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For Dixie children: Teaching students what it meant to be Confederate Americans through their textbooks

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“For Dixie Children: Teaching Students What It Meant to Be
Confederate Americans Through Their Textbooks”

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

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For Daniel Caleb, Jackson Harold, and Adelyn Rose Gibbs.

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Abstract

Education in the 19th century relied heavily on school texts in order to teach American children the moral and civic responsibilities they must possess in order to become productive members of the American republic. After declaring secession, Confederate cultural nationalists took up the cause of educating the school children in the Confederate States of America in the moral and civic responsibilities determined important to the preservation of their new nation. Southerners had felt disenfranchised by the northern press and believed their children learning from these schoolbooks became weakened in their southern identity. Though some southerners were espousing the need for their own school presses before secession, it was not until the split between North and South was solidified that the cause for southern education began immediate.

This work argues that textbooks provide insight into the creation of Confederate nationalism and show how the Confederate society attempted to teach these lessons to their future generations. When writing textbooks, cultural nationalists used the models provided by their northern counterparts, but were determined to present a unique southern perspective devoid of any harmful influences from the North. While some northern lessons remained intact, Confederate textbooks preached the benevolence of slavery and the justification of this institution as instituted by God and the Bible. Confederates promoted the superiority of their cause and people and urged children to rally behind their new flag. Southern textbook authors took the North out of the American Revolution and claimed its start in the South, in attempts to relate their current struggle for

independence with their forefathers. Finally, Confederates reclaimed George Washington as one of their own, a southern slave owner who remained virtuous and an inspiration to all Confederate children. These textbooks present a nationalism frozen in time. The Confederate States of America lost their country, but their attempt to create an identity remains in their textbooks and provides lessons on how education shapes students in what it means to be American.

Introduction

Confederate Cultural Nationalists' Cause for Education

“The political revolution in which we are now engaged makes necessary an intellectual one.”¹ Thus began a grammar text written specifically for Dixie’s children by a southerner and published in the Confederate States of America in 1861. When secession came southerners began to recognize the need to assert their own independence both intellectually and culturally. These individuals who worked for the common cause of developing Confederate intellectual identity, called “Confederate cultural nationalists” by historian Michael Bernath, included critics, lawyers, philosophers, doctors, playwrights, musicians, and most importantly to this study, textbook authors.² One of the best ways to begin the dissemination of these ideas was in the instruction of students. Many southerners began recognizing that they had relied on northerners to support the education of their children for too long. After the firing on Fort Sumter, Confederates began solidifying an identity of their own making, striking against the perceived misunderstandings of the North.

Though studies on the Civil War are numerous and diverse, few historians have explored the connection between textbooks and Confederate nationalism directly. Topics range from the battlefields to the home front, from Richmond, Virginia to Vicksburg, Mississippi, but far too few historians have asked how textbooks published during the war in the South established and reaffirmed what

¹ Charles W. Smythe, *Our Own Primary Grammar for the Use of Beginners* (Greensboro, NC: Sterling and Campbell, 1861), iii.

² Michael Bernath, *Confederate Minds: The Struggle for Intellectual Independence in the Civil War South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 4-5; 67-73.

has come to be called Confederate nationalism.³ Many renowned historians focusing on Confederate culture, including Drew Faust and Bernath, have used textbooks in their analyses, but most do not provide an in-depth investigation to see how textbooks shaped the national narrative. This thesis contributes to the growing field of Civil War scholarship by analyzing these textbooks and investigating what southerners chose to emphasize, and what they purposefully omitted. It attempts to show that textbooks were created with the purpose of instructing children in larger themes than academics, namely those of American identity. This thesis grounds itself on the belief that there existed a national culture within the Confederacy, and that this culture survived throughout the duration of the Civil War, as evidenced by southern textbooks. Michael Bernath has asserted that textbooks were a key part of a larger “literature of knowledge,” along with several other examples including newspapers, popular histories, pamphlets, and magazines.⁴ This form of literature helped form the basis of the Confederate cultural identity and cultural nationalists succeeded in the creation of this literature of knowledge. Textbooks were, and still are, an efficient way of spreading information to a wide audience, though the focus of this thesis will not be to discover how successfully these textbooks taught

³ For more on Confederate Nationalism see: Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1988); Gary Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Stephanie M. McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Joe A. Mobley, *Weary of War: Life on the Confederate Home Front* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008); George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Emory Thomas, *The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971); Emory Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979).

⁴ Bernath, 211.

students. Instead, it asks how Confederate cultural nationalists shaped their national narrative in the instruction of their children.

The crux of the argument is that these textbooks, produced between 1861-1865, established a new Confederate culture that utilized shared American history and heroes and repurposed those events and individuals in order to further nationalistic tendencies in the Confederate South. The authors clearly laid the foundations for this distinctiveness predicated on American identity, values, and the importance of slavery to the continuance of the South. The use of racial stereotypes in these textbooks will be discussed, specifically in terms of how Confederates understood their own slave system that had become vital to their own economic survival. Nineteenth-century textbooks, which were similar to their modern forms, moved beyond the diffusion of general knowledge to establish cultural and moral identity in the children who read and studied them.

Confederate cultural nationalists produced these textbooks in order to create and foster a Confederate national identity that was born out of their shared American past with their new enemy, the United States. The largest source of primary research materials is the Confederate textbook themselves. These include a variety of types such as readers, spellers, geography, and arithmetic texts. Though the Confederacy faced great hardships as the Civil War raged, they were dedicated to the creation and profusion of works for use in southern schools and homes. Confederate presses published 136 textbooks during the course of their existence,

with most coming in the twilight of the Civil War.⁵ Addresses from Confederate President Jefferson Davis, proclamations from the Confederate government, diaries, and contemporary popular culture will also be explored to ground these textbooks in historical context. To show the juxtaposition of northern and Confederate textbooks, several northern textbooks coming from the three decades leading up to the secession movement must be included. Together these sources will illuminate our understanding of Confederate nationalism and provide insight into textbooks as a source for cultural interpretation.

This thesis focuses on three important aspects of Confederate textbooks: 1) what Confederates learned from northern educators, textbooks, and publishers, 2) what beliefs Confederates held about their contemporary world, 3) how they shaped the story of the American Revolution in attempts to rewrite the past to understand the present. Chapter one shows how Confederate cultural nationalists copied, adapted, and revised northern textbooks they deemed incendiary. They did not create their educational framework outright but rather utilized the foundations laid in the North during the antebellum years. Chapter two examines how Confederates explained the struggles of their new nation to their children. Lessons included the importance and benevolence of slavery in the South, the realities of war, and how the Confederacy could only survive with the support of its citizenry. In the final chapter, the focus shifts to the shared American past and explores how Confederates laid claim to the American Revolution and its heroes. They took this

⁵ Laura Elizabeth Kopp, "Teaching the Confederacy: Textbooks in the Civil War South" (master's thesis, University of Maryland, College Park, 2009), 13-14.

shared past and made it a distinctly southern one to validate their reason for fighting.

However, this thesis attempts to explore a phenomenon much larger than the creation of Confederate nationalism. At its core is an exploration of how textbooks are the tools used by schools to help in the creation of an American identity.

Benjamin Rush, Pennsylvania signer of Declaration of Independence, summed up the importance of schools as places “where the youth of all the states may be melted (as it were) together into one mass of citizens.”⁶ Since the creation of schooling in America, textbooks have been an inescapable part of the classroom. Textbooks, along with other instructional materials, can comprise upwards of 90 percent of classroom instruction. Michael Apple, writing an essay in *Textbooks in American Society: Politics, Policy, and Pedagogy*, argues that textbooks are economic, political, and cultural commodities. Apple claims that the textbook “embodies the visions of legitimate knowledge of identifiable groups of people.”⁷ Textbooks clearly outline the beliefs of the society that create them. Through the analysis of these textbooks, we can better understand the society that used them.

⁶ Benjamin Rush, quoted in David B. Tyack, “Forming the National Character: Paradox in the Educational Thought of the Revolutionary Generation,” *Harvard Educational Review* 36 (Winter 1966): 37.

⁷ Michael W. Apple, “Regulating the Text: The Socio-Historical Roots of State Control,” in *Textbooks in American Society: Politics, Policy, and Pedagogy*, ed. Philip G. Altbach, et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 7-8.

Chapter One

Revised and Adapted for Southern Schools

New Englander Noah Webster believed that students should learn the “rudiments of the language” with a dusting of “some just ideas of religion, morals and domestic economy.”¹ Southern writers believed in Webster’s purpose of education and that in order to convey that knowledge that “the lessons [had to] be within [children’s] comprehension, and...that in subject and manner of treatment, they [had to] be interesting as well as instructive.”² American textbook writers, both northern and southern, wrote school texts in an effort to educate children in their general knowledge, moral piety, and patriotic fervor. Though the country was ripped at the seams, Americans believed in education to create a citizenry that would promote the ideals held important to its continued existence.

When Confederate cultural nationalists began publishing their new textbooks expressly for use in southern schools, they often modeled their works after their northern predecessors. The same themes, subjects, and stories began to emerge, but with a new twist. The basis of the Confederate education movement stems from the Early Republic period, but more importantly, the textbooks published under the Confederacy were more aligned with their Union counterparts than their authors would have likely admitted.

With the creation of the United States in 1783, newly minted Americans became concerned with the future of the country, especially in the training of new

¹ Noah Webster, *The American Spelling Book*, 19th ed. (Philadelphia: Johnson & Warner, 1816), vi. Google e-book.

² Samuel Lander, *The Verbal Primer* (Greensboro, NC: Sterling, Campbell & Albright, 1865).

citizens.³ According to historian Lawrence Cremin, education in the Early National Period was founded upon four essential beliefs:

That education was crucial to the vitality of the Republic; that a proper republican education consisted of the diffusion of knowledge, the nurturance of virtue (including patriotic civility), and the cultivation of learning; that schools and colleges were the best agencies for providing a proper republican education on the scale required; and that the most effective means of obtaining the requisite number and kind of schools and colleges was through some system tied to the polity.⁴

These essential beliefs built upon each other. Early educational leaders needed to convince Americans the importance of education, because schooling began as a local matter that eventually grew as the states embraced educational objectives. Americans, northern and southern, realized the need to create universal educational opportunities in order to help establish a common culture, create equal opportunities (though almost exclusively for white citizens), and give children shared moral training. Notably, no southern state enforced these requirements until Reconstruction. These early conceptions provided a wide-reaching opportunity for children, thus contributing to a harmonious and homogenous culture as most American school children learned the same moral and civic duties.⁵ It started with the idea that in order for their new republican experiment to succeed new

³ Carl Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

⁴ Lawrence Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980), 148.

⁵For a discussion on schoolbooks during the 19th century see Ruth Miller Elson, *Guardians of Traditions: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964) and B. Edward McClellan, *Moral Education in America: Schools and the Shaping of Character from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 22-23. It is interesting to note that many of the works regarding education during this period devote few lines to the Confederacy, rather focusing on the education of African American contemporaries.

generations of Americans would have to be taught the republican virtues and democratic processes that emerged from the Revolution. It soon became evident that schools would house this endeavor as states began establishing Boards of Education, which, in turned, strengthened this standardization.⁶

Early education advocates, including Thomas Jefferson, Horace Mann, and Calvin Wiley, took the republican ideals and infused them into educational programs. Each was met with varying degrees of success, but the same goal stood at their core: to create a morally and civically minded citizenry. After school became the standard means to teach and promote republican virtues, textbooks became the tool to disseminate these values. These early texts took different shapes and sizes and used different content and composition but the same thread of republicanism that became synonymous with this Early Republic period woven throughout them. Comparing the earlier United States texts with those of the Confederacy sheds light on how cultural nationalists used their former connection with the North in order to shape the moral and civic lessons for their own children. These texts support similar morality and democracy, but they all predicate themselves on this early period.

One of the earliest proponents of universal public education in the United States, Thomas Jefferson, advocated for education's adoption as early as 1779. For Jefferson, education was essential to the preservation of the new nation. Jefferson understood that educating the populace would only enable them to govern themselves and maintain their rights. Though there had existed a system of home

⁶ Cremin, *The National Experience*, 154. Massachusetts was one of the earliest states to adapt the position in 1837, with Horace Mann at its helm.

and parish education prior to independence, Jefferson first advocated the adoption of a state-sponsored school system in his “Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge,” and saw education as essential for men to acquire the knowledge of their place within the changing social order. However, Jefferson’s great desire for universal education never materialized because local communities, which Jefferson argued ought to be the conveyers of knowledge with state support, never raised revenue to see its adoption.⁷

Most of the early common school movements in the early nineteenth century took place in the northern states, whereas the South relied heavily on local and voluntary parental guidance in the education movement during the antebellum period and often used northern published textbooks. Many southern state legislatures neglected to enact laws for a broad common school system within their borders, with only North Carolina doing the bare minimum before seceding from the Union.⁸ Education historians Wayne Urban and Jennings Wagoner attribute this to the nonchalant attitudes prevalent in southern society. Also, the intense belief in local autonomy from state and federal governments and the problem of raising funds for schools could be credited to the South’s inability to keep up with the North in terms of educational progress.⁹

Northerner Horace Mann and southerner Calvin Wiley perfectly mirrored each other in their attempts to promote education within their state boundaries,

⁷ Charles William Dabney, *Universal Education in the South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 4-5; 19-20.

⁸ Keith Whitescarver, “School Books, Publishers, and Southern Nationalists: Refashioning the Curriculum in North Carolina’s Schools, 1850-1861,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 79 (January 2002): 28.

⁹ Wayne Urban and Jennings Wagoner, *American Education: A History*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 141-158; Elson, 8.

and each became well known beyond those limitations. Mann has entered history as the “Father of the American Public School System,” while Wiley faded into the background.¹⁰ Yet, these two superintendents of education recognized the great power held by schools and educators, textbooks and teachers. Through the lives and achievements of these education reformers, historians can begin to understand the similarities between the two seemingly different sections of the country as they began to split apart at their seams. In the end the South recognized its need for an education movement and once secession came, they began to look toward the only model they had: the North. The South used the North as a mold in terms of structure, but more importantly in the educational materials needed to promote republican virtues and citizenship.

Horace Mann, Massachusetts’ first superintendent of education, argued that uniformity would help bring together the disparate schools across his state. When he took office in the 1830s, Mann discovered that each of the three thousand public schools had their own traditions, habits, and local governance. He hoped that by creating a uniform system of education, Massachusetts would equalize education for both city and rural citizens. It is interesting that Mann was not a proponent of compulsory education, but rather advocated regulation of attendance or the right of refusal to attend. Nevertheless, by 1852, Massachusetts required every child between the ages of eight and fourteen to attend at least twelve weeks a year at either public or private schools. This compulsory system originated with the organized labor movement, which suggests the emerging working class was

¹⁰ Bob Pepperman Taylor, *Horace Mann’s Troubling Legacy: The Education of Democratic Citizens* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 9.

genuinely concerned with childhood exploitation. It also suggests a little about educating the young Americans, and the connection between the right of education and the polity, which was part of the Early Republic's essential beliefs.¹¹

As Mann took the reins of common education in Massachusetts, Calvin Henderson Wiley of North Carolina made the largest strides towards universal public education in the South prior to the Civil War. Wiley became the champion for education in North Carolina, successfully urging the passing of a bill supporting the position of superintendent of schools in 1853, which Wiley first held. A young man educated at the University of North Carolina, Wiley made it his life-long mission to bring education to all North Carolinians and urged that children "be taught to appreciate the opportunities offered at home and given the necessary training to improve them."¹² He inherited a very difficult and precarious situation. Wiley quickly surmised that North Carolina's schools needed to be flooded with something more than money; the schools needed "efficient management," "watchful supervision," "good officers," and a new "liberal course of legislation."¹³ Once Wiley determined how he could strengthen the education of North Carolinians, he made it his life's mission to complete the task at hand. If numbers are any indicators, Wiley achieved his goals of expanding the school system to educate more students; the number of children attending schools rose from 95,000 when Wiley took office in 1853 to 118,852 just seven years later.¹⁴

¹¹ Cremin, *The National Experience*, 154-157.

¹² Dabney, *Universal Education in the South*, 169.

¹³ Calvin D. Jarrett, "Calvin H. Wiley: Southern Education Leader," *Peabody Journal of Education* 41 (March 1964): 277.

¹⁴ Jarrett, 278.

Wiley also urged the “uniform system of good books” in North Carolina and noticed that many believed textbooks were the cause of greatest complaints in the schools.¹⁵ A year before Wiley successfully maneuvered into the superintendent’s office, he wrote *The North Carolina Reader* explicitly for use in the schools of North Carolina and in hopes of creating a schoolbook that could be used throughout the state and “sow in the young minds of North-Carolina the seeds of a true, healthy, and vigorous North-Carolina spirit.”¹⁶ Wiley’s *Reader* stands as a rare southern-written work for use in southern schools prior to secession. Interestingly, Wiley’s publishers recognized the importance of the textbook to encourage “a feeling of self-dependence, and the enlistment of popular sentiment in behalf of the State, and of its institutions.”¹⁷ The publishers also touted the originality of the work and its unique status as a work wholly produced in North Carolina. Yet, Wiley urged textbooks already published in the North in order to write his unique North Carolinian text.

One of the most influential northern textbook authors and someone Wiley would have been familiar with, Noah Webster believed “every child in America should be acquainted with his own country. He should read books that furnish him with ideas that will be useful to him in life and practice,” and Webster wanted every child to be able to open his lips to “the praise of liberty, and of those illustrious heroes and statements, who have wrought a revolution in her favor.”¹⁸ Webster

¹⁵ Jarrett, 283.

¹⁶ Calvin H. Wiley, *The North Carolina Reader* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1851), 4. Google e-book.

¹⁷ Wiley, 3.

¹⁸ Noah Webster, *On the Education of Youth in America*, “Epilogue: Securing the Republic,” edited by Philip Kurland and Ralph Lerner, *The Founders’ Constitution* University of Chicago

took his charge seriously and wrote numerous spellers, histories, and even the first American dictionary.

When Webster updated his widely popular *The American Spelling Book*, he noted its popularity in his preface. Webster's work was used "in a great part of the northern States, it is the only book of the kind used; it is much used in the middle and southern States; and its annual sales indicate a large and increasing demand."¹⁹ Webster's speller had sold nearly seventy-five million copies within its first two years after its publication in 1773, and these sales were not confined to New England. The widespread popularity of Webster's texts was attributed to his dedication for universal literacy in the nascent country. He provided the rules of the American English language, often arranging words by syllables and stressing to the instructors the importance of recitation. The words are often followed by reading exercises for "children to read and know their duty."²⁰

Reading through Webster's 1809 edition of his *American Spelling*, students encountered lessons scattered throughout the text that helped to reinforce the ideals of education Webster found important. Found within the tables of words broken by syllables and presented with both the correct spelling and pronunciation, are "useful lessons," like the division of money in the United States, where one dollar is equal to four shillings six pence sterling for both New England and Virginia, but six shillings in New York and North Carolina. The lesson ends with this prophecy

<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch18s26.html> (accessed November 12, 2012).

¹⁹ Noah Webster, *The American Spelling Book: Containing the Rudiments of the English language: for the Use of Schools in the United States* (Philadelphia: Johnson & Warner, 1809), iii.

²⁰ Gertrude Hildreth, "Noah Webster: Crusader for American Literacy," *The Elementary School Journal* 59 (April 1959): 376-377.

that “these differences give great trouble and will soon be laid aside as useless,--all money will be reckoned in dollars and cents.”²¹ Following this lesson, Webster provides a table of the 1800 and 1810 census, during which time Ohio joined the Union. These lessons provided to the students seem out of place in a speller, but knowing Webster’s affinity to teach young Americans the necessary skills to become productive citizens makes the lessons about American money and population seem essential to his promise of educating the masses. More importantly, northern and southern children read these lessons and absorbed an American identity, before secession came.

Noah Webster’s *The American Spelling Book* had become so immensely popular and recognizable that he wrote an improved *Elementary Spelling Book* in 1831 in hopes of perfecting his earlier work.²² Yet, Confederate cultural nationalists still felt the need to improve further upon his work with the publication of the Third Southern Edition of *The Elementary Spelling Book*. Curiously, an advertisement following the title page stated that “the publishers [felt] that they need offer no apology for issuing the book with so few alterations, as public opinion, North and South, has long since decided that [*The Elementary Spelling Book*] cannot be improved upon.”²³ The book presented Webster’s 1832 edition verbatim. Webster’s text had synthesized the English language in America, and Confederates simply provided their seal of approval for this already influential work. However,

²¹ Webster, *The American Spelling Book*, 113.

²² Noah Webster, *The Elementary Spelling Book; Being an Improvement of the American Spelling Book* (Concord, NH: Moses G. Atwood, 1832). Google e-book.

²³ Noah Webster, *The Elementary Spelling Book: Being an Improvement of the American Spelling Book, Third Southern Edition* (Macon, GA: Burke, Boykin and Company, 1865), advertisement.

an earlier revised speller plainly laid out the reason for a new and improved Confederate edition. Robert Fleming kept the name *The Elementary Spelling Book*, but added *Revised and Adapted to the youth of the Southern Confederacy, interspersed with Bible Readings on Domestic Slavery*.²⁴ Fleming agreed with the editors of the *Third Southern Edition* of Webster's speller that "to make a better book than Webster's would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible," but felt that there needed to be a revised edition "adapted to the wants of the people of the Confederate States of America."²⁵ The first instance of the Biblical defense of slavery occurs with lesson No. 79, where Fleming details the duties of children, parents, servants, and masters.²⁶ Yet, in the style of Webster, Fleming provided a list of four syllable words, which are accented on the second syllable that is a direct copy of Webster's list for lesson Number 79.²⁷ Evidently, Fleming only saw fit to change the sentences that accompanied the word list, returning to his belief that Webster's work was beyond the need of complete revision. This shift highlights that Webster's vocabulary words were still necessary for southern students, but they needed to learn the benevolence and justification of slavery. Many other Confederate authors would build upon lessons already placed within school texts, instead placing addendums on the issues at the core of the Confederacy.

Several themes emerge from the textbooks of the nineteenth century.

Whether writing a reader, speller, primer, geography, history, or arithmetic,

²⁴ Robert Fleming, *The Elementary Spelling Book, Revised and Adapted to the Youth of the Southern Confederacy, Interspersed with Bible Readings on Domestic Slavery* (Atlanta, GA: J.J. Toon & Co, Publishers, 1863).

²⁵ Fleming, 3.

²⁶ Fleming, 57-58.

²⁷ Webster, *Elementary Spelling Book*, 64.

textbook authors were more about cultivating the mind of the student in relation to their morality rather than in their knowledge skillset. Keeping in mind their goal to establish an American nationalism with distinct American traditions and principles, textbook authors wove stories of American greatness, truthfulness, self-control, and Republican virtues into their lessons of vocabulary, mathematics, or history.²⁸ When examined closely, Confederate schoolbooks look similar to their northern counterparts. Similar themes and stories emerge between the two, promoting the creation of their respective future citizens.

Both northern and southern children read primer books first, as they were the most simplistic in scope and often included an alphabetic table, prayers, catechism and simple words, and were often found in the home.²⁹ Perhaps the most influential primer of the period was *The New England Primer*. Smaller than the more advanced texts, *The New England Primer* provided simple tables of letters, words, prayers, and catechisms.³⁰ Published sixty-three years after the 1800 *New England Primer* and in the Confederate States, Marinda Moore's *The Dixie Primer* utilized some of the same examples and questions found in the *New England Primer*. A prolific textbook writer for the Confederacy, Moore was born in Madison, North Carolina in 1829. Deeply religious and formally educated from a young age, Moore graduated from the Greensboro Female College in 1854 before opening a school for girls in the years leading up to the Civil War. She passed away in 1864, only 35

²⁸ Elson, 1-2; Richard D. Mosier, *Making the American Mind: Social and Moral Ideas in the McGuffey Readers* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1947), 151.

²⁹ Clifton Johnson, *Old-Time Schools and School-Books* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), 69.

³⁰ *The New England Primer Improved or an Easy and Pleasant Guide to the Art of Reading; to which is Added the Assembly's Shorter Catechism* (Pittsburgh, PA: United Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1800).

years old. Her family remembered her for her zealous love of children and her country and helping to shape the “future piety and happiness of the populace” of the Confederacy.³¹ Both the *New England* and Moore’s primer begin the catechism section with this question, “Who made you?” to which the answer “God” was provided. Each of the subsequent questions appears in some fashion in each text. The similarities do not end with the catechism either; both works are under forty pages in length, both end with a prayer, and use images scattered throughout to help in the visualization of the text. Also both schoolbooks do not include any discussion of slavery, or any distinct northern or southern culture, but rather focus primarily on the importance of religion and understanding God’s place in the world.³² The descriptor Dixie in the title signaled that this work would be for southern audience, even though the primer used some of the same lessons found in the northern work.

Once students started attending school in any fashion, they often began studying with spellers. The schoolbooks classified under spellers regularly increased in difficulty as the student progressed through the work, beginning with simple one-syllable words and ending with more complex vocabulary. Noah Webster originated the distinct style of American spellers, presenting a logical progression and separating the words by syllables. When Confederates began to

³¹ O.L. Davis and Serena Rankin Parks, “Confederate School Geographies, I: Marinda Branson Moore’s *Dixie Geography*,” *Peabody Journal of Education* 40 (March 1963): 266; Levi Branson, ed., *The Branson Family in Europe and America with Connections* (Raleigh, NC: Levi Branson, A.B., A.M., D.D., Publisher, 1898), 8-10.

³² *New England Primer*, 7; Marinda Branson Moore, *The Dixie Primer, for the Little Folks*, 3rd ed. (Raleigh, NC: Branson, Farrar & Co, 1863), 31.

write their own spellers, they took many cues from Webster, including similarly progressing through the difficulty of the English language.³³

The patterns that emerge between Webster's *Elementary Spelling Book* and Marinda Moore's *Dixie Spellers* highlight the ability of Confederate textbook authors to borrow from their northern predecessors, while promoting the distinctiveness of their region. Moore and Webster included an "Analysis of the English Alphabet" and "Punctuation." Both authors provide a chart of the vowel and consonant sounds, but not necessarily the same words to help explain the sounds. For the 'A' sound, Moore listed the words "fate, fat, far, fall, fare," whereas Webster used the words "late, ask, ball, hat, what."³⁴ Both lists provided the reader the proper sounds of the vowel 'a,' but Moore switched the words to help further separate her work from a northern schoolbook in order to appeal to a wider Confederate audience. Moore copies Webster's explanation for the purpose of punctuation verbatim in her later published work, but her discussion of each type of punctuation mark is written in the second person rather than Webster's third.³⁵ These examples may seem superfluous in understanding the similarities between northern and southern textbooks, but Moore's work clearly shows that northern authors influenced Confederate authors strongly. By copying some sentences verbatim from Webster, Moore has shown that she had his work on her desk at the time of her writing.

³³ For more information on spellers see: John A. Nietz, *Old Textbooks: Spelling, Grammar, Reading, Arithmetic, Geography, American History, Civil Government, Physiology, Penmanship, Art, Music—As Taught in the Common Schools from Colonial Days to 1900* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1961), 10-44; George Emery Littlefield, *Early Schools and School-Books of New England* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1965), 118-136; Johnson, *Old-Time Schools*, 167-232.

³⁴ Marinda Branson Moore, *The Dixie Speller, to Follow the First Dixie Reader* (Raleigh, NC: Branson & Farrar, 1864), 5; Webster, *Elementary Spelling Book*, 8.

³⁵ Moore, *Dixie Speller*, 7; Webster, *Elementary Spelling Book*, 166-167.

Confederate cultural nationalists were not reinventing the wheel, but rather were interested in reorienting the books published to improve the South's image.

After a sound understanding of how the English language works, students learned the parameters of reading through readers. Authors of readers often brought together Bible stories, lessons, orations, and documents from a variety of sources to form the foundation of their work. These works followed similar patterns found in spellers, but the readers took the lesson a step further by placing words together to form simple sentences or descriptions. William McGuffey originated the American reader form and remained a popular author throughout the early twentieth century. He wrote a series of readers during the years leading up to the Civil War, and Confederate cultural nationalists recognized his influential power over the form. In readers, students learned their moral, civic, and religious duties as American, and later Confederate, citizens. Often through the use of religious stories, fables, and myths, authors of readers found ways to illustrate and shape the morality and social order of the American experience.³⁶

William Holmes McGuffey was born in 1800 in Washington County, Pennsylvania to a family of Scotch-Irish heritage. Like most frontier children, McGuffey was educated in the home, using Noah Webster's *Blue Back Speller*. McGuffey entered into the schoolbook industry with a product, his *McGuffey* readers, borrowing heavily from his predecessors. McGuffey published his *First Reader* in 1836 and his *Sixth Reader* in 1857. However, McGuffey's works would far outsell his competition, eventually selling one hundred and twenty-two million copies by

³⁶ For more on readers see: Nietz, *Old Textbooks*, 45-106; Littlefield, *Early Schools and School-Books of New England*, 137-159; Johnson, *Old-Time Schools*, 233-300.

1920.³⁷ His readers, eventually totaling six grades and built upon Webster's spellers, both in content and style, focused predominantly on the spoken word, especially as the student progressed through his book.³⁸

McGuffey represents a northerner writing school texts that eventually became widely used throughout the United States, but he wrote with a distinct bias against the South. Published in the final years of the antebellum period, *McGuffey's New Fifth Eclectic Reader*, written for advanced students, included one hundred lessons, each with their own purpose of educating the reader in proper pronunciation, oration, and morality. Lesson LXXXVIII claimed that religion was "the only basis of society" and "is the best support of the virtues and principles, on which the social order rests."³⁹ McGuffey had been writing these religious principles into each of his readers that came before this *Fifth* edition. An earlier lesson, which detailed the duty of an orator, echoed these religious sentiments in relation to the preservation of the Union.⁴⁰ McGuffey, along with other educational reformers wrote schoolbooks in an effort to raise American citizens to take moral and civic responsibility. Later textbooks of the antebellum period highlighted a shift toward the merging of these two concepts into Protestant republicanism. This part

³⁷ Charles Carpenter, *History of American Schoolbooks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), 85.

³⁸ For more on William McGuffey and his readers see Quentin R. Skrabec, *William McGuffey: Mentor to American Industry* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2009); Richard Mosier, *Making the American Mind: Social and Moral Ideas in the McGuffey Readers* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1947); and Carpenter, 79-86.

³⁹ William Holmes McGuffey, *McGuffey's New Fifth Eclectic Reader: Selected and Original Exercises for Schools* (Cincinnati, OH: Sargent, Wilson & Hinkle, 1857), 306. The use of Roman Numerals is to remain consistent with the sources.

⁴⁰ For more on the importance of Protestantism in northern identity see: Susan Mary Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in Antebellum Era* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000).

of northern nationalism, together with the increasingly anti-slavery tone and tilt of northern examples, left southerners out of the American experience.

McGuffey branded as traitors those demagogues who used their fiery orations in order to sway their followers down a path of dissolution of the Union. He instructed his readers that American orators should use their office “to cultivate, in the people of every State, a deep and fervent attachment to the Union,” which was “indissoluble in life, to be dissolved, we trust, only on that day when nations die in a moment, never to rise again.”⁴¹ McGuffey remained noticeably silent on who these demagogues were and what they stood for, but his message came across quite clearly: the Union must be preserved above all else. Clearly, Confederate authors had to challenge such disrespect. Though most of what these textbooks promoted was not wholly anti-southern, southerners had become so fragile in their own sense of identity that any attack was seen as detrimental to their region. Eventually, when secession came so did southern textbooks promoting southern identity, which then vilified the North, much in the way they felt vilified by northern nationalism.

McGuffey's Newly Revised Eclectic Second Reader began, fittingly for a reader, with a lesson on the importance of reading. McGuffey warned his readers that boys and girls who did not study their reading would find themselves like the man in the story who walked miles along the wrong road, because he had not been able to read the road signs along his journey. More importantly, McGuffey wished his readers would learn to read, because if not “they [would] never know whether they are on

⁴¹ Ibid., 254. The entire lesson covers the pages of 253-257.

the right road or the wrong one.”⁴² Keeping in line with his moralistic center, McGuffey’s lesson attempted to show the importance of reading and specifically the importance of living a moral life. Students who walked the right road followed Christian morals. McGuffey represents a northern approach to school texts that eventually become widely used throughout the United States. He wrote stories that promoted morality based upon republican and Protestant principles, which were dominant in the North. Yet, though McGuffey wrote works that southerners might have construed as anti-southern, Confederate cultural nationalists still attempted to recreate his success with their own school texts and borrowed heavily from his writings for their own versions.

Looking at the *McGuffey’s Eclectic Reader* series in comparison with some Confederate readers shows that most Confederate cultural nationalists used McGuffey and similar readers as a basis for their own compilations. Richard McAllister Smith wrote a similar lesson on the importance of being a good reader in his *Confederate First Reader*. Smith’s story, however, did not share the moralistic undertones of McGuffey. Rather, he told the tale of a young girl who read with “such distinct pronunciation” a petition from a poor widow to help keep her sickly son from military service.⁴³ Before the little girl read for the king, his two pages were unable to complete the task without bad pronunciation and hurried speech. The girl’s ability to read well ended with the woman’s request being granted and the

⁴² William Holmes McGuffey, *McGuffey’s Newly Revised Eclectic Second Reader: Containing Progressive Lessons in Reading and Spelling*, permanent stereotype edition. (Cincinnati, OH: Winthrop B. Smith & Co., Publishers, 1848), 5-6.

⁴³ Richard McAllister Smith, *The Confederate First Reader: Containing Selections in Prose and Poetry. As Reading Exercises for the Younger Children in the Schools and Families of the Confederate States* (Richmond, VA: G.L. Bidgood, 1864), 9-10.

king's pages being sent to learn to read properly. Marinda Moore, Richard Sterling and James Campbell included lessons on the importance of new books and directed students to learn to read through them in order to receive more.⁴⁴ Again these authors presented the lessons without the morality overtones of McGuffey, but on the surface these lessons all hoped that students would embrace in earnest the importance of reading, in order to become productive members of their respective societies.

Many topics appear in Confederate textbooks just as they had in McGuffey's readers. Though the prose changed, the reoccurrence of these stories shows that Confederate authors dipped into the same source material as McGuffey and other northern writers. George Washington, Christopher Columbus, and Biblical figures such as Jesus Christ and the Old Testament Joseph all appear in both northern and southern schoolbooks for young children.

Students learned arithmetic alongside their reading and spelling. The study of math remained important through the nineteenth century and central to the liberal arts education of the period. Content of arithmetic texts changed little during this period, focusing on ratios, exchange rates, percentages, whole numbers, functions, and weights and measurements. Authors often wrote texts in a graded series, popular in other subjects, that progressed in difficulty as the student moved

⁴⁴ Marinda Branson Moore, *The First Dixie Reader; Designed to follow the Dixie Primer* (Raleigh: Branson, Farrar & Co., 1863), 7; Richard Sterling and James D. Campbell, *Our Own Third Reader: For the use of schools and families*, stereotype edition (Greensboro, NC: Sterling, Campbell, and Albright, 1862), 13-15.

through school.⁴⁵ Arithmetic textbooks differed from their counterparts because they presented more abstract facts than moral or anecdotal stories.

Northern and Confederate arithmetic books shared some similarities. Both northern and Confederate students learned the two notations: Arabic and Roman, the latter connecting to the classical heritage to which America laid claim.⁴⁶ Arithmetic books typically concluded with miscellaneous examples often in the form of word problems. Even some of these examples shared commonalities. Charles Leverett, a Confederate cultural nationalist, and Charles Davies, a northern textbook writer in the 1830s, both asked a question based on a merchant buying goods for his store. Leverett asked “A merchant bought 12 cases of merchandise for \$569: what would 25 have cost at the same rate?” while Davies asked: “A merchant bought 13 packages of goods, for which he paid \$326: what will 39 packages cost at the same rate?”⁴⁷ The similar structure and nature of the question, while common among word problems, raises some important similarities between these two works. They both aimed to teach young children arithmetic and in a very similar format. Leverett changed the numbers, certain words, and increased the complexity of the problem, but the structure of the problem remained the same. Samuel Lander included some lessons similar to Davies. Both authors wrote a word problem based on men besieged in a garrison or town. Lander’s problem asked students to discover how many rations each man could receive with the remaining provisions,

⁴⁵ Nietz, 140-149.

⁴⁶ Charles Davies, *The Common School Arithmetic: Prepared for the Use of Academies and Common Schools in the United States* (Utica, NY: William Williams, 1833), 9; Samuel Lander, *Our Own School Arithmetic* (Greensboro, NC: Sterling, Campbell & Albright, 1863), 16; Charles E. Leverett, *The Southern Confederacy Arithmetic, for Common Schools and Academics with a Practical System of Book-Keeping by Single Entry* (Augusta, GA: J.T. Paterson & Co, 1864), 2.

⁴⁷ Leverett, *Southern Arithmetic*, 202; Davies, *The Common School Arithmetic*, 253.

while Davies asked how many men were sent away based upon the ability to last five months with the remaining provisions.⁴⁸ These examples have less in common than the previous examples, but strong similarities still remain.

Geography texts became important later in the antebellum period. Early authors wrote geographies mostly as catalogs of facts with little correlation between them, and they hoped that their works would be seen as interesting and filled with useful knowledge. Many variations of geography textbooks appeared during the nineteenth century. Some authors decided to write their texts as readers, presenting simple reading exercises for students, while others went for a typical chapter-style work, and still others wrote in a simple question and answer format. Yet no matter what the format, geography textbooks still revealed the author's moral agenda. As we will see, Geographies provide insight into many religious, moralistic, racial, and national attitudes.⁴⁹

Confederate cultural nationalists Kensey Stewart and Marinda Moore opted to write geography texts similar to northerner Samuel Mitchell with both descriptive lessons and questions for the teacher to ask.⁵⁰ Mitchell and Moore wrote their textbooks similarly by dividing the work into two separate parts, the first being simply questions and answers and the second a more descriptive account of the world. Stewart opted to ask his questions, without provided answers, following

⁴⁸ Lander, *Our Own Arithmetic*, 221; Davies, *The Common School Arithmetic*, 255.

⁴⁹ For more on nineteenth century geography texts see: Nietz, *Old Text Books*, 195-233.

⁵⁰ Samuel Augustus Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography, Comprising a Description of the Present State of the World, and its Five Great Divisions, America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceanica, with their Several Empires, Kingdoms, States, Territories, etc. Embellished by Numerous Engravings. Adapted to the Capacity of Youth*. (Philadelphia: H. Cowperthwait & Co., 1858); Marinda Branson Moore, *Primary Geography Arranged as a Reading Book for Common Schools, with Questions and Answers Attached* (Raleigh, NC: Branson & Farrar, 1864); Kensey J. Stewart, *A Geography for Beginners* (Richmond, VA: J.W. Randolph, 1864).

each section of different places and topics. All three authors included some discussion of the races of man. The same terminology appeared: the Caucasian was considered white, the Mongolian yellow, and the African or Negro black. In the end, these northern and Confederate authors all exulted the Caucasian race as “the best educated,” and most civilized.” Moore concluded that Caucasian culture offered “the most valuable institutions of society, and the most important and useful inventions, have originated with the people of this race.”⁵¹ This belief was commonly held in the nineteenth century, but its appearance in a textbook published by abolitionist-controlled presses proves interesting.

If Confederate cultural nationalists used northern published schoolbooks as references for their own texts, then why was there an ardent need to create their own books for southern consumption? Southerners believed northern textbooks had become “vicious or filled with slurs at southern institutions which [were] calculated to lead the youth of this country astray.”⁵² As the antebellum period drew to a close, southerners increasingly became vexed by a belief in the growth of northern agitation and propaganda in textbooks meant to warp the minds of southern school children.⁵³ The *Mississippi Free Trader* did not stand alone in its fear of insidious textbooks, as *DeBow's Review* and the *Southern Literary Messenger*,

⁵¹ Moore, *Primary Geography*, 37; Mitchell, *System of Modern Geography*, 41.

⁵² “A Munificent Donation,” *Mississippi Free Trader*, February 18, 1845.

⁵³ Some examples of northern textbooks include: Frederick Emerson, *The North American Arithmetic: Part Second, Uniting Oral and Written Exercises in Corresponding Chapters* (Philadelphia: Parrish, Dunning & Mears, 1832); Samuel Griswold Goodrich, *A Pictorial History of the United States with notices of other portions of America* (New York: Huntington and Savage, Mason and Law, 150); William Holmes McGuffey, *McGuffey's New Sixth Eclectic Reader Exercises in Rhetorical Reading, with Introductory Rules and Examples* (Cincinnati, OH: Sargent, Wilson & Hinkle, 1857); John Pierpont, *The American First Class Book, or Exercises in Reading and Recitation: Selected Principally from Modern Authors of Great Britain and America, Designed for the Use of the Highest Class in Public and Private Schools* (Boston: Charles Bowen, 1836).

two of the most widely circulated periodicals in the South, quickly echoed the calls for the purging of northern influences on southern society.⁵⁴ Through a survey of 78 textbooks published in the North, John Ezell in a *Journal of Southern History* article entitled "A Southern Education for Southrons," found that thirty-five texts presented an obviously biased view, while seventeen could be interpreted as highly prejudiced against the South. He notes that southerners were susceptible to reading unintended results into textbooks with an overcritical eye, but there was a foundation for finding anti-southern rhetoric in textbooks.⁵⁵ Some of the works that Confederates based their school texts upon were determined to be anti-southern by southerners, and they worked to correct these misconceptions of the South.

Confederate textbook authors did more than build upon the textbooks of the North. Rather, they improved schoolbooks for their own children. Though the South failed to produce a common school system like the North, when secession came, they worked tirelessly to put into place textbooks for school children that looked similar to those of northern presses. These texts would provide students the knowledge to become active and patriotic Confederate citizens fighting for the southern cause. Confederate cultural nationalists found northern textbooks overwhelmingly inaccurate and in need of revision before they could pick up the

⁵⁴ J.W. Morgan, "Our School Books," *DeBow's Review, Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources* 28 (October 1860): 434-440; *Southern Literary Messenger; Devoted to Every Department of Literature and the Fine Arts* 17 (May 1851): 324; "The Cause of the South," *DeBow's Review, Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources* 9, no. 1 (July 1850): 120.

⁵⁵ John S. Ezell, "A Southern Education for Southrons," *Journal of Southern History* 17, no. 3 (August 1951): 303-327. Ezell does include several instances that highlight blatant anti-southern northern textbooks, but he does so in a larger thesis surrounding the importance for southerners to promote and create their own educational system.

educational fight for an intelligent nation. These textbooks would proclaim the superiority of the South over the North, the benevolence and justification of slavery, and the Southern Revolution of 1861 as the conclusion to the fight started in the Revolution of 1776.

Chapter Two

Slavery and Superiority: The Cornerstones of the Confederacy

"The African or negro race is...slothful and vicious, but possess little cunning. They are very cruel to each other, and when they have war they sell their prisoners to the white people for slaves....The slaves who are found in America are in much better condition. They are better fed, better clothed, and better instructed than in their native country." From Marinda Moore, *Primary Geography* (1863)¹

When comparing the African to the American slave, Marinda Moore, one of the Confederacy's most ardent supporters and writers of school texts for children, reasoned that slaves benefited significantly from their condition as human chattel in the superiority of the southern society. Adelaide de Vendel Chaudron, writing a Confederate speller in 1865, made explicit the comparison of slaves as human chattel. In her pictorial alphabet, she represented the letter "N" with a "Negro," complete with a hobo sack on his shoulder. This was interspersed with letters represented by horse, dog, cow, lamb, pig, stag, and watch.² In the South, the Negro could easily be grouped with common objects found in the homes of these southern school children and not seem out of place, because students knew the placement of slaves as property. These Confederate schoolbooks, though they were similar in structure to northern published texts, became distinctly southern when the subject matter shifted to the issues that defined the Confederate States of America.

Southerners built their Confederacy on the presumption of racial inferiority and the predominance of a slave society. In their view, the proper and normal condition of the African was slavery, reasoning that even the Africans sold their

¹ Marinda Branson Moore, *Primary Geography Arranged as a Reading Book for Common Schools with Questions and Answers Attached* (Raleigh: Branson, Farrar & Co., 1863), 10.

² Adelaide de Vendel Chaudron, *Chaudron's Spelling Book, Carefully Prepared for Family and School Use* (Mobile, AL: S.H. Goetzel, 1865), 12.

brothers into the system, which mitigated the evils of the trade. The condition of heathenism in Africa only furthered weakened the African culture in the eyes of God-fearing southerners. However twisted their concept of race and slavery was, many Confederate cultural nationalists believed in and promoted the idea that slavery improved the condition of Africans and that slavery was their proper position in the world. With slavery, the Confederacy claimed that they had a superior republic that elevated their society over the Union and had to be preserved. On this foundation of slavery and the superiority of the South rested Confederate nationalism, which Drew Faust and others have argued was the ideology undergirding their southern way of life.³

Confederate cultural nationalists created and shaped Confederate ideology and successfully promoted this cause through newspapers, plays, novels, magazines, and textbooks. Cognizant of their shared American past, these nationalists attempted to correct the misconceptions of southerners and redirect their followers into a new and truly Confederate way of seeing their history and society. They based much of their own literature of knowledge, works that taught the basics of the Confederate identity including textbooks, newspapers, and orations, on northern predecessors.⁴ Noah Webster, Horace Mann, and William McGuffey, noted northern educational reformers and textbook authors, overwhelmingly helped shape the

³ For more on Confederate Nationalism see: Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1988); George Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

⁴ The terminology "Confederate cultural nationalist" and "literature of knowledge" is adopted from Michael Bernath's *Confederate Minds: The Struggle for Intellectual Independence in the Civil War South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

cultural nationalists' understanding of the importance of and philosophy of education within the newly formed independent southern nation. Yet with secession came the necessity to break all ties with the North, including the illusion that Confederate cultural nationalists wrote textbooks without Northern influences.

Before secession southerners complained, "in the primers and first readers from the New England press there [was] a lurking abolitionism, flings at slavery, insidious paragraphs and engravings to prejudice the youthful mind against the institution of slavery."⁵ Southerners became increasingly aware of the growing animosity towards slavery in the North and worried that northern influences would become destructive to their southern culture if.⁶ Secession provided the impetus that cultural nationalists needed to create their own textbook publishing industry. Southern authors responded in droves to earlier cries against the dominance of northern educational material.

Gradually the South came to determine that minor revisions of northern textbooks would not suffice. They began to move further and further away from those northern schoolbooks. In an effort to acknowledge this break from northern works, textbook authors titled their books with distinctly southern and increasingly Confederate nomenclature. These authors promoted their new southern texts through the inclusion of descriptors such as "Confederate," "Dixie," "Our Own," and "Southern," and many explicitly noted that these books were "Expressly for the use

⁵ *The Memphis Daily Appeal* February 22, 1853, in *A Documentary History of Education in the South Before 1860*, Edgar W. Knight, ed., Volume 5 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1953), 288.

⁶ For more on understanding the northern perspective of the South see: Susan Mary Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000).

of schools and academies in the Confederate States of America.”⁷ Though many of these works were based upon, and in some instances copied from their northern counterparts, the authors emphasized that they wrote these works explicitly for southern children. Many authors dedicated their texts to the cause of southern independence. Levi Branson, a Methodist minister and educator at the Lenoir Male and Female Seminary in North Carolina, published and wrote many works for Confederate youth including a composition book dedicated “in the hope that it may be useful to the young of our great rising Confederacy.”⁸ Branson saw a brighter future on the horizon as the South gained her independence and recognized that education would aid in that endeavor. Kensey J. Stewart dedicated his Latin text of Virgil’s *Aeneid* to “His Excellency, Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America.”⁹ Invoking the president, Stewart produced a wholly southern work. Whereas some authors used their dedication of their texts to note their move away from northern influences, others included directions to the instructor not to rely upon northern texts to supplement missing materials. In the preface to *A System of Modern Geography*, John Rice lamented his inability to include maps in his texts, but he urged teachers to use older maps rather than supplement their lessons

⁷ Those used in this research include: Richard Smith, *The Confederate Spelling Book*, 5th ed. (Richmond, VA: George L. Bidgood, 1865); Marinda Branson Moore, *The Dixie Speller* (Raleigh, NC: Branson and Farrar, 1864); Samuel Lander, *Our Own School Arithmetic* (Greensboro, NC: Sterling, Campbell and Albright, 1863); Marinda Branson Moore, *The First Reader, for Southern Schools* (Raleigh: N.C. Christian Advocate Publishing Company, 1864); John H. Rice, *A System of Modern Geography* (Atlanta, GA: Franklin Printing House, 1862); Richard Sterling and JD Campbell, *Our Own First Reader: For the Use of Schools and Families* (Greensboro, NC: Published by Sterling, Campbell, and Albright, 1862).

⁸ Charles R. Holloman, “L. Branson (Levi),” Documenting the American South, docsouth.unc.edu/nc/branson/bio.html (accessed September 4, 2012); Levi Branson, A.M., *First Book in Composition*, (Raleigh, NC: Branson, Farrar & Co., 1863), 3.

⁹ Kensey J. Stewart, *Virgilii Carmina: Bucolica et Aeneidos Libri L-VL*, (Wilmington, NC: William and Robert Chambers, 1863), preface.

with maps found in northern texts, as these were too problematic to be used in southern schools.¹⁰ For Rice, Stewart, and Branson, the need to dissolve any connection with Yankee works was paramount to their mission of creating a Confederate identity that could be shared among all living in the new nation and championing Davis as their great leader.

Beyond simply signaling the break from the Union, the Confederate cultural nationalists also promoted the Confederate States of America as one of the greatest nations of the world. With the same breath they hoped to place doubt in the ability of the United States to rule justly. One of the most effective methods of conveying the new Confederate identity was through the writing and publication of textbooks explicitly for use in schools and homes, as many nationalists acknowledged textbooks served as the foundation of education Just as their northern predecessors has done, textbook writers for southern audiences were sure to help foster a common ideology of greatness within their nation. Furthermore, these textbooks would prepare future citizens of the new nation, a task that could not be taken lightly.¹¹

John Rice, writing in the nascent Confederacy, noted in his geography textbook that the Confederate States of America was “the most desirable country in North America...the people are the freest, most enlightened and prosperous in the world. The independence of man is here asserted and the Christian religion has full

¹⁰ Rice, preface.

¹¹ Richard Mosier, *Making the American Mind: Social and Moral Ideas in the McGuffey Readers* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1947), 20.

sway.”¹² Since Rice published early in the war, he needed to emphasize the supremacy of the Confederacy over the Union, and point out that by declaring their independence the Confederates were able to establish a nation founded upon Christian principles, which helped support their southern way of life. The Confederate Constitution agreed with Rice concerning the importance of the Christian God in their national fabric. The Confederate Congress called upon the “guidance of Almighty God” as “ordain[ing] and establish[ing] [their] Constitution.”¹³ Confederate nationalists firmly believed God was on the Confederate side, and they continuously relied on this belief throughout the war.

Reverend Samuel Lander, a North Carolinian, who taught at several colleges in both Virginia and North Carolina, wrote some textbooks during the Civil War in which he laid claim to a united cause for all Confederate citizens.¹⁴ Lander published two mathematics textbooks and one for English grammatical instruction.¹⁵ His *The Verbal Primer* noted that students, part of a larger collective “we,” should “do all we can for [soldiers] for they do a great deal for us. Our soldiers are very brave. They have fought many hard battles to save us and our country.”¹⁶ Published in 1865, Lander’s work did not recognize the waning days of battle but urged students to help the soldiers through the students’ sacrifices and moral support. Also, Lander’s

¹² Rice, *A System of Modern Geography*, 15.

¹³ Constitution of the Confederate States of America, transcription, Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Georgia.
<http://www.libs.uga.edu/hargrett/selections/confed/trans.html> (accessed September 16, 2012).

¹⁴ Lander founded the Williamston Female College in Williamston, South Carolina in 1870, which was later renamed in his honor following his death in 1904.

¹⁵ Samuel Lander, Historical Note, Lander University
<http://www.lander.edu/Library/Lander-Archive/Samuel-Lander.aspx> (accessed September 5, 2012).

¹⁶ Samuel Lander, *The Verbal Primer* (Greensboro, NC: Sterling, Campbell & Albright, 1865), 7.

collective we helped connect students with their Confederate country. Though children were unable to vote and had virtually no sway in politics, they were still Confederates, part of a larger society whole fighting hard to win their independence. The soldiers were not recognized as fighting for the North Carolinians, where Lander lived and published, but for the mutual our country, that is the newly formed Confederate nation. He portrayed soldiers' deaths as an effort to establish the legitimacy of the Confederate States of America and students began to categorize themselves as Confederates, not along state identities of as Americans. It also helped place the soldiers' sacrifices into a broader appreciation for the current struggle for independence, helping to solidify the ties that bound together Confederates under nationalism.

Just as the use of rhetoric urged a united cause, textbooks taught students a new symbol of the Confederacy. Tucked away on a page with a lesson on two-syllable words, the Confederate flag sat above a short poem: "Forever float the Standard Sheet, Where breathes the foe but falls before us? With Freedom's soil beneath our feet, And Freedom's Banner streaming o'er us!"¹⁷ Students were encouraged to rally around the flag.



Figure 1: "The Flag of the Confederate States." Source: *Southern Pictorial Primer*, 17.

The creation of a national flag helped to unite the Confederacy under one symbol of their cause. The Second National Flag, which was used from 1863-1865, situated

¹⁷ *The Southern Pictorial Primer; Combining Instruction with Amusement, and Designed for us in Schools and Families. Embellished with Numerous Engravings* (Richmond, VA: West & Johnston, Booksellers and Publishers, 1864), 17.

the Confederate battle flag on a field of white. It replaced the First National Flag, which had the battle flag in the union, but the field had bars of alternating red, white, and red stripes. The 1863 redesigned flag, nicknamed the “Stainless Banner,” would have flown over encampment headquarters and government buildings similar to the Union’s flag Old Glory lauded in northern textbooks. *The Southern Pictorial Primer*, along with other textbooks, provided students the ability to recognize a Confederate symbol of nationalism and identify what bound together North Carolinians, Georgians, Virginians, and Alabamians.¹⁸

Though the textbooks continued to promote unity and greatness, the conditions of war began to break some of the national spirit that was so high in 1861. Even Marinda Branson Moore, a prolific Confederate textbook writer, indicated the weakening of Confederate strength in her later works. In her *Primary Geography*, published in 1863, she stressed to Dixie’s children that the Confederacy was a great nation, despite the hardships as the war wreaked havoc on their homes and families. Moore stressed that Confederates learned to make do with less than their northern counterparts. She reminded her students that God had aided their cause: “We were considered an indolent, weak people, but our enemies have found us strong, because we had justice on our side.”¹⁹ With their great leader Jefferson Davis and God fighting for the Confederacy, in her view, the Union would ultimately be defeated.

¹⁸ John M. Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag: America’s Most Embattled Emblem* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2005), 16-18. N.B.: On a flag, the union refers to the upper left corner and the field is used to describe the rest of the flag’s space.

¹⁹ Marinda Branson Moore, *Primary Geography Arranged as a Reading Book for Common Schools with Questions and Answers Attached* (Raleigh, NC: Branson, Farrar & Co., 1863), 14.

She picked up on the nation's hardships in her *The Dixie Speller* when she provided a lesson about war being a "bad thing" and through a first-person narrative talked about how "my pa-pa went, and died in the army. My big brother went too, and got shot. A bomb shell took off his head. My aunt had three sons, and all have died in the army."²⁰ The realism in the passage seems morbid for a child's speller, but the reality of war had already hit home for most of her readers. Historian Drew Faust in *Mothers of Invention* used this same passage from Moore in order to show the waning belief in Confederate nationalism as the war continued to drag on. Though Moore published in 1864, when morale in the Confederate cause was waning, she did not completely dismiss Confederate nationalistic ideas outright. For Faust, Moore "offered Confederate children a sharply dissenting voice, protesting not so much the South's political values but the cost of these commitments in human suffering." Faust noted that this passage showed Moore becoming "discontented" with the present state of the country, and it would be hard to argue against the idea that the war-torn South grew disillusioned about their country amid continually rising death tolls.²¹

However, Faust neglected to include the second half of the story in her monograph. While the first half showed the idea of the high costs of war and of hopes to end the war, Moore continued to discuss the importance of following the law of the land and placing one's trust in God to defend their cause. Moore recognized that children had lost their fathers, brothers, cousins, and uncles

²⁰ Moore, *The Dixie Speller*, 23.

²¹ Drew Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 239.

throughout the War of Southern Independence, and Moore's textbook helped the students understand those sacrifices. Later in the lesson, Moore wrote "if I were a man, and the laws said I must go to war, I would not run away like some do...I would soon-er die at my post than de-sert." Again, she provided a lesson that students must recognize that it was the duty of the men of the Confederacy to fight in order to win their independence from the United States. Children also needed to learn that they would be better off dying for their country than becoming cowards in the face of the community. Though at a high cost, soldiers' deaths were still cherished as they sought the overall goal of the Confederacy, mainly that of winning their independence. Eventually, she asserted the war would end through prayer to God for His strength in preserving them. All Confederate children had to do was to try their best and they would realize that the present state was "not so bad at last." Beckoning back to the Confederate Constitution mention of God's almighty guidance, Moore argued that if the Confederate children kept their faith in God, a central Confederate tenet, then God would deliver them from their present state and into glorious independence.²²

While some textbook authors like Moore found solace in God's favor, others, like L. Johnson, found the Confederacy's greatness by their soldiers' competency on the battlefield. Johnson continually referenced the superiority to the Yankees. By writing his *Johnson's Common School Arithmetic* in 1864, Johnson provided students with problems that reinforced their mathematical skills all centering on the superior ability of Confederate troops. Students were asked, "If one confederate soldier kills

²² Moore, *The Dixie Speller*, 23.

90 Yankees, how many Yankees can 10 confederate soldiers kill?"²³ Clearly, Confederate soldiers were superior in battle to their Yankee counterparts. The unlikely occurrence of a single soldier killing such an impressive number of enemy troops highlighted the abilities of the CSA and its willpower to fight against so large an adversary. Interestingly, in all the math problems which discussed Confederates and Yankees, only the Confederates were identified as soldiers. In another example, Johnson writes, "If one Confederate soldier can whip 7 Yankees how many soldiers can whip 49 Yankees?"²⁴ Both of these word problems made the Confederate opponent a much more formidable force. From the war's beginning, the Union outnumbered Confederates two to one. By the war's end, over two million men fought for the North compared to just shy of a million for the South.²⁵ The Confederate versus Yankees word problem assured the students that though the CSA faced larger forces their determination far outweighed that of their opponents and would lead them to victory. Johnson's neglect to call the Yankees "soldiers" was a subtle way to differentiate between the two armies, but more importantly he dehumanized the Union soldiers. In an effort to continually reinforce the prowess of the Confederacy despite such hardships, Confederate cultural nationalists were able to craft stories into their works to help continually drive home their own greatness.

After establishing the greatness of the Confederacy based upon the civilian resolve, Confederate cultural nationalists addressed the most glaring instances

²³ L. Johnson, AM, *Johnson's Common School Arithmetic* (Raleigh, NC: Branson & Farrar, 1864), 38.

²⁴ Johnson, *Common School Arithmetic*, 44.

²⁵ Louis P. Mauer and J. Ronald Spencer, "Civil War Mobilizations," *OAH Magazine of History* 26, no. 2 (2012): 7.

where the Confederacy differed from any other nation. The establishment of slavery brought about the disparities between North and South that ultimately led to Confederate secession. With independence, Confederates continued their reliance on the slave system. Beyond simply stating that slavery existed within its borders, the Confederacy needed to defend the morality of slavery and its vital role in the southern way of life. Many authors helped further slavery's benevolence by explaining its establishment in the United States as a whole before the North began to shift towards its radical abolitionist views. One such author, Moore highlighted the shared past with the United States that all Confederates understood. She spoke of the greatness the American nation had attained following their struggle for independence from the British, but slowly the North began to change their views on slavery. In fact, the United States was filled with "refined, and intelligent [people] on all subjects but that of negro slavery, on this *they are mad*."²⁶ For most of the early Republic period, the North and South shared in their prosperity and happiness, yet slowly northerners began to shift in their view on slavery until abolitionism swept the entire nation and elected Abraham Lincoln, "a weak man" who was going to enact laws that "would deprive [southerners] of their rights."²⁷ To her mind, the only reasonable course of action was secession, which relieved the South of its oppression from the United States.

Attacking the heart of the North, Marinda Moore's textbooks surely helped foster the idea that the North was to blame for the current struggle for southern independence, in most of her works. In a speller, a text designed to help students

²⁶ Moore, *The Geographical Reader*, 14. Emphasis added.

²⁷ Moore, *The Geographical Reader*, 13.

learn their vocabulary, Moore implicates the North in bringing about the war, through their repeated actions against the South. She explained, "If the rulers in the United States had been good Christian men, the present war would not have come upon [the South]. The people sent bad men to Congress, and they were not willing to make just laws, but were selfish and made laws to suit themselves." Though it was the southern states that seceded, Moore placed blame solely on the North and their unwillingness to allow their southern fellow citizens the ability to maintain their slaveholding society.²⁸

Several Confederate cultural nationalists, including George Fitzhugh and James Dunwoody Brownson DeBow, though not directly involved in writing textbooks for child consumption, continually reiterated the idea that the abolitionists had not lived with "'the negro' for generations...and did not know or care what was in the best interest of the slaves themselves."²⁹ The abolitionists who had taken hold of the United States began to act in defiance against God because of their refusal to recognize slavery as ordained by the Supreme Being. Confederate textbook authors began immediately to counteract those arguments that had seeped their way into the southern schools and homes. For too long, Southerners had been content to allow northern educators to attack southern students with propaganda against the southern way of life and hit at the heart of the young and vulnerable.³⁰

²⁸ Moore, *The Dixie Speller*, 33.

²⁹ Michael Bernath, *Confederate Minds: The Struggle for Intellectual Independence in the Civil War South*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 45. The use of the word Negro is to remain in the vernacular of the Confederacy, and not the reflections of the authors.

³⁰ Bernath, 68.

Cultural nationalists worked hard to counteract the abolitionists' dangerous grip on southern intellect.

One of the most blatant attacks used by the North against the South was its continued reliance on the institution of slavery. According to the Confederate cultural nationalists writing these texts, slavery was the "proper and normal condition" of Africans that "would confer a blessing upon them and their prosperity."³¹ John Rice attempted to dispel the perceived myth that slavery was degrading to the Africans because for him and the Confederacy slavery was vital to their southern way of life and by claiming it as the normal condition for Africans, essentially ridding the system of any moral ambiguity. Many textbooks published for consumption both above and below the Mason-Dixon Line spoke of the inferior nature of the African, but Confederates took the idea even further. For them, God instituted slavery early in human history and thus it should be preserved.

Richard Sterling and James Campbell established a Biblical defense of slavery in an effort to defend the normal condition of Africans in bondage. Both Sterling and Campbell were partners in one of the most productive publishing firms for textbooks that came out of North Carolina. There a state-sponsored common school system had existed since 1853 with the creation of a state superintendent of common schools. Calvin Wiley held that position.³² Richard Sterling, James Campbell, and James Albright established a publishing house in February 1862 dedicated to the printing of Confederate textbooks for southern schools. Sterling

³¹ Rice, 8, 85.

³² Keith Whitescarver, "School Books, Publishers, and Southern Nationalists: Refashioning the Curriculum in North Carolina's Schools, 1850-1861," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 79 (January 2002) 34.

and Campbell were both principals and teachers and served on the State Education Association of North Carolina where James Albright, a printer, edited and published the *North Carolina Journal of Education*. Together, these three men published over twenty-four texts, including several editions between 1861-1865.³³

Sterling and Campbell wrote *Our Own Third Reader* in 1862 and defended slavery with an entire section devoted to the Biblical view of slavery. The authors mentioned the first instance of slavery occurring as early in Genesis when the text made a reference to Abraham's covenant with God through circumcision including those males born servants and those "bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed."³⁴ They continued to defend slavery through twelve more pages devoted to Biblical references, including instructions to masters and servants. A God-fearing nation, the Confederacy, was able to defend its peculiar institution by looking through its sacred text. By following slavery's institution by God in the Bible, Confederate cultural nationalists instructed their students in how to justify their system.³⁵

The prevailing Biblical defense of slavery was the Curse of Ham. Confederate students were taught that all men were descended from Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, but after the flood Noah's sons were sent to different parts of the earth to repopulate it. Japheth went to Eurasia, Shem into Asia, and Ham was sent to Africa. Essentially, Confederate cultural nationalists and slavery supporters argued

³³ Karen Carroll, "Sterling, Campbell, and Albright: Textbook Publishers, 1861-1865," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 63 (April 1986): 175-181.

³⁴ Richard Sterling and James Campbell, *Our Own Third Reader: For the Use of Schools and Families* (Greensboro, NC: Sterling, Campbell, and Albright, 1862), 211. Genesis 15:13.

³⁵ Sterling and Campbell, *Our Own Third Reader*, 211-222.

that Noah's curse on Ham was passed down through his lineage. Ham had been cursed to be "the lowest of slaves...to his brothers," after shamefully gazing upon his naked father.³⁶ A God-fearing nation, the Confederacy applied this Biblical curse in order to suppress dissent on the morality of slavery.

As evident by their continued justification of the institution of slavery, Confederate cultural nationalists shifted to a discussion on its importance to their new nation. In *A System of Modern Geography*, John Rice invoked Alexander Stephens, Vice President of the Confederate States of America, when he wrote:

Under the influence of slavery, which is the *cornerstone* of her governmental fabric and an indomitable spirit of self-reliance in the hearts of the people, the Confederate States has just commenced a career of greatness...and slavery is expressly recognized in the Constitution as it is in the Word of God, and practiced in all states, and *universally approved by the people*. [emphasis added]³⁷

Rice did not mince words when presenting the current Confederate government. His use of the word "cornerstone" showed just how important slavery was to his understanding of the Confederacy. Stephens, in his aptly named "Cornerstone Speech," stated that the new government's "foundations [were] laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and moral condition."³⁸ The basis for the Confederate nation was the inherent inferiority of the Negro, something that was argued by both North and South; but the Confederacy took this inferiority

³⁶ Genesis 9:25; See Genesis Chapters 7-9 for more information regarding the flood. Rice, *A System of Modern Geography*, 14; Moore, *Geographical Reader*, 10.

³⁷ Rice, *A System of Modern Geography*, 21.

³⁸ Alexander Stephens, "Cornerstone Address, March 21, 1861," *Modern History Sourcebook: Alexander H Stephens (1812-1883): Cornerstone Address, March 21, 1861* Fordham University, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1861stephens.asp> (accessed September 5, 2012).

further by placing the African in slavery and their nation was based upon the principle that slavery was natural for the African.³⁹

The importance of slavery cannot be understated when looking at the Confederacy. Slavery was a central component of Confederate nationalism and the Confederate cultural nationalists urged students to understand the benevolence and religious foundations for the slave system that defined the southern culture.⁴⁰ When drafting their constitution, the Confederate Provisional Congress expressly mentioned “Negro slavery” and the “Christian God.” Whereas the American Founding Fathers were cautious in their wording, the Confederates boldly stated what the basis for their government. Christianity and slavery became two basic tenets of Confederate nationalism as one provided the justification for the other. Textbook authors simply helped confirm the Confederate Constitution in lessons that would strengthen children’s resolve for slavery and perpetuating this system sanctioned by God and firmly rooted in Confederate ideology.⁴¹

Some Confederate cultural nationalists believed that the sin of slavery occurred when masters mistreated their slaves, rather than the abolitionist claim of the immorality in the slave system. Moore urged the children in her *Geographical Reader* to “remember that slaves are human, and that God will hold them to account

³⁹ The use of the term “Negro” outside of quotations is to remain in the vernacular of the 19th century and does not reflect the opinions nor language of the author.

⁴⁰ Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1988), 60.

⁴¹ Constitution of the Confederate States of America, transcription, Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Georgia.
<http://www.libs.uga.edu/hargrett/selections/confed/trans.html> (accessed September 9, 2012): Faust, *Confederate Nationalism*, 22-40.

for treating them with injustice.”⁴² Buying into a system of paternalism, Confederates recognized the importance of caring for the slaves, who fell under their household. Masters were expected to provide their slaves with food, shelter, clothes, and support as they saw fit. This system was created in order to help the slave and master classes work and live together.⁴³ Though slave codes became increasingly more constricting for the slaves, Confederates still maintained that the masters must meet certain basic human needs. Moore objected to the mistreatment of slaves and saw this as the sin of the Confederacy. She urged her readers to recognize their role in the paternalistic slave system.⁴⁴

Samuel Lander, in *The Verbal Primer*, provided a very brief lesson on Uncle Tom that solidified the idea of paternalism. Uncle Tom, a common epithet for male slaves adapted from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s title character in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, appears content to stay in his condition of slavery.⁴⁵ Lander’s lessons centers around an exchange between a young mistress and her slave Uncle Tom, in which she mentions how hard at work he was and Tom replied: “That’s all poor Tom is fit for.” The young child pointedly asks him if he would rather be free and work for himself and Uncle Tom replied: “Why, no, Miss; don’t you know master gives me everything I want, and takes care of me when I am sick? What do I want to be free

⁴² Moore, *Geographical Reader*, 14.

⁴³ Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 32-33.

⁴⁴ Moore, *Geographical Reader*, 14.

⁴⁵ Alfred Kazin, “Introduction,” in Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), vii.

for?”⁴⁶ Life as a slave, under the system of paternalism, provided for Uncle Tom and he continued to work in order to maintain his lifestyle, or so they thought.

John Neely, in his *The Confederate State's Speller and Reader*, provided this short story about the slave's daily task:

Hark! how mer-ri-ly they sing as they pick the white cot-ton from the pods, and throw it in-to the bas-ket. These ne-groes are well fed, and well clad, and well cared for when they are sick. When their task is done, there is noth-ing to trou-ble them. Which of us that lives to an-y pur-pose, has not his task to do, as well as the ne-gro?⁴⁷

Neely's story reiterated the tasks of the slaves. They were the main producers of the Confederacy and the basis for the Confederate lifestyle. The slaves Neely described were well cared for, well fed, and well dressed—all necessities that masters should provide as prescribed by paternalism. Neely also reminded his readers to remember the tasks which they were required to complete on a daily basis. Everyone had tasks, from the masters to the slaves to the students studying Neely's text. Working from these nation-building schoolbooks, children of the Confederacy learned that whites and slaves lived and worked beside each other in their proper positions in society.⁴⁸

Mrs. S.A. Poindexter gave a very similar lesson about the harmonious relationship between slaves and masters in her *Philological Reader: A Southern Series*. Her story recounts how Uncle Nat bought a gift for a young mistress who read Biblical stories to his family and for writing “pretty letters for us to our folks in

⁴⁶ Samuel Lander, *The Verbal Primer*. By Rev. S. Lander (Greensboro, NC: Sterling, Campbell, & Albright, 1865), 27.

⁴⁷ John Neely, *The Confederate State's Speller & Reader Containing the Principles and Orthoëpy Systemically Developed, Designed to Accord with the “Present Usage of Literary and Well-bred Society”...for the Use of Schools and Families* (Augusta, GA: A. Bleakley, 1864), 100.

⁴⁸ Neely, 100.

old Virginia” telling them “all we want to say.”⁴⁹ Poindexter carefully introduced Uncle Nat and his slave family showing students how both parties in the slave system benefited from their conditions. The masters provided necessities for their slaves, and slaves reciprocated through their behavior and labor.

Marinda Moore noted in *The First Dixie Reader* that some slaves returned to their masters because they were treated more unfairly in the North than northerners were claiming. She highlights this in a story about a slave named Uncle Ned. Ned who ran away from his master after the Union troops came through his plantation. However, upon reaching freedom, Ned realized that he was actually better off with his master as a slave than with the white northerners as a freedman. The final line of the short story has Ned sending a warning to other slaves that “he wants eb-ry nig-ger to stay at home and mind his work, and let dem Yan-kees do der own work.”⁵⁰ Curiously, Moore included this story in her reader, a text designed to teach children the skills of reading, with Ned speaking in a dialect that represents a lower standard of the spoken language. The juxtaposition of a slave dialect with that of the civilized white schoolchildren again reaffirms the inferiority of the Negro. This story provides a counter point to a prevalent narrative that slaves were better off in the North. This particular slave returned to his “normal and proper condition,” having recognized the benefits of slavery.⁵¹

These textbook authors were members of a larger community of Confederate cultural nationalists, who promoted common ideologies that participants in the

⁴⁹ S.A. Poindexter, *Philological Reader: A Southern Series* (Nashville, TN: SouthWestern Publishing House, 1861) 453-454.

⁵⁰ Moore, *The First Dixie Reader*, 40.

⁵¹ Rice, 8.

larger Confederate political culture also embraced. Often stories and lessons found within textbooks mirrored those same arguments found both prior to and during the Confederacy's founding. Already writing textbooks for several years, Confederate cultural nationalists agreed to meet in 1863 in order to lay legitimacy to their cause for education. These textbook authors gathered at a convention of teachers and textbook authors assembled in Columbia, South Carolina on April 28, 1863 for the purpose of considering how to supply textbooks to schools in the Confederacy and how to advance the educational system already in place. Though the convention lead to little substance, the fact that these educators found it important to come together during wartime speaks to the importance of education to the Confederacy. Early in the convention, they created a Committee on General Interests of Education and Text Books, which was charged with strengthening and encouraging the textbook industry in the southern states in order to stimulate education. President Jefferson Davis gave his stamp of approval to those at the convention, as he was unable to attend. Davis assured those in attendance that:

[The discussion at hand] commands my fullest sympathy, and has, for many years, attracted my earnest consideration...Our form of government is only adapted to a virtuous and intelligent people, and there can be no more imperative duty of the generation which is passing away, than that of providing for the moral, intellectual and religious culture of those who are to succeed them.⁵²

Davis' final words demonstrate the need for textbooks to teach Confederate nationalism as Davis was one of Confederate nationalism's most ardent supporters. In order for the Confederacy to survive, the foundation of future generations would

⁵² *Proceedings of the Convention of Teachers of the Confederate States, Assembled at Columbia, South Carolina, April 28th, 1863* (Macon, GA: Burke, Boykin & Co., Steam Book and Job Printers, 1863), 18.

have to be laid. The importance of education also manifested itself when the Confederate Congress accepted the need for conscription in 1862. They provided numerous exemptions to the law including ministers, mail carriers, railroad workers, and most importantly printers and teachers.⁵³ Again, the need for education remained vital to the continuation of the Confederacy.

Both the Confederate Congress and Davis agreed with the Confederate cultural nationalists on the importance of producing their own Confederate educational materials from which their nation could grow to be the most intelligent in the world. The Convention of Confederate teachers, along with those who held the political power, believed that it was in the “school-room that the mind of the State [was] prepared for the development of its material and moral resources, and for the skillful application of them to its support and defense.”⁵⁴ The teachers recognized that they were educating the future of the Confederacy, and it was imperative that teachers succeeded in those goals in order to pass the reins of rule from the current generation to the future.

As we have seen, Confederate cultural nationalists carefully crafted texts that taught students the essential skills set forth by the educational framework for children living in the southern nation, but also helped instill those tenets which the Confederacy held so close and fought so hard to preserve. Southern authors wrote their works in direct contrast to their northern counterparts. Textbooks were seen

⁵³ George Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution against Politics* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 155.

⁵⁴ Proceedings of the Convention of Teachers of the Confederate States, Assembled at Columbia, South Carolina, April 28th, 1863 (Macon, GA: Burke, Boykin & Co., Steam Book and Job Printers, 1863), 8.

as essential to establish a prosperous country in order to help preserve the southern way of life and take the Confederacy into the future once independence was won. Some authors noted the weakening morale of the nation, but they urged students to remain vigilant. Without maintaining hope and faith in the cause, the Confederacy would be lost, and their way of life destroyed. Confederate cultural nationalists taught children not only what it meant to be a Confederate citizen, but perhaps more importantly how to defend their rights when challenged. Students learned that slavery stood as the cornerstone to the Confederate States of America and urged to believe in its continued practice in the southern states. These students studied the superiority of the southern cause and army and in this inflated sense of supremacy provided the students confidence in the prospect of independence. With a strong case for the superiority of the Confederacy and the importance of slavery to the cause, Confederate cultural nationalists looked to the past in order to rewrite parts of American history in order to claim this story as theirs for the taking. Hope remained high as students learned to trust in their revolutionary beginnings as Americans.

Chapter Three

“War of Independence for the Confederate States:” Reclaiming American History and George Washington as the Confederates’ Own

Students of the Confederate South were taught that the firing commenced at Fort Sumter in April 1861 was the beginning the Second American Revolution. Confederate cultural nationalists, attempting to garner support for the new cause of southern independence, used the American Revolution as the starting point for their current struggle. They hoped that this connection would strengthen their own resolve in fighting for what they believed was the right cause. Within a few short years from the start southern textbooks laid claim that the firing on Fort Sumter “constitute[d] a glorious era in [the Confederacy’s] national history,” as it was the “first battle in the War of Independence of the Confederate States.”¹ Though the Confederacy was still in its infancy when cultural nationalists began touting its illustrious history, its leaders claimed their rightful place as the crusaders for the American cause. They harkened back to their Revolutionary fathers and found their own place in American history. For the nationalists believed, and tirelessly promoted, that they were rightfully standing upon the shoulders of those great giants of the 1770s. Confederate school children learned from their textbooks that the Confederacy was not treasonous, but rather great Americans exercising their duty to defend their God-given rights.

Historian Drew Faust has noted that Confederates immediately began to exploit the rhetoric of American nationalism for themselves, as Confederates needed

¹ Richard Sterling and JD Campbell, *Our Own Third Reader: For the Use of Schools and Families, Stereotype Edition* (Greensboro, NC: Sterling, Campbell, and Albright, 1862), 61.

a history and an identity. They laid claim to the American Revolution and believed their struggle as the continuation of those same political currents embraced by the thirteen mainland colonies. As their forefathers had forged a new system of government through the crucible of war, so must they. George Rable, in *The Confederate Republic*, notes that Confederates latched onto the idea of anti-party politics and claimed a revolution against politics, much like what George Washington called for upon leaving the Presidency in 1797. Both Faust and Rable, used textbooks as evidence to support this argument, though only among numerous other sources including personal papers, political tracts, pamphlets, editorials, and sermons. However, Confederate publishing house textbooks demonstrate well the Confederate self-creation process, especially the idea of inheriting the Revolution of 1776 and creating a sense of a shared national history. Textbooks also taught children to see themselves as part of a large national culture, that of the Confederacy, rather than simply as Virginians, South Carolinians, or Georgians. Textbook authors tried to explain the necessity of war to children faced with the increasing costs of the struggle for independence and urged them to keep the faith.²

Confederates saw themselves as the true inheritors of the cause of the American Revolution. Thomas Jefferson, a wealthy Virginia planter and Revolutionary thinker, provided the key defense for breaking ties with a parent government in his Declaration of Independence against Great Britain. He stated that “it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish [a destructive government], and to

² Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 14; George Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 1-5.

institute a new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”³ By 1860, southerners believed the time had come to heed Jefferson’s call, dissolve their ties with the Union, and establish their own government that would protect their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Though most from the American Revolutionary period were long dead, Confederates understood they were continuing in the spirit of those who went before them. The cast of characters from the Revolution reemerged under new names in 1861. In Confederate texts, George III morphed into Abraham Lincoln; the Yankee Congress replaced the English Parliament; Jefferson Davis shared the status of the Confederate equivalent to George Washington.⁴

Laying claim to their revolutionary forefathers, the Confederates argued that secession was within the rights of the states. They harkened back to Jefferson and his great treatise on the right to declare independence from oppressive parent governments. Jefferson Davis, in his memoir about his time as Confederate president, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, mentioned the Union’s violation of the spirit of Jefferson’s Declaration:

The Southern States had rightfully the power to withdraw from a Union into which they had, as sovereign communities, voluntarily entered; that the denial of the right was a violation of the letter and spirit of the compact between the States; and that the war waged by the Federal Government against the seceding States was in disregard of the limitations of the Constitution, and destructive of the principles of the Declaration of Independence.⁵

³ Thomas Jefferson, *The Declaration of Independence*, 1776.

⁴ Rable, 46.

⁵ Jefferson Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1881), v. Google E-Book.

Even twenty years after the call for secession, Davis remained steadfast in his prewar beliefs regarding the right to secede from the Union. The North had violated the rights of the South and became a despotic government forcing the southern states to declare their independence through secession. Southerners believed the Federal government had violated their rights as citizens under the United States constitution. Confederates used textbooks to retroactively place themselves on the moral high ground for standing against perceived tyranny.

The argument rested on the idea that the Federal Constitution did not explicitly prohibit any state from dissolving its ties with the United States. H.C. Clarke, writing a *Diary of the War for Separation* in 1862, provided a brief history of tension between the North and South during the first eighty years of the United States and agreed with Davis' assertion that the South had the right to secede from the Union. He was quick to reference the threats by the New England states to secede over the 1807 Embargo Acts and called the ratification of the Constitution a "civil compact," which could be dissolved if the equal protection to all states was violated.⁶ For most Confederate nationalists, precedent had been provided by the New England states, though they had fallen short of following through on their threats, and now they simply did not want to extend the same right to the southern states because of their overwhelming disapproval of slavery.

⁶ H.C. Clarke, *Diary Of The War For Separation, A Daily Chronicle Of The Principal Events And History Of The Present Revolution, To Which Is Added Notes And Descriptions Of All The Great Battles Including Walker's Narrative Of The Battle Of Shiloh* (Augusta, GA: Steam Press of Chronicle & Sentinel, 1862), 12.

A Geography for Beginners, written by K.J. Stewart and published in 1864, agreed with Davis and Clarke's conclusion that states held the power to leave the Union if they ever believed that their rights were violated. Students studying Stewart's textbook learned that "When Virginia adopted the Federal Constitution...in 1788, the Commissioners of the State were directed to annex the condition and *reservation of the right to withdraw* from the Federation at will."⁷ Students needed to know that the right to secede from the Union was as justified as had been our separation from Britain. Only in this way could they refute the charge from northerners that the Confederacy be seen as traitors. The time to exercise the right to withdraw came in 1860 with the election of an anti-slavery president, Abraham Lincoln.⁸

John Rice, author of the geography text, *A System of Modern Geography*, wrote that prior to 1860 the Constitution of the United States had "been overthrown and despotism reign[ed] supreme in the hands of a political anti-slavery party." The only possible solution to these "repeated oppressive violations of the Constitution" was secession by the southern states.⁹ While still placing the blame on the northern states, Rice also made sure to include the reason for the Confederacy's urgent need to secede: slavery. The anti-slavery party, with Lincoln as the figurehead, took control of the United States government, creating the fear that the North would stop slavery's spread into new territories and curtail the political influence of southern statesmen. In order to preserve their lifestyle and pursuit of happiness, southerners

⁷ K.J. Stewart, *A Geography for Beginners* (Richmond, VA: JW Randolph, 1864), 40. Emphasis added.

⁸ Rable, 27-28.

⁹ John Rice, *A System of Modern Geography* (Atlanta: Franklin Printing House, 1862), 57.

had to create their own government, which would uphold the institution of slavery, and textbooks had to teach this lesson to children.

In order to prove the justification for dissolving the South's compact with the Federal Constitution, textbooks had to place the blame on the United States Congress, ruled by northern men unwilling to provide equal treatment for their southern countrymen. Rice claimed "secession was caused by the gross injustice of the northern states in repeated oppressive violations of the Constitution."¹⁰ The secessionists were only reacting to the oppressive North in their attempts to overthrow the southern lifestyle, namely slavery. For students of Rice's text, the blame lay solely in the North. These northerners made it virtually impossible for the South to remain a part of the Union for fear of the dissolution of slavery. In Confederate classrooms, students learned that the North had slowly eroded the rights of southerners in their own country and the only honorable course of action left was to declare secession.

Marinda Moore added to the belief in the oppression by the North by offering a brief history of the United States including their involvement with the African slave trade, initially profiting from sales of slaves. Moore presented the North as aggressive in attempting to usurp the South's power in the Federal government through the limitation of slavery. The Union attempted to limit the South's economic culture only after slavery became an unviable labor source in the North, instead selling those slaves South for large profits. After profiting from these sales, northerners began to call for the abolition of slavery and used their profits to try

¹⁰ Rice, *A System of Modern Geography*, 57.

and convince southerners. However, the South “tried to show [the North] how unfair this would be, but still they kept on.”¹¹ Eventually, the only way the South could prevent any further dissolution of slavery was to secede and start a new government where their economic security would be explicitly protected. Students studying Moore’s text learned that President Abraham Lincoln had declared war against the South, and had continued in “vain attempt to whip the South back into the Union.”¹² All the South wished was for the North to tell “her Southern sisters, “If you are not content to dwell with us longer, depart in peace. We will divide the inheritance with you, and may you be a great nation.””¹³ Moore’s readers learned that the North could have allowed the southern departure to be conducted peacefully, but instead waged war and caused great destruction. Instead of dividing their inheritance evenly, the South instead decided to claim it for itself.

While Confederate cultural nationalists stood behind Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence, they did not embrace it in its entirety. They often stopped after the justification for disbanding the political ties to an oppressive government. Textbook writers did not introduce students to the idea that “all men [were] created equal, that they [were] endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.”¹⁴ This proved too problematic for Confederates as the basis for their government rested upon, as we have seen, the inferiority of African slaves and the right to own them as human chattel. Jefferson did not appear as a Revolutionary hero for

¹¹ Moore, *Primary Geography*, 13.

¹² Miranda Branson Moore, *Primary Geography, Arranged as a Reading Book for Common Schools, with Questions and Answers Attached*, 2 ed. (Raleigh: Branson and Farrar, 1864), 13.

¹³ Moore, *Primary Geography*, 14.

¹⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *The Declaration of Independence*, 1776.

students to emulate in any of the textbooks researched, and curiously several did not include the text of his Declaration. Instead authors decided to keep the spirit of that document when discussing the causes for their current struggles. Many textbook authors carefully kept their distance from Jefferson and his ideas on equality similar to their refusal to discuss the fire-eaters of the late antebellum South.¹⁵

After establishing the legitimacy of secession based upon an understanding of Jefferson's Declaration and claiming the direct connection to the original thirteen colonies, textbook authors began to make connections between the Revolution of 1776 and the Southern Revolution of 1861. For far too long, southerners understood their contributions to the Revolutionary War of the 1770s had been neglected by northern texts. One writer in the *Southern Literary Messenger* complained that one northern textbook took "up forty pages in describing the Pequod war, and six in giving an account of the Southern campaigns of the revolution."¹⁶ These texts, they believed, carefully limited southern importance to the American cause and even in the Early Republic. But, even more to the detriment of southern children, these texts proclaimed the inferiority of southerners under the myth of northern dominance.¹⁷ Confederate cultural nationalists worked hard to counteract these myths by placing southern locations and people at the forefront of the Revolution of 1776.

¹⁵ Rable, 47.

¹⁶ "Editor's Table," *Southern Literary Messenger* 33 (July 1861): 75.

¹⁷ Bernath, 66-67.

Textbook author Kensey Stewart included in his text a correlation between the first American Revolution and the second in South Carolina. Purposefully neglecting any northern references, Stewart was sure to claim “the first decided outbreak of the Revolution of 1776 occurred in Charleston, on the occasion of the unjustifiable arrest and imprisonment of Robert Cunningham, in November, 1775.”¹⁸ The War of American Independence had *not* begun at the Battle of Lexington and Concord in April 1775, where modern-day students would accurately attribute the spark that finally erupted years of tension. Instead it was in South Carolina, coincidentally the same place where the spark that erupted the Civil War was lit. In Charleston Harbor the northern states attempted “to seize, provision, and occupy the forts in Charleston Harbour, and turn[ed] their guns upon the city they were designed to protect.”¹⁹ Stewart, whose text was part of the Palmetto Series, highlighted connections between the two wars for independence on American soil.²⁰ Intentionally neglecting the North’s influence on the first American Revolution, Stewart taught students that those battles, which led to the independence from tyrannical Britain, started in South Carolina, and transitively the start of the Confederacy’s independence movement in South Carolina would eventually lead to a similar outcome.

Samuel Lander, in his text *Our Own School Arithmetic*, likewise made a connection to the Revolution of 1776 in one of his word problems. Number 86

¹⁸ Stewart, 41. Cunningham was a Loyalist arrested for acts against the new state of South Carolina.

¹⁹ Stewart, 41.

²⁰ The Palmetto Series was a group of text written and published for South Carolina’s students, aptly named as the Palmetto State is South Carolina’s nickname.

asked: “The Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence was made May 20, 1775; North Carolina unanimously seceded from the United States May 20, 1861; how many days elapsed between these two great events?”²¹ The history of the Mecklenburg Declaration is contested today as no original copy of the resolutions made on May 20, 1775 remains, but it was largely known in North Carolina and became an important part of their historical tradition. Though historians today remain doubtful of its accuracy, North Carolinians of the nineteenth century would surely have believed in its importance as the first colony’s call for independence.²² It was almost poetic how the call for secession came 31,412 days, to answer to Lander’s question, or eighty-six years to the day from the call for independence, and this was not lost on Lander. Students reading through Lander’s text undoubtedly recognized this important coincidence.

Richard Sterling’s *Our Own Third Reader* included numerous stories of important and distinctly southern battles from the Revolutionary War, most within the Carolinas from which Sterling hailed. The reason for these stories was “to interest...young readers, and at the same time convey valuable information.”²³ Sterling’s interesting stories dealt with Revolution battles fought in the South, but the valuable information conveyed was through the grammar lesson. The supplied vocabulary words appeared numbered with definitions just above the story. Sterling then divided the lesson with either a sentence or several with

²¹ Samuel Lander, *Our Own School Arithmetic* (Greensboro, NC: Sterling, Campbell, & Albright, 1863), 219.

²² James H. Williams, “The Mecklenburg Declaration—History,” Mecklenburg Historical Association, <http://www.meckdec.org/declaration/history-of-the-declaration> (accessed January 26, 2013).

²³ Sterling, *Our Own Third Reader*, 3.

corresponding numbers. In essence, Sterling provided contextual definitions of vocabulary words through the use of interesting stories.

Included were stories about the Battle of King's Mountain, the Battle of Guildford Courthouse, and the Battle of Eutaw Springs, all fought within the Carolinas. Sterling provided words to spell and define in Lesson LV: Battle of Eutaw Springs: "2. PROX IM'I TY" and 'IN DE FAT'L GA BLE."²⁴ Sterling defined both and used them in the second paragraph of the story of the Battle of Eutaw Springs as follows, "On the 22^d of August 1781, General [Nathanael] Greene broke up his encampment on the Santee, to march against Colonel [Andrew] Stuart [sic], the British commander, who lay at Eutaw Springs in a pleasant security, never dreaming of the proximity of his active and indefatigable foe."²⁵ The use of Revolutionary War battles fought in the South made connections with students' vocabulary and helped to remind students of their great forefathers who fought for and persevered in their quest for independence from an oppressive government. This two-sided purpose reinforced the ideas of educational practice, but more importantly, it also redefined the Confederate student's recognition of the importance of the American Revolution of 1776 to their current cause for independence.

Perhaps no one connected these two great wars better than S.A. Poindexter in *Philological Reader, A Southern Series*. Throughout this text, Poindexter laments the loss of the Union, but not without recognizing the culprit of this dissolution, namely the North. She included a four-stanza poem of "Washington City," which declared the capital as a "beacon to all nations," "a place to which, from East and

²⁴ N.B. The words were presented broken by syllables by a space or apostrophe.

²⁵ Sterling, *Our Own Third Reader*, 167-168.

West/And South and North, should gather/Our counselors, in union knit,/As sons of one great father.”²⁶ Yet, even though the poem’s author believed that the Union would never dissolve, the rights of citizens were violated and the last stanza leaves no doubt by whom:

You’ll read how Britain’s king did once
Attempt t’oppress our nation;
You’ll read how Lincoln did the same,
And of th’ eventuation;
And ever in their footsteps tread
Who, when their right’s invaded,
Count not the cost, but spurn to be
By a tyrant’s rule degraded.²⁷

Within one poem, Poindexter was able to sum up the beliefs of the Confederacy. She connected Lincoln with King George III; she claimed the oppression of the North as cause for war; she referenced the footsteps of their forefathers as the path to take. She remained consistent with many Confederate cultural nationalists in their lament of the dissolution of the Union, but similarly she recognized that no other course of action remained because of the North’s tyrannical seizure of southern rights.

Confederates not only used the rhetorical language and lessons of the Revolutionary War period, but George Washington became their revolutionary father, prompting Jefferson Davis to hold his inauguration on Washington’s birthday and the Congress of the Confederate States of America to use a figure of Washington on horseback for their Great Seal (figure 2).



Figure 2: "The Great Seal of the Confederate States of America." Source: Faust, *Confederate Nationalism*, 25.

²⁶ S. A. Poindexter, *Philological Reader, A Southern Series* (Nashville, TN: Southwestern Publishing House, 1861), 423.

²⁷ Poindexter, *Philological Reader*, 423.

The seal, with Washington at its center also contained the words “*Deo Vindice*,” translated as “with God as our defender.” The Confederacy officially recognized the Christian God as the defender of the CSA, and by invoking his name Confederates hoped he would protect their new nation and deliver them from the Union’s tyrannical grip. But the imagery of Washington on horseback above the motto suggests the elevation of Washington to a god-like status, something visually created with the 1802 *Apotheosis of Washington* by John James Barralet.²⁸

The young United States positioned Washington on the pedestal and through their civic texts, including textbooks, placed Washington as the public and private, political and paternal father of the nation.²⁹ In 1845, Hastings Weld in *Pictorial Life of George Washington* claimed, “the first word of infancy should be mother, the second, father, the third, Washington.”³⁰ From his death, Washington ascended to a throne of greatness that was unmatched by any other American president. By placing him on this great throne, Americans looked past his faults. Fire-eater Edmund Ruffin had doubts that Washington “was the first or even among the first, in any new & important political movement, or devised any policy conducting greatly to the welfare of the people or the government,” but he believed “as do any of his idolizers” that “Washington was the man, & the only man, & it would seem

²⁸ François Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington’s Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 54.

²⁹ For the seminal work on how nineteenth century Americans adopted the image of Washington as father see François Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington’s Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

³⁰ Hastings H. Weld, *Pictorial History of George Washington: Embracing Anecdotes, Illustrative of his Character. And Embellished with Engravings. For the Young People of the Nation he Founded* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1845), iii-iv.

even designed by Providence, to be at the head of affairs, in war & in peace.”³¹

Ruffin affirms that Washington held power over the American people both North and South. Though Washington had faults, both northerners and southerners invoked his paternal guidance. During the Civil War, both belligerents would use Washington’s image and name as part of their rhetoric for fighting the cause. The Confederacy even used his image on their currency and envelopes, while the Union continued to invoke his guidance and placed his image on their own correspondence papers.³² The United States of America had claimed Washington and continued to trust in his name. When independence came, the Confederate States of America reclaimed this southern man as their own.

Thomas R.R. Cobb, a member of the Confederate Provisional Congress, even suggested the name Republic of Washington for the newly formed country.

Washington embodied the ideal the Confederacy began upon, that of a one-party system, which feared political factions overtaking the American political landscape. Washington also represented the grand revolutionary fathers that forged the way for southerners to disband their ties to the Union, an oppressive government. The fervent belief in Washington trickled down from the political realm into popular culture. Faust, in *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, recounts several instances where ballads claimed Jefferson Davis as “our second Washington” and several other songs that recounted glorious events of greatness for southern Americans, including this stanza from “God Save the South:” “Rebels before,/Our fathers of yore,/Rebel’s the righteous name/Washington bore./Why, then, be ours

³¹ Edmund Ruffin, *The Diary of Edmund Ruffin* quoted in Furstenberg, 25.

³² Furstenberg, 101.

the same,/The name that he snatched from shame,/Making it first in fame,/Foremost in war!”³³ This particular song, asking God to help save the South in its current struggle, wished to reclaim the name rebel, one which Washington proudly bore. No longer were rebels instigators, but revolutionary. Through these other forms of Confederate national literature the invocation of Washington and the Revolution allowed Confederates to celebrate in their new reclaimed American identity and history.³⁴

Just as George Washington made many appearances in the political rhetoric of the period, he also made his way into students’ textbooks. He often played the central figure for stories about moral character. Many textbooks written for the Confederate children included the folk tale of George Washington cutting down the cherry tree. The story urged children to heed the moral lesson that lying was ethically reprehensible and sinful under God’s watchful eye.³⁵ Washington, the “great father [of] his country,” was “studious, and was never known to tell a lie,” and children should “strive to follow his bright example.”³⁶

³³ *The Army Songster. Dedicated to the Army of Northern Virginia* (Richmond, VA: George L. Bidgood, 1864), 65.

³⁴ Emory Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), 221-222; George Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 46-7; Faust, *Confederate Nationalism*, 14. See also, George Washington’s Farewell Address 1796, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp (Accessed April 2, 2012).

³⁵ Moore, *The Dixie Speller*, 35; *The Southern Pictorial Primer; Combining Instruction with Amusement, and Designed for Use in Schools and Families. Embellished with Numerous Engravings* (Richmond, VA: West & Johnston, 1864), 9; Richard Sterling and JD Campbell, *Our Own Second Reader: For the Use of Schools and Families* (Greensboro, NC: Sterling, Campbell, and Albright, 1862), 134-136.

³⁶ *The Pictorial Primer*, 9.

Richard Sterling and JD Campbell provided a parallel story to Washington's obedience to his father in their second reader of their *Our Own* series.³⁷ In this story, the authors wrote of Washington's deep love of his mother, evident by his decision to stay home with her instead of becoming a midshipman when just a young boy. The story ends with Washington's mother claiming God's blessing for the young general because of his devotion and adherence to the commandment to honor thy mother and father. The authors end the story with the lesson that Washington "was one of the best of boys. He was diligent, punctual and obedient...Who is there among men more honored by his countrymen, and by good men and children all over the world, than George Washington?"³⁸ His moral courage and devotion to his parents gave Washington a place of honor for Confederate children. In their schools, children learned lessons of Washington as a man of conviction in his beliefs.

Marinda Moore's text *The Dixie Speller* continued in the devotion of Washington as "father of his country," since "he saved his country from falling into the hands of the British."³⁹ Here Moore tried to lay claim to the perception of American independence before the outbreak of war with Britain. The rhetoric used, i.e. "falling into," suggests that the United States, Washington's country, had been independent and risked the unfortunate fate of being brought under British control. Knowing Moore's work as pieces of Confederate nationalistic propaganda, it

³⁷ *Our Own* was a series of readers written by Sterling and Campbell and published in their publishing house. It is named since they were for the explicit use of the southern states in the Confederacy.

³⁸ Sterling and Campbell, *Our Own Second Reader*, 40-41.

³⁹ Moore, *The Dixie Speller*, 35.

suggests that here she is trying to place the same fate for the Confederacy. Two pages prior to this recounting of Washington's story, Moore berates the North for their unchristian behavior towards the Confederacy and the North's forcing the South into war.⁴⁰ Just as Washington was able to repel the British from the American nation, the Confederacy could resist the encroachment of the North.

Robert Fleming elevated Washington to Biblical proportions through the use of his character as an introduction into a Biblical story of Jesus interacting with a Roman centurion who felt unworthy of Christ's presence. Fleming asserted Washington was "first in war, first in council, and first in the affections of the people," as well as a prominent slaveholder.⁴¹ So too was the Biblical Roman centurion who believed that because he commanded men and held slaves that Jesus would be unwilling to heal his servant, but Christ did perform the miracle and commended the man for his faith. Through the use of this lesson, Fleming hoped to show the students that simply owning slaves did not place them outside of Jesus' love. In fact, a man of great faith, both the centurion and Washington, would be heard and his prayers answered. Here students learned that Washington had as great a faith in Jesus as the Roman guard, but more importantly owned slaves and still fell within God's favor.⁴²

Fleming invoked Washington's name in several other lessons in his speller, mostly focused on the importance of Washington to the Confederacy. His birthday,

⁴⁰ Moore, *The Dixie Speller*, 32.

⁴¹ Robert Fleming, *The Elementary Spelling Book, Revised and Adapted to the Youth of the Southern Confederacy, Interspersed with Bible Readings and Domestic Slavery* (Atlanta, GA: J.J. Toon & Co., Publishers, 1863), 45.

⁴² Fleming, 46.

February 22, became the official start of the Confederate government.⁴³ Later, Fleming invoked the common Washington moniker “father of his country,” that “his memory [was] cherished by the people of the Southern Confederacy,” and that he was an “instrument under the all-ruling hand of God” with goodness and greatness.⁴⁴ These lessons reaffirmed the intense faith in George Washington and laid claim to him as the father of the Confederate States of America. In southern eyes, Washington became a dual father of two countries unable to compromise over the issues that divided them. He played the same role for both nations, as the Union would continue to use Washington, invoke his paternal guidance, and use his warnings of political faction to justify their involvement in the Civil War. However, the Confederacy used Washington as the father figure to his happy slaves and fellow southerners.⁴⁵

In his reader, Richard Sterling provided an extended story about trusting in God with Washington as the central character. In the narrative, Washington encountered a poor fatherless child and returned him to his widowed mother. He offered to write a prescription, implying that he was a physician, and left the desolate family to continue on his journey. When the widow looked at the papers, she noticed that Washington had left a money order for one hundred dollars. The author assured his students:

This is a true incident. Such was the father of his country, a man fearing God, not less pitiful to the sorrows of a weeping child, and the anxieties of a widowed mother, than great in the armies of his country, and the councils of the nation. Thus were the widow's

⁴³ Fleming, 59.

⁴⁴ Fleming 60, 167.

⁴⁵ Furstenberg, 100-101.

prayers answered, and the seed of this faithful Christian not suffered to "*beg bread*."⁴⁶

Students learned that Washington was not only a great warrior but also a role model of Christian charity. He feared God and was concerned with all his fellow countrymen, even the lowly widow and her weeping child. The claiming of Washington, the first American president, as one of their own provided Confederates a common figure to revere and aspire to. By claiming Washington as one of their own, Confederates found a common figure for their children to emulate. Their common ancestry of the great Revolutionary leaders provided Confederates a united connection with each other.

Confederate children learned that Jefferson Davis possessed some of the same qualities held by George Washington, beyond simply being the first president of his nation. Davis, was "at once the model *statesman* and distinguished *warrior*, has so acted as to endear himself to every true patriot of the South."⁴⁷ Davis filled the role of Washington in the Confederacy, a role he was cognizant of, evidenced by his use of Washington's birthday as his inauguration and being sworn into office underneath a Washington statue.⁴⁸ At least in the classroom, Davis aspired to win the people's trust as had Washington who was "first in the affections of his people."⁴⁹ Young southerners were told Davis, because of his great virtue, would deliver the people of the Confederacy into the land of freedom and independence, just as General Washington had in the Revolution.

⁴⁶ Sterling, *Our Own Third Reader*, 70.

⁴⁷ A.S. Worrell, *The Principles of English Grammar* (Nashville, TN: Graves, Marks & Co., 1861), 159.

⁴⁸ Faust, *Confederate Nationalism*, 14.

⁴⁹ Fleming, *The Elementary Spelling Book*, 45.

Confederate cultural nationalists worked hard to set forth a clear vision of the American past. Taking cues from their northern predecessors, southerners needed to lay claim to the American Revolution in order to justify their current struggle. Relying on the justification of the thirteen colonies under British rule, Confederates used the Declaration of Independence as a rallying cry around which to show the right of secession under despotic governments. By continually referring back to the Revolution of 1776, textbook authors forced children to see the connection between their past and the present. Students learned of hard-fought revolutionary battles won in the South, which Confederate cultural nationalists believed counteracted the inaccurate histories concocted in the North. Textbooks made the connections for the students that their current struggle originated in the American Revolution and the Confederacy's cause was one of reclaiming the original American ideals. Since their forefathers succeeded in their revolution, it stood to reason that so too would the nascent southern nation.

By invoking the name of George Washington, and reclaiming his southern heritage, Confederate cultural nationalists found a figure around which Confederates could identify and upon which to rest their dreams of independence. Government officials recognized Washington's importance to their cause and adopted his image and birthday as nationally important. Children learned that in order to be good Confederate Americans they had to emulate Washington in their daily lives. God had blessed him with truthfulness, favor, and most importantly, success. With Washington as the father figure the Confederate States of America would surely succeed. These textbooks, written by and for southerners, were

carefully crafted in order to connect the Confederate present to the American past.

Though the Confederacy lost the war and thus its existence, it did not fail in its attempts to create a new American identity, and then teach that identity to its children.

Conclusion

Textbooks are crafted along political and cultural lines in order to teach a certain version of the past and present. They are shaped by our present society to form future ones. What we teach our children in their textbooks says a lot about how we see ourselves. Textbooks define who we are and what we believe. The national values of the country find their way into the texts to fulfill the schools' charge to create patriotic citizens. According to Harriet Tyson-Bernstein, textbooks are now the *de facto* curriculum of the public schools, meaning that the information presented within them constitutes the important knowledge needed for school children.¹

In 2010, the Texas Board of Education went through a curriculum shake-up that was well documented for Public Broadcast System's "Independent Lens" in the documentary "The Revisionaries." Texas and California are the United States' largest textbook markets, and with Texas' change in the state standards, textbook publishers were pressured to make sure their products fit within the new framework. Board member Mary Helen Berlanga claimed that the conservatives on the elected board "are rewriting history, not only of Texas but of the United States and the world."² The lesson of "The Revisionaries" moves beyond how these Texas conservatives have warped the past to fit their agenda, but more importantly how those proposed revisions shape the textbooks that are written. When a publisher

¹ Harriet Tyson-Bernstein, *A Conspiracy of Good Intentions: America's Textbook Fiasco* (Washington, DC: The Council for Basic Education, 1988), 11.

² James C. McKinley Jr., "Texas Conservatives Win Curriculum Change," *The New York Times* March 12, 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/13/education/13texas.html?_r=0 (accessed February 23, 2013).

authorizes a work that now leaves Thomas Jefferson out of a discussion of the Enlightenment, it diminishes the importance of his philosophy to the American Revolution.³ Textbooks in Texas have been rewritten in order to match the regional values of the state, but because of its prominence in the industry they have a much larger impact.

On the eve of the sesquicentennial remembrance of the Civil War, a Pew Research Center Poll found that 48 percent of Americans ascribe to the belief that the Civil War was fought on the issue of states' rights. An informal poll by sociologist James Loewen found that a higher rate of teachers (55-75%) believe that states' rights was the most significant reason for secession. This inaccurate portrayal of the Civil War leads to the wrong understanding about our past, and the correlation between the percentages of the general public and teachers suggest that the states' rights narrative succeeds in America today.⁴ When educators write, and more dangerously rewrite, history standards, textbooks, and classroom lesson plans they wield enormous power to shape the minds and attitudes of future generations of Americans. Standing uncorrected, these flawed histories will undoubtedly continue to shape the understanding of the students who read them, leaving the cycle of misinformation in place until it is forcibly broken.

When the Confederate States of America reshaped southern education, they crafted a narrative that intended to invoke patriotism and an understanding of the southern way of life. As we have seen, the Confederate cultural nationalists took

³ April Castro, "Texas Education Board Approves Conservative Curriculum Changes by Far-Right," *Huff Post Politics* May 25, 2011
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/13/education/13texas.html?_r=0 (accessed February 23, 2013).

⁴ James W. Loewen, "Getting the Civil War Right," *Teaching Tolerance* 49 (Fall 2011), 24.

their understanding of the importance of education from the Early Republic educational reformers. Though Thomas Jefferson urged the adoption of common schooling in the state of Virginia, it failed to materialize prior to Reconstruction. Horace Mann of Massachusetts and Calvin Wiley of North Carolina made the largest strides towards common education in their respective states. Mann helped bring Massachusetts to the forefront of nineteenth-century education. With Wiley as the head of their education system North Carolina became the earliest southern state to encourage universal education. Both Mann and Wiley recognized the importance of schools in the creation of republican citizens. Textbook writers Noah Webster, William McGuffey, and Wiley wrote their schoolbooks to match the educational goals of schools in antebellum America. Confederate cultural nationalists in turn looked toward these works to accomplish the same goals, albeit in creating Confederate citizens committed to the cause of southern independence.

While authors used northern textbooks as a foundation, they crafted works entirely of and for their own society. One of the most important distinctions between these two bodies of works was the presentation of the benevolence and righteousness of the slave institution that had a firm grip on the South. Authors wrote stories and lessons that upheld the peculiar institution and used the Bible heavily in order to justify its existence. Confederate cultural nationalists heavily relied on Christian tradition to teach schoolchildren that trust in God and the Confederate cause would lead to freedom from oppression by the North. The narrative crafted by the authors told students that the blame for war lay with the North; slavery was essential to the very survival of the South and sanctioned by God.

The horrors of war, they asserted, were a stepping-stone in order to welcome the glorious era of Confederate independence.

In an effort to add legitimacy to their cause, textbook authors reclaimed their shared American past as their own. In the textbooks, Confederates claimed the fulfillment of the Revolution of 1776 and claimed George Washington as their father. The Southern Revolution of 1861 ushered America into a New Era that they believed would make the founding fathers proud. Authors made direct connections between the two revolutions as they compared Abraham Lincoln to George III and Jefferson Davis to George Washington. Students learned that Washington was a southern slave owner who placed his trust in God, followed God's commands, and led his nation to independence. These lessons came from a shared narrative, but Confederate cultural nationalists reframed the narrative to help bolster their southern cause.

Textbooks that are shaped by community standards will always be used to inform future American political leaders, teachers, economists, scientists, doctors, and lawyers. Just as the Confederacy shaped their textbooks to fit their agenda, Americans have been doing the same since the country's founding. The fight for the "correct version" of American history is far from over. American school children have been reading textbooks in schools for hundreds of years. The Confederate cultural nationalists were not far from the mainstream in their attempts to paint an American landscape that fit into their goals and agendas. By looking at Confederate textbooks, we can see what textbooks had to say about their culture and what it meant to be a Confederate citizen. Though they lost the war, the Confederate States

of America's textbooks capture an image of a burgeoning society frozen in time. By cracking the books back open, we can see what many Confederates thought of themselves and their country.

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