

Winter 2015 History & Heritage -- (P.S.)

Thomas Browne --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 275-282)

This 17th-century English scribe (1605-1686), a philosophically-minded physician, embodied the tolerant, *via media* Christianity of an influential wing of Anglicanism? The turmoil of his time is scarcely noticeable in his works, including *Religio Medici*, written for private edification to explore the connections between faith and reason. His was an outlook—thoughtful, believing, stressing what all Christians and churches had in common—much admired by leading Anglicans in America, especially in the South.

Hobbes' Individualism --- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 268-275)

This concept of alienated, self-interested man, in the philosophy of Hobbes, takes the place of a Christian community of souls under fatherly care, human and divine? Hobbes postulated a crude “state of nature” in which men lived “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” lives, like savages under constant threat desperate for any solution to their vulnerability. Thus, blazing a trail for modernity, his social vision offers a mass sandpile of atomized human beings, terrified sheep without natural shepherds nearby.

Thomas Hobbes --- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 268-275)

This English political philosopher (1588-1679), famed author of *Leviathan*, was by general consensus the greatest mind of his age, for better or for worse? Kirk, after a contemporary of the philosopher, calls him “a witty and even whimsical man, much affrighted by darkness and ghosts, not much given to book-reading, fond of argument, song, and tennis.” His translation of Thucydides proved superior to all others before or since, and as brilliant tutor he directed the studies of future Stuart King Charles II.

Hobbes' Statism --- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 268-275)

This concept of absolute civil rule, in the philosophy of Hobbes, takes the place of a Christian limitation of power, the rule of law safeguarding tradition, human and divine? Hobbes conceived of security for the individualized mass of men only in centralized, almighty government, dismissing any middle way between anarchy and totalitarian power. Unlike medieval notions, writes Kirk, “Hobbes’ system offered freedom from Church, town, guild, and local authorities—but in exchange for servitude to Leviathan.”

John Bunyan --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 275-282)

This 17th-century English writer (1628-1688), a Puritan and a mere tinker’s son, astonished the world with his acclaimed allegory on the way of salvation? Eschewing denominational labels, he turned himself into a lay preacher who ran afoul of the law twice, after the Restoration, on false charges of sedition. Jail time proved salutary, however, affording opportunity to craft his *Pilgrim’s Progress*, the best evangelical volume, said Coleridge, “ever produced by a writer not miraculously inspired.”