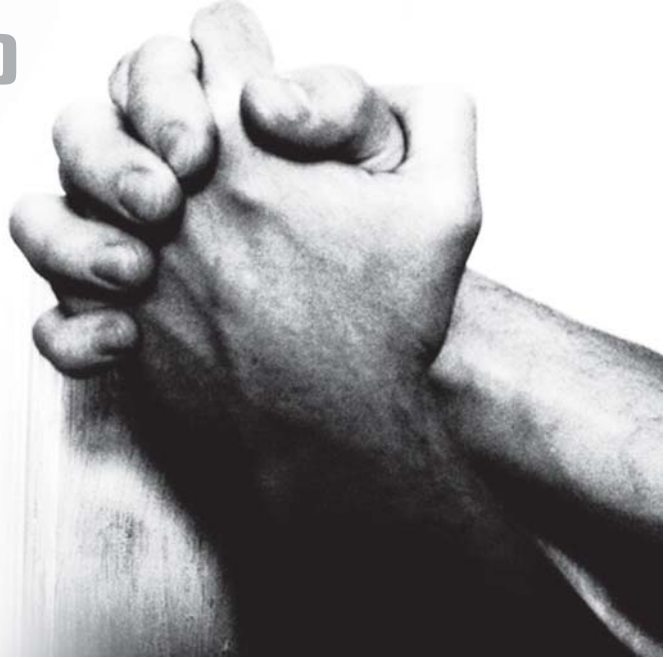




# THE PRAYER THAT SHOCKED THE WORLD



In the previous article we reflected on the vital need for an ongoing self-examination of the ideas and beliefs that we hold from time to time. This thought is inspired by Socrates' exhortation to humanity to keep our ideas constantly under scrutiny and not buy them without taking a good look. "An unexamined life is not worth living," said Socrates. In terms of judgment of men and matters often people lean toward the credulous end of a spectrum. They are happy accepting things heard from others without giving consideration to the evidence involved. Even otherwise educated persons commonly fall a prey to salespersons. Many do make a leap of faith and accept whatever comes from their religious persuasion.

An illustration of credulousness is apt and I found a good one in the religious category from among my recent emails. This email was sent to me by a Christian friend but it could as well have been shared by any God-believing religionist. I thought we may take this up as a general illustrative case. I produce the piece sent to me by email with the advice that I should circulate the wisdom to all and sundry. Here it is:

"THE PRAYER THAT SHOCKED THE WORLD When Minister Joe Wright was asked to open the new session of the

and called it politics. We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition.

With the Lord's help may this prayer sweep over our nation and wholeheartedly become our desire so that we again can be called: "one nation under God"

piece is about seeking God's forgiveness for the listed sins committed by us, humans. Obviously the list contains human failures that have been exhibited throughout human history thereby suggesting quite legitimately that such failures are a consequence of our human nature. From a God-believer's stance God had bequeathed a nature like that when he created man and woman. Humans have abused power. They have exploited the vulnerable. They have coveted their neighbour's possessions including their attractive spouses. And so on. Then why ask for forgiveness?

The piece concludes by invoking God to build "our nation" as "One nation under God." Here again, I have something to quarrel about. Isn't the task of building a nation as one unity something belonging to its citizens? It is you and I who divide our nation and it is only you and I that can make a change of heart to unify the nation. Why pass the buck to God? God has already the onerous task of overseeing 7 or 8 billion people.

I have left the troubling question as to why the pastor wants to construct a nation "under God." Aren't there millions who do not believe in a God and millions in the future who now believe but who may drop that belief in the future? Aren't there millions who believe in several deities?

The deeper issue I have with this emailed

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We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment. Search us, Oh God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Amen!" The response

was immediate. A number of legislators walked out during the prayer in protest. In 6 short weeks, Central Christian Church, where Rev. Wright is pastor, logged more than 5,000 phone calls with only 47 of those calls responding negatively.

The church is now receiving international requests for copies of this prayer from India, Africa and Korea.

Commentator Paul Harvey aired this prayer on his radio program, "The Rest of the Story," and received a larger response to this program than any other he has ever aired.

Kansas Senate, everyone was expecting the usual generalities, but this is what they heard:

"Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask your forgiveness and to seek your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, "Woe to those who call evil good", but that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. We have killed our unborn and called it choice. We have shot anti-abortionists and called it justifiable. We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self esteem. We have abused power

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