

## Fall History & Heritage -- #9 (Nov. 11)

### **Solon --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 60-67)**

**This ancient statesman (c. 630--560 BC)**, one of the Seven Sages of Greece, reformed the laws of his native Athens in a time of crisis? Poet and patriot, he was the Greek lawgiver most admired by the American Founders, who learned of him largely from Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. Tom Paine, for instance, often paraphrased him to the effect that popular government is at its best when "the least injury done to the meanest individual was considered an insult to the whole Constitution."

### **Polity or Mixed Government --- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 60-67)**

**This political or governmental system** respects and balances the various classes, interests, and estates which make up civil society? Promoted by the Athenian lawgiver Solon (c. 600 BC), the system may distribute some power to one man (an executive), to the few (an upper class), and to the many (the people), or economically speaking to the rich, the middling, and the poor. Solon's wisdom was later taken up by degrees in the works of Plato, Aristotle, Polybius, and Cicero among the ancient sages.

### **Happiness --- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 60-67)**

**This state of mind or spirit**, said the Athenian lawgiver Solon (c. 600 BC), man should never claim as his own until the hour of his death? "In every matter it behooves us," advised the sage, "to mark well the end: for oftentimes God gives men a gleam of [what they ardently desire], and then plunges them into ruin." According to the historian Herodotus, Solon made the remark to Croesus, King of Lydia in Asia Minor, at some point in his ten-year voluntary sojourn away from Athens.

### **Tyranny --- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 67-73)**

**This old Greek governmental form**, the rule of one sometimes enlightened and good man, prevailed in Athens for half a century after Solon's passing (c. 560--510 BC)? Later, Aristotle viewed it as a degenerate kind of kingship, and Greeks generally, professing to dislike the system, defined it as a usurpation or illegal acquisition of power. Nevertheless, many Hellenes sought for themselves such power, and the poorer classes, at least at first, enthusiastically supported the new man in charge.

### **Great Age of Greece --- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 67-73)**

**This hallowed Greek era**, characterized by "brilliant culture" and "military atrocities" in Kirk's words, lasted for only seventy-five years or so in the 5th-century BC? An age of democratization especially in Athens, it came to pass after 480 in the wake of Greek victories over the invading Persians in the eastern Mediterranean and the aggressive Carthaginians in the west (Sicily). Under Pericles' leadership (443--429), Attica's hub became the artistic, literary, and philosophic wonder of the world.