DAVID E. STANNARD. — *The Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion, Culture and Social Change.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. Pp. *xii*, 236.

The scope and importance of this short book are far wider than its title would suggest. Attitudes toward death are used not only as a mirror of a society's belief system but also as a key to changing structural relationships within that society. In this essay Stannard argues that the American Puritans' attitudes toward death and their funeral practices arose not only from their religious convictions but also from the pressures, real and perceived, imposed upon them and their culture by a changing New England society.

Two brief introductory chapters survey "Death in the Western Tradition" and give a succinct but excellent sketch of the mental world wherein the Puritan dwelt and which shaped their attitudes toward death. Particularly vital in understanding them was their belief not only in the afterlife and predestination but also in the importance of earthly existence as well as their expectation of an immanent Apocalypse which would sweep away a harsh physical world. Then follows a splendid chapter on "Death and Childhood", which in itself justifies the acquisition of the book. Perhaps to the surprise of some, Stannard's Puritans emerge as loving parents, quite aware that children were children and not miniature adults, worried about both the physical and spiritual health of their offspring. These worries were not only justified by the high disease and infant mortality rates but intensified by their belief in predestination, which allowed them to envision the loss of their child throughout eternity. Such anxieties, Stannard believes, underlie Puritan child rearing practices; they feared the possible anguish of being too attached to their progeny. If adults contemplated death with horror, uncertain of their own salvation and ever-conscious that hell-fire could be their fate, the children's fears were compounded by the basic childhood anxiety of being separated from one's parents, knowing that should either parent or child be damned, death would bring not reunion but perpetual separation. Such childhood fears, argues Stannard, followed the Puritan into adulthood "to produce a culture permeated by fear and confusion in the face of death" (p. 69).

For the Puritan then, death was a great calamity brought on by original sin and he went through life both fearing it and clutching at any straw that might give reassurance of his own salvation. Perry Miller's blithe assumption that the Puritans were optimistic about death is emphatically rejected. Caught between a traditional Christain rhetoric that man had control over his own salvation and its own deterministic convictions that he did not, Puritan society was rent by a cultural dissonance, whose resolution was delayed until the eighteenth century because the elements creating it were so integral a part of the belief structure.

The decline of Puritan society was accurately reflected in its funeral practices. Initially, New England Puritans had followed the customs of their co-religionists in England, eschewing ritual and ceremony, now rendered irrelevant by belief in predestination and unbelief in purgatory, both of which precluded any help by the living for the dead. By the end of seventeenth century however, funerals had grown more elaborate with prayers, eulogies and ornate headstones. This increasing ritualization of death Stannard explains by noting the theory that in unstable and threatening times societies tend to indulge in elaborate rituals. So, from the 1650s onwards, the Puritans, increasingly isolated, shaken by the death of their early leaders and the collapse of a familiar world steadily being undermined by increasing population and prosperity, indulged in a growing "tribalism", lamenting the past and seeing themselves as a threatened community struggling to fulfill a divinely appointed mission. Increasingly funeral ritual is thus part of the Jeremiad

syndrome. As society continued to change, the interdependence of society and culture meant that the traditional culture became increasingly anachronistic and as cultural institutions lost their potency a sense of bereavement set in and the Jeremiads themselves spoke more and more of it. Consequently, the Puritans began to establish a relationship with their past in both the form and the function of bereavement. Seeing an apt delineation of the Jeremiad in Peter Marris' theory that a disintegrating society looks both to a past which it tries to reassert and an idealized future, Stannard follows Marris' argument that these two elements react to reconstruct a meaningful relationship and in some circumstances such a reconstruction can lead to revolution. And indeed a kind of revolution did occur — "an attempted revitalization of its way of life seemingly on the verge of extinction" (p. 141) — the Great Awakening, which is thus portrayed as the product of a conflict between a traditional and increasingly anachronistic group culture and an emerging social structure. Thus the traditional Puritan dialectic of piety versus reason is transformed into one of cultural and social dissonance.

The final deterioration of a viable Puritan culture during the Great Awakening is well demonstrated by the evolution of a more optimistic perspective on death. A sentimental longing for death replaces the earlier fear. A growing conviction among the revivalists that one could tell who was saved neutralized the belief in predestination and ended the old tension between death and the fear of dying.

In the final chapter devoted to American attitudes toward death in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Stannard joins the implicit Jeremiad current among recent New England historians lamenting the loss of a sense of community. The decline of Puritanism with its strong sense of group identity and extended kinship relations paved the way for the excesses of more recent American funeral practices. Death is more traumatic to the members of a small nuclear household than it is to those who feel part of a larger community; unable to dilute their grief in the larger whole, compensation is sought in more elaborate funeral ritual.

This is a stimulating book, well-expressed and clearly written. It is frankly impressionistic and relies heavily on theories drawn from sociology, anthropology and psychology. The approach does allow a fresh look at Puritan history and many discrete elements of New England history, intellectual, social, demographic, medical, iconographic, are molded into a meaningful whole. Indeed since the basis of the book is so theoretical, it forms a ready model for those interested in other times and other places. Yet such an approach is not without its problems. Theories are combined together with an almost heroic daring; several theories culled from several disciplines may be strung together in one argument, even one sentence. The approach is blatantly pragmatic; the test seems to be whether particular theories will explain a set of facts rather than whether there exists any necessary, theoretical connection between the various applied theories themselves. As a result some parts of the book resemble a patchwork quilt rather than a well-tailored suit. Furthermore the factual basis of the study tends to be rather narrow and biased. The source material is drawn largely from Massachusetts and generally Boston at that. Unfortunately Cotton Mather and Samuel Sewall were not in fact as ubiquitous in New England as they are in this book's footnotes, and, if recent demographic studies have revealed anything, it is that Boston and New England are not synonymous. Additionally, while much of the argument rests on contrasting Puritan practice in New England with that in Old, it is never demonstrated, assertions notwithstanding, that English Puritans were less concerned with death than their Massachusetts brethren in the mid-seventeeth century nor are late seventeenth and eighteenth century English non-conformist, or even Weslyan, funerals examined. The Great Awakening was far too complex and widespread an event,

one that transcended the bounds not only of New England but of America itself, to fit in to so neat an interpretation as the one offered here. Marris' theory as used by Stannard and quoted by him addresses itself explicitly to political revolution. In any case, one might question whether it is the traditional Puritan society that falls apart during the Great Awakening or whether that society has not already declined far beyond recognition by the 1730s. To raise such questions, however, is really to comment upon the strengths rather than the weaknesses of the book. For in *The Puritan Way of Death*, Stannard has raised many fundamental issues in the history of Colonial American society and proposed various challenging and promising pathways by which to seek solutions, pathways no one work can be expected to fully explore. This is an excellent work that all historians of colonial America can read with profit and with pleasure.

Peter J. KING,
Carleton University.

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DENIS MONIÈRE. — *Le développement des idéologies au Québec des origines à nos jours.* Montréal, Les Éditions Québec-Amérique, 1977. 381 p.

Il est maintenant de bon ton parmi les intellectuels nationalistes d'afficher dans leurs travaux une rhétorique marxiste. Appliquée à l'analyse du passé québécois, cette démarche n'a le plus souvent d'autre résultat que d'aboutir, sans pourtant en améliorer la substance, à moderniser superficiellement les thèses des historiens néo-nationalistes. Le livre de D. Monière sur les idéologies au Québec est en majeure partie le produit de cette approche ambiguë des rapports entre le national et le social.

L'auteur introduit d'abord son sujet par un exposé sur la nature des idéologies selon Marx, Engels et Mao; mais, comme Marx s'est assez peu préoccupé de la dimension nationale, il fait appel à des éléments théoriques puisés chez les idéologues de la décolonisation. Puisque ce modèle n'a jamais été vérifié à propos du Québec et que sa vertu explicative a été sérieusement mise en doute (S. Amin lui-même laisse entendre que sa *théorie du développement inégal* ne vaut pas pour le Canada[1]), il est bien évident que l'auteur, sous prétexte de ne faire qu'œuvre de synthèse, ne peut, comme il se le permet allègrement, escamoter l'étape de la recherche originale et celle de la vérification de son modèle. En effet Monière, rejetant chez les auteurs qu'il exploite tout ce qui contredit sa thèse, s'est contenté de tirer des travaux des historiens les seuls faits et interprétations qui paraissent justifier ses conclusions. D'ailleurs ce procédé est employé avec un allant qui exclut tout sens critique. Quelques exemples suffiront à illustrer ce problème. À la page 131, citant L. Groulx, après avoir mis le lecteur en garde contre les historiens « plus catholiques que rationnels » (p. 38), Monière écrit: « Ainsi, aux élections de 1834, le parti patriote obtient 483,639 votes et ses adversaires seulement 28,278 ». La somme de ces deux chiffres est 511,917 et elle égale exactement le chiffre de la population totale (hommes, femmes et enfants) du Bas-Canada selon le recensement de 1831. Tout historien bien informé sait qu'à cette date le nombre des électeurs ne dépasse pas les 60,000 et que le maximum des votes (deux par électeur le plus souvent) se situe autour de 110 000. Ailleurs, à la page 80, Monière

[1] F. OUELLET, compte rendu du livre de N. Séguin, dans *Histoire sociale*, 1977, p. 439-447.