

of American education. She has poured over teachers' manuals, periodicals, and handbooks and tried to assess the role of new educational ideas from Europe. The early emphasis on religious conversion seemed to weaken toward midcentury as discussion focused on techniques, professionalism, and nurture. A very interesting chapter at the end focuses on the way in which teaching shifted to the more gradual changes contemplated in Horace Bushnell's ideal of Christian nurture. Childhood in the new romantic understanding challenged orthodox beliefs that, as one clergyman put it, children "are condemned criminals, and they need pardoning mercy" (p. 147). The book closes with a brief return to the comparison of American with British practice. Unlike the British, Americans have made the Sunday school an effective tool in the fulfillment of their intention to Christianize America.

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Abolitionist, Actuary, Atheist: Elizur Wright and the Reform Impulse. By Lawrence B. Goodheart. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1990. Pp. xiii, 282. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$27.50.)

Elizur Wright, sometime abolitionist, actuary, and atheist, seemed destined for the ministry. Born in 1804 to fervently religious parents, educated at that seedbed of evangelicalism, Yale College, and then employed by Oberlin College, where religious commitment reigned, Wright must have felt all but irresistible pressure to consecrate his life to the pulpit. But resist he did. As an Oberlin faculty member in the 1830s, he became embroiled in a tooth-and-nail controversy between immediate abolitionists and proponents of black colonization. His ready pen in the immediatist cause propelled him from his frontier academic post to headquarters of the newly organized American Anti-Slavery Society in New York. As the society's secretary, he played a key role in the most aggressive and fateful reform effort of the age. During that campaign his unbelief was honed. Concluding that the conservatism of churches and clerics formed an obstacle to emancipation second only to that of slaveholders themselves, Wright adopted an anti-clerical, antireligious stance that led him finally into the advanced freethought position that the author with probable exaggeration calls atheism. It also led him into temporary poverty and joblessness as the antislavery coalition splintered and he himself lost favor with the controlling groups.

Most of the prominent abolitionists of the 1830s maintained at least minimal ties with the movement as it evolved in later decades. Wright seems not to have done so. After several discouraging

efforts at publishing reformist newspapers, his career took an unexpected turn. In the 1850s circumstances allowed him to help institute reforms in the infant life insurance industry, whose mysteries were creating fortunes for a few manipulators and losses for myriad small policyholders. Wright put his remarkable mathematical ability to the task of developing actuary tables that removed some of the mystery and much of the chicanery from life insurance. This was a permanent achievement from which millions of Americans have benefited.

Lawrence B. Goodheart has performed the enviable feat of making the abstruse realm of insurance statistics—of which Wright was master—comprehensible to the layman. For this alone he deserves congratulation. In all, Goodheart has written a well-researched, engaging study of a nineteenth-century figure whose varied accomplishments deserve to be better known.

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American Immigrants and Their Generations: Studies and Commentaries on the Hansen Thesis after Fifty Years. Edited by Peter Kivisto and Dag Blanck. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990. Pp. viii, 222. Illustration, notes, figures, tables, appendix, index. \$19.95.)

Historian Marcus Lee Hansen mostly is remembered for his oft-quoted dictum about generational relations: “what the son wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember” (p. 195). Hansen’s “principle of third generation interest” (p. 194) influenced writing on immigration and ethnic history following its exposure in *Commentary* in 1952, which was fifteen years after Hansen dealt with “The Problem of the Third Generation” before the Augustana Historical Society in Rock Island, Illinois. In 1987 editors Peter Kivisto and Dag Blanck, Augustana College faculty, invited leading historians and social scientists to the school to assess the significance over the last half-century of Hansen’s thesis; they now have edited the proceedings.

John Higham, Thomas J. Archdeacon, and Moses Rischin begin with essays that place Hansen’s work, including *The Atlantic Migration* (1940) and *The Immigrant in American History* (1940), in historical context and propose the terms for its enduring value. Particularly interesting is Higham’s contrast of Hansen’s narrative writing with that of social historian John Bodnar of Indiana University. Five essays are directed toward application of Hansen’s thesis to specific ethnicities. Philip Gleason argues that Will Herberg’s *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1960) made the first critical use of Hansen’s thesis in applying it to American religion and finds the