

PATRIOTIC MATERIAL

THE HEART AND SOUL

OF THE

CONSTITUTION

RADIO ADDRESS

BY

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OF THE

UNITED STATES

CONSTITUTION SESQUICENTENNIAL COMMISSION

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The Heart and Soul of the Constitution.

In discussing the Constitution of the United States I wish tonight to consider it from a new angle. We all agree that as a legal document it establishes a successful system of government. Its precision and brevity are admirable. Millions of words have been devoted to its governmental principles. Great jurists have interpreted the meaning of the Constitution in almost all its parts. As a frame of government it has stood the test of time, war, and depression. It is based on truth, and, like truth, it laughs at the assaults of time.

But what I should like to discuss tonight is the heart and soul of the Constitution—its qualities that spring from the human heart, and not merely from the human intellect.

Unless the Constitution satisfies the aspirations of the heart, unless it feeds the human soul, unless it stirs our emotions, it can not be regarded as a complete expression of the American spirit.

Why was the Constitution formed? Who were its framers? What was the emergency before them? What did they aim to accomplish?

In a nutshell, the Constitution was formed for the purpose of perpetuating American liberty by uniting the States in a firm Union. All other aims were subordinate to the safeguarding of the liberty that had been won by the Revolution. It was evident after the Revolution that American liberty would be lost unless the States banded themselves together to preserve it.

If you and I believe that life comes from God, and that the Creator endows man with the right of liberty when He breathes life into him, we must agree that the framers of the Constitution were obeying the will of God when they sought a way to perpetuate liberty.

Life and the right to enjoy liberty come from God. The guaranty of the right to enjoy liberty, the power to maintain liberty, must come from the human heart and soul. The Constitution is this guaranty. It enables the American people to

exercise their power to maintain their liberty against foreign attack or internal dissension.

The signers of the Declaration of Independence pledged their lives to liberty. Their hearts directed their hands when they sent forth this declaration of war for freedom.

The framers of the Constitution were no less in earnest. They saw the light of liberty dying in America as the States quarreled and threatened to disband. It was a new Declaration of Independence which the Constitution-makers prepared for the approval of the people—a declaration that their hard-won liberty should not perish, but should be made perpetual by joining the hearts and souls of the people of all the States in an indestructible Union.

These framers of the Constitution were chosen by their States to meet together. They were soldiers, planters, lawyers, physicians, merchants, and judges. Some of them were rich and others were poor. One of them, a luminous star in the human firmament, had been a penniless printer. Another, Roger Sherman, who, with Robert Morris, had the honor of signing the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution, had been a poor shoemaker who studied at night to become a lawyer. The university which fitted George Washington to preside over this body of men was the stern school of war.

Being human, these delegates had human failings. They were devoted to State and local interests. Those from large States were bent upon exercising the strength of large States. Those from small States shrank from a Union that might make them the pawns of greater States. The commercial North and the agricultural South had clashing interests. All the States had been disappointed by the failure of such central government as was exercised under the Articles of Confederation. They were suspicious of any proposal for a national government. They feared it would swallow the States and the liberties of the people, or be just another failure like the Confederation.

After many jarring sessions, in which misunderstandings, jealousies, and selfish sectional interests bore down their efforts

to agree, the delegates were almost in despair. Their hearts cried out for union, but their minds seemed to be overwhelmed. At this crisis, the venerable Benjamin Franklin suggested that they call upon Providence to give them guidance, that their appeal to the Almighty Father might soften their temper, and, drawing strength by relying upon Divine aid, they might go forward together in common sympathy. What their hearts desired their minds discovered. They found a way to make American liberty forever secure.

We have all read the Constitution. We all know, at least in a general way, how it fulfills the people's will by uniting the States. But have we analyzed the Constitution, to search out its heart and soul? I maintain that, next to the Bible, "that holy book by which men live and die," the most precious expression of the human soul is the Constitution. In the Bible man finds solace, refreshment, and instruction in the most secret and sacred relation of the soul—its relation to God.

In the Constitution we find solace and security in the next most important thing in life—our liberty. Every word in the Constitution serves to safeguard us in our life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. Every American, as he studies the marvelous framework of the Constitution, can say with truth and pride, "This was made for me. It is my fortress. When danger threatens my life or liberty I can take safe refuge in the Constitution. Into that fortress neither President nor Congress nor armies nor mobs can enter and take away my life or liberty."

You may ask me, where in the Constitution is there any language that throbs with a human heartbeat? Where is the soul of the Constitution? My answer is, in every paragraph. All its parts are mighty links that bind the people in an unbreakable chain of Union—a chain so beautifully wrought that it reminds us of the mystical golden chain which the poet saw, binding earth to God's footstool.

Let us consider the preamble to the Constitution. We do not know from whose brain it came, but we know that it sounds the heartbeat of the framers. It is the majestic voice of the people, giving expression to their soul's desire.

"We the People of the United States, in order to form a

more perfect Union." For what purpose? To make our liberties secure. For how long? So long as humanity wanders through the wilderness of time. For whom? For every man, woman, and child under the American flag.

"Establish Justice." What is justice but a guardian of liberty? My rights and immunities made secure against tyranny. Your rights safeguarded against my wrong-doing. Your widow and your child protected when you are gone. Can there be a higher aspiration of the soul than to establish justice? Justice is an attribute of the Almighty Himself; for He said, "I, the Lord thy God, am a just God."

"Insure domestic Tranquility." The people longed for harmony. The framers of the Constitution saw that a central government would bring the States into common accord on all national questions, while removing other vexatious causes of disagreement. The very fact of equality of States was a guarantee of domestic tranquillity. But the Constitution also provided a means whereby the government could protect the people against disturbances of public order and private security. The great charter thereby insured domestic order and peace, both among the States and among the people.

"Provide for the common defence." It was well understood that the separated States were not strong enough to ward off foreign aggression. Divided, they invited invasion and conquest, even from second-rate foreign powers. United, they constituted a nation capable of defending itself in every part. The framers therefore clothed the common government with power to make war and peace, to raise armies and navies, to use the State militia for common defense, to build arsenals and navy yards. All that a mighty nation can do to defend its people and territory the United States of America can do; and even in its infancy the United States became a powerful nation through union of the States. The protection provided by the Constitution is the protection which a wise father provides for his family. This nation is like a strong fort defended by armed men. And far out at sea, prepared to meet and destroy any assailant, the United States Navy rides the waves in unwearyed and vigilant patrol.

"Promote the general Welfare." This provision has a far wider sweep than latter-day commentators accord to it. They seem to think that the government has limited powers in promoting the general welfare. They speak of relief of unemployment, flood-control, and drought-control as examples of provision for the general welfare. Those objects may come within the scope of the government's general welfare powers, it is true, but those powers extend far beyond that point. The general welfare is promoted by the unification of the States. They are thus enabled to pool their resources and concentrate their energies. An example of promotion of the general welfare is the establishment of the postal system. Another example is provision for uniform coinage and currency. Still another is the consolidation of defense forces of which I have just spoken. Indeed, the promotion of the general welfare by unification of the States is manifest in nearly every paragraph of the Constitution.

And finally, the Preamble declares that the Constitution is established to "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity." Who are we but the posterity of the great souls who wrought for our perpetual liberty? Can you agree that the forefathers of America were selfish and heartless men, when this proof is given that 150 years ago they were thinking of us, their posterity and heirs? Are we of this day equally foresighted? Do we give thought to our posterity that will live 150 years from now? If we are ready to pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor for our distant posterity, we are worthy of the forefathers who did that much for us.

Summed up, the Preamble declares that our forefathers sought Union, Justice, Tranquillity, Safety, Welfare, and Liberty. These are the virtues enjoined upon mankind by their Heavenly Father. He who seeks justice is blest with the benediction of God. It is God's wish that mankind should be free. In securing their liberty, the people obey God's will.

We hear it said that the Constitution is faulty because it does not invoke the name of the Deity. I hold that it does more than lean upon Divine strength. It strives to do God's will on earth, as it is done in heaven. Not a line, not a word

in the Constitution is in conflict with the Divine will. On the contrary, every word and every declaration breathes an ardent desire to pattern the American Nation in accordance with God's holy will.

Can an atheist become President of the United States? I maintain that the spirit of the Constitution forbids it. The Constitution prescribes an oath or affirmation which the President must take in order to qualify for his office. This oath or affirmation in its essence is a covenant with the people which the President pledges himself to keep with the help of Almighty God.

All officers of the United States and of the States, all judges and defenders of the Union must bind themselves to support the Constitution. Whether given by oath or affirmation, this pledge is essentially an appeal for Divine help in keeping inviolate a sacred obligation.

Upon all the coins of the United States appears the inscription, "In God we trust." Every word of the Constitution breathes this trust in God. Read the Preamble again and again. Give wings to your thought, so that you may poise like an eagle over time and the universe, and you will find within those words all the most ardent hopes of the human heart, the holiest aspirations of the human soul.

That this nation is established upon the rock of God's favor and protection will be proved, we devoutly believe, by its indestructibility. Time does not wear down nor eat away the eternal truths of the Constitution. War can not overturn the temple of our liberty so long as American sons are worthy of their forefathers. Instead of fading with age, the glory of the Constitution takes on new splendor with the passing of the centuries. The faith of the forefathers gave them strength to plan for the ages. May we, with equal faith, guard our birth-right and hand it down to *our* posterity as their most precious heirloom—liberty, "the immediate jewel of the soul."

On account of the widespread demand for this particular address, it is deemed advisable to reprint it in pamphlet form.
Additional copies for churches, schools, libraries, clubs, etc., will be furnished upon request.

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