The American Enlightenment: The Shaping of the American Experiment and a Free Society. Selected and edited by Adrienne Koch. (New York: George Braziller, 1965. Pp. 669. Notes, chronologies, sources, suggested readings. $8.50.)

This anthology, the last to be published in the six-volume "American Epochs Series" under the general direction of Frank Freidel, contains selections from the writings of five "philosopher-statesmen"—Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton. One might wish for a broader representation of eighteenth-century thinkers, from Jonathan Edwards to Benjamin Rush; but the choice of these particular men reflects clearly Professor Adrienne Koch's view of the American Enlightenment as chiefly oriented toward the theory and practice of government. Unlike their European counterparts these five Americans were not only thinkers but also men of action who played important roles in the revolutionary and constitutional phases of the establishment of the new nation. On the other hand, another "founding father," George Washington, is omitted because he was more a "man of deeds" than an "architect of ideas." Despite some qualms at first about the inclusion of Hamilton as a representative of the Enlightenment, this reviewer agrees that this remarkable cluster of men produced the most influential set of ideas in the period of American history stretching from 1765 to 1815. Yet, by lumping together in this way such diverse and often mutually antagonistic thinkers as Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton, the editor runs some risk of exaggerating the extent of ideological consensus within the American Enlightenment.

Professor Koch's thirty-page introduction is a model of clear, graceful exposition of the meaning and significance of the American Enlightenment, with well-reasoned arguments for her conception of it. Since it would not fit her purposes, however, she gives little attention to the non-political aspect of American thought in the eighteenth century.

The writings of each "representative" thinker are divided into three sections, the first containing autobiographical materials intended to reveal something of the individual character of the writer, the second composed of personal correspondence on a variety of subjects—but chiefly political, and the last drawn from books, pamphlets, and other public documents. This method of selection, while making for short, choppy passages in many places, brings the author to life for the reader better than would an anthology restricted to formal political essays. Culling from the vast collected works of American statesmen just now being published in full and definitive, editions, Professor Koch has managed to preserve in her compact selections much of the flavor and breadth of view of the original. For this reason the book should prove useful to undergraduates and others as a means of sampling judiciously the thought of the founding fathers, whose influence upon their country's political traditions has never been matched.

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