BOOK REVIEWS


Honoring the Sabbath, setting aside one day out of seven as special, is the tantalizing subject of Winton U. Solberg's *Redeem the Time: The Puritan Sabbath in Early America*. As the foundation for the still widespread but endangered observance of the Sabbath in the United States, the Puritan attitude toward, and practice of, keeping the Lord's Day holy, is fascinating from a variety of points of view; and Solberg attempts to pursue his study from several different vantage points. His interest in the theological, socio-economic, and historical aspects of the Puritan Sabbath contributes to the breadth of the book but also threatens the depth of analysis.

Solberg's commitment to the importance of the theological and intellectual elements of the Puritan observance of the Sabbath is established from the first. The whole first part of the book delves into the biblical and theological sources of the practice, culminating in the English Puritan formulation in which "good Sabbaths make good Christians" (p. 59). Unfortunately, this sweep of Judeo-Christian theology requires summaries which border on oversimplification and reflect Solberg's own solution to controversial theological problems. Nevertheless, the acknowledgment of the influence of religious faith and perspective is refreshing.

At the same time, Solberg is careful to discuss Sabbatarianism from the political-economic point of view. He admits, "Not Calvinism alone, then, but Calvinism interacting with basic economic and social forces accounts for the rise of the Puritan Sabbath" (p. 27). Solberg emphasizes that the day of rest was integrally related to the other six days of hard work and contributed to the progressive beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in England and the United States. He documents this well in the chapters on the Chesapeake colonies and New York, where the civil enforcement of rest on the Sabbath brought political order and economic viability to unruly and floundering societies.

In fact, the larger part of *Redeem the Time* is a catalogue of facts which trace the establishment and growth of the English colonies by
highlighting the laws governing the observance of the Sabbath. Solberg has performed an important function of the historian by collecting primary data on colonial practice on the Sabbath. He holds forth tidbit after tidbit which delights the lover of detail and builds evidence for the peculiar development of the English colonies in America. This contribution to the study of American history is marred only by periodic tangents into general history known to every American schoolchild, like the movement of the Pilgrims from England to Holland to Plymouth (pp. 115-20).

Solberg has undertaken an ambitious project. In so doing, he raises the questions which plague modern historians. Is the task to document alone or to posit reasons why? If the historian does offer explanations, upon what understanding of humanity do they rest, an intellectual-spiritual one, or a political-economic one, or another? It is disappointing that Solberg's broad overview of the practice of observing the Sabbath fails to touch the depths of either these concerns or the continuing implications of Sabbatarianism.

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Some years ago a historian sent an article on the McIntosh expedition of 1778-1779 to the Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine. The editor returned it with a kind note saying that the topic was being covered in a series, already commissioned, on Fort Pitt and the Revolution. A bit upset at this turn of events, the historian waited for the articles in question, convinced no one could handle the subject as well as he — he was wrong. This reviewer was that historian, and this book is an outgrowth of those articles.

Modern scholars have been inclined to assign the Revolution on the frontier a secondary role in the struggle, but in the 1770s this was hardly the case. General Washington, long aware of the significance of the Ohio Valley, saw territorial expansion as a goal second only to independence itself, as evidenced by the concern expressed in his letters, and by his willingness to sacrifice men and material he could hardly afford to that end. Central to his concern was the garrison at