

# The Philadelphia Bulletin

## The most underrated part of inauguration

By Chuck Norris

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I know inaugural news and commentary is already passé. But I could not find one news report or pundit this past week that caught what I believe was the most subtle, strategic and possibly subversive moment of the inauguration ceremony. Did you catch it?

The two who subtly stole the show were the Protestant ministers who sandwiched the ceremony with their invocation and benediction. *Newsweek*, said that Pastor Rick Warren "clearly opted for a conciliatory tone that eschewed any mention of culture-war issues."

But Warren was hardly pacifying the elites or anyone else – if you truly understand what he prayed. The invocation may have seemed like a rather benign blessing that even his most ardent foes could have interpreted as inclusive. But the real portrait of his prayer was quite to the contrary.

Personally, I wasn't expecting any sort of controversial catechism from Warren. If he ended his prayer like Franklin Graham, who closed his invocation at Bush's 2001 inauguration "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" and was lambasted by the politically left for doing so, I would have been pleasantly surprised. Well, in my estimation, Rick Warren was Franklin Graham on spiritual steroids.

**Warren should win the clergy-of-the-year award for prayer creativity, cultural relativity and subtle subversive submissions.**

First of all, Warren's prayer was nearly five minutes – about 486 words. He certainly didn't cower to typical audience intolerance for long prayers and opt for a short grace before meals.

Second, Warren embarks on what theologians call a *Mars Hill (Greek) apologetic*, which is a biblical approach and deductive line of reason that the Apostle Paul used in teaching about a Creator God, with whom all can at first identify. No God-fearing individual could object to Warren's wide appeal in the words:

*Almighty God, our Father, everything we see, and everything we can't see, exists because of you alone. It all comes from you, it all belongs to you, it all exists for your glory. History is your story.*

Third, Warren then narrows his focus by identifying the Creator as the one true Hebrew (or Jewish) God of the Old Testament – something that sounds inclusive of Judaism but also serves as the basis and narrowing of his Christian logic. At the same time, he was culturally relative and sensitive to (but not necessarily endorsing of) Islam, by extolling God as "the compassionate and merciful one," a descriptive line that opens all but one chapter of the Koran. All of that is contained in his few words:

*The Scripture tells us, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one." And you are the compassionate and merciful one. And you are loving to everyone you have made.*

Fourth, Warren then covers the gamut in compassionate petitions: thanking God for racial freedom and equality, praying a blessing on Obama and his cabinet, asking God to help us all unite in freedom, forgive us of our presumption and pride and share and serve all humanity – not just ourselves or our own. Got you hooked yet?

Now for the part that would have earned him nothing but jeers and disdain, were it not couched in those preceding four points:

Fifth, Warren turns on a dime by calling on God to help us remember this universal religious truth (in all Middle Eastern religions, I might add): that God will judge all nations and all peoples. Then, for clarity sake, the name of Warren's Supreme Judge is given. He refers to this transforming agent, who changed his own life, in four different languages: "I humbly ask this in the name of the one who changed my life – Yeshua (Hebrew), Isa (Arabic), Jesus (Spanish pronunciation) and Jesus (English) ..."

Sixth and last, just when you think the "amen" is imminent, Warren gives a *coup de grace* to any political or earthly power – a possible subversive chess move to subtly call Obama's regime into checkmate.

He called upon the global Christian community to invoke God's power against any and all human strongholds by collectively praying the Lord's Prayer. Warren rallies all branches, traditions and denominations of the universal church by triggering a prayer response through his words, "who taught us to pray saying ..." Proof came as cameras immediately panned the Washington crowds who found themselves suddenly reciting the prayer with Warren.

So why did Warren close his invocation with the Lord's Prayer? The simple answer is that it is universal, well known and both relatively inclusive of the majority and yet exclusive to the band of Jesus' loyalists. But the truth is the Lord's Prayer is no trite meaningless religious repetition to Warren.

Warren once explained in [one of his teachings](#), "Why do we pray 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done as it is in heaven'? Because in heaven God's will is always done perfectly. But is God's will done perfectly on earth? Absolutely not. Most of the things that happen on earth are not God's will, but our will – we make choices. So God's will is not always done here... When you pray, 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,' you are saying to God, first, I *accept* Your purpose and plan, and second, I *surrender* to Your control."

Reciting the Lord's Prayer is pleading with God to do nothing short of erecting His Kingdom and executing His desires on earth as they are in heaven! It is calling upon the one true God, asking for his nature to overrun ours, his wishes to be fulfilled (not ours) and his rule and reign to be established (not ours)! On the flip side, it is the most "dangerous" prayer one can pray if one wants to continue to live selfishly, misuse power and maintain control over others.

The Lord's Prayer is, in reality, the most invasive and subversive prayer to human selfishness that one can pray. It is able to breakdown spiritual strongholds within us, within others, and even within political structures. As Warren once said, "Praying the Lord's prayer is what you need to pray when your circumstances are uncontrollable, when people around you are unchangeable, and when problems are unexplainable."

Now you tell me: Why would Warren, who thoroughly understands the Scriptures, pray that particular prayer at the transference of new political powers with whom he largely disagrees?

The answer is obvious.

Like millions of others, I repeated this relatively short prayer in rote for most of my life, without thinking twice about its meaning. But then I learned about its powerful truths from my pastor, who teaches its principles and encourages its daily recitation through a simple acronym. The Lord's Prayer has revolutionized my prayers and my life, and I believe (as I know Warren does) it can change all of our lives, government and world, if we sincerely and regularly pray it. That's exactly why Warren's invocation included it.

For the media, Warren was reinforcing his image as "a unifying, post-Christian-right figure rather than as a divisive culture warrior." But reality is, as Jesus called His Apostles to do, Warren was being as Jesus taught us to be, "*wise as a serpent, and innocent as a dove.*" And most never even caught it.

So, say what you will about this purpose-driven pastor, but, when you parse it out, Rev. Rick Warren's inaugural invocation was about as purpose-driven as prayers come.