

Spring History & Heritage -- #9 (May 26)

Tammany or Tammany Hall --- (Grant/Wilbur; *Christian Almanac*, April 17)

This political “machine” or shadow government, having begun innocently as a debating society after the Revolution, virtually ran NYC for much of the 19th-century? Closely associated with the Democrats and impoverished immigrants, the “machine” dispensed handouts, jobs, contracts, and other favors (even immunity to organized crime) in exchange for votes and payoffs. Its notorious “boss,” William Tweed (1823--1878) amassed millions in politics after leaving his family’s chair-making trade.

Johann Reuchlin --- (Grant/Wilbur; *Christian Almanac*, April 24)

This German linguist (1455--1522), uncle of Lutheran professor Philip Melanchthon, was engulfed in controversy for advocating the scholarly use of Jewish writings? At the time the Dominicans lobbied both emperor and pope for prohibition of works authored by Jews (other than the Bible), but the linguist countered by urging their preservation. To refrain from banning the books, he argued, would show the Church’s magnanimity in addition to helping her teachers master Hebrew and sharpen their refutation of heresies.

Council of Constance --- (Grant/Wilbur; *Christian Almanac*, April 22)

This Church Council (1414--1418), convened in a German city on a lake, sought to resolve more than a quarter century of rival papal claims coming from Rome & Avignon? It took four years of quarrelsome debate for the bishops to settle on a compromise pope (Martin V), thus restoring a semblance of unity and peace to Western Christianity. Ominously, the delegates began their business by condemning for heresy Jan Hus, a Bohemian Reformer who came to the council via “safe passage” to clarify his theology.

Jacobus Arminius --- (Grant/Wilbur; *Christian Almanac*, May 8)

This early 17th-century Dutch theologian (d. 1609) unwittingly convulsed the Protestant world with his stance on the respective roles of God and man in salvation? Called to academia in Leiden from his pastorate in Amsterdam, the beloved minister was constrained to comment on Calvinistic predestination, to which he demurred. His position made man’s consent to God’s grace the decisive factor in salvation, thus undermining the invincible sufficiency of the mercy God grants to His elect in Christ.

World’s Columbian Exposition --- (Grant/Wilbur; *Christian Almanac*, May 1)

This 1893 Chicago extravaganza, “the fairest fair of them all” writes George Grant, commemorated (a year late) the 400th-anniversary of Columbus’s voyage to America? Millions viewed the exhibits of 19 countries, 38 U.S. States, and 42 creative disciplines arranged in an imposing surreal city, many buildings of which were classically designed and pristine white in appearance. For many Americans, the fair served to show Europe how advanced in the arts and sciences their relatively young country was.

(sources for the Q&A’s are indicated; any errors of judgment are those of Veritas history teacher Mr. Zaffini, writer of this post for his students and their families)