

## Fall 2015 History & Heritage -- #2

(A Seasonal Catechism for the Study of Western and American Civilization)

### **A Republic --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 415-432)**

**This political form or ideal**, derived from Latin meaning “the public thing,” eschews hereditary monarchs but may opt for strong chief executives? The form itself may be mostly aristocratic or largely democratic, depending on whether the voice of the people generally or the judgment of a privileged elite predominates. In America, it assumed a more democratic character, both nationally and on the state/local level, but never reducible to mere majority rule or the absolutism of the masses.

### **All Men Are Created Equal --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 401-415)**

**This “proposition” (to quote Lincoln)**, cited by the American Declaration as “self-evident truth,” has inspired proponents of democratic rights worldwide in modern times? Its meaning, however, has been uncertain and contested, not least because its antithesis (opposite) is more obvious to the naked eye in human nature and society. Nevertheless, the Founders’ claim is premised on mankind’s shared basic rights and moral/legal obligations understood within a theistic Creator/creature framework.

### **Defending the Chartered Rights of Englishmen --- (Kirk; *Roots*, pp. 401-415)**

**This rationale for secession from Britain**, perhaps more than the Founders’ appeal to natural law though not inconsistent with it, was persuasive to American Patriots? Typically, it went by the slogan “no taxation without representation,” referring to a freeman’s right by custom and law to choose who would speak for him in the legislature. Application to America was clear enough: only colonial assemblies should tax the colonists, who were represented in reality in their own little seaboard republics.

### **The Right of Revolution --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 401-415)**

**This seemingly-radical right of the people**, the power to alter or abolish existing governments, is often attributed to the American Declaration? Such attribution is not without merit, for the document expressly says as much; though qualified by the observation that no government should be targeted for “light and transient causes.” The right, moreover, was more natural than radical to the Founders, who applied it not to morals and society but to rulers and regimes disdainful of serving their societies.

### **Unwritten Constitution --- (Kirk; *Roots of American Order*, pp. 415-432)**

**This title** may be used for the older and deeper beliefs, habits, customs, practices, and laws upon which all enduring written constitutions depend? No less so for the 1787-89 U.S. Constitution, the framers and ratifiers of which being men thoroughly familiar with history, ancient and modern, including of course their own Anglo-American past. Their crowning achievement, needless to say, wouldn’t have lasted long unless it had reflected their cultural-political reality and that reality’s broader tradition and experience.