

Spring History & Heritage -- #2 (March 31)

Age of Augustus --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 113-125)

This 1st-century Roman epoch, in which the Christ was born, was a time of relative peace and prosperity overseen by a non-despotic emperor (r. 27BC--AD 14)? It deserves to be ranked, writes Russell Kirk, with the Great Age of Greece (400s BC) on account of its extraordinary architectural, artistic, and literary achievements. Brilliant prose came from the pen of the historian Livy and poetry from Virgil and Horace, works studied by Western Civilization's educated men for centuries.

Labor, Pietas, Fatum --- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 113-125)

These three Latin words, wrote 20th-century American-born poet T.S. Eliot, capture three grand themes that unify and animate the magisterial poetry of Virgil (70--19 BC)? The first of the three directs us to the indispensability of work, especially cultivating the soil, to our happiness. The other two suggest that by adding reverence to our work (stewarding the comprehensive cultural inheritance of one's fathers), our destiny, like Rome's, may be one of far-reaching peace and prosperity.

Stoics --- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 113-125)

These Greco-Roman thinkers, "philosophers of fortitude" in Russell Kirk's words, made inroads with the Roman upper classes in the first three centuries AD? Seneca (4 BC--AD 65) and the slave-philosopher Epictetus (55--135 AD) were numbered among them, moralists who made virtue, especially dispassion in the ups and downs of life, supreme. Generally, they urged men to follow a universal way of nature, something usually (in their creed) more abstract and idealistic than cultural and traditional.

Marcus Aurelius on Horseback --- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 113-125)

This equestrian statue in Rome, wrote Nathaniel Hawthorne, "is the most majestic representation of the kingly character that ever the world has seen"? Just the sight in bronze effigy of the 2nd-century Stoic emperor, the quintessential philosopher-king, observed the New England novelist, "is enough to create an evanescent sentiment of loyalty in a democratic bosom, so august does he look, so fit to rule, so worthy of man's profoundest homage and obedience, so inevitably attractive of his love."

Meditations --- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 113-125)

This classic volume of Stoic philosophy, generally unknown and unread till the 1500s, was originally titled *Marcus Aurelius to Himself*? No book of ancient philosophy has been as well received in the modern world, the philosopher-king's melancholic, yet hopeful reflections having never lapsed into irrelevancy. To sum up his vision, there is of God a natural order or way of life to which man's soul and society bear witness, and humanity's duty is to follow and steward, willingly and cheerfully, that order.

(sources for the Q&A's are indicated; any errors of judgment are those of Veritas history Mr. Zaffini, author of this post for his students and their families)