

BOOK REVIEWS

American Heathens: Religion, Race, and Reconstruction in California. By Joshua Paddison. Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West, series editor, William Deverell. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press and San Marino, CA: the Huntington Library, 2012. Sources cited, illustrations, photographs, bibliography, and index. 267 pp. \$45.00 cloth.

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Combining the topics of post-Civil War Reconstruction, California in the Gilded Age, and federal Indian policies of the late-nineteenth century may seem incongruous, yet Joshua Paddison in *American Heathens* connects these topics in a way that compels one to reconsider the meaning and boundaries of Reconstruction. Paddison argues two main points. First, development of racial hierarchies and defining citizenship were closely tied to religion in the West during the post-Civil War period. Second, Reconstruction was “multiracial and multiregional” and ended in the 1880s (p. 5). Defining citizenship was a process, and *American Heathens* details how attempts to define citizenship broadly in the late 1860s and early 1870s shifted to an almost universal call for exclusionary policies. With California’s diverse population, the state’s role was critical in the debate, and religion was central to the struggle. Paddison writes, “Christianity provided the language with which competing groups defined and contested race” (p. 37).

Initially, many Protestant missionaries in California supported unrestricted Chinese immigration and President Grant’s Peace Policy, which placed denominations in charge of Indian reservations. Missionaries also argued in favor of expanding the franchise, but only for all male Christians. As one mission agency wrote, the Chinese “cannot be safely entrusted with the rights of citizenships . . . unless they are brought out of the darkness of their natural state and the bondage of their pagan religion into the light and liberty of the gospel” (p. 44). The same, according to missionaries, was true for Native Americans. Paddison’s study of Indian-white relations focuses on Round Valley Indian Reservation (north of San Francisco)--the location of the largest Indian Christian revival during the Peace Policy era. One Methodist minister visiting Round Valley was convinced of God’s work there and predicted that if the revival continued, the Indians would become “useful, orderly and industrious citizens” (p. 67).

California missionaries were fighting an uphill battle. One San Francisco paper