PURITAN BOSTON AND QUAKER PHILADELPHIA: Two Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Class Authority and Leadership
by E. Digby Baltzell
Free Press, 1980
585 pp. $19.95

Rooted in tradition, Boston and Philadelphia seem, at first glance, to be sister cities. Yet while Bostonians have influenced U.S. history all out of proportion to their numbers, Philadelphians have not. (One example: In the *Dictionary of American Biography*, only 76 people rate entries of more than 5,000 words; 31 are Massachusetts natives, two are Pennsylvanians.) The gap, theorizes Baltzell, a University of Pennsylvania historian, can be traced to the contrasting values of the Protestant sects that founded these cities. Boston's Puritans set a standard of both intolerance and high-toned responsibility, reflected in the city fathers custom of banning objectionable books. Philadelphia's Quakers—more egalitarian and individualistic—were inclined toward tolerance. Averse to political maneuvering, they exhibited, says Baltzell, a rigid diffidence that enabled the city's notoriously corrupt politicians to take hold and prosper long before the 1776 Revolution. "Passive and private," Philadelphia's upper class has generally kept to its clubs and businesses, shunning participation in public life. Baltzell sees a warning in this tale of two cities: For most of its history, America, like Boston, has been primarily Puritan and Calvinist in spirit; during recent decades, especially the 1960s, the country's intellectuals and academics have moved closer to Philadelphians' individualism. The result, believes Baltzell, may be a generation of highly educated humanists who are unwilling to lead.

THE CHEESE AND THE WORMS: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller
by Carlo Ginzburg
Johns Hopkins, 1980
177 pp. $14

"I have an artful mind," admitted Domenico Scandella during his first trial for heresy in 1584. Scandella, known as Menocchio, was born in Montereale, near Venice, in 1532. He owned a mill, sired 11 children, served briefly as village mayor—and, remarkable for a country boy, learned to read and write. It proved to be his undoing. "He will argue with anyone," testified one neighbor. A second heresy trial, in 1599, resulted in the stubborn Menocchio's being burned at the stake. Italian historian Ginzburg accidentally stumbled

Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

on Menocchio's case in Italian archives. He was struck by the forgotten miller's plucky defense and his eccentric views, including a piquant version of the Creation: "All was chaos, that is, earth, air, water, and fire were mixed together; and out of that bulk a mass formed—just as cheese is made out of milk—and worms appeared in it, and these were angels." Where did Menocchio get his ideas? He refers during his trials to a dozen books, including Boccaccio's *Decameron* and the *Koran.* Yet, as Ginzburg demonstrates, Menocchio appropriated "remnants of the thinking of others as he might stones and bricks" to construct his own unique cosmology, held together by a mortar of temporal rural folklore. Ginzburg adroitly blends Inquisition transcripts (which, like modern screenplays, record gesture and tone as well as dialogue) with his own scholarly detective work to animate the stubborn miller's confusing, colorful personality. Ironically, Menocchio epitomizes the age upon which he left no mark: Like much of 16th-century society, he was reeling from the encounter between peasant culture and the written word.

THE FRENCH ENCOUNTER WITH AFRICANS: White Response to Blacks, 1530–1880
by William B. Cohen
Ind. Univ., 1980
360 pp. $22.50

For 200 years, France has enjoyed a reputation for racial egalitarianism that black American visitors, such as Richard Wright and Paul Robeson, have confirmed. Cohen, an Indiana University historian, traces the less well-known but deep historical currents of French racial bigotry. The first prolonged contact between Frenchmen and Africans, he notes, occurred on West Indian plantations in the 1620s and '30s. Popular travelogues by 15th-century traders and missionaries had already sparked impressions of black inferiority in most Europeans' minds. French owners of foot-dragging African slaves were quick to fuel such notions. Still, the first modern abolitionists were probably Frenchmen—the influential 18th-century Enlightenment *philosophes* Diderot, Voltaire, Montesquieu. But they saw history as the story of human progress toward the apex of European civili-