

Spring History & Heritage -- #3 (April 8)

The following entries (in summary or Q&A form) convey the teacher's descriptions & explanations of the sources indicated. Teacher & students take up the same readings.

Charity Organization Society --- (*Christian Almanac*; Grant/Wilbur; March 19)

"England's leading private charity agency in the late nineteenth century," writes George Grant, it revolutionized care for the poor in often wretched industrial cities? Its purpose was to restore the dignity of able-bodied men on the margins of society by befriending them, training them for "gainful employ," and finding them jobs. It was, said Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon (1834--1892), "a charity to which the curse of idleness is subjected to the rule of the under-magistrate of earthly society: work."

Johann Sebastian Bach --- (*Christian Almanac*; Grant/Wilbur; March 21)

Composer, musician, choir director, **this German Lutheran (1685--1750)** crafted some of music history's finest works but never gained fame or fortune in his own day? It took 46 years to compile and catalogue 60 volumes filled with his compositions including the acclaimed *St. Matthew Passion*, the *Mass in B-minor*, and the *Brandenburg Concertos*. Much of his music was composed for the liturgy of the church, but irrespective of occasion he expressly dedicated it all to God's glory alone (*Soli Deo Gloria*).

"Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" --- (*Almanac*; Grant/Wilbur, March 26)

This Jonathan Edwards sermon, a model in homiletics and a standard in literary anthologies, was first preached to his Northampton, MA, flock on March 26, 1742? As was his custom, Edwards merely read his manuscript, with all its biblical citations and theological/philosophical musings, to his congregation with little emotional fanfare. Many people, however, reacted to what he said with uncontrolled sighing and weeping, evidently awakened to the horror of their sin and the terror of its just punishment.

John Milton --- (*Almanac*; Grant/Wilbur; March 28)

A passionate pamphleteer immersed in the religious-political turmoil of his day, **this Puritan poet (1608--1674)** is ranked with Shakespeare among English literary giants? He joined the parliamentary party in the civil war of the 1640's, justified the execution of Charles I, and served for a decade as an aide to Cromwell and his Commonwealth. Blind and barely surviving the restoration of the Stuarts (1660), he dedicated his final years to the epics *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*.

The Power to Tax -- (*Founding Fathers' Guide*; McClanahan; pp. 45-49)

In order to strengthen the Union and its general government, the Framers (in Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution) gave Congress "Power to lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defense and general Welfare of the United States. . ." Under the Articles of Confederation, by contrast, the U.S. could merely requisition operating funds from the States, a method that proved unreliable in the Revolutionary period.

Even so, critics of the new U.S. power to tax were numerous, lively, and in the end, prophetic. For instance, Richard Henry Lee (VA) foresaw a confused array of national & State laws feeding off the same persons, goods, and enterprises to the disadvantage not only of the private sector, but of the States as well. Lee, writing as the “Federal Farmer” in 1787, observed that “to lay and collect internal taxes, in this extensive country, must require a great number of congressional ordinances, immediately operating upon the body of the people; these must continually interfere with the state laws, and thereby produce disorder and general dissatisfaction, till the one system of laws or the other, operating upon the same subjects, shall be abolished.... Further, as to internal taxes, the state governments will have concurrent powers with the general government, and both may tax the same objects in the same year; and the objection that the general government may suspend a state tax, as a necessary measure for the promoting the collection of a federal tax, is not without foundation.”

The opponents’ (Anti-federalists’) criticisms often hit home, and although the proponents (Federalists) got their power to tax and narrowly won ratification of their Constitution, they were at pains to reassure the States and the people that the powers of the U.S. would be few and its taxes low. Such reassurances proved, for the most part, true, but only for a generation or two.

Commerce Clause --- (*Founding Fathers’ Guide*; McClanahan; pp. 49-57)

The regulatory powers found in **this Article I, Section 8 clause** have been, over time, among the most abused of all in the U.S. Constitution? Today, the clause is routinely employed to justify congressional control (or that of U.S. agencies) over any and all economic activity, even that confined to cities or limited to a particular State. The Founders, however, as revealed by their debates in Philadelphia & elsewhere, intended the provision merely to facilitate trade with other nations and between States.

Internal Improvements --- (*Founding Fathers’ Guide*; McClanahan; pp. 57-62)

To the Founding generation, **this term** signified major public works facilitating travel and commerce, like canals, roads, railroads, bridges, and lighthouses? Granting the U.S. power to build such works was discussed in the Philadelphia Convention and rejected; even Benjamin Franklin’s modest proposal “to provide for cutting canals where deemed necessary” was voted down. Nonetheless, and despite Madison’s & Monroe’s vetoes of congressional bills, the U.S. found a way early on to sponsor large-scale public works.