

Fall History & Heritage -- #6 (October 17)

This week's Q&A and commentary are based on George Grant's *Christian Almanac* and Bill Bennett's *America, Vol. 1*.

Calvin Coolidge -- (*Almanac*, Oct. 11)

Best known for saying, "The chief business of America is business," **this taciturn New Englander (1872--1930)** rose through the ranks of Massachusetts politics and got national attention for his deft handling of the Boston police strike? Elected U.S. Vice President (on the Republican ticket with Ohio's Warren Harding) in 1920, he succeeded to the presidency when Harding died suddenly in 1923. His straightforward conservatism called for less government and a more free and virtuous citizenry.

The Red Badge of Courage -- (*Almanac*, Oct. 13)

If "altogether a work of the imagination, unbased on personal experience," said English critic Sydney Brooks of **this late 19th-century novel**, "its realism would be nothing short of a miracle"? Brooks assumed that the novel's author, Stephen Crane had seen combat firsthand in the Civil War, but Crane (1871--1900) wasn't even born till six years after the surrender at Appomattox. His novel, it turns out, is less "fictionalized journalism" than a fantasy that depicts the human condition in its most dire straits.

"Defender of the Faith"; Latin, "Fidei Defensor" -- (*America*, Vol. 1, pp. 23-24)

Despite its odd and dubious origins in the early 1500s, British monarchs to this day retain **this bold religious title?** The honor was originally bestowed by Pope Leo X to King Henry VIII (r. 1509--1547) for his aggressive attack (in pamphlet form) on the life and doctrine of German Reformer Martin Luther. In a mind-boggling twist of fate, Henry later severed the bonds between English Christianity and Rome, and he got his Parliament to declare himself the authoritative head of a new Anglican Church.

Thomas Cranmer -- (*America*, Vol. 1, p. 25)

This Archbishop of Canterbury was burned to death for heresy at Oxford during the reign of Mary Tudor ("Bloody Mary," r. 1553--1558)? Under torture he had earlier signed a recantation of his Reformational beliefs, but when Mary decided to execute him anyway, he reaffirmed his Protestantism, casting "that hand that hath offended" into the flames first. A gifted writer, he drafted the *Thirty-Nine Articles* (the formal confession of the Church of England), and his resonant style adorns the *Book of Common Prayer*.

"Gloriana" -- (*America*, Vol. 1, pp. 25-29)

Without a doubt, the long reign of Elizabeth I (r. 1558--1603) was the Tudor dynasty's greatest glory. In her day England saw a remarkable flowering of arts and letters (including Spenser, Shakespeare, and Marlowe) and the beginning of centuries of mastery of the seas (admiralty).

Longing to keep the religious peace, Elizabeth ruled as a cautious Protestant. She suppressed public celebration of the Catholic mass, but refrained from any extensive campaign to search for (and bring charges against) secret Catholics. She also maneuvered shrewdly to dampen the fiery disputes of the sons of the Reformation, preferring, if possible, to split the differences between Anglicans and Puritans.

What Elizabeth, the daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn, prized most were the love and loyalty of her people and their Parliament. That she won and never lost.

Shakespeare's England -- (America, Vol.1, p. 27)

Author Bill Bennett cites the following from Shakespeare's *Richard II*, a passage that movingly expresses the triumphant sense the English once had of living in a land especially favored and blessed:

*This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands,
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.*

A cautionary tale for today? Modern Brits, suffice to say, have no such sensibility. Divine favor can be withdrawn and with it contentment in present circumstances and hope for the future. Nations may boast of their far-flung dominion or their high ideals ("liberty, equality, fraternity"--"life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"), but there is no substitute for submission to Christ, His Gospel, and His Church. *Psalms 2* comes to mind (verses 10-12, ESV, quoted below).

*Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*