms of learning. Private tutoring for younger children and private academies for older children seemingly dominated the educational paradigm of many evangelical readers and contributors.[6] Evangelical periodicals benefited financially from the advertisements of private male and female academies,[7] and though tutors were exclusive and

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[5] Barnes, Schoen, and Towers, "Reimagining the Old South," 11.

[6] Most of these academies were college preparatory in nature. Few taught only basic literacy and arithmetical skills. For general information on academies, see Sizer, *Age of the Academies*; Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 118-20; J.M. Opal, "Exciting Emulation: Academies and the Transformation of the Rural North," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 2 (September 2004): 445-70. For an example of a famous academy that persisted through the period, see James Lewis MacLeod, *The Great Doctor Waddel, Pronounced Waddle: A Study of Moses Waddel, 1770-1840, as Teacher and Puritan* (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1985). For the role of academies in planter family life, see Stowe, *Intimacy and Power*, 128-42. One "old field school teacher" remembered that "the children of many able planters who have at home their most trivial wants supplied, and their slightest wishes attended to by numerous servants, attend school with a great many serious disadvantages, because their quarter-and-sevenpence [sic] of some…neighbor is wanting to make things convenient." Old Field Teacher, "Old Field Schools--School Rooms," *Southern Christian Advocate*, March 29, 1850.

[7] For a random sampling of such advertisements, see "Walterbourough Academy," *Southern Evangelical Intelligencer*, July 17, 1819; "Hannah More Female Collegiate Institute," *The Southern Presbyterian*, December 6, 1857; "Rockingham Male Academy," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, October 23, 1858; "Brownwood Institute, Near Lagrange, Georgia," *Christian Index*, January 19, 1859. Advertisements also

academies secondary in nature, most evangelicals perceived no conflict amid their advocacy for both private and later forms of common schooling.

In their efforts to supplement private academies in order to provide educational opportunities to larger populations, southern evangelicals championed the models implemented in the Northeast and elsewhere. One of the early attempts to expand educational opportunities was the manual labor school, which proponents clearly intended as a means of social improvement. New York-turned-Georgia Baptist minister and teacher, Adiel Sherwood founded a manual labor school in Eatonton in order to combat the Baptist resistance to ministerial education, while in South Carolina, the state government even commissioned an investigation into the possibilities of using the model to solve the free school problem.[8] Amid the debates that laboring and thinking were incompatible and the fanciful overestimation of child-labor production in the low country, *Religious Herald* editor Henry Keeling stated that manual labor schools could effectively challenge the social structure that so often served the interests of elites. Cataloging the success of schools across the nation, Keeling promoted the conclusion of the Virginia Baptist Education Society that the manual labor system must be implemented immediately. The Society added that its mission was "to assist deserving and pious young men,

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included information about the weather, resources, and health of the school's location. Otis Smith wrote that the Richmond Bath Academy's "climate is as pure as any section of the Southern country. The health of the place is proverbial." Otis Smith, "Richmond Bath Academy," *Christian Index and Baptist Miscellany*, January 14, 1834. This information was essential in marketing, as most parents faced the prospect of sending their children away. Schools, even universities such as Lindsley's University of Nashville shut down entirely in 1850 because of a cholera epidemic. Davidson, "Philip Lindsley: Teacher as Prophet." For an analysis of a southern academy in the context of the free market, including how marketing and advertising influenced the public, see Kim Tolley, "A Chartered School in a Free Market: The Case of Raleigh Academy, 1801-1828," *Teachers College Record* 107, no. 1 2005): 59-88.

[8] Knight, "Academy Movement in the South"; Herbert Galen Lull, *The Manual Labor Movement in the United States* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1914); Wilson, *Baptist Manual Labor School Movement*. Jarrett Burch, *Adiel Sherwood: Baptist Antebellum Pioneer in Georgia* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003).

recommended by their respective churches, whose own means are not adequate to defray the expense of education." Through the manual school, the Society intended to challenge the vanity and self-reliance of educated elites, to train ministers for the "Western wilds," and, most significantly, to combat the notion that manual labor is not honorable, "a feeling which is at war with our republican institutions, and which will in time undermine and destroy them."[9] Even amid the failure to sustain manual labor schools, southern evangelical reformers and commentators demonstrated that the individual need for self-governance, a concept associated with the ideology of free labor, was not entirely foreign, and, though many conceived of such self-governance only in moral terms, they demonstrated a willingness to traverse social ranks and regional lines.[10]

Though many of these schools failed and many evangelicals were never able to reconcile the relationship between physical labor and scholarship, especially in the South, where labor was so easily equated with slavery, many southern evangelicals attempted to incorporate "foreign" models in order to challenge the southern educational arrangement. Like Sherwood, many had migrated to the region for the purpose of spreading religion, but proposals for educational reform moved with them as well. Though historian Jonathan David Wells primarily used medical training in his argument for the fluidity of interregional exchange, the manual school movement

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[9] Keeling argued that most southerners were self-taught amid the laborious constraints of agricultural life; therefore, the manual labor model fit nicely with southern status quo."The Union of Labour and Study," *Religious Herald*, July 15, 1831. ; "Manual Labor," *Religious Herald*, June 22, 1832; "Virginia Baptist Education Society," *Religious Herald*, April 27, 1832; Certainly the data cited by Schweiger concerning the number of children enrolled in formal schooling of any kind, which ranged from 15-40 percent, compared with the illiteracy rate, which ranged from 3-11 percent. Even if southerners eventually failed to embrace the manual labor school as legitimate, they clearly made work and at least literacy cohabitating partners in practice. Schweiger, *Gospel Working Up*.

[10] See Jeffrey A. Mullins, "'In the Sweat of Thy Brow': Education, Manual Labor, and the Market Revolution," in *Cultural Change and the Market Revolution in America, 1789-1860*, ed. Scott C. Martin (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 143-80.

and later the common school followed a similar pattern, finding their greatest champions from many who traversed the same paths between the regions, either on foot or in correspondence.[11]

This movement revealed that at least some evangelical southerners were willing to use European and Yankee models to expand educational opportunities and challenge elites' control of educational access. By the 1830s and 1840s, Americans had also turned toward a new institution—the common school—to provide basic education for all children. The common school, as historian Lawrence Cremin noted, was not a "school for the common people" but "a school common to all people," open to all and supported by taxation.[12] Historian Carl Kaestle argued that Americans welcomed government intervention through the taxation-funded common school for unity, order, and a preservation of republican institutions. He noted that Americans of the period inherited "an anxious sense of the fragility of republican government," as contemporary economic trends of growing capitalism and urbanization and the political realities of an expanding democracy prompted action to educate all children.[13]

Southern evangelicals were willing to look to the North not only for examples of common school reform, but also for rhetoric to engender its support. William Capers, editor of

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[11] Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, 19-40. Sherwood and Lindsley were both born outside of the South. Perhaps this is even understated as so many educated southerners were schooled outside of the South as well. For the role of northern colleges and universities in the education of southerners and ensuing cultural exchange, see O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, 1, 27-47. Though Lori Glover contends that elites increasingly turned away from northern educational institutions, preferring southern colleges and universities, the exchange among middling, educated evangelicals remained. See Glover, *Southern Sons*.

[12] Cremin, *National Experience*, 138. *Common school* will be used in this chapter to denote any institution provided for all students by the collective interests of the people, which invariably included taxation, public investment, etc. *Free school*, especially in the South, marked a school designed as a charity for poor children. Many southerners, emerging from the eighteenth century, were familiar with the "old-field schools" which usually involved tuition and instruction of a group of students from a hired tutor.

[13] Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 75-82. Kaestle noted that many common schools required families to contribute financially to the school and were not entirely free schools.

the *Southern Christian Advocate*, included a description of a "new system of education" from the *New York American* in which Josiah Holbrook described the new system of learning, including methods of grammar, spelling, and writing, implemented in Prussia and other German states. In 1838, the *Biblical Recorder and Southern Watchman* published a speech of Henry Ward Beecher to the Mechanics' Association of Cincinnati, which lamented the emerging mechanical age without an educated laboring class. Beecher stated that "to the perpetuity of extended republican institutions," learning was essential and defined education as "not merely the commencement of knowledge, and the discipline of mind, but that which takes by the hand every human being and puts him in possession of his own powers."[14]

Throughout the period, southern evangelical writers willingly acknowledged the superiority of northern educational institutions and systems of schools, most notably the common school. Throughout the period, many, with varying degrees of frustration, noted that southerners who could afford the expense sent their children to be educated in the North.[15] One Alabama writer used Massachusetts as a foil in his demand for education reform in the state. He listed Massachusetts' lack of resources, soil, and even wealth, and then concluded that none of these disadvantages had prevented the state from creating a system of about four thousand free schools serving one hundred and eight thousand children. He asked: "What will the good people of Alabama, with their extended territory, their beautiful rivers, their endless mineral resources, think of [these] facts? What will our brethren think of it, who find so great difficulty in the

[14] "Who are the Poor," *Southern Christian Advocate*, February 16, 1838.

[15] Writers here mostly referred to this practice when discussing education beyond the primary years, often in discussions of ministerial training. "Education in Massachusetts," *Alabama Baptist Advocate*, May 18, 1849.

endowment of a single College?"[16] As sectional tensions increased after the denominations split in the mid-1840s, writers continued to acknowledge the superiority of northern institutions, even when not explicitly encouraging school reform. One writer stated that, for his teachers, he would "prefer a Southern man, all else equal," but that most teachers who proclaimed they were southerners "by faith and by education" were simply not sufficient enough to have authority over his children. Others, though, argued that this practice of studying abroad was injurious and based on the perceived "prestige" of northern institutions, not the actual value of education.[17]

Some have suggested that the South lagged in the development of free, public education because of the necessity of taxation.[18] Many evangelical writers were adamant, though, in demanding taxation for legitimate causes, such as public education. In the 1830s, this collective resistance was strong, and the responses from evangelicals who wanted change were adamant. New Jersey-born Presbyterian and mathematician at the University of North Carolina, Joseph Caldwell argued that state legislation had reduced taxation excessively, implementing the "delusion" that such a reduction would fulfill the purpose of republican government. Another North Carolina writer asked if those who opposed the tax for education did not consent to pay a much heavier tax for rum, tobacco, or other sundry items of use to no one. He stated that "it is a

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[16] Ibid.

[17] W.W. Phillips, "The Birth Place of Teachers," *Tennessee Baptist*, November 1, 1856. "Home Education," *Southern Christian Advocate*, October 5, 1848. Writers did comment on the shortage of teachers faced by southern schools in the 1850s. One Kentucky writer argued that Tennessee's plan for common schools would utterly fail because of the lack of teachers and that Kentucky's plan would find it "wholly impossible to accomplish the great purposes for which this noble system was devised, so long as reliance was had upon other States for instructors." "Normal Schools," *Nashville Christian Advocate*, January 23, 1857.

[18] Dabney, *Universal Education in the South*, 31; Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 203; Franklin, *Militant South*, 129. Collins, *White Society in the Antebellum South*, 188; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*. Wyatt-Brown argued that southerners, driven by planter interests, resisted all internal improvements that required taxation, as the protection of property, not its seizure, was the chief duty of government.

shame, a burning shame—it is more—it is a sin—to oppose a system of so manifest advantage to the interests of society, intellectual, moral and religious; and especially when this is done out of a wretched avaricious dread of paying a few cents annually in the shape of a tax." The writer lamented that fears over taxation had inhibited the progress of North Carolina and most certainly induced the lagging of progress, compared to other states in the Union. The writer also attributed the "want of energy in the matter" to the hot climate and to the "peculiarity of our institutions." The solution, for him, rested in convincing the state government to act and the people to consent to its collective cost.[19]

Whether or not influenced by their assessment of taxation, southerners did not embrace the common school movement as Americans did elsewhere, or at least not within the confines of state houses before the 1850s. Much of the efforts within state legislatures between 1800 and 1860 failed; often, rhetoric in favor of popular education increased, bills passed, but somehow monies never translated into the construction of schools, the training of teachers, or mass education, especially of the poor.[20] In South Carolina, Free Schools were established by an 1811 Act, with preference supposedly given to the poor and orphans. But many schools were packed with children of wealth and substance whose parents "[took] advantage of this false liberality of the State…to save their own pockets."[21] Despite the efforts of Charles Memminger and James

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[19] "Common Free Schools," *Biblical Recorder and Southern Watchman*, July 21, 1839; Knight, *Documentary History*; Joseph Caldwell, "Joseph Caldwell on Popular Education," in *A Documentary History of Education in the South Before 1860*, ed. Edgar W. Knight (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1950).

[20] For the most extensive summary and analysis of the common school in the South, see Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 192-217.

[21] *Publication No. 1, Report of the Section to which was referred the consideration of the state of the Free Schools*, ed. Telescope Office (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Society for the Advancement of Learning, 1835). Reprinted as "Popular Education," *Southern Literary Journal and Magazine of Arts*, November, 1835.

Thornwell, no significant popular education for all, outside of charity schools for paupers in Charleston, was in operation until the 1850s. Even at that time, Governor Richard Manning insisted that happiness and republican institutions depended on the "enlightenment" of the citizens and that the current system only provided for the elites, leaving the poor and middle classes without educational opportunity.[22]

In Virginia, reformers tried unsuccessfully to implement a system of pauper education under a Literary Fund, but, as Kaestle contends, common-school debates revealed a divide between the middle class in the West and the planter elites in the East. The cultural association of the common school with charity, and the legislatures' insistence on tying funding to poverty, inhibited the acceptance of the institution. One even deemed "the charity feature" the "stumbling block to a state system."[23] In 1830s Georgia, a common-school act passed but no funding was allocated and the law was repealed in the 1840s as economic depression threatened the state. Even as late as 1860, Georgia reformers lamented the lack of formal schooling for all and acknowledged that comparison to the system of the North was futile, calling the government "to call upon the citizens of the more favored portions of her territory, to send the light of knowledge to the children in the mountain coves, or scattered over the pine barrens." They reminded readers that "individual education is a public benefit; and that wherever there is an uneducated mind, there is an unknown amount of lost energy, of dormant usefulness, while every well instructed

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[22] For analysis of public education development under the watch of Memminger, see Laylon Wayne Jordan, "Education for Community: C. G. Memminger and the Origination of Common Schools in Antebellum Charleston," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 83, no. 2 (April 1982): 99-115; "Education," *Southern Presbyterian*, December 15, 1853; For the beginnings of public education in Georgia, see E. Merton Coulter, *A Georgia Educational Movement During the Eighteen Hundred Fifties*, Bulletin of the University of Georgia (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1925); Orr, *History of Education in Georgia*.

[23] William Arthur Maddox, *The Free School Idea in Virginia Before the Civil War* (New York: Teachers College, 1918), 167.

man with sound moral character exerts a wholesome and refining influence upon the community with whom he dwells."[24]

In North Carolina, change began with the 1839 Common School law, which followed failed attempts in the 1810s and 1820s to enact such legislation. By 1846, a majority of North Carolinians voted to establish and fund a common school in each school district. Calvin Wiley became the state's superintendent of this new system of schools in 1852, editing journals, evaluating schoolbooks, and organizing information. During his tenure, Wiley was able to proclaim that the school "system is the most all-pervading secular influence in the State, and whatever regularly circulates through all its veins and arteries must inevitably, sooner or later, radically affect the character of the whole State." In spite of Wiley's celebration, North Carolina's path toward public education paralleled the other southern states, though somewhat more successfully, as the number of children attending school increased and illiteracy rates declined by 1860. Explaining this difference, Kaestle argued that North Carolina lacked "the abject sectionalism of Virginia, the monolithic, defensive racism of South Carolina, and the roller-coaster cotton economy of Georgia."[25]

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[24] George F. Pierce, Samuel K. Talmage, and Leonidas B. Mercer, "Appendix A, Report on Public Education, By Mr. Lewis of Hancock with Appendixes," (Milledgeville,1860). "Report, Adopted by the late Educational Convention at Marietta," *Christian Index*, July 29, 1851.

[25] C. H. Wiley, "Common Schools," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, January 7, 1860; "Meeting of the State Educational Association," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, May 14, 1857; Calvin D. Jarrett, "Calvin H. Wiley: Southern Education Leader," *Peabody Journal of Education* 41, no. 5 (March 1964): 276-88; Keith Whitescarver, "School Books, Publishers, and Southern Nationalists: Refashioning the Curriculum in North Carolina's Schools, 1850-1861," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 79, no. 1 (January 2002): 28-49. According to Whitescarver, Wiley marshaled the resources necessary to produce and publish an elementary reader for North Carolinians. Designed as an alternative to northern school books, the Reader provided young southern minds a sense of southern nationalism and local identity, rather than the national ideals, increasingly antagonistic to southern ends. Whitescarver noted that sales for Wiley's school book were lacking, "[signifying] that southern school books did not provide a yearned for cultural coherence for the great body of white southerners" (49). Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 211-12. For the debate over common schooling in North Carolina, see also Harry L. Watson, "The Man with the Dirty

In Tennessee, public education was connected to land grants from the federal government, with tax collections from the sale of lands intended for a public school fund. Through laws in 1823 and 1827 that enabled the growth of the school fund, Tennesseans moved ahead with the creation of common schools once the law created sufficient funds by 1830. However, support for these schools and the ability of state leaders to use the money appropriately and legally ebbed and flowed for the next thirty years. A similar story occurred in Alabama, as school funds, created in 1839, were mismanaged and never enabled school sustenance. In the 1850s, interest in common school reform heightened across the region. Andrew Johnson in Tennessee passionately pleaded for change and increased access to learning, while in Alabama, William F. Perry became the state superintendent and worked to revise laws and improve the conditions for and access to learning by Alabama children. In Mississippi, Florida, and Louisiana, legislatures did not even make common schools a legal possibility until 1846 and 1847.[26]

As these efforts lagged behind the rest of the nation, the educational opportunities of southern children failed to benefit from the changes happening elsewhere. In the Northeast, the school-year was extended and standardized, local school boards and state agencies were established, and attempts to the control the quality of instruction through education journals and normal schools were consistent and operational by 1860. In the antebellum North and Midwest, state legislatures created state superintendents and laws that provided localities the ability to raise common-schools funds through taxation. At first, many Americans in these regions resisted

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Black Beard: Race, Class, and Schools in the Antebellum South," *Journal of the Early Republic* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 1-26.

[26] Knight, *Public Education in the South*; Dabney, *Universal Education in the South*; H. Blair Bentley, "Governor Andrew Johnson and Public Education in Tennessee," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (Spring 1988); Knight, *Documentary History*, 135-241.

increased taxation and more intrusive state involvement, but as urban areas grew, many preferred the common school to the pauper and private school paradigms of the previous generations. As Kaestle noted, the "belief that equity, progress, and cohesion depended upon state-regulated common schooling eventually prevailed." But across the nation stretched a "North-South gradient" as southerners did not exhibit this collective will to change educational paradigms.[27]

The general failings of efforts to educate the masses in the antebellum South are well rehearsed. Some historians argued that southerners rejected taxation, others blamed the poor for refusing instruction, and others argued that southerners resisted the centralization necessary for any systemization of common schooling, as state leaders could not be trusted and, to most white southerners, reformers and teachers resembled mere "peddlers who displayed their Yankee trinkets."[28] Historian Harry L. Watson proposed that an integral contradiction thwarted common school reform: even though education could solidify and protect white society, a "demand for public education contradicted a competing tenet of southern racial ideology, for if whites needed education to become superior, the races were fundamentally more equal than slavery's defenders liked to claim."[29] The efforts to establish a common school system, no matter how unsuccessful, reveal some important assumptions about education that southern evangelicals shared with each other and with fellow evangelicals elsewhere. The debates over the nature of mass education also demonstrate the pervasiveness of and differences in republican ideology, the uncertainty facing

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[27] Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 192; ibid., 193. For Kaestle's analysis of common school reforms, see ibid., 104-35. For analysis of midwestern efforts to establish common schools in comparison to the East, see ibid., 182-92. Antebellum southerners acknowledged these differences throughout the period. See "Schools," *Southern Religious Telegraph*, January 13, 1832; "Education in the United States," *Religious Herald*, January 17, 1834; "Reform in School Hours," *Southern Presbyterian*, July 7, 1855.

[28] Dabney, *Universal Education in the South*; Knight, *Public Education in the South*; Coulter, *Georgia Educational Movement*, 4.

[29] Watson, "Man with the Dirty Black Beard," 4.

southern evangelical values amid modernization, and an ambivalence in evaluating the social order of the slaveholding South.

Rich and Poor Frustrations

Common school support wavered in the antebellum South, frequently submitting to economic realities and the increasing necessity of preserving white unity in the region amid a nation that was content to leave slavery behind. Though few southern evangelicals glowingly wrote of the common school as the "great leveler,"[30] many believed that the common school promised poor whites a chance for individual betterment and provided the entire region the opportunity for social improvement as well. Evangelical writers revealed assumptions usually associated with a vibrant middle class, a desire to improve personal station and to challenge the elites' values. Historian Jonathan Daniel Wells argued that middle class southerners "declared their intention to remake southern society with all of the tangible signs of progress," perceiving "resistance from the planter class as well as from poorer whites."[31]

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[30] "The Morals of our Free Schools," *The Christian Examiner*, March 1, 1851; Historian Michael O'Brien argued that "few southerners, in fact, ever wrote in a concerted way about social structure. They produced reams about race, gender, politics, and religion" but seemed to view society in personal terms. O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order*, 1, 379.

[31] Historian William Kauffman Scarborough argued that southern elites, in fact, exhibited values usually associated with the middle class—thrift, hard work, temperance—simply because of the commercial economy of nineteenth-century plantation agriculture. William Kauffman Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003); Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, 68. The term "middle class" is most challenging to pen. Some scholars, such as Max Weber, have used the term to refer to economic realities alone, such as a particular type of profession, a status associated with method of labor. See Max Weber, "Status Groups and Classes," in *The Essential Weber: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Others have noted that the middle class boundaries were demarcated by political expression, and still others have deemed the group defined primarily by cultural values. See Johnson, *Shopkeeper's Millennium*. For a larger discussion of a variety of perspectives on the middle class, see Stuart M. Blumin, "The Hypothesis of Middle-Class Formation in Nineteenth-Century America: A Critique and Some Proposals," *American Historical Review* 90, no. 2 (April 1985): 299-338; Jennifer L. Goloboy, "The Early American Middle Class," *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 537-45. In his analysis of the South, Wells argued that, until the 1850s when the middle class awoke to self-

To navigate this middle ground, many evangelicals, such as Baptist leader George Dabney, looked to formal education:

> One of the greatest advantages of a republican government, in which no offices nor honors are hereditary, is, that energy, talent and virtue can rise unimpeded from the lowest to the highest station in society. But to most of those who are borne down by the hard hand of poverty, this must prove a bootless privilege, unless they can receive the intellectual training necessary to qualify them for the arduous ascent.[32]

Certainly, Dabney, a college professor and classicist who later manumitted his slaves, was no ordinary southern Baptist, but he clearly valued the Republic's promise of elevation and the common school's means to achieve it. Evangelicals and reformers who wanted to encourage this movement along the social ladder, intentionally or not, found conflict with the elites who protected their position. Dabney's blending of the opportunities afforded by republican government with a desire to prevent others from discarding such a "bootless privilege" was not unique to the South. Historians have previously used the economic and social realities of the emerging middle class in large urban spaces in the Northeast to explain the common school movement.[33] Evangelical writers clearly aligned with the virtues of the middle class, and as they proposed remedies to illiteracy and ignorance, such virtues reigned, even when in conflict with the excesses of planter ostentation.

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consciousness, one must use the term, middling classes, to refer to those between the planters and the yeomen. Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, 8-12.

[32] George E. Dabney, "Education in Virginia," *Southern Literary Messanger*, September, 1841.

[33] Kaestle argued that little opposition to social elevation, most notably through education, existed in the early Republic, but that industrialization and urbanization made a "new bureaucratic ethos" quite attractive to many middle class leaders. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 72. Kaestle also noted that middle-class values and ideology were not necessarily embraced by those actually in the middle class; even still, he noted that "Protestant revivalism and reform activities had a bourgeois character." Ibid., 78; Though not analyzing the common school, much of the emphasis on the middle class and its relationship to the development of nineteenth-century schools stems from the interpreation of Michael Katz. Katz argued that the story of schooling was a story of a wealthy middle class using formal education as a means of social control. Katz, *Irony of Early School Reform*.

Throughout the period, southern evangelicals expressed frustration with elites who they perceived not only as obstructionists in the creation of a system of free schooling, but also as lazy, morally-corrupted parents and students who would rather follow visions of honor and grace than submit to the glories of hard work and intellectual engagement. As evangelicals, these writers frequently opposed the excesses associated with the planter culture. Dueling, drunkenness, and a determined pursuit of pleasure made easy targets.[34] Writers clearly aligned themselves with the modern virtues of the middle-class, a system of values that included increasingly secular and state-provided education.[35] Though Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians constituted a cross-section of society and both planters and paupers filled their pews, evangelical writers' advocacy of learning must be considered an expression of their

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[34] C.K.J., "Origin, Unreasonableness, Consequences, and Guilt of Duelling," *Southern Religious Telegraph*, November 6, 1830; Horne, "Duelling," *Southern Christian Advocate* 1845; "Bishop Jeremy Taylor on Duelling," *Southern Presbyterian*, August 3, 1856; "Duelling," *North Carolina Christian Advocate* 1857. Religious writers appealed to the scripture as expected, but they deemed it "high treason against the State." One stated that the aristocracy of duelers has now…given place to the aristocracy of genius and of political and professional eminence. Growing civilization has outlawed it as barbarian. Reason and common sense have hooted at it as ridiculously absurd." "Duelling Establishing an Arrogant Oligarchy," *Southern Presbyterian*, March 7, 1857. Another argued that Christians should not even attend the funeral of a dueler. "A Vindication of the Common School Question--No. VI," *Southern Christian Advocate*, July 7, 1859. Jonathan Daniel Wells argued that the protests against dueling reveal that a southern middling group was indeed capable of viewing the practice as "an eccentric vestige of genteel culture kept alive by an increasingly outdated southern elite" and that "such criticism would lead to a broader critique of honor and gentility." Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, 84-85. For an analysis of dueling and how conceptions of honor permeated southern elite culture, see Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*; Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence*; Wyatt-Brown, *Shaping of Southern Culture*; Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery*.

[35] For a various middle-class virtues that coincided well with evangelicalism, see "Avarice," *Religious Herald*, July 11, 1828; "Idleness," *Religious Herald*, May 16, 1828; William Brown, "Rum," *Religious Herald*, January 9, 1829; "Punctuality," *Religious Herald*, April 25, 1834; "Tobacco and Insanity," *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, May 20, 1853; "Avarice," *Southern Presbyterian*, February 9, 1856; "Religion Among Lawyers and Medical Men," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, January 1, 1858; Samuel Jones, "Improve your Homestead and Train Your Sons To Habits of Industry," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, June 9, 1860. Wells noted that historian Paul Johnson argued in *Shopkeeper's Millennium* that certain values, such as hard work, thrift, self-denial, and a critique of luxury marked the northern middle class, and Wells argued that such a refrain was also important to southern evangelicals, many of whom comprised the middling stations in southern hierarchy. Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, 73-75; Johnson, *Shopkeeper's Millennium*.

position in society and certainly affirmed their preference for middle-class virtues and modern reform, which, from their perspective, steered their "flocks" toward redemption rather than revelry. Despite this moral confluence, evangelical views on wealth and property often revealed an uneasiness, perhaps expected with bourgeois morality amid the system of slavery in which the middle class had not yet achieved mastery. One writer stated that "prosperity is, perhaps, universally, a greater trial to virtue than adversity, and riches than poverty."[36]

Early Baptists and Methodists certainly, though perhaps anonymously or vaguely, attacked the perceived moral failings of their wealthy neighbors. In the recruitment and training of ministers, the Virginia Baptist Education Society argued that rich men do not make good ministers: "princely rank and fortune almost infallibly lead to *intellectual weakness and moral depravity*." The writer suggested that, though he was wrong about religion, Thomas Jefferson did correctly pinpoint this reality—that wealth, enterprise, and learning grew directly from the "poverty of [Massachusetts] soil."[37] Some found that the exact cause of the region's ignorance was difficult to pinpoint, but simply expressed their frustration in social terms. One stated that education was neglected because "the calling of a schoolmaster is not reckoned a *gentlemanly* calling" despite the wide range of influence such a leader might have. Whether in the honor or salary given, the office of the schoolmaster revealed disrespect toward formal education, one

[36] "The Poor," *Southern Christian Advocate*, March 2, 1838. Certainly this is a convenient position for the wealthy to have. Knowledge of prosperity stems seemingly from prosperity itself, as arguments against such reasoning from below were futile. Another quoted evangelical reformer, abolitionist and favorite among these evangelical writers, Hannah More, stated that "even riches cannot make rich." "Who are the Poor."

[37] Henry Keeling, "The Education of 'Poor Young Men, for the Ministry'," *Religious Herald*, May 27, 1831.

seemingly determined by the elites of society. The writer argued that education was much like religion: "almost every one is ready to acknowledge its importance, while few seem to *feel* it."[38]

While southern writers would shed this explicit affirmation of the northern virtues in 1860, the outcry against the problems of wealth continued, especially as the attempts to create a common school increased.[39] Even as late as the 1850s, Baptist writers chastised the education of wealthy elites:

> A young nobleman or gentleman is born and reared in a university. His father's home is a school in which his mind is trained from infancy. He sees the best society, he hears the best language spoken, his ear is familiar with the finest music, and his eye is habituate to the most beautiful specimens of sculpture and painting, furniture and decorations; whilst fashion, with her plastic hand; with infinite ease, gives the tone and character of the times to his pliant mind. Yet how very few rich men, or men of rank, are men of original genius, notwithstanding all their advantages and acquirements! If the rich man's education were really the best adapted of cultivating the human mind, the poor man would be entirely superseded.

Interestingly, the writer then compares the poor to the "fishermen of Galilee" and to Socrates, elevating their virtue alongside classical sages and peering down at the wealthy below.[40] Repeatedly, writers acknowledged the moral superiority of the poor over the rich and the dearth of virtue that pervaded elite education, while at the same time, announcing that the poor were destitute in the literacy, learning and opportunities available to improve their unfortunate lot.[41]

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[38] A Country Correspondent, "Letters on Education," *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Messanger*, April 1823.

[39] The continued rhetoric against the life of leisure, pleasure, and honor preferred by planters conflicts with the work of Heyrman, who argued that clerics set aside such protests, in favor of "mastery." While the evangelical writers do not entirely contradict Heyrman, the pursuit of "mastery" perhaps is more complicated than she states. Heyrman, *Southern Cross*.

[40] "Rich and Poor--Education," *Biblical Recorder*, February 8, 1851.

[41] Historian Richard Carwardine argued that antebellum Methodists "saw no contradiction in declaring their skepticism about human riches while simultaneously striving for improvement of themselves and their families." For Carwadine, this improvement was both moral and material, and Methodists, though moving from outsiders in circles of power and status to insiders, retained a consistent view of

Throughout the period, the rhetoric remained quite populist among Baptists and Methodists, though it seldom acknowledged, much less targeted, slavery, and many writers decried the values associated with wealth. Though distinctions between wealth and the "love of money" (with the former being acceptable and the latter sinful) were entirely pervasive, most agreed that wealth provided a false sense of superiority and that the wealthy rested upon laws opposed to divine principle.[42] One noted that "the law of honour, being constituted by men occupied in the pursuit of pleasure and for the mutual conveniency [sic] of such men, will be found, as might be expected from the character and design of the law-makers, to be, in most instances, favourable [sic] to the licentious indulgences of the natural passions" rather than hard work and learning.[43] Another agreed that in the southern code, individuals could "be a great rogue, / …be a great fool, / Have lost the little he picked up at school, / Be a glutton, adulterer, deep drowned in debt, / …the vilest of sinners," but retain position, prestige, and "respectability" among his peers.[44]

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individualism and capitalism. Carwardine is writing specifically about American Methodists, though one may argue southern Methodists prove this as well. Richard Carwardine, "'Antinomians' *and* 'Arminians': Methodists and the Market Revolution," in *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 282-310.

[42] R. Hall, "Truth Resides with the Common People," *Religious Herald*, June 28, 1833; "The Arrogance of Wealth," *Southern Christian Advocate*, October 7, 1842. In *The Root of All Evil*, historian Kenneth Startup argued that "there was a strong ascetic tendency in antebellum southern theology, almost an obsession with simplicity or plainness. It was not predicated merely upon some dour and petulant narrow-mindedness that would have people live a bland and solemn life. Rather, the clerics believed that ostentation and excessive accumulation were the marks of a material or carnal mind, a mind closed to spiritual truths." Startup believed that this critique of capitalism encouraged the defense of slavery, as clerics were predisposed by their religious doctrine to attack the pursuit of money. Kenneth Moore Startup, *The Root of All Evil: the Protestant Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 55.

[43] "The Law of Honour," *Religious Herald*, April 23, 1830.

[44] "Respectability," *Christian Index*, November 17, 1832.

Despite this "respectability," writers made clear that those privileged in the society were the last to exhibit any responsibility to the common good and often last to recognize the necessity of labor in learning. Georgia Methodist Bishop J. O. Andrew argued that children of the wealthy were more likely to pursue pleasure, betraying both "godly principle" and "enlightened humanity." He beckoned readers toward the arduous lot of finding the "rare bird" among the sons of rich men who demonstrated virtue and usefulness to society. He deduced that "the great number are imbecile, reckless, proud, extravagant, and vicious, who live entirely for themselves, are of but little use to Church or State, make use of the wealth they have inherited, to corrupt society and to make sure their own destruction." Andrew's rhetoric certainly seems odd for a slaveowning cleric, one whose "property" would split the denomination, but perhaps it demonstrates evangelical southerners' lingering uneasiness with mastery, one they were willing to uneasily embrace while enjoying its benefits.[45]

Southern evangelical writers aimed at what they perceived as a flawed moral code among the southern elite that impeded the spread of knowledge and literacy to all southerners. Writers' frustrations with elites stemmed not only from a theoretical evaluation of lifestyle, but also from the impervious hold that many elites had over government and society, both of which writers wanted to replace with their own codes. Many wondered whether, and indeed doubted if, the children of the wealthy would use their advantages and access to education for the betterment of society.[46] Others were less diplomatic, arguing that aristocracy was "unmanly" and worked to

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[45] J.O. Andrew, "The Education of Children," *Southern Christian Advocate*, June 18, 1847. Historian Donald Mathews stated that Andrews "became the perfect personification of southern Methodists' view of themselves and their responsibilities. Andrews was almost the prototype of the scrupulously moral slaveholder" who tried to free the two slaves that he inherited. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 160-61.

[46] S. D. Worthington, "Common School Education," *Tennesse Baptist*, August 6, 1853.

alienate the poor from education: “This bastard aristocracy, fondly conceived and dearly cherished, has poisoned and perverted the passions and powers of many promising minds until the *ball-room* has become their sanctuary.”[47]

Throughout the first half of the century, evangelical writers also expressed a frustration with how the elites indirectly inhibited the demand for public education through social pressure and cultural control. Historians have noted that public education, when offered in the South, was provided directly by the generosity of wealthy patriarchs, both urban and rural, who used such charity as a means of maintaining solidarity within white society.[48] Especially in the 1830s and more prevalent in South Carolina, the perception that public education was pauper education was a grave concern for common school reformers. In Charleston, some argued that the system of free schools had been hijacked by the elites, who sent their children to these schools, while the South Carolina mustered little support for public education. Poor schools fostered a “feeling of contempt” among the poor, as “many poor persons possessing delicate feelings have absolutely refused to send their children to poor schools.” Another writer stated that “enemies” of the common schools have deemed them “*charity schools,* to which the children of the poor only are to be send, and thus branded with *mendacity* by their wealthy neighbors, and condemned as a distinct and subordinate class.” Schools in Virginia were described as “paralyzed” as parents

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[47] "American Aristocracy," *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, March 6, 1856.

[48] Burton, *In My Father's House*; Clement Eaton, *The Mind of the Old South*, Rev. ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967); Best, "Education and the Forming of the American South," 39-51; Bellows, *Benevolence among Slaveholders*; Barbara L. Bellows, "'My Children, Gentlemen, Are My Own': Poor Women, Urban Elite, and the Bonds of Obligation in Antebellum Charleston," in *The Web of Southern Social Relations*, ed. Walter J. Frasier, R. Frank Saunders, and Jon L. Wakelyn (Athens, Ga: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), 52-71.

would "rather their children grow up in ignorance than be considered poor."[49] Thus, sending one's child to a public school condemned the child as less than honorable and subjected the entire family to social ridicule, in speech, action, and even fashion. Publicly funded schools were rejected because they required an admission of poverty that the poor could not stomach, an admission that planters orchestrated to protect their privilege, to define access to learning, and to flaunt their control of the public space.

In the 1850s, though, negotiations with elites were essential, especially in state legislatures, as advocates pushed the common school in both law and practice. Even so, evangelical writers did not hesitate to place blame. One stated that the efforts of common-school reformers on behalf of the poor and destitute had been "counteracted by a class of men known as 'guardians of the Treasury' who conceive that the whole duty of man is accomplished when a stray dime is chugged back into the public treasury." These elites were proclaimed "enemies" of the people, responsible for making Georgia an "Empire State" of ignorance. Evangelical writers charged the elites and decision-makers for the lack of funding, questioning how a state like Georgia, with three hundred million dollars in taxable property, could not undertake the mission of a common education for all.[50]

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[49] "Report of the Section to which was Referred the Consideration of the State of the Free Schools," (Columbia: South Carolina Society for the Advancement of Learning, 1835). South Carolina had committed to Free Schools for the poor of Charleston, most notably, from early in the period. Charles Memminger, a German immigrant and orphan adopted by Thomas Bennett tried to transform the negative public sentiment toward these institutions in the 1850s. Jordan, "Education for Community." "From the Newbern Spectator," *Biblical Recorder and Southern Watchman*, June 27, 1839; "Schools." For analysis of South Carolina educational efforts, see Knight, *Public Education in the South*, 215-28. Knight contended that Charlestonian elites' use of the schools encouraged the general public to consider the benefits of popularly funded education.

[50] "Education in Alabama--Georgia," *Christian Index*, April 20, 1854; "Common School Education in Georgia," *Southern Christian Advocate*, November 7, 1851. Decrying elites' influence more generally, "ALPHA" stated that "often the meanest man can, if he is rich, enter the highest circles of society. He seems to sway a kind of universal scepter over his neighbor. He is applauded for many acts, for which the poor man would be scoffed at....Not only does the man of opulence hold such a sway in the social circle,

These perceptions frustrated evangelicals who wanted the poor to improve upon their station and viewed educational opportunity as a sure path to such elevation. In the 1830s, evangelicals exerted educational and religious influence on the poor, as the fruits of learning, writers believed, tended to have the most significant effects for improvement of the individual, the family, and society. The *Religious Herald* printed an article from the *London Mechanics Magazine* that described how learning elevates the poor man: he could avoid the ale-house, find employment, enjoy satisfactory domestic conversation, and become "more respectable in the eyes of this family." Later the editor included a brief treatise on the relationship between ignorance and vice that described knowledge as "the poor man's wealth." Writers in this period also seemingly had to tread carefully around the issue of ignorance. One argued that North Carolina was "under the weather" because poor and immigrant parents "were satisfied to give their children just such an education as they had themselves. Such as could read and write, would learn their children just that much; and such as knew not a letter in the book, were content to let their children beat their way through the world as they did."[51] Perhaps this was exactly as planter elites designed the codes that governed the culture, but most certainly, these battles against the blockading rules of honor engendered writers' frustration and ire.

Other writers were not so sympathetic to the educational mentality of the poor. In 1839 Episcopal Bishop Stephen Elliot and Presbyterian James Thornwell reported to the South Carolina General Assembly that "the *moral* difficulties are the carelessness of the poor about the

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but he exerts, to no small degree, the same influence in the church to which he may chance to belong. His voice is the first to be heard in all the important schemes; and his decision, in a measure, is final…Has the many of wealth gaineda [sic] better character, or, more improved the faculties of his intellect than his neighbor? It is evident his opportunities for doing good, and improving the talents left in his keeping, have been greater, but the question is, has he done it? No." ALPHA, "Wealth and Its Influence on Society," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, July 9, 1857.

[51] "Common Free Schools."

education of their children, the selfishness which leads them to prefer their labor to their improvement, and the foolish pride which prevents them from receiving that bounty, which they cannot procure in a better way."[52] Significantly, their audience consisted of state legislators and neither was a friend of democracy, their characterization of the poor differed from many of the Baptist and Methodist writers. Elliot owned almost 200 slaves, and Thornwell, though an outspoken advocate for education who later refashioned his rhetoric, doubted the ability of the masses to govern themselves.[53]

But by the 1850s, the populations of southern states had increased, and the frontier, with its notoriously precarious existence disconnected from community controls and established authority, had migrated westward. The region also faced pressures from other areas, whose populations, modernizations, and systems of schooling had surpassed the South.[54] In Charleston, the population grew by almost 250% between 1800 and 1850. These changes prompted more attention to the lives of ordinary southerners, especially those outside the grasp of social institutions, such as churches or schools. Some regions in the South were still sparsely populated. For example, one writer lamented that in Florida the population was so isolated that the poor did not live in reach of a school.[55] Providing the poor access and a general improvement of the entire

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[52] "Report on the Free School System: to the General Assembly of South Carolina, at the Regular Session of 1839," (Columbia: South Carolina General Assembly, 1840).

[53] Holifield, *Gentlemen Theologians*, 30-31; Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order*, 126-29.

[54] Historian Harry L. Watson stated that the South's population did not grow nearly as much as the North's between 1800 and 1860, but even still, the market revolution and "the prolonged struggle to 'modernize' the slave South" was only "partially successful." According to him, slavery pushed the region into the market, but also slowed its progress. Watson, "Slavery and the Dual Economy," 46-47.

[55] "Sketches of Florida," *Southern Baptist: A Family Religious Newspaper*, July 9, 1851; J.E. Sharpe, the chairman of the Georgia Baptist Sunday School Convention, reported that the Church needed to help "the

region were goals of those who wanted to expand both Sunday schools and common schools. To secure this, some purposefully justified demands, claiming that the common school would not infringe upon the academies or colleges, most certainly to win over decision-makers who controlled the purse.[56] Weighted with responsibility, southern Methodists established a "Southern Educational Journal" to report on the effort to take schooling to the masses. North Carolinian J. Henry Brent asked, "It is the glory of the Methodist Church to preach the Gospel to the poor; but can we claim equal praise for watching over the intellect? and [sic] affording them facilities for mental culture equal to their gospel privileges?" He encouraged readers: "Let us, while endeavoring to keep our hold upon the wealthy, see to it that the poor are not driven from us in distrust or despair."[57]

In confronting ignorance and a distrust of learning among the poor, many evangelical writers were overwhelmed by the task. Calvin Wiley reported that the goal of the common schools of North Carolina would be

> to obliterate from the community that vast mass of ignorance which has, heretofore, cast such a dark cloud over the prospects of our State. We cannot educate these people against their will; and considering that the chief difficulties in our way are the inevitable result of the very ignorance which we wish to remove, every consideration of prudence, of justice and of patriotism calls on us to be patient, to be tolerant of honest mistakes, to be diligent, and to be faithful to our great cause by making the most of circumstances.[58]

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teeming thousands of poor children in Georgia which have not Sabbath School, no Bible, nor any one to teach them." J.E. Sharpe, "Georgia Baptist Sunday School Convention," *Christian Index*, March 11, 1857.

[56] "Common School Education in Georgia."

[57] J. Henry Brent, "Southern Educational Journal," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, May 7, 1857.

[58] "To the Committees appointed to examine and pass on the qualifications of those wishing to teach Common Schools: Sixth Annual Letter of instructions and suggestions," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, May 21, 1858.

Wiley viewed the mentality of the poor as a hindrance, not unlike Thornwell and Elliot, but he demonstrated a commitment more characteristic of the rhetoric of evangelical writers throughout the period. Common-school advocates worked to bend the wills of both those making decisions and funding reform and those who would benefit from such change.

Importantly, though, many writers were convinced that the common school must be a place where the wealthy and the poor interacted. This relationship should be both contractual in providing for education and personal in experiencing it together. The *Christian Index* reprinted the Report of the Educational Convention in Georgia, which argued that

> it is as much the right of the poor to be educated, as of the rich to be protected in the possession of his property; and if the poor man be under obligation at the call of his country to risk his life and pour out his blood, in defence [sic] of those institutions, which secure to the rich man his dearest rights and most valued possessions—the rich man is under obligations to contribute of his wealth, to give the children of his defender an education, which will enable them to read the charter of their liberties; an education which will enable them to read the charter of their salvation—an education which will enable them, by industry, to rise in society…[59]

The *Common School Assistant*, from the early days of common schooling in the North, had refuted the wealthy who ignored such duties and insisted on sending their children to private school, stating that "the rich child should not be taught, almost first thing, to look upon his neighbor's children as born to fewer advantages; he should be taught—by being sent to school during the first years with the child of want—that all in this land have equal claims for an education which will fit them for the duties of citizens."[60] While writers in the 1850s did not champion this particular feature of the common school so explicitly, the *Christian Index* editor featured a discussion from the *New York Evangelist* that stated that the rich and the poor should worship together, and in the eyes of many, education was an extension of the religious body.

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[59] "Report, Adopted by the late Educational Convention at Marietta."

[60] Ibid.

Unfortunately, from their perspective, though, the poor were "not qualified to mingle with the better classes," adding "immorality to immorality" simply because they only associated with fellow illiterate and uneducated neighbors.[61] Though not with great frequency, evangelicals supported this not necessarily because they envisioned the common school as a grand social experiment, but because they understood the unity necessary to the survival of the common school and the unity necessary for the survival of their peculiar way of life.[62]

James Henley Thornwell even modified his thinking on the subject of educating the poor and the elites together. In an 1853 letter to South Carolina Governor Manning, Thornwell acknowledged his frustrations with those living in poverty: uneducated, poor "parents will scorn a favor rather than permit their children to be stigmatized as the condition of receiving it." For this reason, Thornwell had become even more convinced that the poor and rich should attend school together. He argued that

> the true policy of the State is to recognize no distinction betwixt the rich and the poor; to put them all upon the same footing; to treat them simply as so many minds whose capacities are to be unfolded and whose energies are to be directed. The rich and the poor in the school-house, as in the house of God, should meet together upon the ground of their common relations, and the consequences of this promiscuous elementary training would soon be felt in harmonizing and smoothing the unevenness, harshness and inequalities of social life.[63]

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[61] "To Prominent Individuals," *Common School Assistant* II, no. 1 (January 1837); Humphrey, "The Rich and the Poor."

[62] Several historians have argued that southern support of the common school was an attempt to rally white southerners into a common feeling of camaraderie and to create a sense of common future in defense of slavery. Cecil-Fronsman, *Common Whites*; Eelman, "An Educated and Intelligent People," 250-70.

[63] James Henley Thornwell to Governor John Laurence Manning November, 1853, in *Dr. J.H. Thornwell's Letter to Governor Manning on Public Instruction in South Carolina* (Charleston, SC: City Council of Charleston, 1885)

Granted, Thornwell, writing as president of South Carolina College, had clear professional interests in the cause of public education. His educational plan, though, stemmed directly from the political realities of South Carolina and his frustration with sectarian religion. The free schools in South Carolina in the first half of the 1800s were branded with the label of "pauper" and thus unpopular even among the people who benefited greatly, but with the uncertainty at the end of the antebellum period about the nature of government and the necessity of the region to create its own institutions, the prospect of the common school was perhaps more essential than a mere preference. Detesting denominational bickering, Thornwell also deemed disunity a threat to southern legitimacy and most importantly, a hindrance to the greater cause of education. Strangely, or perhaps expectedly, he emerged as one of the most vocal evangelical proponents of the common school.[64]

Republican and Religious Fortifications

One of the lessons Thornwell expressed in the 1850s was the sentiment that education and education reform reveal realities within society and could not be artificially constructed, much less imposed upon a group against its will. He contended that "public instruction, like the form of government, must spring from the manners, maxims, habits, and associations of the people. It must penetrate their character, constitute an element of their national existence, be a portion of themselves, if it would not be suspected as an alien, or distrusted as a spy."[65] While not appearing a reformer, Thornwell advocated reform, writing firstly as a tactician familiar with the heat-weary sluggishness of Carolina slave society and most certainly an understanding of how many outside the region had become tired of slavery. He exhibited a tone and an

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

understanding of cause and effect brimming with conservatism, and his perspective emerged from a society hanging onto slavery and its social system, bent on retaining the past, even as it negotiated the institutions of modern America.

Thornwell's conflicted analysis reveals the changing nature of southern evangelicals' relationship to the modern world. While religious justifications and a hyperbolic bulwark of tradition may have dominated the discourse concerning the southern common school, writers did not ignore or reject the modern transformations occurring around them. In *Becoming Bourgeois*, historian Frank Byrne argued that mercantile families in southern urban spaces used formal education to "demarcate a cultural boundary" between themselves and other white southerners and that southerners "shared a religious understanding opposed to the rising tide of individualism and liberal capitalism."[66] But for many, the concept of common schooling funded by taxation was a worthy goal, even though such a goal was fundamentally a part of the modernization that Byrne claims most southerners decried and middling southerners prized only for themselves. In the 1830s, southern evangelicals began to associate the diffusion of education to the masses as a part of the modernizing forces encompassing the economy, society, and even the landscape. Southern evangelical writers often placed the common school in this context. Perhaps this was simply a rhetorical appeal, but it remains equally plausible that they fundamentally viewed the common school as a necessity inherent in the future, not wholly unlike the railroad or the canal.

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[66] Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 116; In his 1991 essay about the reforming efforts of Georgian Joseph Henry Lumpkin, historian Timothy Huebner argued that Lumpkin's evangelical framework for promoting education, temperance, and industrialization did not fit the mold, that this "broad and deep foundation for general and permanent improvement at the South" did not meet expectations. Huebner, "Joseph Henry Lumpkin and Evangelical Reform," 269. Others have noted that military schools afforded middling whites a means to "alter cultural expectations so that [bourgeois] institutions and values were validated." Green, *Military Education and the Middle Class*. Support for common school education certainly distinguished the middling southerner from the lesser yeomen and afforded him mastery of an institution uniquely his own.

One writer acknowledged the role of the state in funding a variety of ventures which had increased the national and individual wealth. The prospect of prosperity

> unlocked the treasures of nations, to the accomplishment of objects so stupendous in their aspect and difficult in their execution as to have enrolled them a century ago…But irresistible facts have satisfied incredulity itself. Rail roads [sic] are stretching through the length and breadth of kingdoms; and canals and navigable stream, ploughed by adventurous keel of the flying steam boat [sic], are pouring the riches of commerce into the very heart of continents. Distance vanishes before the light of science, and nations are interlocking in the embraces of brotherhood. Nor is this all: the claims of Education now exert commanding influence over the hearts and purses of whole communities who heretofore regarded with lamentable indifference all attempts to cultivate liberally the youthful mind.[67]

Many evangelicals considered public education and the common school important not simply for moral virtue, for individual salvation, or for political sustenance, but they fundamentally viewed the common school as a part of the future, a part of the modern world that increasingly infringed upon southern tradition, a tradition they explicitly challenged.

For most of these writers, this infringement was not an impersonal force to which all must give way, but a part of the modern world that needed to be constructed with care and precision. Even as modern life transformed individuals, evangelicals harnessed their understanding of human nature and the purposes of humanity. One Methodist writer quoted French leader Lamartine who argued that in the rush to educate and train workers who are "fit to make bridges and railroads, and tissues and cottons," one could not assume that learning was only for "temporal" ends. The writer asked, "Has man no other than a mercantile, an industrial, a terrestial [sic] end?" and answered that the end of man is "thought, conscience, [and] virtue" and the "Creator of that human thought will not ask of civilization whether it has formed skillful [sic]

[67] A.M., "Education of the Talented Poor," *Southern Christian Advocate*, February 9, 1838.

operatives, useful industrials, and numerous manualists," but rather enabled the elevation of the human soul.[68]

Even amid this uneasiness with education as a part of worldly improvement, writers generally wanted change. To win support for the cause, many education reformers elevated their concerns in the public mind: "No question more deeply concerns the welfare of the whole State. The increase of our population, the development of resources, and the extending spirit of enterprise among our citizens, all demand of us some earnest attention to the cause of general education."[69]

Any hindrance to this educational enterprise was worth overcoming, and those best able to make it happen were not elites. In 1851, another Vermont-born, Virginia Baptist clergyman, Eli Ball, argued that those in need to the common school consisted of three groups: those living too far from a school, those who lived near a school, and those who comprised the "most industrious, and therefore, [the] most valuable citizens, whose property is not sufficient to support them without work, and who, having but few, and many of them no servants, are obliged to keep their children at home at work."[70] Spartanburg Methodist Joseph Wofford Tucker, in response to a charge that the common school was submission to "wild and fruitless delusion," argued before the South Carolina legislature that "his faith rests with the common mind—with the common people; in whom there is an inherent power—a potent and moral influence which is exerted and felt in every organized society." He argued that his main goal in the diffusion of

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[68] "Education and Religion," *Southern Christian Advocate*, November 3, 1837.

[69] Thomas F. Scott et al., "General Education in Georgia," *Southern Presbyterian*, April 24, 1851.

[70] Eli Ball, "Education for the Masses," *Christian Index*, March 20, 1851.

knowledge through the common school was nothing more than the "elevation of the lower classes."[71]

Tucker's inspiration in the promotion of education stemmed from his view of improvement and progress, which was influenced by changes in the North. He argued that, despite objections by some that the common school was "imported from Yankee-land," the possibility remained that the South indeed had a few valuable lessons to learn from the North. He argued that "we might learn how to make a good School, as well as a good cotton factory, by studying a Northern model, without incurring any very serious public calamity."[72] Kaestle posited that southerners rejected northern institutions amid sectional disagreements, but Wells claimed the commercial and professional people were quite willing to embrace and admire northern educational progress, viewing the planter elites as the main hindrance to positive change.[73] The writers of these evangelical papers, though critical of some northerners for their theology and of all for abolition, pursued common-school reform with delayed yet significant enthusiasm.

Despite this engagement and desire for reform, southern evangelicals were embarrassed by their inability to bring education to all their neighbors. One writer lamented that copies of the 1850 United States census would travel throughout the "civilized world" diffusing the reality of southern educational deficiency. From the census data, the "cry of the educational destitution among our poor rings." Interestingly, the writer desperately wanted to distinguish the region's

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[71] Joseph Wofford Tucker, *Speech of J. Wofford Tucker of Spartanburg on a Bill to Organize a System of Common Schools: Delivered in the House of Representatives, December 6, 1853* (Columbia, SC: Greneker & Lamotte, 1853).

[72] Ibid.

[73] Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 212; Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, 133-35.

population from the "ignorant masses of the Old World," a label perhaps too incriminating given the charges of South's defense of slavery and a reasonable conclusion after reading the Census.[74] Despite this embarrassment, southern evangelical writers, even as they supported the common school as a safeguard of the Republic and as a legitimate product of the modern world, mandated that the common school be constructed on their own terms, protecting their version of regional identity and religious solidarity.

Early in the century, southern evangelicals, tempted to associate knowledge with secularism or Enlightenment atheism, meticulously guarded religion's role in education. While exalting schooling and education at the expense of ignorance, from their perspective, one must guard against "the reasoning of the carnal and sophistical mind, which vents its enmity to its Maker, by opposition to his word, and manifests the same spirit of unhumbled pride." One writer more succinctly wrote that "man is as much a moral as he is an intelligent being. And his moral faculties need as diligent, as careful and as skillful cultivation, as his intellectual."[75] A "Provincial Protestant" claimed that the "pseudo-philosophers of the age which has just passed away, have presented the christian [sic] religion, not merely as irreconcilable in its doctrines, but as hostile in its spirit with true knowledge." This writer chastised the metaphysicians and the infidels of the 1700s for warring with virtue, for denouncing the "moral reflections" of classical philosophers, and for segregating religion and science.[76]

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[74] "Educational Destitution in Georgia," *Christian Index*, October 26, 1854.

[75] "On the Primeaval and Present State of Man," *Southern Christian Advocate*, December 22, 1837; "The Wretchedness of Expanded Intellect without Holy Affections," *Southern Christian Advocate*, June 10, 1836; A Country Correspondent, "Letters on Education, No. II," *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Messanger* VI, no. 5 (May, 1823).

[76] A Provincial Protestant, "The Christian Religion Vindicated from the Charge of Being Hostile to Knowledge," *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Messanger* I, no. 4 (April, 1818).

Later, writers continued to monitor the relationship between schooling and religion. Even when supporting common schools with great enthusiasm, one Methodist editor was encouraged "to see Methodists, not as Methodists, but as citizens, bending their energies to the task of developing all the efficiency of the common school system in every neighborhood," but warned that, as Methodists, schools supporters were obligated to protect students from sectarianism and to use the common school for "the inculcation of christian [sic] morals."[77] Here the identities—one religious and one secular—remained distinct. Some were critical of "associationists" who desired all children to be "Fourierized" and nurtured as if, according to the "great apostle of Boston," William Ellery Channing, all natural impulses of childhood were good and not originally sinful.[78] In 1854, Presbyterians offered a more mediatory tone to this conversation:

> Nothing can be more unjust than to accuse religion of a tendency to stint or cramp our mental powers, or to induce low and contracted views of things. That the religion of superstition has this tendency, cannot be doubted…Religion does not claim of all men, nor indeed of any, though it does not forbid that they should be philosophers, skilled in the dialectics of Aristotle or familiar with the transcendentalism of Germany; but it does require of them that they cultivate their mental faculties; that they deposite [sic] in their intellect an ample stock of ideas; that they exercise reflection and discrimination…that they acquire knowledge from every accessible quarter."[79]

Others remained adamant that popular learning, whether in science or literature, was insufficient to "meet the wants of man's moral nature." Even though education in institutions and seminaries

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[77] "Our Educational Institutions," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, January 7, 1858.

[78] B., "The Associationists and their Education," *Southern Christian Advocate*, August 20, 1847.

[79] "The Claims of Religion on the Intellect," *Southern Presbyterian*, November 30, 1854. Presbyterians argued that science, for example, should be taught only alongside "revealed truth." Washington Baird, editor of the *Southern* Presbyterian, denounced "heathen literature, heathen morals, and science divorced from Revealed Truth, and exhibited as the offspring of Chance and Chaos." "LIterary and Scientific Instruction, in Connection with Christian Morals and Gospel Truth," *Southern Presbyterian*, November 1, 1848. For an analysis of Presbyterianism's, more extensive commitment to education (or at least the education of its ministers) in the first half of the nineteenth-century, see Boles, *Great Revival: Beginnings*, 120.

of higher learning provided positive enrichment, an education without Christianity was futile and mere delusion.[80]

Even still, reason could be calculated and pride could be checked, if schooling attended to religious interests above all others. One writer clearly stated that "popular education lies at the foundation of social virtue." Careful to affirm that uneducated people could exhibit both virtue and true religion, he wholeheartedly believed that "popular ignorance and popular corruption are closely allied…[The] moral depravities of communities bears a direct relation to the amount of their intellectual degradation."[81] This conflation of virtue, religion, and the good, educated society, as well as uneasiness with the radicalism of *philosophe* revolution, hardly distinguished southerners from other Americans. Historian Mark Noll contended that as "virtue" was feminized and privatized, a new concept of "virtue" emerged, one that valued democratization, liberal government, a market mentality, the spread of religion, sentimental literature, and an affection-controlled morality. Southerners, he argued, "remained closer to the deferential, class-stratified, and socially organized civic humanism of the early Revolutionary period," elevating social stability over individual success, regarding the past as more valuable to save than the future important to transform. Kenneth Startup claimed that, despite the revolution and radicalism rooted in the evangelical "new birth," antebellum southern evangelicals were, in fact, "part of the Western mind" as they defined status and virtue according to material possessions.[82]

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[80] "Mistakes in Education," *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, November 22, 1855.

[81] "Common Free Schools."

[82] Fox-Genovese and Genovese argue that southerners were conflicted about the French Revolution, appreciating its republicanism and shunning its radicalism. Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class*, 23-30. In the creation of a "theistic common sense," Mark Noll points to the work of Henry May, who argued that Americans saw multiple enlightenments, rather than a single one, rejecting the skeptical enlightenment of Hume and Voltaire, while embracing the "didactic enlightenment" of Hutcheson and Smith. Noll, *America's God*, 93-95; Henry Farnham May, *The Enlightenment in America*

While these characterizations may be accurate, it is clear that southern clerics were not willing to sacrifice the "new birth" for the coming of age in a world where wealth and individualism were flaunted at the expense of moral substance and piety. Any attempt to buttress the Republic with education must include the intense regulation of the latter.

For these southerners, the common school could simultaneously assuage the immediate demands of religion and ensure the future of the Republic. Many Americans, some southern evangelicals included, believed that education-inspired virtue, in both its republican and religious forms, was essential to the preservation of liberty, as ignorance was "more dreaded in [the] Republican government, than fleets and armies."[83] In 1823, a "Country Correspondent" argued that the issue of education was "notoriously" neglected in Virginia and most had "a low opinion of the importance of education." This correspondent pointed to uncertainty and the abuse of power in Spain and in Russia as a product of the peoples' lack of education and thus power. Frustrated, he described the low opinion of schooling shared by many in contrast to the heightened need for schooling amid a government constantly given to the ambitions of those who would swindle away power from the people. He stated:

> It seems almost unnecessary to say that the theory of our government is built on the virtue and intelligence of the people. As all power emanates from them, as all officers, legislative, judiciary and executive are created and filled by them, most obviously there is an indispensible necessity that the community should be enlightened and virtuous, vigilant and discriminating.

(New York: Oxford University Press, 1976). In his portrayal of southern differences in defining virtue, Noll leans on the work of George Rable and Stephanie McCurry. George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics*, Civil War America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*. Startup, *Root of All Evil*.

[83] "Popular Education," *The Southern Literary Gazette*, July 15, 1829.

Interestingly, the writer also examined the importance of education in the development and progress of religion, but the analysis was separate from the benefits for republicanism. He rejoiced that the Bible had begun to "reassert its supremacy" in the nation.[84]

This fear of popular opinion being corrupted by unsound leadership or of an unsuspecting and uneducated populace swept away by the ambitions of a capable demagogue increased dramatically by the 1850s. Though a component of southern evangelical support for the common school from early in the period, the fear that the population would be deluded, deceived, and led astray by an opportune demagogue became increasingly important to evangelical southerners. Whereas an 1829 Baptist writer acknowledged that in the inculcation of the Bible upon children, one may inadvertently produce "bigoted zealots,"[85] later southern evangelicals held tightly to the principle that the diffusion of education, specially an education in religion, tradition, and literacy, was the key to survival. In 1859, *The Christian Index* argued that unless changes occur in the system of schooling, the "next generation will show a larger number of ignorant electors than the present." The editor continued, deeming "an ignorant population" a "vicious" one, "easily moved by the influence of evil passions, and readily controlled by artful, unprincipled demagogues." Interestingly, the editor added that, though education was essential to virtue and happiness, the legislature would continue to delay improvements until the "public sentiment demanded it."[86]

For these evangelicals, the preservation of the Republic was connected explicitly to the development of the common school. Though writing about Sunday schools, James E. Welch contributed to the *Southern Christian Herald* in Cheraw, SC, noting that a community must be

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[84] Correspondent, "Letters on Education."

[85] "On the Dedication of Children to God, in Paryer--No. 2," *Religious Herald*, March 27, 1829.

[86] William Moseley, "Education of Orphans," *Christian Index*, November 10, 1858.

governed by the Gospel, but also that "the existence of our republic depends upon the enlightened moral sentiments of the people, and hence every friend of liberty—every enemy of the 'Man of Sin' must deeply regret that so many of the dear youth of our country are growing up without means of even a common school education." This letter was followed by a reprint of the entire address by South Carolina Governor George McDuffie, advocating free education for all South Carolina children. This juxtaposition, while perhaps ordinary, reveals the complexity with which southern evangelicals tended to education, admonishing and encouraging a variety of forms, many with purposes in seeming contradiction.[87] Sometimes these writers encouraged individuals to think for themselves in order to resist demagoguery, and at other times, they advocated the very control—albeit, in their view, holy, devout, and spirit-pleasing—they railed against.

The need to preserve the Republic through the common school became a more explicit goal after 1840, culminating in the rhetoric of the 1850s in which southern evangelical editors defended not only against ignorance-inducing demagoguery, but against sectional fire. A North Carolina Methodist explicitly demanded southern teachers, as northern teachers were "not to be trusted" to represent slavery in southern fashion and to repel the excesses of "northern fanaticism."[88] Another Methodist argued that even the Czar of Russia, among the other monarchs of Europe, had promoted a system of public education. Even though the nature of despotism limited learning entirely, much more had been done among these European powers, and South

[87] James E. Welch, "Sunday Schools Letter," *Southern Christian Herald*, December 9, 1836.

[88] "Southern Teachers," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, July 15, 1858.

Carolina would most certainly "suffer by comparison with the kingly and despotic governments" who had made such provisions.[89]

At an 1854 commencement of Union University in Tennessee, graduate W.F. Owen of Alabama revealed his reason for advocating the diffusion of knowledge to more people:

> A vicious people cannot possess a virtuous government; nor can a vicious government rule a virtuous people. The only true strength of a republican government consists in the individual virtue of its citizens. And when we consider the importance attached to individual opinions and individual actions in our country, who can estimate the vastness of the obligation resting on our citizens, and our government to the cultivation of a spirit of moderation, of justice, and of virtue.[90]

Owen represents an important subtlety in the relationship between republican government, virtue, and learning. Closing the address, Owen expressed an important tension that emerged among the evangelical writers—many were coming to terms with modernization. Owen distinguished between those who cry for conservatism and those who rush to "Progress." Owen charged that improvement in art, science, and technology merely increased the demand for more innovation, at the expense of the "wisdom of their fathers." Owen called for a balance between the governing principles of "perpetual progress" and "the necessary limitations to that progress." Interestingly, Owen was not uneasy with the expansion of democracy or even the language of political equality as many writers were, but he was not willing, as he stated, to discard the wisdom of the past or the preservation of unity in the present. He desired the national "treasure be expended in the work of national advantage, in the advancement of commerce, and in the education of the masses, instead of being lavished upon political demagogues, half famished for

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[89] "Common School Education," *Southern Christian Advocate*, March 17, 1854.

[90] W.F. Owen, "An Address, Delivered at the Commencement of Union University, by W.F. Owen, Moulton, Alabama, a member of the Graduating Class, July 19, 1854," *Tennessee Baptist*, August 12, 1854.

the spoils of party victory."[91] Certainly this call for unity was an expression of conservatism, undoubtedly against sectional rivals and abolition, but this conservatism was not a blind assault on reason, equality, or popular education. In fact, popular education, no matter how democratic, modern, or new, fit nicely into the needs of the region to protect its people from the sways of northern challenges to the region's peculiar institutions and perceived moral supremacy.

The common school would fulfill the needs of southerners who desired solidarity amid increasing pressure from other regions. One argued that the "golden chain of conservatism, both spiritual and temporal, which has hitherto bound this great republic together, was first forged out of pure Christian principle, and then holily placed in the keeping of the church. It has been polished and kept bright ever since by the emery wheels of generous forbearance and mutual compromise." For this writer, the security of religion depended on the preservation of the Republic, and the preservation of the Republic upon "governmental unity." Clearly, the writer viewed the spread and popularity of abolition as a threat, and a call for unity an appropriate marker for a return to the values espoused by the slaveholding South.[92]

Increasingly, as southerners needed to construct unity amid the challenges to slavery and the charges of illegitimacy of the faith that slavery induced, southern evangelical writers invoked an old authority to base their claims of moral uprightness and even to frame their support for the diffusion of knowledge. While southerners may have indeed retained an earlier understanding of republicanism—one that consisted of public liberty, personal virtue, and deference to class—their support of the common school for the survival of the Republic increasingly incorporated a vision for individual and collective submission to the Bible, a predictable, inherited safeguard

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[91] Ibid.

[92] "The Church and the Republic," *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, January 23, 1851.

from the recent past, even while prompting them to support modern, somewhat secular common schools. While activism and social transformation may not have been products of this ideology, the conflation of religion and republicanism and its origin in conservatism did not exclude individual responsibility or reforming action.[93]

As southern evangelicals demanded a common school to gird republican ideals and popular education to satisfy their own values of learning and literacy born in modern consciousness, evangelical advocates of popular education constrained the possibilities promised by the common school through an insistence upon religious dogmatism. They envisioned social improvement, but such transformation would not happen through science, technology or "worldly" education. Transformation would only happen once the world had been transformed into their likeness. According to one writer in the 1840s, Christian education must infuse all attempts at education reform. The writer encouraged the reader to "imagine a society composed of such individuals. All pure in heart. All enlightened in understanding. All affectionate in deportment. Christian Arts. Christian Sciences. Christian Literature. Christian authorities. Christian Government. Would not this be substantial social improvement? And would it not be the consequence of thorough individual improvement."[94] This refrain would become increasingly important over the last two decades before civil war.

Southern evangelical writers' insistence on the role of the Bible increased by the mid-1840s. As discussions over the nature of education intensified and the common school became a

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[93] Noll, *America's God*, 216-17. Noll states that "For the South, republicans meant more an ideal of social stability than an ideal of individual fulfillment, more an arena to display honor than an opened for achievement, more an opportunity to save the best plan of the past than to new-model the future. …Because Southern interpretations of republican freedom never became as democratic, as liberal, or as concerned about individual rights as their Northern counterparts, theology in the South tended not to stress individual spiritual rights and the necessity of personal religious activism as much as the North."

[94] "Christian Education," *Southern Christian Advocate*, November 3, 1843.

greater possibility in southern states, evangelicals needed to assert their control over an increasingly public, and potentially secular, institution. Methodist editor William Wightman included a brief treatise by common-school reformer J. Orville Taylor that argued that "the march of intellect, separated from Bible instruction, had always been a rogue march" and that constitutions "do not prevent crime, poverty, and suffering," but only knowledge and practice of Scripture can accomplish this.[95] By using this language, Taylor and his audience could escape the rhetoric and the control of institutions, setting themselves as the arbiters of happiness and their moral code as the source of the Republic's (and slavery's) defense.

Writers who supported and fostered enthusiasm for the common school increasingly used religion as the impetus for increasing access to education, but also as a means of establishing the legitimacy of the region and its peculiarity. Their worldview demanded that the Bible be asserted as the supreme arbiter of morality and the final determiner of the Republic's survival. Sunday school advocate Matthew Williams of South Carolina deemed the Bible "the only ark of the nation's safety." All genius and learning must begin with its precepts, rather than the "proud and unsanctified philosophy" and intellectuals who "pull down the Bible" below the "throne of Reason." Without religion, according to Williams, reason only leads to "sacrilegious madness and folly."[96]

One writer stated that the Bible "[fed] the imagination with the loftiest sublimities—with the purest and noblest conceptions of the beautiful."[97] But this sustenance was not simply inspiration for southern evangelicals. Learning about and adhering to the Bible, especially in

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[95] J. Orville Taylor, "The Bible in Schools," *Southern Christian Advocate*, August 25, 1843.

[96] Matthew J Williams, "Address," *Southern Christian Advocate*, June 24, 1842.

[97] "God's Book for Man's Intellect," *Christian Index*, October 30, 1856.

common schooling, became somewhat synonymous with the preservation of liberty. One warned that in common schools the Bible "is virtually snatched from the School [sic] desks by ruthless Protestant hands. It is always used little enough, but now it is less used than ever before in some places."[98] Alabama Presbyterian William T. Hamilton argued that the "difference in the amount of intelligence among the common people where the Bible is open to all, and among those where it is not in their hands, is almost incredibly great." For him, the Bible was the "*people's book"* and the key to unlocking knowledge and securing a defense against the pleasures of this world.[99]

Southern evangelicals did not simply raise the Bible as a banner, proclaiming its moral standard and their own uprightness. They used the Bible to understand and define their brand of republican ideology and to create a southern version of popular education.[100] By the 1850s, conflation of religion and republicanism also determined how they wrote about common schools. In their view, the Bible was the reason for the "mightiness" of the United States, the reason for the victory over Catholic Mexico in the previous decade. One writer speculated that if Roman Catholicism had not separated the people from the Bible, Mexicans would have experienced

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[98] A.W.M., "The Bible in School," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, September 22, 1859. The author also stated that "we need no Catholics to oppress children here." For examples of southern evangelical hyerbole and alarmist fear-mongering about Catholics and education, see "Proposed Catholic League Against Our Free Schools," *Southern Christian Advocate*, September 9, 1852; "Speech of Rev. Dr. Fuller on Public Free Schools," *Christian Index*, June 16, 1853; "Popery and Schools Funds," *Christian Index*, February 29, 1853. Historian Benjamin Justice argued that religion in the public schools was mediated through compromises at local levels. Justice, *The War that Wasn't.*

[99] William T. Hamilton, "Bible-Reading and Popular Intelligence," *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, April 3, 1851.

[100] Historian Harry Watson has demonstrated that common school reformers such as Calvin Wiley used religious rhetoric to encourage support for the common school, though Wiley was never able to "[resolve] the contradictions between his theories of equality and inequality." Watson, "Man with the Dirty Black Beard," 25. The insistence on the Bible was perhaps an attempt to establish a moral plane above northern abolitionists.

widespread common school attendance and more populous colleges. As absurd as this charge was coming from a southerner, the welfare and safety of the nation, from this perspective, depended entirely on the Bible retaining its proper place as "the palladium of liberty."[101] No longer was the diffusion of knowledge alone the "palladium of the Republic" and the key to unlocking citizens' responsibility to the common good, but true security was found in learning and submitting to Holy Scripture and the wishes of the evangelical authorities.

Many had clearly embraced the notion that the Republic depended on education, but the most essential component was not only providing access for all white children, but that education submitted to the biblically-imposed morality:

> The very perpetuity of the existence of our free institutions depended on the educated youth of our country—then why not let them build upon the Bible, and erect thereon a structure which cannot be shaken by the fierce and destructive tempest—let the inculcations be wrought and begun in our schools. When our laws, the Constitution of our government, and the permanency of our peculiar institutions morally, politically, and religiously depend upon, and are sustained wholly by the influence imparted to them from the great fundamental doctrines of the Bible, why not educate the youth in the great science leading to a knowledge of this fact.

The writer dispelled notions that the Bible and religious instruction in the schools might engender charges of sectarianism, but rather argued that this was essential for unity. For him, school reform would be the beginning of a "revolution"—a revolution to refashion an old religious code in defense of virtue that southern evangelicals now perceived as not only unpopular, but incompatible with modern life.[102]

Probably the most interesting dialogue concerning the influence and spread of the common school occurred in the 1859 editions of the *Southern Christian Advocate*. William J. Sasnett, a professor at Emory University, wrote several "Objections of a Common School

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[101] "The Bible a School Book--The Book of the People," *Nashville Christian Advocate*, March 11, 1852.

[102] "School Reform," *Tennessee Baptist*, September 20, 1856.

System of Education By State Agency." In the letter, he argued that the common school system would remove the "better informed, more enlightened classes" from their rightful place of governing southern society, preventing excesses and "mobocracies." He argued that change must occur gradually and the 1850s efforts to improve education were in fact an imposition on a process, a process that made transformation meaningful, protecting the laws of "social organization." In his objections, he assumed some elements of modern life and even middle class thinking, noting that the common school, if imposed, would not only violate the laws of supply and demand, but would deny parents their "ever present" desire to utilize thrift and hard work in the elevation of themselves and the improvement of their children's lives.[103]

Sasnett, though clearly in the minority among periodical writers, surely had little expectation of what would then ensue. President of Emory, James R. Thomas, responded with a blistering nine-installment rebuttal of Sasnett's argument, his style, his points of contention, and his logic. Thomas berated Sasnett's assumptions about government, contending that Sasnett was "at war with republicanism" and that none of the doomsday scenarios posed by Sasnett as an impeding result of the common school have actually happened in the North, where the common school has flourished. Thomas ridiculed Sasnett for the notion that a state legislature which had resisted the notion of common school could be considered a "hotbed" of "spontaneous" revolution. Thomas noted that, according to Sasnett's reasoning, the government should not be involved in any public works, including common-school education, the State would have no basis for making any internal improvements, including railroads. Thomas, though, contended that every man had a vested interest in improvements, as every man is a "stockholder" in the government. Despite all the claims of reformers, Thomas noted that the common schools have

[103] W.J. Sasnett, "Objections to a Common-School System of Education by State Agency," *Southern Christian Advocate*, February 24, 1859.

not been proven to improve the lives of children in relation to the station of their parents, questioning that even if such did occur, how could that be a problem? Thomas clearly deemed Sasnett somewhat paranoid, always looking for a conspiracy among the State's poor to direct government coffers and plot revolution.[104]

Refusing to be publically denounced as not only incorrect and foolish, but also incapable of using logic, Professor Sasnett responded with his own nine-part rebuttal that graced the *Advocate* until the end of July. His vindication began with a confession of his true intentions that were not mentioned in his initial questioning of the system: that the common school threatened the plans of denominational education. Sasnett feared that, just as northern denominations had been "forestalled and shut out" of providing education to the common people, so the southern denominations would be removed from influence. His second installment detailed how he viewed the entire common school system as violating the equality of responsibility inherent in republican government, as clearly by using taxation to fund this educational venture, the government was "taxing one class for the benefit of another, of securing privileges and benefits to one class at the expense of another." Sasnett argued that the common school system would take education out of the people's control and place it under state control, would injure the

[104] J. R. Thomas, "Prof. Sasnett's "Objections to Common School Education by State Agency," Reviewed--No.VII," *Southern Christian Advocate*, May 12, 1859; J. R. Thomas, "Prof. Sasnett's "Objections to Common School Education by State Agency," Reviewed--No.VI," *Southern Christian Advocate*, May 5, 1859; J. R. Thomas, "Prof. Sasnett's "Objections to Common School Education by State Agency," Reviewed--No.II," *Southern Christian Advocate*, March 31, 1859; J. R. Thomas, "Prof. Sasnett's "Objections to Common School Education by State Agency," Reviewed--No.V," *Southern Christian Advocate*, April 21, 1859; J. R. Thomas, "Prof. Sasnett's "Objections to Common School Education by State Agency," Reviewed--No.IV," *Southern Christian Advocate*, April 14, 1859; J. R. Thomas, "Prof. Sasnett's "Objections to Common School Education by State Agency," Reviewed--No.III," *Southern Christian Advocate*, April 7, 1859; J. R. Thomas, "Prof. Sasnett's "Objections to Common School Education by State Agency," Reviewed--No.I," *Southern Christian Advocate*, March 17, 1859; J. R. Thomas, "Prof. Sasnett's "Objections to Common School Education by State Agency," Reviewed--No.VIII," *Southern Christian Advocate*, May 19, 1859; J. R. Thomas, "Prof. Sasnett's "Objections to Common School Education by State Agency," Reviewed--No.IX," *Southern Christian Advocate*, May 26, 1859.

system of higher education, and, by mandating a secular learning, would allow the State to thus interfere with the traditional notion that schooling is an extension, and thus a responsibility, of the family.[105] After this public quarrel, Sasnett left Emory by October 1859 to become the first President of the East Alabama Male College, which was begun under the leadership and funding of Alabama Methodists, but, perhaps ironically for Sasnett, was obtained by the Alabama legislature in 1867.

In their arguments, Sasnett and Thomas used republican language, claimed the tradition of Adam Smith, and justified their positions with religion. Sasnett did not argue that children should not be educated, but he clearly outlined that some were more fit for learning than others and that individuals, not the prosperity of an elite (though most certainly the influence of a religious body), should be responsible for making this happen. Mimicking northern educational models and later galvanizing southern unity against northern condemnation, southerners implemented a variety of educational forms to take literacy and learning to the masses. Even as late as 1859, evangelical writers did not reach a consensus about the implementation of the common school as the most significant expression of this goal prior to the Civil War. While using republican ideology to make claims for the spread of free education to the masses, southern evangelicals became frustrated with the designs of the elites and the apathy of the poor. As the region became increasingly aware of its educational backwardness and the modernizing

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[105] W.J. Sasnett, "A Vindication of the Common School Question," *Southern Christian Advocate*, June 2, 1859; W.J. Sasnett, "A Vindication of the Common School Question--No. II," *Southern Christian Advocate*, June 9, 1859; W.J. Sasnett, "A Vindication of the Common School Question--No. III," *Southern Christian Advocate*, June 16, 1859; W.J. Sasnett, "A Vindication of the Common School Question--No. IV," *Southern Christian Advocate*, June 23, 1859; Sasnett, "A Vindication of the Common School Question--No. VI."; W.J. Sasnett, "A Vindication of the Common School Question--No. VII," *Southern Christian Advocate*, July 14, 1859; W.J. Sasnett, "A Vindication of the Common School Question--No. VIII," *Southern Christian Advocate*, July 21, 1859; W.J. Sasnett, "A Vindication of the Common School Question--No. IX," *Southern Christian Advocate*, July 28, 1859.

tendencies and realities of the entire nation, some southerners, infused with bourgeois assumptions that were a convenient match to their own standards of morality, increasingly called upon the State to fund public education, serving the interests of all children in the state, and increasingly relied on a scriptural stronghold to defend their positions and promote the evangelical cause. Some may charge that these writers conflated the church and the state, by fusing republican reality with religious devotion, but most retained a very strong understanding of religious and secular responsibilities, though many would attest that the interests of each institution served the other.

CHAPTER 5

THE HOME CIRCLE:

FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF CONTROL

Moralizing the benefits of free labor and warning of the problems found on rural frontiers, Yankee theologian Horace Bushnell derided southerners and their insistence on slavery in a recurrent 1847 sermon. Northerners, he argued, "[delved] in labor," while southern masters engaged in ease, eloquence, and engagements in public parade. This difference, induced by the violence and curse of slavery, desecrated the character of southerners and, at least for a time, elevated masters as "solitary sheiks on their estates." Bushnell published *Christian Nurture* the same year, blending the doctrines of Calvin's original sin, Locke's *tabula rasa*, and romantic notions of an unspoiled nature. Bushnell belittled many values that southern evangelicals cherished in defining themselves: a distinct conversion experience, the importance of the Holy Writ read by ordinary folks, and the significance of the individual's personal confrontation with evil, both in the heart and of the world. Though he supported science, embraced technology, and celebrated the city, Bushnell championed the social order and the importance of an individual's social responsibilities even at the expense of some personal liberties. From this social vision, he lamented that, in the South, "education and religion are thus displaced, [and] the dinner table only remains, [and] on this hangs, in great part, the keeping of the social state." Mocking southerners' insistence on good graces and hospitality, Bushnell lamented that southern youth,

surrounded by the "barbarism" of slavery, were trained not in Christian morality and virtue, but only in codes of honor.[1]

In her work *Southern Cross*, historian Christine Leigh Heyrman argued that, by the end of the antebellum period, southern evangelicals discarded the principles and patterns inconsistent with the life of Bushnell's "sheiks," finding "common ground with worldlier men" and blurring the codes of southern honor and once-radical religious sensibilities.[2] Certainly southern evangelicals supported slavery, affirmed the power of the patriarch, and lagged in the implementation of educational systems, but Bushnell's charge and Heyrman's interpretation are perhaps too simplistic. With so many demands for social, religious, and educational change littering the evangelical press and the frequent tirades against the impious behavior of dueling, drinking, and Sabbath-breaking elites, one cannot assume a gentle conflation of evangelical and genteel values, even in the 1840s and 1850s. Southern evangelicals consistently revised and negotiated a code of respectability, insisting that attention to the soul, morality, and the needs of the denomination remain dominant.[3] This expectation, once imposed upon individuals, families,

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[1] Horace Bushnell, *Barbarism: the First Danger, a Discourse for Home Missions* (New York: American Home Missionary Society, 1847); Daniel Walker Howe, "The Social Science of Horace Bushnell," *The Journal of American History* 70, no. 2 (September 1983); Fox-Genovese and Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class*, 582-83; Boylan, *Sunday School*, 147-52. Boylan argued that Bushnell's ideas, though not without much debate, infused into Sunday school practices and assumptions about learning; Robert Bruce Mullin, *The Puritan as Yankee: A Life of Horace Bushnell* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2002).

[2] Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 248; For the best analysis of 1700s evangelical challenges to the social and cultural expectations of elites, see Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 163-77; For an alternate view of the relationship of evangelicalism to the social order, see McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 136-70. McCurry argued against "declension" and in favor of a yeomen evangelical population that had never truly embraced egalitarianism, preferring instead to "[shore] up their own claims to power and authority at home" through a commitment to hierarchy and possibility of slavery's legitimacy (147).

[3] Respectability was used by historian Bruce Collins to denote white southerners' "impulse to improvement" that transcended class lines (162). Collins, *White Society in the Antebellum South*. While Collins' idea remains valid, the notion of respectability surmised by evangelicals placed religion as the supreme arbiter of moral decisions.

and society, inhibited the growth and sustenance of religious and secular systems of schooling, even as evangelicals promoted the worth of such educations.

Codes of honor and of evangelicalism were often in conflict, but, according to historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown, neither "wholly triumphed" over the other. The South lived "with a divided soul, a dissonance seldom acknowledged."[4] One code maintained family and community honor through a variety of means, most notably "informal, extralegal modes of surveillance and control," and the other required individual, yet often explicitly public, expression of the "recurring skirmishes of the soul."[5] In the 1840s and 1850s, according to Wyatt-Brown, these values converged. Both codes—evangelical morality and Old South honor—demanded individual performance, required constant attention to one's neighbors, and elevated the family as the central teacher of social and religious expectations. Though evangelicalism, by nature, was open to individuals across the social order and southern honor codes centered upon the whims of elites, both codes imparted exclusivity and moral separation from one's neighbor that marked the southern experience. Though individuals shouldered real internalized pressure to abide by both codes, southern evangelicals "readily monitored the level of piety among those with whom they interacted," while elites generally directed a culture of honor that required the constant evaluation of behavior by a discriminating public, most notably of a planter class seeking mastery.[6] The convergence and conflict between these traditions shaped southern evangelicals'

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[4] Wyatt-Brown, *Shaping of Southern Culture*, 104.

[5] Ibid., 100; Schneider, *Way of the Cross*, 50.

[6] Scott Stephan, *Redeeming the Southern Family: Evangelical Women and Domestic Devotion in the Antebellum South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 23; Schneider, *Way of the Cross*, 61-64; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*; Wyatt-Brown, *Shaping of Southern Culture*. Wyatt-Brown argued that "the interconnection of honor and moral conscience, along with shame and its relation to a sense of guilt, encouraged the Southern Christian to balance the two ethical systems or even make them one" (85). In his analysis of gender relationship in the antebellum period, historian Frederick A. Bode argued that "a

ideas concerning the purposes of schooling, the authorities that governed the educative experience, and processes by which learning would best occur.

Southern evangelicals envisioned the southern family as the ultimate educational authority, the most sacred teacher. Even as some southern evangelicals supported common schools and as even more supported the creation of Sunday schools to sustain denominational relevance, most assumed that the most essential and most significant learning occurred within the home and that the father was the ultimate gateway to the teaching of children. Though familial authority might have appeared to satisfy both honorable and evangelical codes, southern evangelicals grew frustrated with educational authority deflected away from churches, as fathers ultimately made educational choices that did not always comply with evangelical wishes. With the family in charge, denominational demands proved less convincing to southern fathers. With fathers not entirely compliant with the educational paradigms of evangelical leaders, many southern evangelicals tried to assert their control over family educational choices by proposing the proper educational path for mothers and demanding educational choices submit to evangelical moral codes.

Establishing a Circle of Control

Southern evangelicals, in navigating the expectations of this southern honor code and of holy scripture, esteemed the supremacy of the family. The family became the authority of all religious, educative, and social decisions. As the revivalism of the Second Awakening waned, the pressure upon parents and the family to lead children to the saving bench increased. The

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comprehensive account of religion in the antebellum South will require an appreciation of the tension between unequal households of dependents governed by men—the hard edges of class, race, and gender—and the insistence on individual conscience and piety, and community and benevolence, which lay at the core of evangelical Protestantism." Frederick A. Bode, "A Common Sphere: White Evangelicals and Gender in Antebellum Georgia," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 809. This chapter will attempt to navigate this tension in southerners' ideas about education.

family eventually stood as "the Christian's citadel from which he sallied forth to do battle with the world."[7] Some have argued that southern evangelicals extolled the virtues of "family religion" not for how the family could encourage religious faith, but how the family became religious faith.[8] The rhetoric of family found in the evangelical press differed from that of the backwoods preachers and angry adolescents of the previous generation who scorned their fathers' faith and authority, finding solace in renegade conversion and egalitarian cells. The southern evangelical press frequently included entire sections of weekly editions devoted to family instruction, providing stories, anecdotes, and moral lessons for mothers and for children, while affirming the power of the evangelical patriarch. By the 1850s, southern Methodists were even publishing a single monthly journal, *Home Circle*, for the specific purpose of admonishing families. Evangelicals assumed that the family as an institution was essential to the survival of the church and the larger society. For evangelical writers, all efforts to educate white southerners submitted to the family's final authority.

Evangelicals clearly stated that the family proved the best teacher. *Southern Christian Advocate* editors William Wightman and T. O. Summers published an address by Delaware cleric Willard Hall who argued that "the FAMILY indeed is the foundation of society, the

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[7] Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 100. Mathews argued that evangelicals expected "family religion," though often more of an ideal imposed than a demonstrated reality, to hurry youth to conversion. Their commitment to this cause increased and eventually superseded the egalitarian evangelical morality of the faith's origins in the 1700s. See also Cynthia Lynn Lyerly, *Methodism and the Southern Mind, 1770-1810* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 163-65.

[8] Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 158-60. Heyrman argued that "identifying the home as church appealed to southern whites because it restored the moral authority to the natural family and mitigated evangelical churches' earlier, more exacting, claims on their members' loyalty and affection" (159). While certainly true, one must consider the natural growth and generational realities of the expansion of a denomination. Given the constant obsession with conversion, one may also conclude that the radical sons of the 1790s, such as Heyrman's Stith Mead, grew up and worried no longer with the conversion of their elders, but, by the 1820s and 1830s, their children.

nursery of its virtues, the seed-bed of its vices; imparting to the mass its principles and character." From the beginning of the institution, according to Hall, families were the church itself with the patriarch as priest. Though all kinds of religious and secular instruction existed, "parental and filial love [constituted] the best qualification of both teacher and learner," as none had similar, adequate abilities to inculcate, counsel, and even convert. Tennessee Methodists included an article from the *New York Observer*, a Presbyterian publication, which argued that a family was the nursery, school, and sanctuary.[9]

Though this control of the patriarch and the force of the family may signify evangelical attempts at cultural control,[10] southern evangelicals crossed denominational and regional lines in their attempts to affirm a uniquely evangelical goal—conversion. A contributor to the *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine* reminded parents: "To you the language of God, in this dispensation of providence is—take these children and educate them for eternity—furnish them with those religious instructions; set before them that pious example; …exercise over them that prudent discipline which will have the happiest tendency, to form their minds for the joys of a glorious immortality."[11] One editor admonished readers:

> Christian parent, does not your heart yearn over that little immortal soul that God has given you? Oh! think but one moment that it can never die. Think that it is to exert an influence for weal or for woe in this world!—Think that it may wear a crown of glory in

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[9] Willard Hall, "Family Order The Foundation of Civil Order--These Promoted by the Sabbath," *Southern Christian Advocate*, May 9, 1845; "What is the Family?," *Nashville Christian Advocate*, February 4, 1858.

[10] Heyrman concluded, "What had come to matter most to men of God was what had always mattered most to men of honor: vindicating their mastery within the public sphere." Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 252.

[11] "Reflections on the New Year," *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine* I, no. 1 (January 1818): 13; for illustrative examples, see "Duty of Family Religion," *Southern Christian Herald*, December 5, 1836; "Parental," *Biblical Recorder and Southern Watchman*, March 24, 1838; "Religion at Home," *Southern Baptist*, June 13, 1847.

> heaven or writhe under the displeasure of Almighty God for ever! And then remember that destiny is hinged, in a measure, upon your conduct. There was a whole family in the ark, there may be whole families in heaven. Blessed be God, we are led to believe there are many such now in glory. And oh! the blessedness of a saved father, or a saved mother, or a saved family in heaven.[12]

This conception of family as supreme authority and the most essential medium to salvation steered southern evangelical educational demands.

Certainly evangelicals across the nation fretted over the piety of their children, and this advice is not uniquely southern or especially evangelical. That the family was the supreme arbiter of morality and foundational to strong society, in the eyes of antebellum evangelicals, should be no surprise. Evangelicals across the nation believed that the home was "an individual, privately owned sanctified religious community."[13] In *Redeeming the Southern Family,* historian Scott Stephan argued that "evangelicals believed that the most difficult passages of faith—such as the quest to convert children and the death of loved ones—would take place within the home. Evangelicals viewed afflictions as a precondition for piety, a means to eliminate sin and worldliness from their households."[14] The home was the arena for the trials and tribulations of existence, but also the greatest fortification against the ill-effects of such forces.

For southern evangelicals, though, the importance of the individual along the path to salvation and the family's authority in securing it made the South resistant to social change. The impending consequences of sin and the pressures posed by codes of respectability insulated southern evangelicals from the larger social and educational movements, including the Sunday schools and common schools, and turned their energies toward the hearth alone. In varying

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[12] "Children," *Southern Presbyterian*, April 9, 1859.

[13] Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 49.

[14] Stephan, *Redeeming the Southern Family*, 49.

degrees, southern evangelical writers affirmed the supremacy of the family as the primary means of educating the entire region, minimizing the ideas necessary to inspire a collective effort for the benefit of all children. Even as such an affirmation undermined the authority of the common school and the Sunday school, some writers insisted that the family ruled, unaware that entertaining such pronouncements undermined their desire to build educational institutions.

Given that the eternal souls of children were in jeopardy and the home furnished the tools to abate the impending fires of unbelief, some southern evangelicals went so far as to demand that education was entirely the responsibility of parents with none outside of the home circle involved. B. M. Sanders, a leader among Georgia Baptists, argued in 1851 that children should never be sent away from the home, from the parental grip, until absolutely necessary. Not only would the behavior of children respond rightly to parental supervision, but children would "labor harder for [their] improvement." Sanders' words were strong, even for the religious press: "The God of nature has ordained it to be so, and violence is done to nature's laws whenever this charge is transferred by the parent to another person. Such a transfer therefore cannot be justified upon any other consideration than that of solemn necessity."[15] This hardline view assumed that evangelical parents have the time, resources, and intellectual prowess necessary to execute this task. This sentiment, though, reflected an underlying, often implied resistance in the evangelical discourse toward formal education outside of the home.

Others, though not so restrictive, were equally adamant that parents retain control over their children's instruction, even if not as the sole teachers. One contributor stated that parents were better instructors than any private tutor or school outside the home, and since many parents

[15] B.M. Sanders, "Education of Children," *Christian Index*, September 18, 1851; Another common assumption of evangelical writers was the idea that deliberately leaving moral frameworks to the choices and whims of children, rather than providing clear and firm inculcation, was delusional and "poisonous" to children."Duty of Parents to their Children," *Religious Herald*, June 7, 1833.

employed others for the task, children, immediately upon returning from school each day, must find a book of the parent's choosing.[16] Parents should seemingly compete with the school for the heart and mind of the child. This sentiment continued throughout the period, as a Methodist writer argued that "the facilities of the age and country in which we live tend to relax parents, and in a measure tempt them to neglect their children." The "intellectual training [is given] to the teacher in the common school or academy, while the parents manifest a criminal indifference."[17] Another argued that home instruction was much preferred to boarding schools, as the most important lessons began long before the age appropriate for formal schooling and continued after such age had passed.[18] No matter the station, parents should keep a skeptical eye on learning, whether in common, Sunday, or elite boarding schools. For southern evangelicals, morality and religious affection exhibited in adulthood stemmed directly from the persistent intensity with which parents educated the individual during childhood. Even if unable to control education entirely, parents were deemed the "first and greatest of all" teachers, who, either through partnership or as supreme arbiter of knowledge, extended learning to their children.[19]

The affirmation of parental supremacy in educational decisions was conceived through evangelical and southern lenses. Southern evangelicals' connections to bourgeois values and even northern voices framed their view of the family's role. In the 1830s, the *Religious Herald* included a brief exposition on the parental role in education from New York's *Common School Almanac*. The writer argued that the proper education of children, as "a young man's best

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[16] "Education of Children," *Religious Herald*, September 4, 1835.

[17] "Education--A Word to Parents," *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, June 19, 1856.

[18] "The Home School," *Christian Index*, May 24, 1855.

[19] "Parental Responsibility," *Religious Herald*, January 1, 1836.

capital," was essential to securing the "privileges and honors of manhood" as well as the rights and privileges of "freeman," as "ignorance is always the vassal, the slave of intelligence." From this perspective, the education of children should comprise parents' "first care."[20] Another Baptist affirmed this, stating that education "makes the man" and is "a better inheritance for [children] than a great estate."[21] The language of slavery, masculinity, the middle class, and even plantation society littered the discourse of evangelicals, and writers fused this language to elevate the family as the supreme arbiter of educational decisions and suppressed any notions of communal, shared, or public authority. Capital, as southerners understood it, and inheritance could only be private matters used for private ends.

Even in partnership to champion morality and conversion, the relationship between the home circle and the common school affirmed parental control. Critiquing a meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Education in Cleveland, Ohio, one southern Presbyterian editor added that reform was futile unless reformers consider the "domestic circle" and "public sentiment." He added that

> until parental authority be restored and respected; until the importance of law, order, and subordination receive its proper inculcation; and until public sentiment shall have been so re-moulded [sic] as to enforce and sustain sound and healthful discipline in public institutions, it matters little what will be the course of study, or who are employed as instructors.[22]

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[20] "To Parents," *Religious Herald*, April 5, 1839.

[21] "Education," *Religious Herald*, May 22, 1833. Interestingly, this definition neither confirms nor confronts southern codes of honor, which mandate that sons learn to "master themselves." Glover argued that planters used higher learning to demarcate their own social superiority, but rarely commented on intellectual concerns and "infrequently" discussed academics. Lorri Glover, ""Let Us Manufacture Men": Educating Elite Boys in the Early National South," in *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*, ed. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 34; Glover, *Southern Sons*, 41-42.

[22] "Reform in Education," *Southern Presbyterian*, September 25, 1851.

While many evangelical writers supported common schools, voluntary organizations, and educational institutions, they implied, and often stated, that such would never truly succeed without submitting to the authority of the family.

Even in the commentary concerning Sunday schools, evangelicals asserted the authority of parents. Some stated that if parents fulfilled their obligations to their children and attended to the home circle, Sunday schools would not even be necessary.[23] The *Sunday School Journal* charged parents: "You have serious interest in the schools in which your children are taught in the doctrines and duties of the Bible. You must naturally have great anxiety as to the kind of instruction they receive, the kind of companions they are associated with, and the kind of impressions, good or bad. …You must give account for the manner in which you have discharged this duty."[24] The affirmation of family leadership, even in religious education, steered the discourse of writers, and schooling outside the home was important only to buttress family instruction.

This affirmation was theologically reasonable to most evangelicals, especially among Presbyterians, whose notions of covenant and childrearing fostered reliance upon upbringing as a means of salvation. One writer questioned, "If the Sabbath school were of itself alone an efficient system, for the religious training of the young, we might still ask whether parents do not greatly need that mental discipline which they find in the work of teaching divine truth?"[25] For

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[23] L. A. A., "No. 1 Sunday Schools," *Religious Herald*, January 31, 1834.

[24] "To the Parents of Children in Sabbath School," *Biblical Recorder and Southern Watchman*, March 8, 1838.

[25] "The Sabbath School and the Family," *Southern Presbyterian*, January 5, 1848. One Presbyterian expressed the importance of the church in moral education: "Children are to be made disciples or scholars in the school of Christ—for what else is the Church but a school or nursery…They remain under the government and teaching of the church until they have become 'perfect men'…Never should the children of the church leave the house—the family—the school of God." Smyth, *Denominational Education in*

many, the Sunday school should be no more than an "auxiliary" to parental instruction, care, and leadership, not a "substitute."[26] Perhaps this should be expected, as many evangelicals were generations removed from the movement's origins. Once-radical evangelicals married, conceived, and hoped to engender the same passions leading to conversion among their children, though not with the revolutionary passion that might undermine their house. Baptists also agreed that "it is not in the church that the task of religious education can be fully accomplished."[27] Even while pleading for the support of the Sunday school cause and while establishing such schools across the region, some evangelicals deferred entirely to parental authority.

Some southern evangelical writers, though, expressed frustration with parents and an awareness that such authority, once given to parents, was not within their control and was also affected by competing codes of conduct. Sometimes simple disagreements about child-rearing emerged. One writer blamed fathers for actively teaching their "lisping babes to curse and swear, and laugh at their bold profanity."[28] Sometimes southern evangelical writers were more theoretical in their analysis. While elites allowed their sons the freedom necessary to develop autonomy, some evangelicals hesitated, unconvinced of the benefits of encouraging independence in children and wary of subordinating salvation to honor. Children, if allowed to

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Parochial Schools and Religious Colleges, enforced upon Every Church by Divine Authority. McCurry has argued that church covenants heightened increased paternal responsibility to dependents. McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 176-78.

[26] "The Abuse of Sabbath Schools," *Southern Presbyterian*, May 1, 1851. The contributor continued: "The whole tenure of the teachings of scripture on this point is, that to parents, God has entrusted the religious instruction of children. Search the Bible from one end to the other: there is no permission given to parents to transfer this responsibility to others."

[27] "Parents are the Best Teachers, and Home the Best School," *Southern Baptist*, October 25, 1847; "Family Instruction," *Religious Herald*, May 19, 1837.

[28] A Country Correspondent, "Letters on Education, No. III," *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine* VI, no. 6 1823): 305.

rule themselves and if "granted every indulgence," become the master of the parents, subverting divine-sanctioned order and failing to exhibit the "principles of action which mark the gentleman."[29] Interestingly, the writer employed the language of honor to promote a strictly evangelical view of child-rearing. Gentlemanly status, though, was not awarded to sons who successfully negotiated their position, as honorable southern boys were expected, but to those who exhibited religious piety and respect of religious ritual.[30]

Even middle class attitudes toward children frustrated some writers who viewed discipline differently. Some argued that parents have been duped by the idea that exercising authority over children will inhibit the child's love and affection for the family. Children should not escape the parental gaze or rod, but rather parents must act as "guides and counselors" as if together in a foreign land, extending liberty and "allowance for the youthful spirits" only as the father and mother deem appropriate.[31] Others acknowledged that the methods of child-rearing were changing, complaining of extremes: in the past parents and teachers used force—the rod, ear-wringing, hair-pulling, and starvation—to establish the authority of the home circle, but now authorities use only cooperation and make children spoiled, rather than afraid.[32] Amid these discussions, writers complained that parents neglected their duties, failed to discipline their children, and ignored biblical commands.

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[29] "School Government--Parental Co-operation," *Christian Index*, August 4, 1858.

[30] Historian Lori Glover argued that southern sons enjoyed exercising independence, that parents encouraged autonomy and confidence in their children, and that reputation mattered. Glover contends that southern elites embraced the child-rearing assumptions of Locke, though they express less interest in intellectual pursuits than northern neighbors. Glover, *Southern Sons*, 57.

[31] "Children," *Christian Index*, June 21, 1855.

[32] "School Government--Parental Co-operation."

Evangelicals' frustrations with parents, though, grew as the Sunday school became more common. One Baptist reminded readers that "the legitimate design of sabbath [sic] schools is not to supersede but to assist parental effort; and every Christian parent ought to regard himself as the responsible person in this great concern."[33] After praising common schools as "harbingers of a higher civilization" and Sunday schools for caretaking the "interests of Eternity," the Sunday School Convention of the South Carolina Conference of Methodists explained its fears. They decried "relaxed" parental responsibilities and expressed their suspicions of the popular "disposition to look upon the Sabbath School instruction not simply as an *aid* to home education, but as a *substitute* for it." They warned that

> educational enterprizes [sic] of the present day may be a curse, instead of a blessing, if they give rise to any such *opinion*, or to any corresponding *practice*, whether the opinion be consciously entertained or not…The Church may build Colleges and Academies on every hill top, but unless parents in some good degree feel the solemn and untransferable [sic] obligations resting on them, those who expect a great regenerating influence to go forth from these institutions, may meet with bitter disappointment.[34]

This affirmed an essential message to evangelical readers: one must wholeheartedly support the educational efforts of the denomination, most especially the Sunday school, but none of those efforts were enough to supplant the true educative institution—the family. One should not assume, though, that the writer advocated escaping duty and obligation, as evangelical clergy supported all types of educational ventures. But the language employed, deeming educational institutions a potential "curse," undermined calls for constructing educational institutions and notions within southern evangelical consciousness that education happened best as a part of a community, rather than a family unit.

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[33] "To Parents," *Religious Herald*, February 22, 1833.

[34] James Carlisle, Warren DuPre, and Simpson Bobo, "Proceedings of the Methodist Sunday School Convention of Ministers and Delegates from within the Bounds of the S. Carolina Confederence," (South Carolina: Sunday School Convention, 1859).

The supremacy of the family was not always a theoretical or theological choice. By 1860, southern evangelicals seemingly affirmed Bushnell's charge—that only the family remained to educate the children. Though justifying this choice with geography, noting the isolation of many southern homes, one Baptist recounted that "we continue to hear almost every week of some new instance in which a family far from the church, and unable to attend a Baptist Sabbath School, transforms itself into such a school." Books, resources, and supplies for "these home kept schools" were increasingly demanded. Amazed at the "beautiful propriety in the plan of calling one's own children and servants together on a Sabbath day for religious instruction," the writer called all parents and masters to care for the souls of those children and slaves under their care. While these home schools and home libraries seemingly suggest that the rural nature of southern life instigated such forms of schooling, evangelical writers preferred such models.[35]

The home, though occasionally maligned for parental irresponsibility, was ideally a warm fireside ushering salvation to a generation of southern evangelicals too far removed from the fires of religious revival but precariously close to escaping parental reach and flying to a life of worldliness and sin. Southern evangelicals affirmed the supremacy of the home in educating

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[35] The population density of the South was significantly lower than in the North, and many have argued that this limited the development of educational institutions. "Those Family Schools," *Tennessee Baptist*, August 11, 1860. For population analysis, see Thomas B. Alexander et al., "Antebellum North and South in Comparative Perspective: A Discussion," *The American Historical Review* 85, no. 5 (December 1980). For arguments that the South's rural character undermined educational development, see McWhiney, *Cracker Culture*, 210; Collins, *White Society in the Antebellum South*, 210; Burton, *In My Father's House*, 89. However, many now concur that the northern common school began in rural areas, rather than urban ones, suggesting indirectly that southern rurality cannot account for the South's limited educational development. For examples of this perspective, see Parkerson and Parkerson, *Emergence of the Common School*; Kaestle and Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change in Massachusetts*. Historian Frank Towers noted that southern urbanization, when characterized as "trailing behind more advanced societies" ignores the fact that southerners adopted urbanization, industry, railroads, and heterogeneous populations, even if such changes conspicuously "bore the marks of slavery." Towers, "Southern Path."; Wells even argued that such rurally-diffused arrangements actually inspired southern "intellectual engagement" in debating societies and lyceums, that education provided social engagement to an otherwise geographically isolated people."Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*, 90.

children, fathers exerted their authority over decision-making, and southern evangelicals confirmed that education was first administered as a private matter. Southern evangelical writers held fast to education ruled within the private sphere, even at the expense of learning institutions they cherished and for which they advocated.

Father and Mother as Teacher

Affirming the notion that the family should reign over all educational designs, southern evangelicals deferred to traditional sources within the family to regulate the schooling of children. In 1838, Virginia Presbyterians cited the work of Heman Humphrey, president of Amherst College, as an authority on domestic education. Humphrey argued that "every family is a little state, or empire within itself, bound together by the most endearing attractions, and government by its patriarchal head, with whose prerogative no power on earth has the right to interfere."[36] Antebellum southern evangelicals proclaimed the father as ruler over the family and thus the ultimate educative authority for his children. Unless the father committed neglect or abuse, none should dispute his power. Oddly, though, evangelical southerners expended great energy, money, and time in the education of future mothers, rather than future fathers. By submitting to the will of the family and encouraging mothers to take a more educated and active role in the education of their children, southern evangelicals were not preparing for a stronger republic in which children grew to perform the duty and responsibility of citizens, but they were protecting the home as the ultimate schoolhouse and infusing their own ideology upon such a circle.

The father's role, according to southern evangelicals, extended directly from biblical command. As the "protector and head…[with] direct and powerful influence over his children,"

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[36] Dr. Humphrey, "Dr. Humphrey on Education," *Southern Religious Telegraph*, November 29, 1838.

the father should be given reverence, respect, and honor. Even still, the father is to act "in harmony with the mother," never allowing the children to witness dissension between them. The mother's judgment may be weak," one writer contended, "but it should be strengthened and guided aright by the father, without being rendered valueless in the eyes of her children." The writer then injected a story of a young man, whose mother passed and whose father was "a man of the world, mingling in the circles of gayety and fashion." After being expelled from an academy, the young man spent his days gambling and drinking. The son explained his behavior: "'My father scolds me for drinking, but I learned to love champagne and brandy at his own table, and he drinks them still.—My father curses me, and denies me the privileges of a son, because I gamble; but I learned the art in his own parlor—of him and his associates, as they sat evening after evening amusing themselves over their dice and cards.'" The father's example for the "home circle," in this view, determined the inability of the son to shake immorality and the "dangerous pleasures [that] have lured them to ruin."[37] To avoid such tragedy, the evangelical father was to educate his children in morality, as well as demonstrate his own mastery of virtue for any "cloud of witnesses" that may have been watching.

Southern evangelical writers demanded that fathers raise the educational expectations of their children in order to instill proper Christian character and to encourage children toward an "independent livelihood" and provide "the means of rising in society."[38] One editor even charged fathers not to use geography as an excuse, but to engage such a challenge. All farmers, he argued, should amass a family library to overcome the distance from the towns that threatened to relegate their children's education as "defective." Books and the child's access to them were the

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[37] "The Father's Position and Influence," *Christian Index*, February 19, 1852.

[38] C. S., "Communicated," *Southern Evangelical Intelligencer*, October 7, 1820.

father's responsibility, and the access of children to them would elevate individuals and society.[39] Here the father assumed charge of what his child was reading, controlling information and determining the boundaries of knowledge.

Unfortunately, for southern evangelicals, not all fathers, especially those without money, time, and their own education, were capable of meeting such expectations. Often fathers resisted religious influences, including the Sunday school, and any attempts by outside authorities to impose conformity.[40] Contending that Sunday schools were the "hope of the world," one teacher argued that "they *never can*—they *never will*, exert their legitimate influence until christian [sic] fathers come forward and discharge obligations they owe to their children, to church, and to God."[41] Fathers clearly failed to establish the proper educational plan and to set the appropriate examples within evangelical behavioral norms, at least insufficiently for evangelical leaders' liking. The institutions of learning established by evangelicals, even though they extended learning beyond the home, were inhibited by the ineptitude of southern fathers.

In order to change this behavior, southern evangelicals could not explicitly and consistently reprimand fathers, for conceptions of honor shielded fathers from scrutiny, and any chastisement for irresponsibility would ultimately disorient the "little state." Writers could not, at

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[39] "Formation of Character," *Christian Index*, December 17, 1833; "Untitled," *Southern Christian Herald*, May 6, 1836; "The Duties of Fathers," *Southern Baptist*, November 21, 1847; "Farmer's Libraries," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, December 11, 1860

[40] For the conflict between evangelical and traditional views of masculinity, see Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 120-24; Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 212-13; ibid., 228-52; Glover, *Southern Sons*, 17-22; Evangelical editors and writers generally affirmed their own brand of manly virtue throughout a variety of topics. A Methodist family journal in the 1850s provided one explicit definition: "It is not by books alone, or chiefly, that one becomes in all points a man. Study to do faithfully every duty that comes your way. Stand to your post; silently devour the chagrins of life; love justice, control self; swerve not from truth or right; be a man of rectitude, decision, conscientiousness; one that fears and obeys God, and exercises benevolence to all." "How to Be A Man," *Home Circle: A Monthly Periodical Devoted to Religion and Literatue* IV, no. 1 1858).

[41] "To Christian Fathers," *Religious Herald*, April 20, 1838.

least with equal gusto, demean paternal authority for its lazy indiscretion and celebrate it as the lead teacher of the home circle. Rather than looking to the common school or even the Sunday school as educative authorities, southern evangelicals turned to mothers.[42] By encouraging female education, advocating for female schools, and indeed scurrying to train all mothers in "the way they should go," southern evangelicals simultaneously affirmed the cultural expectation of patriarchy that honorable respectability demanded, and they infused the entire familial institution with their own brand of morality. This kept education within the home and kept the home under control of the patriarch, but provided evangelical values access to the hearth through which they could expand denominational and moral control.

But ascribing virtue to women and leaning upon them for the education of children contradicted traditional Christian teachings. Women were responsible for the education of the children and burdened by the responsibility of imparting virtue and salvation, but in relationship to husbands, wives were expected to rein in their leadership and subdue the frailties commonly imputed to the fairer sex. Mothers assumed greater responsibility over the household, but ultimately, fathers dominated the family. Women were left simultaneously as leader and follower in the family structure. As historian Scott Stephan has argued, the evangelical leadership "ascribed wives with superior piety yet vested husbands with final authority."[43] Female authority

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[42] Historians have frequently concluded that southern society was not as quick to embrace "separate spheres," as men asserted authority over household operations and religion with much more consistency than their Yankee counterparts. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 38-39; McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 188-1991. McCurry asserted that women operated within a "circumscribed arena," submitting to the control of their husbands; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 254-71; Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 189-93. Heyrman contended that since the home remained the workplace for most men, men exerted more control over domestic affairs in other regions. For Heyrman, "evangelicals could not rest content with a religion that was the faith of women, children, and slaves" (193). This analysis would seemingly reveal a strong divide between urban and rural areas, even entirely within other regions.

[43] Stephan, *Redeeming the Southern Family*, 96.

and power extended no further than the children, but education, as a component of juvenile experience, was certainly within her power and responsibility to administer, even as authorities routinely questioned if her guidance was alone adequate.[44] By giving women authority within the house and constructing "separate spheres," evangelicals flirted with a delegation of responsibility that challenged the traditional Christian view and elevated the status of women far more than many southerners would normally allow.[45]

The effort to bridge this contradiction, to mend the inadequacies of male leadership and to use women to extend church influence, induced a burgeoning sector of the educational economy. Evangelicals devoted themselves to the education of women, training them to be mothers who instill proper values in their children. One *Religious Herald* writer stated that "every generation of men, will be, essentially, what their *mothers are*." Especially in moral sensibilities, habits, and philosophies of life, motherly influence reigned over a child's education. In a lecture given to the Georgia Historical Society, Oglethorpe University president Samuel Talmage deemed the family supreme in his education and that "any degree of success to which he attained his cultivation, he was indebted to the promptings of a sedulous mother." According to him, mothers "[stood] at the head of the fountain of life and [directed] its flowings [sic] to

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[44] Historian Gregory A Wills argued that southern evangelicals looked to women to sustain the church" (55), that women took leadership roles in the family, church, and religious societies, and that southern evangelicals generally viewed women as morally superior to men. Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 54-59.

[45] Fox-Genovese argued that planters believed that female equality was a symptom of class slavery and that only subordination of women inside and outside the home was legitimate. Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 197-98.

gladden and to fertilize, or to wither or to curse."[46] These perspectives placed tremendous pressure upon women to enact a positive result upon children, a pressure that other motherly duties would often not allow time to entertain.

Evangelical mothers, though secondary to men and subordinate to the father's authority in the family, shouldered the responsibilities for moral and religious education within the family unit. For example, one Methodist writer recounted the life of L. D. Huston of Nashville, editor of the *Home Circle,* contending that the mother controlled the child's mind, even "the influence of a smile or a tear" to an infant. Huston believed that his mother had the greatest influence on faith, followed by his father, the Sunday school, and the minister.[47] Another even used Tacitus to focus attention on the mother's role in education, arguing that once the "rigid mental discipline" and "sound and uncorrupt" morals were not instilled by Roman mothers, the armies failed and the empire fell.[48] With the mother resided the eternal fate of each child, and many southern evangelicals worried that southern women were not ready for this responsibility. With fathers not able, interested, or compliant in educating children, southern evangelical reformers invested in young women to buttress family authority and doctrinal unity. This contradiction in familial authority was a living reality for most power structures within the home and directed southern educational energies toward female education.

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[46] "Education," *Religious Herald*, April 6, 1832; Samuel K. Talmage, *A Lecture Delivered Before the Georgia Historical Society, February 29th and March 4th, 1844.* (Savannah: Press of Locke and Davis, 1844).

[47] "Religious Training of the Young," *Nashville Christian Advocate*, May 21, 1857; Frequent in the "Ladies Department" sections of these periodicals were anecdotes, such as the story of a Maine sailor, orphaned at a young age and in jail for public drunkenness. The sailor after 10 years in the commercial marine and 10 years in the United States navy was asked if he remembered anything about his mother. He recalled only that she was pious, but he was also able to sing a few lines from a hymn she once sang to him. "My Mother Taught Me," *Christian Index*, May 3, 1855.

[48] "Education Among the Ancient Romans," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, January 29, 1858.

It should not be surprising that, aside from religious schooling, no single education topic engaged evangelical readers as much as female education. One evangelical writer even complained that southerners cared more for educating women than men and even ministers, likening the collective energy as "a kind of mania."[49] Typical arguments for female education included pontifications about the relationship between women and divinely-sanctioned order: the neglect of female education "[sank] woman below the common level ordained by our Creator, and [tended] only to debase her…to the condition of a savage," preventing her from achieving potential and benefitting family and society.[50] Historians have acknowledged the widespread interest of antebellum southerners in the education of their daughters. In *The Education of the Southern Belle*, historian Christie Anne Farnham argued that, despite southerners' use of northern teachers and implementation of northern models, the region "evidenced the greatest interest in female colleges of any region of the nation."[51] Though her emphasis was not on middling- or lower-class white southerners, Farnham's conclusion is certainly supported by the

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[49] H. C. H., "Female Colleges, Education of the Ministry, &c," *Christian Index*, March 24, 1853; "Religious Education," *Southern Presbyterian*, November 8, 1848; One writer contended that female colleges and seminaries outnumber denominational colleges for men. Itinerant, "Literary Institutions," *Southern Presbyterian*, March 13, 1852; "Female Schools," *Southern Christian Advocate*, February 19, 1852. Farnham, *Education of a Southern Belle*, 2. Farnham analyzed primarily female colleges and academies. Little attention was given to female primary schooling. Evangelical writers virtually ignored the primary schooling of girls as a separate topic of discussion. In their suggestions for the common school or Sunday schools, they rarely made gender distinctions explicit, making it difficult to assume the inclusion or exclusion of girls. In this section, unless explicitly stated, the analysis focuses on the education of young women in academies, colleges, and institutes.

[50] "The Claims of Female Education," *Tennessee Baptist*, July 28, 1855; Fox-Genovese argued that women "relinquished any attempt to criticize the prevailing conventions of womanhood" (232). Some of the evangelical rhetoric refuted this claim, often politely; most affirmed this interpretation. Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 231-33.

[51] For alternative interpretations in which southern female education was considered less pervasive, less influential, and more limiting to women, see Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*; Jean E. Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

prolific chattering of the evangelical press, whose readership was undoubtedly comprised of many women but whose editorship was male.

Female education revealed the cultural and social expectations of women in American evangelical circles. Among most evangelicals, the moral superiority of women was assumed. Though in the North this reality enhanced the authority of women in the home and created spheres outside the home in which some women worked for social change and reform, slavery and rural life "circumscribed the ability of [southern] women…to engineer significant social change."[52] As middle class ideology demanded and southern elites politely assumed, women were confined to a particular space, and evangelicals employed education to prepare them for this role as mothers.[53] Others have argued that this enhanced authority had political undertones, as American women became influential in the political sphere, training young men to be responsible republicans.[54]

While southern evangelicals would not condone the political influence of "republican mothers" or the equality of rights demanded by any American *philosophes,* they ascribed gravity to female learning unexpected in planter circles. Evangelicals fretted about the "worldliness" of traditional female education. In an unsigned editorial, one writer argued for an education appropriate for female responsibilities: "if the only business of a wife is to aid in filling the purse, and catering to the apetites [sic] of her husband, then the sum of necessary knowledge

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[52] Stephan, *Redeeming the Southern Family*, 4.

[53] Margaret A. Nash, *Women's Education in the United States, 1780-1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 56-59.

[54] For the ideology of "republican motherhood," see Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); For a reevaluation of "republican motherhood," see Margaret A. Nash, "Rethinking Republican Motherhood: Benjamin Rush and the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia," *Journal of the Early Republic* XVII, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 171-92.

may be expressed by the common saying, it is enough for a woman to know how to make a *shirt and a pudding*." This contributor infused his argument with a critique of elite's propensity to educate girls only for "good company:" "dress, dancing, balls, plays, and all the inventions of thoughtless mortal to get rid of time, take complete possession of the heart. And thus the work of education is finished!"[55] The gender expectations of southern honor suggested a female education that some southern evangelicals disliked; although many southern evangelicals were also slaveholders, this negotiation of values often succumbed to the "mania" of southern evangelical reformers.

Throughout the period, southern evangelicals were more interested that women learn to distribute, administer, and lead others to grace than to act graceful. They wanted female education to purge iniquity, rather than boorishness, and to polish hearts, rather than manners. Similar to their frustrations with elites in the creation of common schools, southern evangelical advocates of female education were not convinced that the culture established by planters induced the preferred methods of learning. Writers denounced "ignorant mothers" who multiplied the effects of "uneducated women" in the region. This ignorance stemmed not from obstinate poverty, but planter opulence. Mothers who have "[reigned] as the queen of the ballroom" rarely provided adequate familial leadership. A daughter who "casts aside her book for the cotillion will never win the love and esteem of a sensible man," and while she may be

[55] "Letter to the Editor," *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine* II, no. 1 (1819): 38. Some rhetoric of southern evangelical female education advocates tended toward even greater liberalism. One writer chastised critics of a Methodist teacher, Miss Miller, deeming the denial of single women the right to teach the Bible rooted in a "spirit of jealousy." "Baptiste Missionarie," *Religious Herald*, March 21, 1828; "Christianos," *Religious Herald*, February 15, 1828; "Untitled," *Religious Herald*, February 29, 1828. This sentiment did not wane over time. One argued that "the time has passed when [a woman's] appropriate sphere of usefulness was thought to be wholly within the precincts of the domestic circle—her mission to comprise only the proper management of household interests. The world has long since learned to put a just estimate on the worth and power of female intellectual genius." "The Education of Woman," *Southern Presbyterian*, November 14, 1850.

able to sing, paint, dance, and play, she will never, in their view, be able to "reason and reflect, and feel and judge, and discourse and discriminate."[56] Preparing the female population for spiritual influence over the family required not only educational expansion to those uneducated, but a reform of curriculum as well.

Like "republican mothers," southern evangelical women were encouraged to avoid the "ornamentals" and obtain an education similar to men, even though the ends of such education remained entirely different.[57] Most southern evangelicals affirmed this interpretation, even if the purposes of educating men and women diverged.[58] In 1830, one contributor argued that

> woman was not created to be as a hireling or a slave—Nature has thrown around her attractions and qualifications that fit her for a different sphere. Her path through life, tho' perhaps it may in some measure lead through 'flowery meads and verdant dales' yet it requires all the boasted powers ascribed to men to enable her to 'preserve the even tenor of her way.' In the discharge of her duties, whatever they may be, they are thronged with the same difficulties, and require the same energy to perform, that attend the pathway of men.[59]

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[56] "Uneducated Women," *Southern Christian Advocate*, April 2, 1847.

[57] Some historians have argued that elite women increasingly received a similar education to elite men in the antebellum South. Farnham, *Education of a Southern Belle*. For an alternate view, see Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 45-49. Fox-Genovese asserted that northern women were unique because they began to be educated for specific careers, such as teaching, while southern women were still restricted to the conservative ideals of southern womanhood and family; For Catherine Clinton, the increased access to education only fostered female frustrations, as the confined spaces for elite women to exert such knowledge upon their worlds remained limited. Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Another Side of Southern Slavery* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

[58] "Education of Woman," *Tennessee Baptist*, June 28, 1851; Eugene Strode, "An Address Delivered at the Examination of the Tennessee and North Alabama Female Institute, ont the Subject of Female Education," *Tennessee Baptist*, July 5, 1851; "Our Daughters," *Christian Index*, March 16, 1859.

[59] "Female Education," *Religious Herald*, August 20, 1830.

Even as this writer affirmed that male and female education should be equally thorough and arduous, he concluded by stating that "the cultivation of the female intellect cannot detract from the power, influence, or pleasure of man."[60]

As more and more evangelical women attended female seminaries, some continued to debate the purposes of female education and to argue that women needed an education fitting for their role in family and society, a role that was more important than the frivolous leisure activities of plantation mistresses. One writer noted that

> as woman has been taught in these latter days—too much—she is intended to be a mere plaything, to administer to our pleasures, by dressing gaudily, making music, and giving light or shade upon canvass or paper. Would she be any the less qualified to relieve the want, administer comfort, bind up the broken heart, cheer the weary, if she could read the poetry of the Greeks and Romans facile, and in their own language?[61]

While female education should provide women more significant knowledge than was needed for a mere pedestal, the purpose of female education and the contours of its expansion were not entirely removed from traditional expectations for women in family and society. Though not meant to support a republic of citizens, female education was certainly, in the southern evangelical view, intended to procure and protect the citizens of heaven.

The intended task for evangelically educated women was the salvation of souls. Given the newly constructed female influence on the family unit and the charge that current female schools prepared primarily upper-class women for worldly living, reformers held fast to the goal of conversion. A well-educated mother would substitute for the father, even while deferring to

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[60] Ibid.

[61] "Female Education," *Tennessee Baptist*, June 17, 1854. The writer also stated that "there are not many, if there be any, who seriously object to place woman on an equality with man--an equality not meaning that woman should be qualified to discharge duties, and when qualified, to be selected for the battle-field, for the forum, for the seas, and least of all, for the pulpit: yet all should desire to see her mind so brought out by education as to be man's equal, if not his superior, in training the youthful mind."

his authority, and make certain that the children were trained into evangelical norms. As "the family circle is God's blessed ordinance" and the "most hallowed spot on earth,"[62] properly educated mothers could be responsible for diffusing the most important educational truths to their children. As mothers schooled in virtue, they would be prepared "to save [the] sons" and ensure "family elevation." This domestic relationship, rather than any among neighbors and within communities, became the foundation of the antebellum classroom in the South. For these evangelical writers, the notion that economic realities prevented many southern women from such a standard was never a consideration.

In this period, southern evangelicals expected women to become the teacher of virtue and the guide to salvation for a generation of southern children, who may never attend a formal school. Even still, subordination to male authority was expected. Marion Preston Rose, a valedictorian of Georgia Female College in Macon during the 1850s, stated that a "true woman" must be "the friend, counselor, and comforter of man." But Rose's words, however polite and appropriate for her audience, were not entirely deferential. Rose requested that men not treat the graduates as "mere butterfly-creatures, who are to be toyed with for a passing hour, and then cast aside like a faded flower," but as individuals capable of trust, duty, and heroism. At the same time, she admitted that women "are not advocates of the so-called right's [sic] of woman, but, we ask that she be allowed to seek and appropriate those means of improvement which contribute most to her usefulness." This "usefulness" was undoubtedly familiar to her audience, and it manifested itself best, in their view, in the education of children—not others' children—but her own, not within the schoolhouse, but within the home circle. As southern evangelicals worked to diffuse knowledge, they hoped educated and well-trained mothers could accomplish this task

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[62] "The Family," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, December 11, 1860.

while protecting the supremacy of the private sphere. Without a common schoolhouse, the diffusion of knowledge depended largely on mothers, most of whom were unable to accomplish the task alone.

Frustrations with the Family Circle

By implementing a variety of plans and instituting a variety of schools for female education, southern evangelicals could multiply their version of morality generationally, with little actual challenge to the power of patriarchy, and satisfy their modernizing tendencies, which required organizing activity and a reevaluation of familial roles. In her work, *Education and the Creation of Capital in the Early American Republic,* historian Nancy Beadie argued that while evangelicals in New York focused intently on the salvation of souls during the Second Great Awakening, they also encouraged the "reformation" of society, the transformation of social and political relationships through the development of educational institutions.[63] Northern evangelicals pooled resources and invested in the education of others not simply to educate the masses but also to amass social and ultimately political capital. In contrast, southern evangelicals failed to imagine the collective action possible or to muster the capital necessary to secure the common good.

By supporting the family as the supreme educational unit and focusing their attentions on the mother's influence over the home, southern evangelicals narrowed their interests to spurring individual souls to salvation, rather than addressing social ills, uplifting the community, or even educating all southerners.[64] By elevating the family as the moral compass and the facilitator of doctrine, southern evangelicals could only extend their control over society through moral

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[63] Beadie, *Education and the Creation of Capital*, 208-10.

[64] Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 100.

imperatives, lamenting loudly when parental choices failed to match their own. Since economic and political power rested in the hands of elites and since discipline and education were under the authority of fathers, evangelical reformers remained powerless to change society, impotence they, in fact, helped construct by negotiating with honor codes and elevating the hearth.[65] Any "reformations" that did occur would be entirely personal and not necessarily subservient to southern evangelical goals. Rather than pursuing a collective vision for educating the community, most southern evangelicals returned to enforcing morality, mending the perceived path to salvation, and submitting to familial authorities.

In the 1830s, southern evangelical writers revealed at least the beginnings of this collective vision, that the education of children required responsible energies of all adults, rather than politicians or church leaders, as "the grand engine for revolutionizing a world." Not surprisingly, editors quoted freely from the press of other regions, who shared this belief. One writer for the *Christian Guardian*, quoted in the *Religious Herald,* stated that the education of youth had always consumed the time and attention of wise people, and currently, "every individual is called upon to help forward this noble enterprise, this mighty engine, that it may move on with accelerated velocity, and exert a wider and more salutary influence, til [sic] every child of Adam is taught the Scriptures, and made wise through faith unto salvation."[66] Even as the ends of education could be quite radical and socially expansive, though, southern evangelical

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[65] The significance of the father's role was reflected in the changing evangelical practices of church discipline. Once a marker of evangelical congregations, church discipline was handed over to fathers or significantly less frequently implemented by church leaders. Heyrman argued that church discipline declined, as evangelicals became more comfortable with masters' vices. Heyrman, *Southern Cross*, 249-52; Baptists continued to value the idea of discipline, but pressured those who initiated discipline by making them lead investigations. Though some churches believed the prosecution of prominent members was a mark of good spiritual health, most became content with the fellowship of sinners. Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 116-20.

[66] ALPHA, "Value of Sabbath Schools," *Religious Herald*, August 12, 1836.

writers affirmed the supremacy of fathers, and the souls of children, "given into the custody of every father of a family," far outweighed educational preferences or procedures.[67] Evangelicals left the father in charge of all under his authority and also shifted their emphasis away from the possibilities of social reformation.[68] Their reforming organizations, such as Sunday schools, denominational colleges, and even common schools, served this moralizing mission and firmly committed all to the idea that if individuals could find salvation, then society would be changed without substantive overt human intention. Secure families, rather than united communities, would achieve these goals.

Early in the antebellum period, an emphasis on moral education captivated the minds of southern evangelical writers, but they would use moral education to influence familial learning and parental choices, especially choices that relied on reason to discard faith and educational decisions too captivated by honor, wealth, and worldliness. Because the family was the ultimate authority, evangelicals had to abide by curriculums and lessons that parents chose no matter if such contradicted church teachings and values. Evangelicals found themselves discontent with an education in the honor codes that governed southern traditions and the laws of reason that defined the modern experience.

When parents elevated the values of the Enlightenment or provided instruction conformed to reason, evangelical writers decried this emphasis by promoting evangelical morality as supreme. Some evangelical parents chose to educate their children in fiction, classical languages, and science, which caused others to question the preeminence of reason over

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[67] "Moral Culture," *Religious Herald*, March 30, 1833; ALPHA, "Value of Sabbath Schools."; "Moral Education," *Religious Herald*, August 4, 1837.

[68] Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 100.

virtue.[69] A Kentucky Methodist refused the notion that education "[referred] exclusively to the intellect." He continued, "No system of education, it is true, can change the heart, or form the moral nature into a state of union with God; but it can, and often does, so train the moral powers as to lead to the use of the means by which the man is brought to God."[70] Moral righteousness, rather than reason, defined the essence of evangelical goals and colored their educational visions. Another affirmed this view, stating that "man is as much, by the constitution of his nature, a *moral and religious*, as he is a *rational being.* Why then is it right and necessary to cultivate and improve in the best manner our *intellectual* powers, while our *moral* and *religious* faculties must be left to take any direction that may be given to them, by humour [sic], caprice, passion, or any adventitious circumstances, whatever?"[71]

Even as they challenged the supremacy of reason, though, southern evangelicals, assumed the calculation and certainty of rational thought as they defended religious faith and challenged other virtues, such as honor and worldliness. One early Baptist argued that the "laws of honour are partial and fluctuating; and their operation, so far as they do operate, rests upon the observance and opinion of the surrounding world."[72] Here the writer, as many evangelicals, separated himself from the world outside of evangelical control, defining outsiders as ignorant of

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[69] "Mental Improvement of the Young," *Religious Herald*, April 17, 1829; "Importance of Moral Education," *Southern Presbyterian*, April 6, 1854; "The Bacalaureate Address Delivered by President Wood's [sic] at the late Annual Comemencement of the University of Alabama," *Christian Index*, September 28, 1833; "Mental and Moral Culture," *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, April 10, 1851.

[70] ALPHA, "Our Schools," *Nashville Christian Advocate*, May 3, 1860.

[71] "Wishes Respecting a Treatise on Education," *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine* III, no. 3 (1820): 122.

[72] "A Feature of Evangelical Morality," *Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine* IV, no. 1 (1821): 127.

evangelical realities at best and as antagonistic to evangelical educational concerns at worst. Both the rationality of science and the irrationality of honor prompted evangelicals to fortify the home circle with moral awareness and virtue. Significantly, these discussions of moral education reveal an evangelical community not entirely smitten with reason, honor, or religion alone, as disagreement in practice and in print ushered frustrated dissention among many writers.

In addition to chastising parents for choosing an education in which faith was secondary to reason and weakened by honor, early southern evangelicals underscored the conflict between the wealth of the region and the dearth of educational diffusion, between the codes of honor that permeated the culture and the values that denominations wished to impart. One writer explicitly stated that the "inequality of property which slavery has produced" had created major problems for the education of elite children. The writer criticized the system in which the "most respectable [parents]…prepared their sons for being genteel farmers or planters, lawyers, and physicians." Most upsetting to this writer, though, was the "cruel tenderness in parents [that bowed to the] fond indulgence and foolish pride" that kept children from learning about trials, economic frustrations, and hard work. Another complained about the "mistake of the illiterate" parents who "suppose that nothing more is necessary than those elementary parts of learning, which enable a man to transact the ordinary business of life, to read his newspaper and settle his accounts" and also the mistake of more pretentious members of southern society who study for the "cultivation of intellectual powers" alone.[73] Slavery and the economy that buttressed it essentially kept young elite students lazy and removed from reality, while others simply trained

[73]"Wishes Respecting a Treatise on Education."

for daily chores alone.[74] Neither of these paths satisfied southern evangelicals' wishes, even though both were constructed by the parental authorities that southern evangelicals affirmed.

Since some argued that parents' wealth inhibited children's access to proper education within the home, southern evangelicals could only rest upon calls for moral reformation. One argued that since "wealth [multiplied] the opportunities for the gratifications of passions," only an education in morality and "intellectual cultivation" could overwhelm such distractions and "remove the occasions of strife."[75] Another stated that "fireside education" was wholly ignored since "the intellect is known to be power" and "those who have the charge of children look forward to the means of acquiring wealth and station as all important: they therefore endeavor to cultivate the mind and enlarge its capacity, believing that they thus put those under their care in the true road to fortune."[76] Economic interests seemingly fostered a culture that valued enterprise, its skills and its values, which were not always in congruence with those of southern evangelicals.

Wealth, and the southern culture trailing it, frustrated evangelicals interested in education and prompted many to "defend" evangelical morality, rather than promoting an alternate vision for educating all. Unable to determine educational choices, many southern evangelical writers lashed out in moral tirades or promoted parables, hoping to find success in moral persuasion, since educational transformations were forbidden. For example, parents were instructed to protect their children from the vice of dancing schools. Dancing, in their view, was "ornamental," "morally wrong," and "[deteriorated] the minds of the young… [making] them

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[74] "Reflections of a Parent," *Religious Herald*, November 21, 1828.

[75] "The Social Benefits Resulting from a General Diffusion of Knowledge," *Biblical Recorder and Southern Watchman*, November 24, 1838.

[76] "Fireside Education," *Biblical Recorder and Southern Watchman*, October 31, 1840.

wild and thoughtless."[77] Not simply a topic among immobile Baptists, one Presbyterian writer derided "fashionable parents" and church members for allowing children to engage in such worldliness. The "criminality" of the church parents who patronized dancing schools exceeded that of the worldly parents because "the vows of God" were upon them.[78]

This conflict between the "worldliness" of southern culture and evangelical morality steered evangelical commentary about education, leaving most commentators frustrated with individuals who valued honor at the expense of religion. Most seemingly disagreed with W. C. Moragne who argued that elementary education was supremely about the cultivation of the mind, instituted to create a gentleman, "distinguished by a *delicate regard for the feelings and character of others*."[79] One Methodist writer lamented that methods of parenting had changed:

> In these days of parental delinquency, in the moral and religious training of children, when the terms, "boys" and "girls" have become almost obsolete—by reason, that the *masculine juvenile* is suffered to assume the "young *gentleman*," with his "cards" and "cigars," before he has fairly attained unto the years of old-fashioned boyhood, and the gentle feminine, is allowed to put on the "young lady," while yet in her pantalettes [sic]…faithfulness still lingers in some places, though its name is no longer "*legion*."

The writer concluded with an anecdote concerning the wisdom and righteousness of a young seven-year-old boy, whose gentlemanly temporary caregiver proposed taking the lad for

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[77] Mollie Morality, "Dancing Schools," *Christian Index*, January 21, 1857.

[78] "The Church and the Dancing School," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, March 24, 1860; For the conflict between dancing evangelicals and those who condemned such motion, see Stephan, *Redeeming the Southern Family*, 30-32. Stephan argued that dancing, like other activities once-forbidden by clergy, infiltrated southern households; Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 121-31; For a description of how dancing was incorporated into the education of planters' daughters, see Farnham, *Education of a Southern Belle*, 42, 168-74.

[79] W. C. Moragne, *An Address on the Character of the Scholar and the Gentleman: Delivered before the Young Men of the Presbyterian High Schools at Greenwood, Abbeville District at the Close of the Examinations, July 28, 1853* (Anderson, SC: Printed at the Advocate Office, 1853). Moragne's words affirm the notion that southern evangelicals embraced the mastery of elites, including their notion of education for refinement and manners. Most evangelicals, especially before 1830, would have appreciated his celebration of truth, but not necessarily his emphasis on gentlemanly graces. For earlier frustrations with training "ladies" and "gentlemen," see Correspondent, "Letters on Education, No. III," 301.

entertainment, only to be refused once the child realized that they were to attend a circus. The boy responded by proclaiming that the circus was "*a bad place*" and demanded they return home.[80] Though fiction, this story revealed that evangelical writers were willing to use children to induce adult action, promoting fears that moral education was potentially undone by the most sublime of adult intentions. Since it could not be scripted on evangelical terms, society became something to avoid, to shun. With the family as the supreme arbiter of educational decisions, children could be trained to make money, dance, and enjoy the circus, while evangelicals could only scoff from the periphery. By elevating the private sphere as the primary educative authority, evangelicals perhaps made children more susceptible to the larger culture bent toward honor rather than Christian virtue, a culture they considered lost, not in slavery or patriarchy, but in sin. They were left powerless, except in the praise of mythical seven-year-old boys who made good decisions. Cries about morality and its place in education could only elicit a soul to ponder, and such was insufficient to satisfy the evangelical desire to save.

As opportunities for schooling outside the home increased, southern evangelicals monitored moral education within the home and negotiated the terms by which the family remained the supreme authority while formal schools educated children. Sometimes southern evangelical writers challenged parental authority if such leadership threatened the perceived spiritual well-being of the child. One Baptist writer questioned, "What right have Christians to place their children under the tuition of infidels, sceptics, or nothingarians [sic]...And what right have Christian parents to commit their sons and daughters even to *professed* Christians who neglect or negligently perform, the duty of educating their scholars as moral and accountable

[80] "An Incident," *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, April 7, 1853.

beings?"[81] Most simply affirmed the authority of the family, even while acknowledging the influence of outside teachers. One stated that parents were "morally *bound*" to the teacher with whom they entrusted their children.[82] The warning was clear: if one's child exits the private sphere for education, the teacher must confirm the desires and values of the parents.

Parental prerogative, though, caused great tension for evangelicals, when parents chose schools for their children to attend that conflicted with evangelical expectations and values. Parents' decisions to educate their children outside of the home subjected children to questionable morals and worldly ideas that undermined familial control, but also that threated denominational values as well. One writer recounted a story of two Baptist men traveling to the Methodist female seminary attended by one of their daughters. The accompanying friend asked the father why he sent his child to the rival denomination's school. The father replied, "'I am a free man, I send my daughter where I please.'" The "Baptist" writer then responded to this tale by stating that "we do not for a moment question the brother's right to do as he pleased but our only surprise was that he did not please to do right."[83] The liberty of parents to choose schools affirmed evangelical concessions to the father's ultimate authority, but undermined evangelical expectations for proper learning.

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[81] "Education," *Religious Herald*, February 11, 1831.

[82] "School Government--Parental Co-operation." One writer even rehearsed an oft-repeated interpretation about teachers: "There are many persons employed in teaching, merely because they can get nothing else to do, who have very little qualification for their responsible tasks, and need, in the estimation of puff writers, a good deal of eulogy to help them along." ALPHA, "Our Schools." Another disagreed, stating that the teachers were the nation's "real rulers," second only to mothers, of course. "Schools," *North Carolina Presbyterian*, January 1, 1859.

[83] "A Baptist", "It is the Duty of the Baptists to Patronize their own Literary Institutions," *Christian Index*, March 10, 1853.

While educational choices for some southerners increased throughout the period, southern evangelical writers became less content, ironically, with home education, especially if it violated their precepts. Even as they conceived of education as a familial responsibility, they were not so conciliatory with families that violated religious codes in training their children. *Christian Index* editor Joseph Walker expressed frustration with evangelical families who were mistakenly "conforming to the world" by such a home school. Even as he and other southern evangelicals centered the family in the social order, affirmed the authority of patriarchs, and educated women for evangelical motherhood, Walker could only protest against parents who schooled their children without attention to piety, who provided an education that was "almost entirely worldly," celebrating "fashionable accomplishments,' such as dancing, drawing, Latin, and mathematics, rather than true religion. His ire extended beyond the mere "ornamentals" associated with honor culture, but chastised parents for educating their children in academics as well. Most significantly, his words undermined the arguments made by southern evangelicals that the family reigned over a child's education, but given the father's esteemed position, Walker had no alternate course of action.

This inability to affect change frustrated southern evangelicals who desired the diffusion of education, and their cries for moral instruction fell on their "brothers" and "sisters," some of whom exacerbated reformers' dissatisfaction. Though claiming not to limit the curriculum taught by parent to child, one Baptist writer cautioned:

> to give a child knowledge without endeavoring, at the same time, to add to knowledge godliness, is to do your best to throw the momentum of the grant into the arm of the idiot; construct a machinery which may help to move a world, and to leave out the spring which would ensure its moving it only towards God. We would have you shun, even as you would the tampering with an immorality deposited in your keeping, the imitating what goes on in a thousand of the households of a professedly Christian neighborhood,-- that children can pronounce well, and they can step well, and they can play well, the

> mother proudly exhibits the specimens of proficiency in painting, and the father dwells, with an air of delight, on the progress made in Virgil and Homer.[84]

With such household instruction, evangelicals feared that religion would be lost, that children would not receive instruction in proper behavior, and the virtue that home education promised to inculcate would be superseded by worldly knowledge and frivolous pursuits.

Ultimately, though, evangelicals failed to recognize the inadequacy of their educational vision, the limitations of parental prerogative in achieving denominational goals, and the possibilities that their northern neighbors found in constructing educational institutions, both public and private, for the common good of all. Southern evangelicals expressed frustrations with parents, who failed to teach their children in the way evangelicals thought they should go, and sought to reinforce these weaknesses by clamoring to educate future mothers. Southern evangelicals, even those fond of the general diffusion of knowledge, could not escape an obsession with morality. Such was the key to gauging personal salvation, which they could not measure, and to steering patriarchal whims, which they could not control. Such was also the key to affirming the sacredness of the home circle, while criticizing those same esteemed authorities who strayed from evangelical expectations.

While families may have served this function of learning well, southern evangelical writers consistently negotiated with parents who failed to train children adequately. Though fostering a larger awareness of community and social responsibility through common schooling may have resulted in the intellectual diffusion many desired, the embrace of evangelical morality in such a system would always remain dependent on a culture that southern evangelicals simply could not entirely trust. While demanding that all submit to denominational institutions would have most directly instilled the proper knowledge in children, southern evangelicals were part of

[84] "Moral Education."

the patriarchal culture they resisted and were obsessed with salvation that most commonly passed from parent to child. Unable to shake the authority of the family inherent in southern codes of honor and tradition, evangelicals created a "system" of schooling with which they could never be content and in which many children would never find rudimentary knowledge. Not all parents were properly trained, able, or available to educate their own children. For many antebellum southern children, the home circle proved a poor schoolhouse.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Writing for the Methodist *Quarterly Review* in 1860, a Mississippi teacher, R. H. C., penned "The Southern Standard of Education," answering the question of why the South lagged behind the North in educational improvement. Provoked by the charge of Scottish cleric and scientist, Thomas Dick, who observed that in the South, "the means of education are not so extensive, nor has society advanced to such a state of moral and mental improvement" as other regions of the nation, this southern teacher agreed that southern education was comparatively insufficient. Most educational activity among the upper classes, he claimed, was superficial, professional teachers were almost entirely absent, and only a "perfect mania for light literature" abounded. This teacher disputed, though, the reverend's explanation for this backwardness—slavery. Ironically, R. H. C. lamented that the "South opens so many sources of pecuniary gain, that the inducements to follow pursuits which demand chiefly physical exertion are superior to those which require intellectual qualifications."[1] In conflict with Dick's assertion, this teacher argued that the "haste" with which southerners rushed to "professions and pursuits" left little or no regard for learning, especially if it impeded profit. In fact, he argued that "it [was] stamped upon the minds of [southern] children at an early age that they must make money," never giving credence to a well-trained or well-informed mind.[2] Directing blame toward planters for being the least educated and the most leisured, this teacher left elites with no excuse for leading southern

[1] R. H. C., "The Southern Standard of Education," *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* XIV, no. 4 (October 1860): 575; ibid., 574.

[2] Ibid., 575.

education to such a "deplorable" condition, but he refused to acknowledge the role of slavery in enabling such elite status and establishing such a cultural inertia that thwarted all attempts to enact educational reform.

As a teacher, R. H. C. proclaimed the glories of knowledge "for its own sake" and the importance of "the eternal principles and truths of science," and his frustration stemmed from southern culture, a culture bound by the realities of slave labor. The values and expectations trailing the peculiar institution determined the educational reality of the antebellum South, if only in limiting educational visions and elevating codes of honor that inhibited any reforming impulses. Amid this economic and cultural reality, evangelicals worked for the expansion of educational opportunities through a variety of means. Despite evangelicals' insistent rhetoric and even persistent advocacy of various educational institutions, the charge of so many—that the South lagged behind in all educational pursuits—remained a defining mark on the evangelical psyche and a significant problem for southern children.

In supporting educational reform, southern evangelicals were simultaneously advocates for, and adversaries of, antebellum southern culture. Many overtly supported the benefits of republican government and an understanding of liberty born from notions of natural rights and *tabula rasa*, but as members of the kingdom of heaven, they scoffed at those that believed the "mind [would] grow up like a sheet of white paper—as though the Devil would write nothing on it."[3] They valued the pursuit of happiness promised by the founders, but lived under the recognition that such happiness, if only worldly and physical, was incomplete. Many defended slavery and deferred to the chivalric code that governed southern culture, but promoted institutions born in the North and values generally espoused among the middling classes who

[3] "New-York Sunday School Union and Southern Sunday School Union."

defied the aristocratic leisure that teacher R. H. C. derided. Like Jefferson, many evangelicals were committed to the liberal diffusion of knowledge, but most cared more for moral uprightness and salvation than literacy and responsible citizenship.

Southern evangelicals simply did not share Jefferson's vision in its entirety. Writers were more likely to use Jefferson's language—education for the preservation of the Republic—in order to promote education for religious ends, rather than to educate the masses for citizenship. These goals did not stem from a profound dislike of taxation, the region's rural character, or a blind defense of tradition.[4] In some conversations and actions, southern evangelicals consistently worked for very modern goals and utilized modern institutions. As Donald Mathews suggested and Beth Barton Schweiger insisted, religious fervor spurred modernizing tendencies.[5] Southern evangelicalism did not simply oppose public schooling because it challenged tradition, but the goals of evangelicals directed the culture of the South away from the common good and toward the surest methods of individual salvation and denominational success. The press clearly revealed a consistent negotiation between the institutions and values of the modernizing North and the most appropriate means by which writers could influence the South, entangled by traditional codes of honor and committed to chattel slavery.

The growth of the southern religious press itself was an example of this negotiation. Its editors and contributors represented only a fraction of these larger religious communities. Religious newspapers provided access into the interests, perspectives, and debates within the southern evangelical community, but none of the words in support or critique of educational ventures constituted real action and none embodied an official voice. While many complained

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[4] Franklin, *Militant South*; Urban, "Southern Exposure"; Taylor, "Toward a Definition of Orthodoxy."

[5] Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process."; Schweiger, "Max Weber in Mount Airy."

about educational backwardness, encouraged enthusiasm for Sunday schools, and debated the authorities that governed scholastic institutions, their voices comprised only a running commentary of perceived activity. Even when editorial position on education was clearly stated, other southerners involved in constructing educational reality—common whites, planter elites, and politicians—remain silent in this analysis and sometimes peripheral to the conclusions of evangelical writers altogether. One cannot evaluate, for example, Kaestle's assertion that wealthy planters, who had "little interest in the education of white labor," thwarted common-school proposals in the region, but one can conclude that among evangelical writers, sectionalism was not, as Kaestle suggested, a major reason for the limitations of educational reform.[6] Published conversations, debates, and, occasionally, religious rants focused on many topics other than education, and when writers attended to schools, their voices comprised only a portion of the southern educational landscape. In spite of the limitations in focusing so intensely on the public conversation of evangelical leaders, the evangelical press revealed an important subculture within the antebellum South, one that certainly shaped the larger culture and the educational designs of many. Even as many remain hidden in this discourse, this southern evangelical banter exposed perspectives and opinions essential to the narrative of antebellum education in the region overlooked by historians who dismissed the region entirely or by those who sought public schoolhouse construction only.

Throughout the antebellum period, southern evangelicals increasingly used institutions, such as the press, as a moral overseer within a southern culture not entirely constructed in their image. Schools, as southern evangelicals imagined them, could serve a similar function. Rather than focusing their energies on common schools, southern evangelicals confined their

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[6] Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 205.

educational vision to those institutions that would support the church, such as the theological school, and those institutions that would achieve religious goals, such as the Sunday school. Even as many writers supported the expansion of literacy and common schools, the need of evangelicals to extend salvation to individuals, combined with the infancy of southern evangelical institutions, encumbered any attempts to provide learning to all. The press and the pulpit urged reforms on evangelical terms and devised educational schemes within the context of evangelical goals alone.

In constructing these "little empires" of education and benevolence, southern evangelical denominations exhibited both a modern and traditional consciousness. On the one hand, they desired education for all and employed bureaucracies and newspapers (albeit unsuccessfully) to procure such a goal, but they also demanded that learning be confined to boundaries born of piety and an obsession with salvation. Using examples from world history, a North Carolina Methodist explained the educational programs of past civilizations, concluding that the "pietistic" system of eighteenth-century German cleric Augustus Hermann Franke was superior for it "habituated [children] from an early age to prayer, to self-examination, to self-knowledge, and piety." The "humanism" of the Greeks and the "egoism" of the Enlightenment only diluted this intended purpose.[7] Some southern evangelicals were ready to spread literacy, but their obsession with salvation steered their thoughts about learning from personal liberation and community uplift to the inculcation of religious virtue. From the evangelical perspective, the diffusion of learning needed to occur on their own terms, and in order for the denomination to survive and thrive, these terms were increasingly bent on control of southern culture or at least an appeal to those masters who already held sway.

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[7] D. R. McAnally, "Popular Education," *Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church* XII, no. 2 (July 1858): 381.

Given such influence over southern society, this limitation was instrumental in subduing any attempts at common-school reform that flourished elsewhere. Though some southern evangelicals were not sold on the idea, especially in comparison to the work of Sunday schools or denominational schools that indoctrinated morality and evangelical virtue, many supported the effort to expand the educational opportunities to an even greater population. Many evangelicals rhetorically and actively championed common-school reforms across the region. Amasa Converse, a transplanted missionary who left New Hampshire for Virginia and became a newspaper editor, lamented in the 1830s that "all *acknowledge* the importance of primary instruction, of carrying its blessings to the poor and the neglected, of distributing these blessings before every man's poor in the community—and yet few *act* on this subject as if there were any sincerity in their professions." Converse agreed with a New York observer that the source of this was the "heartless indifference of the high classes" toward those beneath them.[8] Southern evangelicals, even as they clamored for influence in southern society, debated how common schools were constructed and administered, as well as deliberating how all classes in southern society would be affected.

Among religious press contributors, the common school certainly had more advocates than skeptics, and public education, while certainly not as "foreign" as Thomas Dyer suggested,[9] was never embraced as Jefferson hoped. Evangelical supporters of the common school found common ground between its promotion and their religious goals, suggesting the denominational, social, and political benefits of an educated populace, rather than dismissal of the institution as an admission that white identity was insufficient and needed to be improved or a means to unite

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[8] "Waste of Mind: Importance of Popular Education," *Southern Religious Telegraph*, November 7, 1834.

[9] Dyer, "Education."

the white masses in defense of the peculiar institution increasingly under attack.[10] No matter this advocacy of denominational and public education, southern evangelicals offered very little evidence found by historian Nancy Beadie in her study of communities outside the South, in which education was an expression of social capital, fostering relationships that enabled networks of financial and familial prosperity. Southern evangelicals preferred education for the procurement of religious control and individual salvation, rather than the improvement of social position or status.

Frustrations emerged, though, as many southerners preferred the lethargic inertia of an educational status quo that rested upon religious instruction, even as it left so many destitute of rudimentary learning and left so many reform-minded evangelicals disheartened by the whims of their neighbors. Unaware of their own complicity in affirming a culture that hesitated to leave religious inculcation behind, many suggested with indignation and immediacy that denominations "double the scale of operations" and "help build up the schools of high grade."[11] Some, especially within Baptist circles, resisted the apparatus of modernizing institutions, refusing to be ruled by the American Sunday School Union, state governments, or even the dictates of educational agencies within their denominations. Reformers lamented that the poor viewed education as an imposition from above, and elites refused any financial support to those below. Dissatisfied with educational realities, many southern evangelical writers continued to insist that southerners attend to the heart over the mind, thus hindering their own efforts toward increasing the diffusion of knowledge. In their critiques of elites and poor whites, southern

[10] Watson, "Man with Beard"; Eelman, "An Educated and Intelligent People."

[11] LULY, "Our Educational Policy," *North Carolina Christian Advocate*, December 24, 1857.

evangelical writers certainly demonstrated the modern-leaning consciousness and awareness of northern reforms that Jonathan Daniel Wells and other historians have suggested.[12]

In order to gain even greater authority over southern culture, many southern evangelicals stood behind morality, a code defined by evangelicals themselves and imposed on southern culture without submission, at least entirely, to southern honor. The enforcement of such morality demanded control of educational reform. Southern evangelicals conflated the protections of the populace from the pressures facing the Republic with the actions necessary, in their view, to protect individuals from the pit of hell. *Religious Herald* editor Henry Keeling quoted Columbian College president Chapin: "'Knowledge without virtue is a torch in the hand of a lunatic.'" Keeling added that "knowledge without virtue, would change the philosopher, the patriot, and the philanthropist into a fiend. The march of science will be onward.—If accompanied by virtue, her train will be freedom, prosperity, and every blessing; if by vice, tyranny and all manner of wretchedness."[13] While not widely revealed in the religious press, this slight disdain for knowledge most certainly encouraged a vein of anti-intellectualism that challenged southern educational reform. Most importantly, though, this perception of virtue and morality enabled the elevation of evangelical educational institutions so instrumental to the evangelical vision of the region's future.

To exert their control through morality, though, evangelicals could not rely on denominational institutions alone. Deferring to fathers, southern evangelicals affirmed an authority essential to a society entrenched in southern honor, but also a means to influence and

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[12] Wells, *Origins of the Southern Middle Class*; Barnes, Schoen, and Towers, "Reimagining the Old South."

[13] Henry Keeling, "Whence the Necessity of Theological Schools--No.IV," *Religious Herald*, February 15, 1833.

sway southern populations toward even greater evangelical control. Most deferred to the protection and control of the patriarchal family structure, proclaiming the father as the arbiter of morality upon his house and as the guiding authority of the learning of children. The education of women proved a meaningful door into the power structure of the family that evangelicals refused to undermine. By expanding educational opportunities for women and girls, southern evangelicals could secure their own voice within a structure controlled by fathers and solidify their own authority among the next generation of evangelicals. The "home circle" provided evangelicals a boundary that was appealing to honorable planters who protected the private space and to evangelicals who increasingly viewed the home as an instrument necessary for the sustenance of the church, a nursery for conversion and religious training.

This deference to the family steered many evangelicals away from the public sphere and kept education, like conversion, a private matter that less frequently demanded public expression. Even as ministers and leaders supported religious and public education in the region, they were handicapped by the authority of fathers who needed to rule their own family as masters, rather than simply as parents. Even as southern evangelicals bolstered northern-born educational institutions, such as the Sunday school and the common school, and modernizing techniques, such as reform societies and newspapers, southern evangelicals deferred to the vestiges of honor that permeated southern culture and the patriarchs who controlled its hearths. While republicanism and religion in the North merged and encouraged the development of institutions that intended to reform society, southerners contented themselves with personal change alone. Evangelicals willfully conceded this boundary, since salvation, which was only imagined in individual terms, was always the ultimate goal, and planters approved, since personal revolution was seemingly change without any radical consequences, at least

consequences that would negatively affect their "home circles" or landed estates. The submission of any educational will to the interests and decisions of the family left evangelicals frustrated and conflicted.

Arguing that schools challenged the authority of the individual, historian Grady McWhiney claimed that conceptions of honor caused southerners simply to value different skills, notably those not associated with classroom learning. While evangelicals negotiated with the honor codes that affirmed the supremacy of fathers and denounced the honor-induced excesses of the planter elites, their commitment to education was marked by the religious culture they wanted to impose, rather than the honor culture they had grown to accept. Southern evangelical writers did not necessarily prefer the skills of fighters and fiddlers to the words of the scribbler, but they were willing to submit all lessons to religious ends. Though Christine Leigh Heyrman argued that southern evangelicals gradually embraced the values and the mastery of planter elites, this transition from radical dissenter to religious leader was not seamless, nor was the evangelicals' relationship to honor culture consistently cordial. Perhaps, as Stephanie McCurry argued, this evangelical antagonism to southern culture was overstated, but most certainly, Bertram Wyatt-Brown's contention that the South's "divided soul" deemed any value or moral obligation, as only half-hearted, emerged from the conversations in the press.[14] This "divided soul" propelled evangelicals, for example, to embrace the values of a modernizing middle class, while deferring to traditional patriarchy. This "divided soul" accessed reforming language and bourgeoning organizations popular in the North, but, with every new proposal, faced the biblical myopia of skeptics and the adamant resistance of those who demanded private control. Southern evangelicals thus supported and handicapped their own desire to educate their neighbors. This

[14] McWhiney, *Cracker Culture*; Heyrman, *Southern Cross*; McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*; Wyatt-Brown, *Shaping of Southern Culture*, 104.

"divided self" neither transformed the Jeffersonian vision into collective action, nor enabled any widespread acceptance of evangelical educational vision to trump paternal authority or to permeate the southern mind.

This tension between honor and religion was experienced differently among all brands of evangelical adherents and colored the educational choices and designs of evangelical denominations. Morality in its religious form, submitting to the dictates of the Bible, and morality in its social form, as a tool used by evangelical and patriarchal authorities to control others, trumped mental improvement. No matter how powerful southern evangelicals claimed knowledge to be, they understood and believed that moral power was most important and the only knowledge capable of securing eternal rewards. Conceptions of education deferred to this reality, and educational choices reflected this understanding. Evangelicals thus had no problem promoting the common school and the Sunday school alike, but their suspicions placed any immediacy of action firmly within the religious camp. The evangelical desire to control and the assumptions of the reforming impulse undoubtedly challenged the fierce independence of all gripped by conceptions of honor in the present and fears of damnation in the future, turning some against educational enterprise altogether.

Thomas Jefferson had argued that the memories of children should not be built upon the Bible, but that "an education adapted to the years, to the capacity, and the condition of everyone" would provide classical and historical facts as the foundation for morality, enabling each individual to "work out their own greatest happiness."[15] Though spreading literacy and learning was perhaps a shared action between the vision of Jefferson and the interests of southern evangelical leaders, who needed their flocks to read Holy Scripture and respond in obedience,

[15] Jefferson, *Notes*, 135.

the missions differed. Southern evangelicals could not conflate their own purposes of schooling and moral assumptions of Jefferson. Any notion of happiness, health, or sound judgment stemming from any document other than the Bible was problematical at best. An education adapted to the "condition of everyone" may have been necessary to bring all to responsible citizenship, but the means of salvation and dictates of evangelical morality, in the southern evangelical view, could never bend to lowly sinners. Even as they supported a variety of educational institutions, their justifications of such reforms, the resistance to such organizations, and their lingering frustrations with the larger culture reckoned their reconciliation of "divided soul" a failure.

Certainly the values of southern evangelicals cannot explain the entire landscape of antebellum southern education, but their virtues and enterprises were difficult to escape. The culture southern evangelicals negotiated and constructed cannot be assumed to control the region, but any attempt to explain southern educational difference in the antebellum period must acknowledge the significance of evangelical discourse. If some southern evangelicals hesitated to construct the institutions necessary to spread literacy and learning and if they espoused virtue that affirmed traditional authorities unconducive to mass literacy and that relegated knowledge of the mind behind the interests of the soul, then any attempts at educational reform faced even greater challenges. In their dogmatic dialogs and active pursuits to overcome these obstacles, southern evangelicals were not without commentary, commentary necessary for historians to consider in understanding the relationship between religion, culture, and education. In distinguishing between a good and bad education, one southern Presbyterian editor included poetry selections recited before the Hampden Sydney College Philosophical Society:

> The truly wise are they,
> And only they, who seek the light of Truth

> To guide the from the tempting snares of Vice, —
> To show forth Virtue in her native charms, —
> To shed a winning brightness o'er her path
> And cheer them onward in its heavenward course.[16]

The means of learning, for the poet, were loosely connected to reason, but the end of learning ultimately remained moral righteousness and virtue. Such wisdom—as well as evangelical salvation—could be achieved by the literate and illiterate alike.

[16] "Thoughts on Education," *Southern Religious Telegraph*, June 19, 1830.

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