with a great variety of people and organizations, and not only with a small group of communist leaders. From Nelson’s vantage, we better understand what party membership meant for hundreds of men and women, few of whose stories have been told until now: why young immigrant workers were drawn to radicalism in the 1920s; why rank-and-file party members who were committed to a vision of freer, more democratic institutions supported repressive Soviet policies in the 1930s and 1940s, despite their own doubts; and why their break with the party in the 1950s was for many of them such a traumatic experience.

The best part of Steve Nelson is Steve Nelson himself, and the fact that the book is based on oral history only enhances the qualities of the story which reflect his temperament and personality. Unlike other recently published autobiographies that began as oral narratives, however, the authors provide little explanation of the process by which Nelson’s spoken words became the written words of the book. Barrett and Ruck say only: “It is his remembering and rethinking that shape this book. The two of us simply helped put it down in words” (xviii). This is inadequate guidance for readers who are interested in the interplay between memory and history, but it is a gap that hardly detracts from the story Steve Nelson tells.

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The American Quest for the City of God. By Leland D. Baldwin.
(Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1981. Pp. ix, 368. Foreword, prologue, index. $18.95.)

Dr. Leland D. Baldwin, who died early in 1981, was the author of seventeen published volumes on American history, whose scope extended from the history of a city (Pittsburgh) to a two-volume survey of United States history. At the end of his life Baldwin summarized his reflections on this nation’s past in The American Quest for the City of God, a volume filled with such riches of information and interpretation that a brief review does not do it justice.

The basic thesis of Baldwin’s final work is that the key movements of American history have been secular expressions of the City of God: the American Mission; the New Freedom; the New Deal; the New Frontier; the Great Society; Manifest Destiny; making the
world safe for democracy, even the American Civil War. He stresses the great rivalry between liberalism and conservatism throughout American history, but although he is on the side of progress, he more than occasionally manifests a critical attitude towards leading reformers. Thus Theodore Roosevelt "actually accomplished little" (p. 262), while Woodrow Wilson "was not willing to go too far" (p. 265); as for Franklin Roosevelt, "the New Deal did not bring the United States out of the depression" (p. 286).

With the winds of change blowing across America, Baldwin nevertheless complains about the relative absence of real debate, and pessimistically observes: "It may be suggested, that neither liberals nor conservatives have much to offer that will stand rational examination" (p. 360). One possible remedy is constitutional revision, a topic addressed by him in a book published a decade ago. Baldwin goes so far as to suggest that it might be desirable to adopt some version of the parliamentary system in the United States.

Although most of the chapters deal with domestic matters rather than foreign policy, those covering the latter are among the most interesting ones. Baldwin quite logically devotes the opening chapter to the English roots of American civilization — a subject on which he once wrote an entire book. In fact, the English impact globally has been quite extensive; in the chapter on imperialism Baldwin makes the bold claim that China and Latin America "were . . . British to all intents and purposes" (p. 223). As for the imperialistic United States, its behavior in the Philippines was as barbaric as was the Spanish, while it had no intention of including its new tropical possessions in the "City of God." Today "The American Mission Is Passé . . . at least in any crusading sense" (p. 343).

But in his survey of the post-World War II era Baldwin takes issue with the New Leftists, labelling Harry Truman as a great president because he stood up to the Communists, thus, it is hoped, gaining time for Russia to mellow. Still, he recognizes that the Vietnam War "made clear . . . that there was a limit to what American power could encompass" (p. 296). Baldwin's obvious hostility towards Richard Nixon is demonstrated by his devoting a mere sentence to Nixon's policies towards the Middle East, the Soviet Union, and Communist China.

Perhaps the most controversial methodological feature of this book is Baldwin's frequent reliance on stereotypes with respect to nationality and other groups. Thus the nineteenth-century Germans were "docile, obedient, industrious" (p. 136), while the behavior of
the pre-Civil War "Cotton Snob" "ranged from the pompous to the overbearing" (p. 165). Baldwin later notes that most Americans today have stereotyped views about Mexicans and blacks, but historian Justin Smith also stereotyped the Mexicans and Americans in his 1919 two-volume history of the Mexican War.

In discussing the book's general layout, one might note that it contains an index and scattered footnotes, but there is no formal bibliography. The reviewer also found eleven minor typographical errors, a shortcoming which occasionally detracts from this well-written volume. In defiance of the current practice of viewing history through a microscope, it literally embraces the cosmos with its telescopic probings.

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As Professor Philip S. Klein stresses in his foreword to this excellent bibliography on Centre County, local history is of significance as a laboratory in which broader themes in the American experience can be analyzed. Yet specialists in local studies have been hampered by a dearth of good bibliographies and finding aids.

Part of the Penn State Libraries' bibliography series, Joan Lee's compilation of Centre County materials could and should serve as a model for similar undertakings in other Pennsylvania counties. More than twenty-three hundred entries include both published and unpublished sources, books, pamphlets, articles, public documents, dissertations, theses, and manuscript holdings. Arrangement is alphabetical by broad subjects, beginning with agriculture and ending with water and sewage. Each entry has its own number and each adheres to standard bibliographic form. Annotations, where they appear, are succinct and helpful to the researcher who must make judgments about which sources would be most germane to his or her subject. Repository location abbreviations follow each entry, and there are thorough author and subject indexes by entry number.