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(A Seasonal Catechism for the Study of Western and American Civilization)

Virginia County Courts --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 323-332)

These governmental bodies administered local affairs in the colonial Old Dominion, possessing often more practical power than even Williamsburg's House of Burgesses? Consisting of 8-12 justices of the peace appointed (in theory) by the royal governor, the body heard criminal and civil cases while in control of its own makeup and many other appointments. The unsalaried judges were all gentlemen-planters; unelected, they nonetheless upheld liberty's self-rule for themselves and the citizenry nearby.

The Enlightenment --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 347-358)

This intellectual fashion, corresponding to the late-1600's and all the 1700's, appealed to man's Reason exclusively for finding the truths by which men must live? A movement centered in France and led by Parisian philosophes, it fostered hostility to established religions and traditions in W. Europe and Britain but made merely a mild impact among some Deists in America. The witty poet Coleridge observed that the age teemed with wannabe enlighteners but was decidedly devoid of enlightenment.

Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu -- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 347-358)

This French legal scholar (1689-1755) was cited more frequently than any other philosopher by the Founding Fathers at their Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia? His works, including *The Spirit of Laws* (1748), were characterized by terse and lively prose, eagerly devoured by educated Americans in their early, formative years. "He possessed to the fullest," writes Kirk, "that gift for brilliant generalization which is found more often among French men of letters than among any other people. . ."

The Spirit of Laws --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 347-358)

This treatise (1748) of Frenchman Baron de Montesquieu correlated nicely with the experience of British America and was warmly embraced by the Founding Fathers? In the text, Montesquieu affirmed particular customs and habits as the basis for civil law, which in its turn facilitates the liberty of citizens to practice their callings in community. Governments, said the philosopher, keep the law best when their powers are separated, each one having the capacity to counter the others as was the case in the colonies.

Massachusetts Townships --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 323-332)

These governmental bodies, much admired as a forerunner of American democracy, administered local affairs in the colonial Bay State? The bodies, the officers of which were made sensitive to popular opinion by annual elections, served semi-rural districts centered in a small city having considerable independence even from Boston. District convocations of freemen—at first only devout Puritan church members, later all property holders—supervised the course of law and public policy.