

errors, the author might perhaps show greater care in his own conclusions.

For historians Rutman's "grass roots" approach in the Namier tradition is of great value. The research has obviously been thorough, and the author is well equipped to guide others through the labyrinth of colonial records. But more evidence is needed to prove that the towering edifice of church and state was never more than a small heap of sticks and stones.

University of North Dakota

Beverly Zweiben

*Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century.* By Ruth Miller Elson. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964. Pp. xiii, 424. Notes, illustrations, bibliography, bibliography of textbooks used, index. \$7.00.)

Those of us who have been "indoctrinated" in the mainstream of American intellectual and social history by such men as Parrington, Gabriel, and Curti probably deserve to be called the dilettantes of the historical profession. We deal with grand themes, large ideas, and magnificent generalizations. Our work displays the sophisticated erudition of a modern Renaissance Man. Henry Adams, Thorstein Veblen, or even William Graham Sumner should be our ideal. In any case, we trust our colleagues will marvel at the ease with which we thread our way through the varied disciplines of philosophy, literature, and the natural and social sciences. It may quite truthfully be said that we are philosophers of history, but not historians!

Yet, if the scope of reconstruction and analysis of the past is as cosmopolitan as some have maintained, then the philosopher of history probably has a place in the profession. But the real dimensions he can add to history as a discipline must go deeper than the rather obvious historical material he has dealt with heretofore or than the methodology and postulates of the groping behavioral sciences from which he may have borrowed too indiscriminately. In *Guardians of Tradition* Professor Elson has attempted to provide these added dimensions by presenting the results of her twenty-five years' study of some one thousand textbooks used in American schools during the nineteenth century. In the main this is an ideological treatment of the content of these books. Elson concentrates particularly on the common type of school reader, such as the various editions of McGuffey, as well as an history and geography books and, to a lesser extent, on spellers and arithmetics. As the author defines her efforts in the Preface, this systematic review of the dominant themes and ideas contained in these books serves to define the "attitudes which make up the lowest common denominator of American intellectual history." Here the underlying values and ideals of the entire society should be found, unless perchance the textbook writers are totally out of step with their times, an unlikely occurrence in the case of books which continue to be used and published. And certainly from what is known of the politics and journalism of various periods during the nineteenth century, this reader

can concur with the author's conclusion that her study tends to show how "Americanism" was being popularly defined or idealized. Naturally, as Elson repeatedly points out, the picture is not always clear or consistent at any given period. The author also tries to show the changes in views and emphases from one period to another, particularly the differences in the treatment of subjects before and after the Civil War.

Although Professor Elson has done a prodigious job in distilling and synthesizing what she has found in such a vast array of schoolbooks, it is doubtful that she has extended our knowledge of what "the American Mind" was all about during the last century. Nor can the reader automatically assume, as the author seems to, that the textbooks were a cause rather than an effect of certain patterns of thought, which in turn had arisen from the most diverse historical roots. Because the categories of her ideological analysis are themselves quite traditional in the field of intellectual history, her work still retains the one-dimensional perspective which has characterized so much of the writing in this field. There has simply been too great a tendency to ignore the facts of history as the social-intellectual historian attempts to display his findings. As a result these findings are reported in too much of a vacuum and are often distorted by the writer's prejudices. In Professor Elson's case, there is a distinct superiority complex in her presentation, which in itself is barely matched by the notions of racial and national superiority she finds in the schoolbooks themselves! Her own implied and expressed value judgments suffer both from the largely ahistorical framework in which she writes and from her lofty position of scholarship, which seems to make her forget that these books were intended for young children, not for high school or college students. If Elson really feels, as she says, that some of the literary fare in the books used during the early nineteenth century was too rich for the "common" schoolboy, perhaps she should reconsider her own notion that the young student can be taught critical thinking rather than the simple facts and values presented in the majority of these books.

*Lilly Endowment, Indianapolis*

Kenneth S. Templeton, Jr.

*Religious Strife on the Southern Frontier.* By Walter Brownlow Posey.  
(Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965. Pp. xviii,  
112. \$4.00.)

The immediate post-Revolutionary War years precipitated increased migrations into the American West. Filled with settlers seeking fertile lands, the West soon realized unprecedented growth and appeared destined to upset the political and economic power of the East. Moreover, the conditions peculiar to frontier existence threatened to destroy existing social customs and religious creeds. Fear by eastern theologians that the expanding democratic regions west of the mountains would succumb to "Godlessness" prompted the birth of cooperative religious ventures to avert such calamity. The American Bible Society, the American Sunday School Union, and the American Home Mission Society