

Spring History & Heritage -- #8 (May 20)

This post, with its entries based on class readings as indicated below, is our last of the spring. Veritas's Spring 2013 History & Heritage Test on posts 1-8 will follow shortly.

A statesman, as distinct from a politician, is one who, whatever the cost to himself, alerts a people to the long-range consequences of actions. The United States has no statesmen. (Clyde Wilson; chroniclesmagazine.org; April 15, 2013)

The Babylonian Captivity of the Papacy --- (Almanac; Grant/Wilbur; April 30)

Mild-mannered Pope Clement V fled from chaotic Rome and inaugurated **this exilic epoch of the papacy (1309--1367)** when he bought Avignon in southern France? He set up court in the small village where he was succeeded by John XXII, Benedict XII, Clement VI, and Innocent VI, all French popes by birth. The successors flirted with a return to Rome but it was the next pope, Urban V, who made it happen, setting sail from Marseille in the spring of 1367 bound for Italy.

George Washington --- (Christian Almanac; Grant/Wilbur; April 30)

Surveyor and soldier, **this Founding Father (1732--1799)** led the new U.S. Continental Army to triumph over Britain in the War for Independence? The Virginia planter & slaveholder, says author George Grant, "was part cultivated gentleman, part rugged pioneer, a man in whom the ideas of Western civilization were combined with the great physical strength and fierce spirit of independence of the frontiersman." His republican example in voluntarily yielding power, military & political, inspires his countrymen still.

Jerusalem --- (Christian Almanac; Grant/Wilbur; May 2)

This venerable Middle Eastern city, coveted by three major world religions, was visited by Mark Twain in May 1867 as part of a "Grand Tour" for America's elite class? Twain, assigned to report on the transatlantic "pleasure party," was taken aback at the city's decrepit appearance under the neglectful regional rule of the Ottoman Turks. Most of the small number of inhabitants were neither Jews nor Palestinian Muslims but Christians, either pious pilgrims or native descendants of Byzantine civilization.

Hamilton Defends Constitution's Presidential Term

(Founding Fathers' Guide to the Constitution; McClanahan; p. 101)

The 4-year presidential term with a prospect of reelection, in Alexander Hamilton's view, was good for the executive himself, good for the people to whom he was accountable, and good for the U.S. government. In Federalist No. 72, Hamilton said re-eligibility would "give to the officer himself the inclination and the resolution to act his part well, and to the community time and leisure to observe the tendency of his measures, and thence to form an experimental estimate of their merits. . . [and] when they see reason to approve of his conduct, to continue him in the station, in order to prolong the utility of his talents and virtues, and to secure to the government, the advantage of permanency in a wise system of administration."

A President, Not a King --- (*Founding Fathers' Guide*; McClanahan; p. 101)

In the excerpt below, Archibald Maclaine (NC) defends the Constitution's office of the president and chides Anti-federalists for suggesting it's just another name for monarchy:

"The enemies of the new form of government endeavour to persuade others, what I can scarcely think they believe themselves; that, the President of the United States is only another name for King, and that we shall be subject to all the evils of a monarchical government. How a magistrate, who is removeable at a short period, can be compared to an hereditary monarch, whose family, to all succeeding generations, as well as himself must be maintained in pomp and splendour, at an enormous expence to the nation; and whose power and influence will be proportionably great, these honest guardians of the rights of the people would do well to inform us...."

If we read Maclaine's words in light of today's "imperial presidency," says McClanahan, we're struck by how far we've fallen from "the original intent of the Constitution." The Commander-in-Chief's status, power, pomp, and generous material provision in and out of office are now taken for granted as The American Way. He's expected to set the civic agenda for over 300,000,000 people, harness the nation's resources, advance its programs and goals, solve its pressing problems. Was more ever expected from or handed over to the kings of old?

Power to Impeach --- (*Founding Fathers' Guide*; McClanahan; pp. 102-105)

This constitutional power allows for the accusation of a president (or high official) on charges of "Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors"? The power was vested in the House of Representatives to curb executive corruption and a wide variety of ways in which the public trust may be abused. With respect to the president, for instance, George Mason (VA) asked, "Shall any man be above Justice? Above all shall that man be above it, who can commit the most extensive injustice?"

Power to Impeach Unnecessary --- (McClanahan; pp. 102-105)

A minority report in the Philadelphia Convention, Charles Pinckney (SC) took **this view with respect to this power (vested in the House)** aimed at presidential misconduct? Pinckney said there was little to fear from executive abuse because the express constitutional powers of the president were few and strictly circumscribed. Of course, the South Carolinian was right about the Constitution, but naïve if he didn't anticipate that men in power, ordinarily, seek even more power however they may come by it.