

Winter History & Heritage -- #7 (February 6)

This week's entries are based entirely on our readings for this academic year in *The Christian Almanac* (Grant & Wilbur) and *America, Vol. 1* (William Bennett).

Edward the Confessor -- (Almanac, Jan. 5)

This Saxon prince, the only king of England ever canonized by the Catholic Church, sponsored the construction of the famous Westminster Abbey in the mid-11th-century? The prince took up the grand project late in life in order to make up for an earlier unfulfilled vow to make a pilgrimage to Rome. As it turned out, he was buried at Westminster on Epiphany (Jan. 6, 1066), and his Norman cousin, William, was crowned king there on Christmas Day of the same year (Dec. 25, 1066).

John Donne -- (Almanac, Jan. 24)

This Renaissance courtier (1572--1631), a brilliant stylist in prose and poetry both sacred and secular, became Anglican dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London in 1621? The loyal love of his wife and her premature death (shortly after giving birth to her 12th child) tempered his cosmopolitan excesses and led him along a path of deep piety. Famous lines drawn from his sermons and poems include "No Man is an Island," "For Whom the Bell Tolls," and "Death, Be not Proud."

Thomas Mifflin -- (Almanac, Jan. 10)

A military man (Quartermaster General) though reared a Quaker, **this Pennsylvanian (1744--1800)** obtained critical supplies for the Continental army early in the Revolution? He was General Washington's first aide-de-camp, and at the war's end he was the man, as president of Congress, who received Washington's resignation of his commission on behalf of a grateful people. In between, ironically, he broke faith with Washington by conspiring with others to replace him as commander with Horatio Gates.

Codex Sinaiticus -- (Almanac, Jan. 19)

It took years of patience and persistence, but German researcher Konstantin von Tischendorf (1815--1874) finally brought to light **this ancient manuscript volume**, one of the oldest copies of the Bible on record? Tischendorf made his initial discovery at St. Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai in 1844, and he revisited the site to broaden his investigation in 1859. The text, consisting of a large portion of the Old Testament and the entire New Testament in Greek, proved invaluable to Bible scholars and students.

Francis A. Schaeffer -- (Almanac, Jan. 26)

This American Presbyterian (1912--1984) inspired many Bible-believing Christians to evangelize not merely individuals, but society's institutions and culture as well? His books (including *How Should We Then Live?*) addressed key issues in philosophy, theology, and ethics and lamented the de-Christianization of the modern Western world. In Switzerland (1948) he founded L'Abri ("the shelter"), a unique study center offering "honest answers to honest questions" posed by visiting students and skeptics.

The Federalist Papers -- (America, Vol. 1, pp. 127-129)

This collection of essays, first appearing in newspapers in the late-1780s, was penned in support of the U.S. Constitution by Hamilton, Jay, and Madison? While ratification debates raged, the authors offered their refutation of the Constitution's opponents, the Antifederalists, whose influence was particularly potent in places like New York, Massachusetts, and Virginia. Over time, the collection has attained the lofty status of a classic, a stellar example of early American political theory.

Federalist No. 10 -- (America, Vol. 1, p. 128)

Madison, in **this famous Federalist essay**, challenged the assumption that small agrarian societies were more suited to republicanism than large commercial ones? Madison said the smaller republics of old failed precisely because of their limited size: they didn't have a multitude of "factions" (special interests) jockeying for advantage and counterbalancing one another's ambitions. His conclusion, dubious in light of our history, was that big commercial societies best serve republican liberty.

Patrick Henry -- (America, Vol. 1, pp. 130-131)

This iconic Virginian (1736--1799) led the Antifederalist fight against the U.S. Constitution in his native state in 1788? He complained even of Constitution's Preamble, asking "who authorised them [the convention's delegates] to speak the language of, We, the People, instead of We, the States? States are the characteristics, and the soul of a confederation. If the States be not the agents of this compact, it must be one great consolidated National Government of the people of all the states."

"The Sacred Fire of Liberty" -- (America, Vol. 1, p. 135)

In his first inaugural (addressed to Congress on April 30, 1789, in New York City) George Washington used **this phrase** to identify the republican model of government? He said it seemed this model, with its many duties and privileges, had been entrusted to Americans in a grand experiment ordained by Heaven itself. Prior to his remarks, Washington had placed his hand on a Bible and recited the presidential oath, adding the words "So help me God" (and thus setting a precedent for all future inaugurations).