

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 criminalité." 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 additional details, it is a book well worth acquiring.

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HENRY F. MAY. — *The Enlightenment in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976. Pp. xix, 419.

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 Revolutionary 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 revolutionary 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 scepticism, 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 Revolutionary 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 millennial in both tone and object, yet secular in looking to reason and knowledge to usher in the millenium to a material world. It owed much to the English Commonwealth and Dissenting traditions and was a reaction to the complacency of the secular side of the Moderate Enlightenment, just as revivalism itself was a reaction to the complacency of the religious side. Thus "millennialism" 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 toriyism. It triumphed because it was associated with both the Moderate Enlightenment and moderate calvinism and because the evangelicals, revivalists and moderate calvinist reformers 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, particularly 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 millennialists, 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 ideological 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 millennialism in the ideology of the Revolutionary Enlightenment but there is no basic discussion of millennialism 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 subscribed 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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LEO A. JOHNSON. — *History of the County of Ontario, 1615-1875*. Whitby, Ontario: The Corporation of the County of Ontario, 1973. Pp. 386.

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,