described, but the theory and its assumptions are not fully explained. Likewise, the
public ritual of penitence called amende honorable is merely presented as “une
peine principale” (p. 113). This ritual in which the criminal confessed to and
repented for his offence sanctioned the punishment to follow and purged his soul.
It also reinforced the moral order and the system of justice, while separating the
culprit from the sympathy of the onlookers. Every public execution of justice was
a calculated and explicit lesson to cow potential malefactors among, to use one
writer’s phrase, “le peuple toujours déraisonnable.” The French magistrates’
belief in the irrationality and moral depravity of the lower orders of society would
explain their zeal, noted on p. 137, to brand and to isolate transgressors. “The
breakdown in morals,” wrote the author of the Code de la Police, "is a contagious
disease, whose progress will lead to the destruction of the body politic.” French
criminal justice was capable of extreme brutality in dealing with what appeared
to be the germ of social disorder.

La Justice criminelle du Roi au Canada is not a complete work. It exposes
one aspect of a legal system that dealt with civil matters and regulated commerce
too. The book is a prelude for Prof. Lachance’s promised “étude de la crimina­
lité.” Better organized yet less vital than his earlier work, it is an admirable
handbook on the actual procedure, practices, and personnel of the royal courts
of New France in the eighteenth century. For these things and a wealth of ad­
ditional details, it is a book well worth acquiring.

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It is a curiosity of American historiography that, despite the large and
growing literature on the eighteenth century, there should be so little devoted to a
comprehensive view of the Enlightenment in America. Professor May’s book seeks
to remedy this situation. Befitting a volume on the eighteenth century it is clearly
written and well laid out. Divided into four unequal sections — the Moderate
Enlightenment, 1688-1787; the Sceptical Enlightenment, 1750-1789; the Revo­
lutionary Enlightenment, 1760-1800 and the Didactic Enlightenment, 1800-1815 —
it chronicles the rise, the flood and, above all, the ebb of the movement. Given
that the American Enlightenment was essentially the product of an elite, was
remarkably shallow in its permeation of American society and had to contend
with the vital, and often boisterous, religious forces stirring colonial and revo­
lutionary America, May tries to deal with the Enlightenment within the context
both of American society and the prevailing ideological patterns. This means
recognizing that the Enlightenment cannot be understood apart from the religious
ideas and feelings of the time and May is acutely aware of the interplay between
religious and other developments in American life from the Great Awakening to the
Great Revival. Indeed, if anything distinguishes the Enlightenment in America
from its European manifestations, it is the degree to which it is permeated by
religion. If this book can be said to have a thesis, it is the role of religion in the
Enlightenment in America, not only, for example, in the onslaught of revivalism
from without in defeating it, but also, May argues, in Anglican dreams of glory that
split the moderate enlightenment religious camp into two, and in pitting Old Lights
against Anglicans paved the way for the rise of ultraprotestantism.
May delineates well the main assumptions of the world picture envisioned by
the early or moderate Enlightenment, paying particular attention to Anglican beliefs
but having surprisingly little to say about the political ideology of either the
American Revolution or the newly born republic. Symptomatically he probes for
the roots of Toryism in religious rather than political soil, though with little enough
success. He plays down both the importance of the Skeptical Enlightenment in
America and the degree of French influence within it; English deism, not French
skepticism, lay at its core. It was at best a shallow movement, blown out of all
proportion by its opponents; Hume was known only as an historian and, ironically,
his influence was felt only later in America through the Scottish reaction to him,
Common Sense philosophy. The Revolutionary Enlightenment taking shape after
1760 was a markedly different phenomenon from the moderate one that
preceded it; poise and balance gave way to passion and intensity. The Re­
volutionary Enlightenment had much in common with the religious enthusiasm that
existed alongside it and that was ultimately to prove its nemesis. Religious in
spirit it was intolerant, cataclysmic, committed to popular instinct and millenial
in both tone and object, yet secular in looking to reason and knowledge to usher
in the millennium to a material world. It owed much to the English Commonwealth
and Dissenting traditions and was a reaction to the complicity of the secular side
of the Moderate Enlightenment, just as revivalism itself was a reaction to the
complicity of the religious side. Thus "millenialism" was a major factor in
American intellectual life in the second half of the eighteenth century; ultimately,
however, it was its religious, rather than its secular, form that better suited the
taste of the American people.

The final section of the book shows persuasively how the Enlightenment
finally came to terms with, or rather was absorbed by, Christianity and democracy
in America through the medium of Scottish Common Sense philosophy. With
French catholicism inconceivable and German idealism incomprehensible, this
philosophy, which could justify almost anything, provided a juste milieu between
equally unacceptable Benthamite liberalism and Burkean toryism. It triumphed
because it was associated with both the Moderate Enlightenment and moderate
calvinism and because the evangelicals, revivalists and moderate calvinist re­
formers were able to offer social control, peace, joy and contentment to people in
harsh and barren surroundings, a task beyond the Enlightenment's power. May's
analysis not only explains what happens to the Enlightenment; it also provides
a basis for a better understanding of both the social and intellectual currents of
the Jacksonian Era.

This book has many virtues: the stress on religion, the attempt to treat the
whole movement, the concentration on the dynamics, the change in ideas, rather
than taking a static approach. Yet the balance seems rather uneven. The Moderate
Enlightenment, which in the long run probably contributed most to American
thought, is disposed of in less than a hundred pages, while the Skeptical and
Revolutionary Enlightenments, which for all the brilliance of the latter were far
less influential, together get twice that space. It is true that Philadelphia in the 1790s
is a fascinating study, but despite May's explicit assumption to the contrary, it is
doubtful if its importance and influence in the new republic were equivalent to
that exerted by Paris in Revolutionary France. Apart from the introductory
sections on the Moderate and Revolutionary Enlightenments, there seems to be a
surprising reluctance to articulate a comprehensive ideological structure, particu­
larly on the intermediate level, that is to link separate ideas into a larger, over­
arching pattern. Consequently the chapter on Virginian Deism becomes a recitation
of people with labels pinned on them, and deals far more with the manners and
mores of the planters than with their ideas, a similar tendency recurs elsewhere,
for example the treatment of the New England clergy in Part III. Often many
distinctions become blurred; deists and sceptics get lumped together as though
they are the same thing; it is never clear just which New England clergy are
millenialists, and of what kind, and which are not. Equally disturbing is a tendency
to deal with men rather than ideas; many sections of the book consist of a series
of brief vignettes; the introduction of a figure, some pertinent facts about him and
a brief statement of his ideas and then on to the next. Many of these are excellently
done but the whole tends to be less than the sum of the parts because the ideo­
logical structures which they illustrate do not seem to be an essential part of the
chapter. What one often gets, therefore, is a set of conclusions; one does not see
the arguments on which these conclusions rest, and often it is these very arguments
that constitute the essence of the thought. One other problem arises, ironically
enough, from one of the book’s great merits. May stresses the role of millenialism
in the ideology of the Revolutionary Enlightenment but there is no basic discussion
of millenialism or of the non-enlightenment religious ideas which are so vital a part
of the story. This is perhaps hardly surprising since May has deliberately sub­
scribed to a self denying ordinance, “people whose ultimate authority is either
scripture or faith do not belong in the Enlightenment” (p. 402, n. 29). Such
forbearance may be defensible from the view point of the Enlightenment but it
does close off a great deal of the life of the mind of eighteenth century Americans;
in effect it forbids the exploration of half of a dialectic, whose importance May is
at pains to stress. Taken to extremes, it might admit a discussion of Charles
Chauncey, but veto one of Jonathan Edwards (although in truth May does not
carry it quite that far). Religion, both rational and revealed, loomed too large in
eighteenth-century America, and was too intertwined with the Enlightenment to
deliberately ignore so vital a part of it; it was this religious element that gave the
American manifestation of the Enlightenment much of its own unique character.
This book is probably now the best overall work on Enlightenment thought in
America but it would have been even more illustrative of the American mind in
the eighteenth century, had its goal been American thought in the Age of the
Enlightenment rather than considering just the Enlightenment in America.

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Léo A. Johnson. — History of the County of Ontario, 1615-1875. Whitby,

To say that Professor Johnson’s History of the County of Ontario is the best
local history written to date about an Ontario region could be interpreted as a way
of damning this book with faint praise, since the existing body of Ontario local
studies is scarcely studded with historical gems. The book however is far from
being merely the best of an indifferent lot. It is an outstanding accomplishment
by any standards and sets a level of scholarly achievement which will be difficult
for other local historians to meet.

What makes this book exceptional and what makes it extraordinarily useful
well beyond the bounds of local history is simply its unvarying concern with actual
historical detail. With far more precision and far more real evidence than is usual
in such works, Professor Johnson makes plain a great deal about the process of
historical development in the county. There are inevitably aspects of local history
for which he has not been able to find time or space (the militia, for example,