

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.

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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

plunged into the wilderness distributing Bibles along with religious education and conversion. But denominational cooperation evaporated quickly. Frontier Methodist and Baptist preachers resented encroachment upon their "sphere of influence" by eastern Congregationalists and Presbyterians; and soon all Protestant denominations engaged in lively, at times vitriolic, debate in vying for membership. When the Disciples of Christ threatened to destroy the religious monopoly after 1830, the established sects conveniently ignored their differences and joined again in concerted action to thwart the "menace." And as Catholicism spread westward following the European influx of Irish and German settlers during the 1830's, the Protestant denominations (including the Disciples of Christ) once more closed ranks and, united in fear and ignorance, faced this latest challenge to their geographical supremacy.

Walter Brownlow Posey cleverly examines these denominational fluctuations in *Religious Strife on the Southern Frontier*. Tracing early movements of people into Kentucky and Tennessee, and later the population shifts into the lower Mississippi Valley, Posey depicts the dilemma faced by organized religion in converting the frontiersman. Ministers found individuals more concerned with land speculators than God's messengers; moreover, frontier psychology demanded a departure from religious creeds which, while acceptable in the sedate East, found little support on the democratically oriented, non-intellectual fringe of civilization. Posey describes the evolution of camp meetings and the eventual success of denominational religion through its graphic exhortations on salvation and damnation. The revival afforded the uneducated a direct emotional release, and such frontier communication with God converted thousands of skeptics into believers. As religion permeated the West, each sect viewed the other suspiciously; and soon suspicion evolved into competition for church membership. Such theological rivalry, Posey suggests, subsided only in times of national crises—in particular the Revolution, the Civil War, and the Catholic challenge.

Religious Strife on the Southern Frontier is a compilation of lectures delivered by the author at Louisiana State University in April, 1963. Understandably, lecture material must exclude panoramic examinations and concentrate instead upon condensation of pertinent material. Still, some depth analysis of the 1830's and 1840's—specifically the era of Jacksonian reform and abolitionism—and their impact upon southern religious development would have been welcome. Posey refers to these events, but the relationship between them remains vague and serves to perplex rather than clarify. These points considered, the fact that the author has managed to shed light upon frontier denominational warfare deserves the historian's thanks. Through subtlety and wit, and the inclusion of illuminating quotes from nineteenth century religious leaders of all shades, the author has demonstrated conclusively that religious harmony was, in general, a negative force in frontier regions—existing periodically to withstand external forces more feared than each other.