

come alive and problems of the Bureau of Indian Affairs seem immediate. But much of the detail borders on the antiquarian. Perhaps it is useful to know something about the bookkeeping practices of the bureau or the number of letters each overworked clerk transcribed. For some there may be a certain fascination in knowing precisely how Indian medals were struck or how books were bound, but does it matter?

Viola is generally sympathetic toward his subject, although at one perceptive moment he refers to McKenney as a blend of blarney and sincerity. He insists that McKenney was a great humanitarian. This does not quite come off. Other than that McKenney grew up in a Quaker family, there is not a satisfactory explanation of the wellspring of his humanitarianism. But more importantly, the McKenney of this book seems not to have a deep insight into the needs of Indians and the overwhelming problems they faced. Viola sets out to correct what he calls a faulty image of McKenney as a vacillating and self seeking opportunist. The picture that does come through is that of a socially ambitious, impractical dreamer who could not keep his own financial house in order and who did not do much better with the affairs of the Indians.

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The Mind of America, 1820-1860. By Rush Welter. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975. Pp. xvi, 603. Appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$14.95.)

Rush Welter, whose previous writings have displayed a talent for the American Studies approach to scholarship, is a professor of American history at Bennington College. This latest impressive work pursues the same interdisciplinary avenue to understanding an age often called the Middle Period. Welter's emphasis here is more of an exploration of the "inarticulate premises" of a generation (p. vii) than of the formal intellectual trends of the day; therefore, predictable personalities rarely appear except as spokesmen for commonly shared beliefs.

In order to reveal the views of this traditionally silent majority, Welter draws from patriotic Fourth of July orations,

state constitutional conventions, pamphlets, periodicals, and, surprisingly, very few contemporary newspapers. The result of this research is an instructive and often entertaining compendium of quotations which validates the author's major theses. A multitude of supposedly inarticulate unknowns speaks forthrightly on the American mission, equality, religion, education, politics, and other topics. The general reader will find the arguments and prose easy to follow and will not be led on any exotic academic excursions. For the more venturesome reader there are two hundred pages of notes, bibliography, and index. In addition to the standard footnotes for source citations, Welter includes a separate set of notes for digressions into historiographical comparisons and sometimes querulous debates with other scholars and definitions.

Welter skillfully channels the many facets of the Middle Period mind into a number of underlying themes. One of these is the manner in which democrats and conservatives replaced their initial differences with mutual accommodations on many issues. For example, the frontier West became a social leveler for classes and regions because it "made room for their disparate hopes" (p. 320). Another theme, nicely developed in the final chapter, is the inevitability of the Civil War, which resulted, in part, from the contemporary generation's strongly held convictions on morality, constitutions, and individual liberties.

Any book of this scope and ambition naturally invites as much criticism for what it is not as for what it is. An analysis of popular literature would be appropriate and welcome here, as would a discussion of William McGuffey in either of the sections on morality or education. Welter's omission of proslavery arguments despite generous anti-slavery ones is a curious departure from his usual balanced treatment of issues. And closer editing would have prevented the rhythmic "on the one hand . . . on the other hand" which appears with metronomic frequency.

Its minor flaws included, this is a commendable addition to the field of intellectual history. With Russel Nye's *Society and Culture in America*, a recent look at the same generation from a slightly different vantage point, historians are now better equipped to understand and appreciate the mind of America before the Civil War.

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