

CONSTITUTION WEEK

Editor's Note: Following is an address delivered over radio station WCDJ in connection with the observance of Constitution Week. The address was made by William S. Privott and is the final one of several published in The Herald by request.

We are so constantly afflicted with "weeks" of different kinds, ranging from "be kind to animals" week to "corn bread" week, that we usually pay little attention to them. However, I feel that observance of "Constitution" week merits our serious consideration and I commend the local DAR Chapter for its sponsorship and Radio Station WCDJ for its cooperation. Most of us have not read the U. S. Constitution since our high school days and we are inclined to take for granted the many benefits and privileges which we enjoy solely because of the fact that they are guaranteed by the Constitution. Among these are the freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom of the press and the rights to assemble and bear arms.

I would remind all that the Constitution is a document written by and for human beings and is, therefore, subject to all the frailties and difference of opinion that the human mind can devise. Even the Bible is subject to different interpretations and some of our fiercest battles have been fought because of this. If, then, the Holy Scripture, with its divine inspiration, were to be subject to challenge and debate, how can anyone be surprised that differences of opinion arise as to the meaning of our Constitution? I hasten to say that I do not agree with some of the interpretations that have been recently propounded, especially with reference to the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, but I do recognize the need for a final and absolute authority who shall say what the law is. The remedy lies not in an attack upon the Constitution itself but changes must be effected by changes in the laws and by changes in the personnel of the individuals who pass upon their applicability to the Constitution. History reveals a number of occasions when the people and the Congress and even the Presidents have opposed the interpretation placed upon some laws by the judicial branch of the government, but at no time do I recall that it was contended that authority was lacking to so interpret and enforce the laws as written. Our proper remedy, if we do not like any law, is to change the law itself. Most of us recall the late unlamented and unpopular 18th Amendment known, facetiously, as the Prohibition Act. When it was found to be unpopular and unenforceable, solely because of public opinion in the matter, the law was properly repealed by the 21st Amendment. During the past week you

have had scholarly and appropriate discourses on the 5th and 14th Amendments, on the history and background of the Constitution and I thought that the radio audience might be interested in refreshing its memory as to just how a change or amendment to the Constitution is brought about.

Article 5 provides that: "The Congress, whenever two-thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose amendments to this Constitution, or, on the application of the Legislatures of two-thirds of the several states, shall call a convention for proposing amendments, which, in either case, shall be valid to all intents and purposes, as part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three-fourths of the several states or by conventions in three-fourths thereof, as the one or the other mode of ratification may be proposed by the Congress; . . ." What has been the history of uses or attempted uses of Article 5 by members of Congress? No fewer than 4,020 proposals for amendment of the Constitution have been submitted between 1789, the effective date of the Constitution, until 1941. This is an average of twenty-six and one-half a year which, if maintained — and more amendments are being proposed now than ever before — could bring the total to almost 4,500 by the end of the year. Scores of sensible and apparently useful amendments have died on first base. But not a few trivial and downright crackpot ideas have been advanced since the first Congress organized itself 169 years ago in New York.

Representative Miller of Wisconsin in 1893 proposed that "The Army and Navy, including the Army and Navy schools of organized murder (the academies at West Point and Annapolis), are hereby abolished." Also, he suggested that "The House and Senate shall vote by electricity." Three amendments have tried to

prohibit the possession of wealth in excess of \$10,000,000, the government to confiscate the surplus. Then there was Representative Morin of Pennsylvania, who, in 1914, wanted to dispossess any citizen or combination of citizens of "all wealth, property, power, influence or honor gained through dishonesty."

Dissatisfaction with the methods of choosing the President and Vice President, still a subject of dispute, has given rise to scores of proposals. Back in 1808, Senator Hillhouse of Connecticut proposed that the President be chosen by lot from the pool of retired senators. More colorful was the suggestion of Vinton of Ohio in 1844: to let each state elect its favorite son, then put into a foolproof box or sphere as many balls as each state has Representatives and Senators, each ball to be stamped with the name of the state, shake well, draw out one ball, and give the job of being President to the choice of the lucky state.

The Vice Presidency has been the subject of many proposals, ranging from the seven attempts to abolish the office entirely to the five efforts to multiply the job and have a first, second and third Vice President on the theory that "What is good for General Motors is good for the United States."

The Constitution makes no mention of God. The omission was no oversight. The Revolution was fought not only against taxes and the Crown but against the old world tyranny of which clericalism and an established state church were a part. So sensitive were the founding fathers on this subject that the very first clause of the First Article in the Bill of Rights—the first amending of the Constitution—specified that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The fear of church interference in government was expressed in proposed amendments to forbid ministers to hold federal office.

Between 1889 and 1941, some sixty-five amendments were

proposed to bring some order out of the chaos and confusion of the marriage and divorce laws of the states. But aside from the prohibition of polygamy as decreed by the Edmunds Act, the states have kept exclusive jurisdiction over marital relations, and have shied away from yielding any of it to the federal government.

Whether a particular amendment is worthy or not, adding it to the Constitution is difficult. This is shown by the score of twenty-two wins in nearly 4,500 tries. Among the reasonable suggestions that have so far failed but are kept alive are equal rights, abolition of Congressional immunity, national representation for the District of Columbia, and the problem of Presidential disability. It should be a matter of pride, however persistent, no silly proposal has ever won acceptance, from the proposal of "Marse" Wilson of Mississippi to prohibit foreign-born citizens from becoming Congressmen to the choice of President by a kind of bingo.

Weekly Devotional Column

By JAMES MacKENZIE

Jesus is coming to earth again! Glorious promise and blessed hope—Jesus is coming again! Coming in bodily form. Coming to save, and coming to judge. Jesus is coming again!

Men may ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" But Jesus is coming again! Preachers may fail to proclaim it, but Jesus is coming again! Intidels may twist and turn the precious pages of the Sacred Volume to change their meaning, but Jesus is coming again! We may be so engrossed with the petty, mundane cares and affairs of this doomed world that we desire not His coming—But Jesus is coming again!

Jesus is coming again! Coming first of all to receive unto Himself His saints, who look for His coming. Coming then to judge

the world, and to reign on the throne of David for one-thousand years. Jesus is coming again, and those who love and believe the Bible expect Him soon—perhaps today. For example, here is one of many Bible descriptions of the days that will precede His return: "Thus know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholiness, without natural affection (perverted), truce-breakers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. . . ." (II Timothy 3:1-5). Sounds like a contemporary history of our times, doesn't it?

Perhaps the most general characteristic of the last days (which most Bible scholars believe are the days we are now living in) is that men will have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. That is, they will pay lip service to religion, and go through the outward motions of churchianity, but will allow it to have

no influence whatever on their lives. This of course is the ultimate blasphemy, and we see much of it today. So much indeed, that it is difficult to tell the church member from the honest sinner who makes no insincere pretense at piety. In our day and time leading church members curse and drink, lie, steal, gamble, read the same dirty magazines and modern novels as the unsaved, and are to be seen, so I understand, at filthy movies. Nor do many feel shame at their betrayal of the Precious Saviour, but will defend their conduct and encourage others, especially children, to follow their path to hell. Surely the day approaches quickly—our Lord will not long delay His coming.

Are you ready? Were Jesus to come today would you greet Him with joy or with fear? Dear friend, even now as you read these words you may avail yourself of the mercy and love of God by simply trusting His Son, Jesus, as your Saviour and Lord. We know not the day nor the hour when He shall come again in bodily form, but where the heart is open to Him He enters in to save, and to bless. Let Jesus come into your heart right now.

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