



Lion of the Forest (Ohio River Valley)

Charles C., Jr. Cole

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James B. Finley - circuit rider, missionary, prison reformer, church official - transformed the Ohio River Valley in the nineteenth century. As a boy he witnessed frontier raids, and as a youth he was known as the "New Market Devil." In adulthood, he traveled the Ohio forests, converting thousands through his thunderous preaching - and he was not above bringing hecklers under control with his fists. Finley criticized the federal government's Indian policy and his racist contemporaries, contributed to the temperance and prison reform movements, and played a key role in the 1844 division of the Methodist Episcopal church over the slavery issue. Making extensive use of letters, diaries and church and public documents, Charles C. Cole, Jr., details Finley's influence on the moral and religious development of the Ohio River area. Cole evaluates Finley's writings and focuses on his ideas. He traces the important changes in Finley's attitudes toward slavery and abolition and provides new insights into his views on politics, economics and religion. For anyone with an interest in early life and religion in the Ohio River Valley, *Lion of the Forest* supplies a critical but sympathetic portrait of a complex, colorful and controversial figure.

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