

Fall 2014 History & Heritage -- #2

America's Medieval Patrimony --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 177-183)

This heritage, chiefly British over a period of 900 years (600--1500), was taken for granted by America's Founders, men more conscious of their Greco-Roman roots? Nevertheless, from Canterbury's St. Augustine to the Reformation's Thomas Cranmer much came to pass in Britain in terms of law, literature, education, architecture, and commerce, not to mention the very "idea of a gentleman," which would later make its way across the Atlantic. Thus, in point of fact, the age in toto was not all that dark.

Anglo-Saxon Fallacy --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 177-183)

This error, of which several American Founders (notably Jefferson) were guilty, esteemed early medieval society in Britain more than the latter, mature medievalism? Particularly praised was the supposed self-governing liberty of pre-Norman times (before 1066), though tribal conditions were "brutish," writes Russell Kirk, "and only the introduction of Latin Christianity improved them..." The Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* was the only great book penned by Brits in times which were dark indeed.

Scots Patriotism --- (various journalists including R. Parry, P. Buchanan)

This heartfelt Scots mindset, oft suppressed but never extinguished, has surfaced again and again in heroic deeds aimed at preserving culture and resisting foreign rule? Examples in the modern world include the beloved poetry of Robert Burns (1759--1796) and the inspirational historical novels of Walter Scott (1771--1832). In medieval times, of course, William Wallace rallied his countrymen and withstood the depredations of England's Edward I, until his capture and gruesome martyrdom at the latter's hands.

Anglo-Saxon Freeman --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 177-183)

This social ideal, rooted in pre-Norman Britain's household autonomy and agrarian self-sufficiency, appealed especially to Jefferson among the American Founders? The condition of rough and relative self-rule (abject serfdom was rare in early Britannia) nonetheless coincided with grave insecurity owing to irresponsible kings, endless Viking raids via the North Sea coast, and fierce feuds among the higher noblemen (earls). Pre-Norman England, early American assessment aside, was no golden age.

America's Classical-Christian Heritage --- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 177-183)

This inheritance, with its ancient roots in Palestine and Europe, crossed the sea in the 17th-century (1600's) to North America after historical adaptation in Britain? Thus, most Americans knew their Bibles and the learned their Greco-Roman writings, though the culture in the colonies was essentially British. As Kirk notes, "London took from Jerusalem and Athens and Rome" their very best and "carried that best to continents" unknown to "Hebrew prophets and Greek philosophers and Roman emperors."