

Fall History & Heritage -- #2 (Sept. 23)

“God is Dead” --- (Tabletalk magazine; daily Bible lesson, Sept. 5)

This well-known and infamous assertion of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844—1900) is often misunderstood by those who cite and perhaps mock it? Nietzsche, by means of the proposition, referred not to the existence or non-existence of the Deity but to the “practical atheism” of many Europeans in his day. While professing faith, Nietzsche’s contemporaries made little effort to heed purportedly divine doctrines and obligations, or so it seemed to the skeptical philosopher.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson --- (Grant/Wilbur; Christian Almanac, Sept. 19)

This Victorian-Age poet (1809—1892), son of a clergyman who directed his early studies, succeeded William Wordsworth as Britain’s poet laureate in 1850? His greatest works include *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1854), commemorating the heroism of the British cavalry in Crimea, and *Idylls of the King* (1885), a series of narrative romances on the life and times of King Arthur. One of his early poems, *The Princess* addressed the controversy over women’s rights in lyrical blank verse.

Order --- (Kirk; Roots of American Order, pp. 3-10)

This necessity, wrote French mystic Simone Weil (1909—1943), is man’s “first need of all,” more vital to his welfare even than food and shelter? We may call it a way of wisdom—a unified set of beliefs, standards, examples, customs, laws—handed down by a civilization’s fathers (tradition) and tested by a train of events (experience). By means of its light, sons and citizens can discover their temporal identity as particular people in a particular place, and find inspiration to preserve and perfect that identity.

“Higher Kind of Order” --- (Kirk; Roots of American Order, pp. 3-10)

This phrase, wrote author Russell Kirk, may be used to identify a way of wisdom which, as far as possible in this world, declares man’s dignity and promotes liberty and justice? Such wisdom has its temporal and earthly source in what G.K. Chesterton called “the democracy of the dead,” the sayings and judgments of visionary forefathers preserved over the ages. It also “is founded upon,” in Kirk’s words, “the practical experience of human beings over many centuries. . .”

Cicero’s Age and Ours --- (Kirk; Roots of American Order, pp. 3-10)

The age of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106—43 BC) witnessed the waning days of the Roman Republic as it fell victim to ruinous civil war succeeded by imperial domination. Remembrance of the moral and social order of the fathers was slipping away, and Cicero’s contemporaries did little to arrest the decline of civilization. “Long before our time,” wrote the great orator & statesman, “the customs of our ancestors molded admirable men, and in turn those eminent men upheld the ways and institutions of their forebears. Our age, however, inherited the Republic as if it were some beautiful painting of bygone ages, its colors already fading through great antiquity; and not only has our time neglected to freshen the colors of the picture, but we have failed to preserve its form and outlines.”