

December 16, 2005

Dear Friend:

Glorious Past

OUR NATION'S GODLY HERITAGE

The Supreme Court in 1892 declared "This is a Christian nation."

Since the writing of the first amendment, many court cases have emerged to challenge the "separation of church and state." Though many in our nation now believe that "the separation" means our country should be void of any reference to faith, clearly that was not the intent of the Founding Fathers, nor of lawmakers of the first several decades of America's existence.

One such case occurred in the United States Supreme Court during the early months of 1892. The case was the Church of the Holy Trinity vs. United States. The case was formed around the decision of Holy Trinity Church of New York City to hire a pastor from England. At the time there were laws preventing the hiring of foreigners for jobs that could and should be filled by Americans – but its intent was to prevent the hiring of cheaper unskilled labor from abroad, especially to work in the burgeoning railroad expansion – not to interfere with individual congregations and their pastoral selection process.

The final opinion was authored by Justice David J. Brewer, and his comments have become a virtual encyclopedia of the many references to faith in the founding of America. He concludes: *"No purpose of action against religion can be imputed to any legislation, state or national, because this is a religious people . . . This is a Christian nation."*

Justice Brewer reached this conclusion after reviewing volumes of primary sources, ranging in diversity from the commission of Christopher Columbus to the charters and constitutions of several states.

Brewer also referred to the words of the Declaration of Independence (*"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with a certain unalienable Rights ... And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."*)

Brewer comments: *"There is no dissonance in these declarations. There is a universal language pervading them all, having one meaning; they affirm and reaffirm that this is a religious nation ... they speak the voice of the entire people."*

Brewer goes on to make reference to several previous Supreme Court cases, as well as the common practices of the opening of sessions of our governing bodies with prayer, the laws that observe the Sabbath and the profuse presence of churches and charitable organizations that spread their message across our nation and around the world. Brewer concludes as many Americans have known for centuries, that our faith is essential to our makeup as a nation, and any attempt to deny this fact is an attempt to deny the very heart and soul of America. *"America is a Christian nation."*

PRESIDENTIAL QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"Before all else, we seek, upon our common labor as a nation, the blessings of Almighty God. And the hopes in our hearts fashion the deepest prayers of our whole people. May we pursue the right – without self-righteousness. May we know unity – without conformity. May we grow in strength – without pride in

self. May we, in our dealings with all people of the earth, ever speak truth and serve justice ... And so the prayer of our people carries far beyond our own frontiers to the wide world of our duty and destiny."

-- Dwight D. Eisenhower

ONE NATION UNDER GOD: THE HISTORY OF PRAYER IN AMERICA

The Prayer of Helen Hunt Jackson

While women long had been the country's champions of prayer, ensuring that America's children were properly taught to turn to God, their voices in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century became louder and more creative than ever. The longtime friend and neighbor of Emily Dickinson, Helen Hunt Jackson, wrote one of the most heartrending prayers of the day. "Advancing Towards the End of the Day" as she too came to the end of her life. Movingly she bemoaned the fact that she had not done more for others during her lifetime, touching as it did on the message of the Beatitudes.

Father, I scarcely dare to pray,
So clear I see, now it is done,
How I have wasted half my day,
And left my work just begun.

So clear I see that things I though
Were right or harmless were a sin
So clear I see that I have sought
Unconscious, selfish aims to win;
So clear I see that I have hurt
The soul I might have helped to save,
That I have slothful been inert,
Deaf to the calls thy leaders gave.

In outskirts of the kingdom vast,
Father, the humblest spot give me;
Set me the lowliest task thou hast:
Let me repentant work for thee!

Once published, the prayer was circulated widely and read from church pulpits across the country. Among her other achievements was a book called *Ramona*, written while she still lived in Colorado Springs, that was the first major work to call attention to the plight of the Native Americans.

Having moved to Colorado, Helen Hunt Jackson, like so many other Americans, was awed by the beauty and genuine possibilities of the West, so stunningly captured for Easterners in the paintings of the Hudson River School and the prose of America's burgeoning writers. Tens of thousands of Americans now were homesteading in frontier lands, building new communities at a faster pace than ever. Prayer became the steadfast companion to settlers confronting the unknown.

This excerpt is drawn from *One Nation Under God: The History of Prayer in America* by James P. Moore, Jr. published on November 1, 2005. More information can be found on <http://www.1nug.com/>.

Energetic Present

PRAYER REQUESTS

Now that it has been 1,000 days since the invasion of Iraq, pray for President Bush as he continues to lead our efforts there as Commander-in-Chief, asking God to guide him with His wisdom and strength, that our efforts there will bear positive results and that the entire Middle East region will be strengthened by the establishment of democracy in Iraq.

As elections in Iraq have taken place, pray for democracy to continue to grow in that nation. Pray for a generation of children who now learn of life lived in freedom rather than tyranny, asking God to continue to raise up leaders who will act responsibly and work for the common good.

Give thanks for the positive news from U.S. military commanders in Iraq who report that 214,000 Iraqi troops and security forces have been trained and are now serving their country. Pray that the thousands of insurgents who continue to wreak havoc in their own country will have their efforts defused.

As President Bush continues to speak about the new benefit changes in Medicare, pray that every senior citizen who needs help understanding and deciding on their plan will get the help they need resulting in better health care for all older Americans.

As the January 11 deadline for Hurricane Katrina victims to apply for aid from FEMA approaches, pray that everyone who continues to need help will get it. Pray also for those evacuees who remain in government-provided housing to have the obstacles to their successful placement removed so they will obtain permanent housing. Pray for everyone working to rebuild and bring relief to the entire Gulf Region, particularly faith-based efforts. Pray for those working to rebuild the levees in New Orleans to know the best way to proceed.

Pray for American troops and other relief efforts in Pakistan where some aid is being blocked by terrorists, asking God to help and provide assistance to those still marginalized by last month's earthquake.

Pray for our troops as they continue to serve faithfully, particularly during this difficult time of year, asking God to strengthen and protect every member of the military abroad and at home. Pray especially for those who have lost loved ones as they face the Christmas season for the first time, asking God to comfort and care for each one in their loss. Pray for the children who now face life without a parent, and for those who will step up to provide comfort, love and support for them.

A CHRISTMASTIME PRAYER FOR OUR TROOPS

by Greg Asimakoupoulos

O God, be near our troops today.
Homesick, they are well aware
that their place at the family table
will lack their presence this year.
They also know that their presents
neath the Christmas tree
will have to wait for a later date.
In the meantime, Father,
give them reason
in this season of Immanuel
to sense God-with-us with them.
Remind them that peace on earth
is worth their frontline courage
as well as the sacrifices
they may be called to make.
Although the carols they try to sing

may catch in their throats,
allow them to swallow
their current circumstances
without bitterness or regret.
As these men and women sing Joy to the World,
help them to know happiness in their hearts.
May the letters, e-mails and phone calls they receive
be tidings of comfort and joy.
And although the explosive nights in a war zone
are anything but silent,
give these who serve global justice
freedom from terror-triggered nightmares
and the ability to dream of goodwill to men.
In the name of the Prince of Peace we pray. Amen.

Challenging Future

WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT ON REVOLUTION

" The eight years from the end of the Revolutionary War to the election of a constitutional government were a time of disorder and upheaval [in our country]. There were uprisings, with mobs attacking courthouses and government buildings. There was a planned military coup that was defused only by the personal intervention of General Washington. In 1783, Congress was chased from this city by angry veterans demanding back-pay, and they stayed on the run for six months.

Our founders faced many difficult challenges – they made mistakes, they learned from their experiences, and they adjusted their approach ... It is important to keep this history in mind as we look at the progress of freedom and democracy in Iraq. No nation in history has made the transition to a free society without facing challenges, setbacks, and false starts. The past two-and-a-half years have been a period of difficult struggle in Iraq, yet they've also been a time of great hope and achievement for the Iraqi people."
– George W. Bush

Serving God and Country,

Chaplain Ken

Rev. Kenneth L. Beale, Jr., D. Min.

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