

Winter History & Heritage -- #5 (February 4)

This week, several *Almanac* summaries; Next, our first descriptions of select content from Brion McClanahan's *The Founding Fathers' Guide to the Constitution*.

Quotes of the Week --- (Christian Almanac; Grant/Wilbur; Jan. 29, 31)

Books and friends should be few but good. (Patrick Henry, 1736--1799)

Exertion, self-denial, endurance, these make the hero, but to the spoiled child they connote the evil of nature and the malice of man. (Richard Weaver, 1910--1963)

(Weaver, a N. Carolinian, was a professor of literature at the Univ. of Chicago)

Columba --- (Christian Almanac; Grant/Wilbur; Dec. 13)

This 6th-century Irish monk (521--597) is best known for having established a famous monastery on the isle of Iona, west of Scotland? As a youth, he attended a church planted by St. Patrick two centuries earlier; as a man, he planted churches himself in his native Ireland before sailing east with companions on a missionary quest in 563. For the sake of his monastery, Iona was celebrated as a center for scholarship, a base for evangelization of pagans, and a sacred plot for the burial of Christian kings.

Boniface --- (Christian Almanac; Grant/Wilbur; Dec. 25)

This 8th-century British monk (d. 754), like unto the prophet Elijah in his bold challenge to pagan priests, is known to history as the "Apostle to the Germans"? He impressed upon the Norsemen the impotence of their gods by chopping down the sacred Oak of Thor, then distributing to the people logs and branches for light and heat in their homes. The image laid the groundwork for his gospel witness to the saving merit of Christ's sacrifice for the sins of the world *upon a tree*.

John Donne --- (Christian Almanac; Grant/Wilbur; Jan. 24)

Known best for his love sonnets, **this Renaissance Englishman (1572--1631)** also preached sermons unexcelled in persuasive power in his day? Drawn from worldliness to a devout life of faith, in part by the sacrificial love of his wife, he entered the Anglican priesthood and later became dean of St. Paul's Cathedral (1621). Some of the civilization's more familiar lines—"No man is an island, entire in itself," and, with respect to our mortality, "For whom does the bell toll? It tolls for thee"—come from his pen.

Edict of Nantes --- (Christian Almanac; Grant/Wilbur; Jan. 29)

Issued by France's Henry IV in 1589 after civil war between Catholics & Protestants (Huguenots), **this decree** granted full religious freedom to the latter? The decree was in force for about 100 years until Louis XIV revoked it in 1685, provoking an exodus of Huguenots to Switzerland, Germany, England, and America. Louis thought the decree irrelevant, declaring, "The best of the larger part of our subjects, who formerly held the so-called Reformed religion, have embraced the Catholic religion. . ."

Thomas Carlyle --- (Christian Almanac; Grant/Wilbur; Dec. 4, 27)

Known as the “Sage of Chelsea” (London), **this Scottish writer (1795--1881)** took an unpopular but seemingly prophetic stand against modern materialism & rationalism? His many works included *The French Revolution*, and an ingenious novel, *Sartor Resartus*, in which an eccentric professor’s fixation with clothes suggests the deeper meaning of man’s history as a revelation of God and His purposes. His Calvinistic, Presbyterian upbringing, from which he rebelled, nonetheless colored his career.

Franz Schubert --- (Christian Almanac; Grant/Wilbur; Jan. 31)

Son of a poor schoolmaster & a choirboy in his youth, **this Austrian composer (1797--1828)** is best known for over six hundred lovely German lieder (art songs)? Impoverished all his life, he persevered to write rich works of all kinds besides his acclaimed lieder—sonatas, quartets & quintets, masses, and nine symphonies including the “Unfinished” (No. 8). His hero, Beethoven (b. 1770), after reviewing some of the younger artist’s songs, said he truly possessed a “divine spark.”

George Mason --- (Christian Almanac; Grant/Wilbur; Jan. 29)

This Virginian (1725-1792)—planter, statesman & soldier—wrote much of his state’s constitution as well as its *Declaration of Rights* (1776)? “The wisest man of his generation” in Jefferson’s estimate, his Virginia *Declaration* served as a primary source for both the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Bill of Rights*. His fierce opposition to the Constitution (he said he’d just as soon cut off his hand than sign it) was rooted in his fear of too much centralization of power & failure to outlaw the foreign slave trade.

Cyrus Griffin --- (Christian Almanac; Grant/Wilbur; Jan. 22)

A Virginian & a protégé of George Washington, **this Founder (1736--1796)** was the last president of Congress (under the Articles) before the Constitution took effect in 1789? He originally opposed the Constitution as a threat to republican liberty, but he relented due to Washington’s reassurances and the promise of amendments (Bill of Rights). His credo included a Jeffersonian “necessary evil” approach to government; “the smaller it is, the less powerful it can be,” he said, “the better all men are apt to be.”

Winslow Homer --- (Christian Almanac; Grant/Wilbur; Dec. 20)

This 19th-century New Englander (1836--1910), a mostly self-taught artist, is best known for his idyllic scenes whether of farms, resorts, or children at play? By the late-1850s he was an illustrator for *Harper’s Weekly*, a journal that sent him to Civil War battlefronts inspiring his first major painting in oil, *Prisoners from the Front*. Eventually, as in his masterpiece *Eight Bells*, he showed us the mystery of the sea, its heroic sailors & fisherman, and other wonders of nature.