

*THE ENDURING SOUTH: Subcultural Persistence in Mass Society.* By John Shelton Reed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974. xxi + 90 pp. List of tables, methodological appendix, bibliography, notes, and index. \$4.95.)

Henceforth please disregard those glossy *New Yorker* ads touting Atlanta's cosmopolitanism, Nashville's culture, Dallas's night life. According to this re-analysis of 1938-1968 survey data from Gallup and the National Opinion Research Center (first published in 1972 and now issued in paperback), the South is still as particularistic, pistol-happy, and puritanical as ever. After ingeniously employing surveys to demarcate the South from the rest of the U.S., sociologist John Shelton Reed compares opinion in the two regions on three broad topics: regional loyalties and kinship ties, violence, and religion. Interstate highways, condominiums, and New York-produced TV programs have apparently had little impact on Southern localism. Corporal punishment and permit-free gun ownership still command considerably more support to the south than to the north of the "Smith and Wesson line." Fundamentalist Protestantism, with its corollaries of

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prohibitionism and antipathy to Catholics, Jews, and atheists remains much more pervasive in Dixie than outside it. Nor are these contrasts much reduced when statistically controlled for the survey respondents' education, urbanization, and occupations. Southern values, according to Reed, are more than products of the region's obvious demographic traits; there really is something different about the South.

Indeed, Southern whites comprise something approaching the classic definition of an ethnic group. The regional grouping serves as a source of psychological identification and as the center of primary group relationships, and refracts national patterns of behavior through its own "prism of cultural heritage" (p. 10). On most survey questions, Southern whites differ more from Yankees than blacks do from whites (p. 83).

Why did this cultural gulf arise and why does it persist? Following C. Vann Woodward and Sheldon Hackney, Reed speculates that Southern identity emerged as a defensive reaction to antebellum Northern attacks ("there would be no South if there were no North"). It persisted partly because of "threats" which continued after the War and partly because parochializing institutions (family and church) are stronger in the South and cosmopolitanizing institutions (schools and media) are weaker than they are elsewhere (pp. 83-90).

Although its light and witty style, its size (90 pp. of text), and its solid grounding in facts would seem to make it a valuable tool in undergraduate Southern history courses, one may question the book on several grounds: Just how central are Reed's themes to the Southern consciousness and Southern history? How does a regional differentiation on these topics relate to feelings on race or towards party competition? How are the opinions linked to the social and political structure? Why do Southerners with different demographic traits differ in the extent to which they adhere to the "Southern position" on the questions of localism, violence, and fundamentalism? Has the South really been in a "chronic crisis" (p. 89) since the Civil War? If not, why have articulate white Southerners sometimes seemed to think so? Has Southern opinion changed on these and other topics since 1968 (the latest date on any of the surveys he cites), or have Vietnam, the string of assassinations, the nationalization of race as a conscious issue, the birth and death of radical social movements, the emergence of feminism, the uncloseting of sex, the spread of dope left Southern opinion untouched and rigid? Is cultural defense so crucial to the white South as it must have seemed at the time these surveys were taken? May the factual basis as well as the speculations of this book be therefore somewhat dated? With a holy Georgia peanut farmer rolling (at the time of this writing) toward the nomination of the party of George McGovern, can we really say that sectional consciousness has endured?