

## The Necessity of Prayer to Effective Military & Combat Leadership

### INTRODUCTION

In 2002, The Naval Aviation Foundation (NAF), led by former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Thomas Moorer and Admiral Mark Hill, filed a friend of the court brief in the Virginia Military Institute prayer case, *Mellen and Knick v. Bunting*, targeted at removing mealtime prayers at VMI. This would be the first major battle in the war against prayer in the Armed Forces.

VMI was a target because it is state supported and trains young men and women to defend our country “in time of national peril,” and thus, it is an part of America’s military and defense establishment. The NAF presented many proofs from American history, including organic utterances, official acts, testimonials, and the prayers of America’s Commanders-in-Chief and preeminent combat leaders, to reconfirm to the judges that American military leadership considers prayer a “military necessity” and has so from America’s founding, to this present hour.

Judges use the term “military necessity,” to describe the judicial deference given to America’s uniformed military leadership because of the different demands on those charged with winning America’s wars and ultimately securing the nation’s defense and security.

The country’s first organic utterance is the Declaration of Independence. It recognizes the “Creator” and “Divine Providence”. The authors of the Declaration also wrote the U.S. Armed Forces’ first principles, which form the military’s core principles. The “Creator”, cited in the Declaration of Independence, is the same “God” called upon in the Armed Forces “sacred oaths,” all of which end with the prayer, “...so help me God.”

The first principles of the Continental Navy were written by John Adams in 1775 and passed by the Continental congress on November 28, 1775. These same principles were reaffirmed and expanded in 1956 by the U.S. Congress and again for the U.S. Army and Air Force in 1997, and remain to this day unchanged.

The second principle of the Continental Navy states:

“The Commanders of the ships of the Thirteen United Colonies are to take care that divine service be performed twice a day on board, and a sermon preached on Sundays, unless bad weather or other extraordinary accidents prevent it.”

The second principle adopted in the Rules and Regulations of for the Continental Army on Friday June 30 1775, states:

“It is earnestly recommended to all officers and soldiers, diligently to attend Divine Service...”

Prayer and American Military History in battles great and small are inseparable in that prayer has been used to foster a sense of honor, loyalty and devotion to duty in service to God and Country. The recognition of our “Creator” found in the Declaration of Independence, and tens of thousands of official government documents and Americans’ national dependence upon His superintending or Divine Providence, is often publicly and officially invoked and acknowledged through public and official prayer by the Commander-in-Chief, elected and appointed officials, and most importantly, America’s uniformed and civilian military leadership and authorities. All of whom speak with a single voice confirming that prayer to Almighty God for his provision and protection is a vital national security interest for the United States Armed Forces.

Military prayers have never established, supported, or sponsored a specific religion, but rather have acknowledged Divine Providence in the establishment of the United States of America, and the successes of her Armed Forces.

## **VIRTUE & THE SOLDIER’S SOUL**

Virtue is the “animating spirit” of the American military and is the “keynote” of a Commander’s sworn duty of exemplary behavior, supervision and correction.”<sup>1</sup> Successful armies consist of uniformly disciplined, patriotic, well-trained, obedient soldiers, whose high morale demonstrates a special trust and confidence in the patriotism, valor, fidelity and abilities of their military officers and civilian military leaders.

Distinguished VMI graduate General George C. Marshall, author of “The Marshall Plan” to rebuild Europe after World War II, taught that morale comes from “the religious fervor of the soul.” It is the essential element of achieving military objectives, and is ignored at great peril, when soldiers hold only guns and orders, with no strength of virtue. Said Marshall:

...I look upon the spiritual life of the soldier as even more important than his physical equipment...the soldier's heart, the soldier's spirit, the soldier's soul are everything. Unless the soldier's soul sustains him, he cannot be relied on and will fail himself and his commander and his country in the end.

General George C. Marshall

In 1828, Noah Webster defined “soul” as; “The spiritual, rational and immortal substance in man...which enables him to think and reason, and which renders him a subject of moral government.” The soul’s training for self-government yields a commensurate level of good order and military discipline. American military services are especially constituted to train effective

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<sup>1</sup> Leland P. Lovette, *Naval Customs Traditions and Usage*, George Banta Publishing Company: Menasha, Wisconsin, 1934, p. 60-61. See U.S. Navy, *Naval Justice* 18-19 (1945).

and disciplined forces, to lead and defend the country “in time of national peril,” and must therefore be keen to the soul and the true source of American virtue, honor and patriotism.

When military leaders publicly pray they convey to those under their command their subordination to the institutional moral standard, thereby signaling to the ranks their adherence to the standard’s high value of life and their careful consideration to the expenditure of lives and resources in accomplishing military combat objectives.

Leaders can rely upon the military chaplaincy, to an extent, to shoulder the responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the troops, but officers lead by example. Subordination to the Declaration’s “Creator” through prayer demonstrates to the ranks that commanders recognize the difficulty in humanly alleviating the morale-depleting stresses attributable to separation from their homes, duty in strange surroundings involving people whose language or customs they do not share, fear of facing dangerous training, deadly combat, new assignments, and other service hardships.

Transmitting the military necessity for public prayer and the precedent for a military moral code familiarizes troops with the military’s unique justice system, aids them in determining “lawful” orders, both given and received, and assists in inspiring virtue, honor and patriotism, while suppressing all immorality to, and for, the welfare of those under their command.

In the 1950s, after the Korean War, a Defense Department study of returned POW’s reported the extent of their poor performance at Communist hands. Because our “soldiers did not understand the Constitution or the stark differences” between the atheistic Communist system and the rights and freedoms with which Americans are endowed by the “Creator” of the Declaration of Independence, President Dwight Eisenhower issued the U.S. Military “Code of Conduct” to reinforce the individual soldier by reaffirming the American purpose and by adding “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance. The Code of Conduct memorized by all soldiers included; “never to forget that I am an American fighting man, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which make my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.”

The recognition of “God” and the “Creator” is in tens of thousands of official American government documents. Divine Providence is often publicly invoked and acknowledged through prayer by our Commanders-in-Chief, who without exception have publicly acknowledged “God” in each of their inaugural addresses. Elected and appointed officials, and most importantly, America’s uniformed and civilian military leadership and senior authorities, all speak with a single voice confirming that prayer to “Almighty God” for his provision and protection is vital to national security for all of the United States Armed Forces.

## SCIENCE CONFIRMS THE MILITARY NECESSITY OF PRAYER

Not only has prayer been deemed essential in the professional judgment of military leaders, scientific research supports its positive impact on military morale, health and well-being.

The Studies in Social Psychology in World War II Series, produced by the Social Science Research Council, was one of the largest social science research projects in history. Volume II,

*The American Soldier, Combat and Its Aftermath*, Princeton University Press, (1949), reported data on the importance of prayer to officers and enlisted infantrymen. Prayer was selected most frequently as the soldier's source of combat motivation. The motivation of prayer was selected over the next highest categories of "thinking that you couldn't let the other men down," and "thinking that you had to finish the job in order to get home again." Not only did enlisted infantrymen mention prayers more often than any other item as helping a lot, but length of combat had no effect on the frequency of responses.

These data would suggest that combat men who had experienced greater stress were at least as likely to say they were helped by prayer as those who had been subjected to less stress" (p. 176)...[T]he fact that such an overwhelming majority of combat men said that prayer helped them a lot certainly means that they almost universally had recourse to prayer and probably found relief, distraction, or consolation in the process (p. 185).

Military training and "going in harm's way" can result in injury and death. The healing aspects of religion and prayer have also been scientifically noted. Dr. Dale Matthews, a physician with Duke University's Center for the Study of Religion/Spirituality and Health, has published a book on *The Faith Factor: Proof of the Healing Power of Prayer*, and the Duke University Center has produced more than 70 data-based, peer-reviewed papers published in medical and scientific journals. Although the mountain of data is vigorously challenged in humanist journals such as *Free Thought* and *Skeptical Inquirer*, Harold Pincus, former deputy medical director of the American Psychiatric Association, stated that these findings make it clear there are "important connections between spirituality, religion, and health,"<sup>2</sup> and medical schools have acted to implement its benefits in physician training.

## PRAYER AT PIVOTAL POINTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

### The Birth of America

Historically, the military has acknowledged Almighty God as sovereign over the affairs of men, especially men of valor in war time. From General George Washington to the present hour, our Commanders-in-Chief have prayed for God's Providence, and acknowledged His favor upon a military force that is dedicated to defending liberty and justice for all.

The first meeting of Congress in 1774 took place at Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia and was opened with prayer. There was some argument then as to whether men of such diverse religious views could agree to pray. Mr. Samuel Adams arose and said, "that he was no bigot; and could hear a Prayer from any gentleman of Piety and virtue who was at the same time a friend to his Country." The next morning, September 7, 1774, The Reverend Jacob Duche opened the congressional session with prayer.

John Adams described the prayer to his wife Abigail in a letter, saying he had never heard prayer with "such fervor, such ardor, such earnestness and pathos, and in a language so elegant and

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<sup>2</sup> H. A. Pincus. Commentary: Spirituality, Religion, and Health: Expanding, and Using the Knowledge Base. *Mind/Body Medicine*, 2 (1997) at 49.

sublime, for America, for Congress, for the Province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially the town of Boston. It has had an excellent effect upon everybody here.”<sup>3</sup>

Thursday, June 28, 1787. Benjamin Franklin delivered a speech to the Constitutional Convention addressing a bitter debate over the representation of individual states in the new government. At the age of 81, he was the senior member of the convention. James Madison recorded his words as follows:

The small progress we have made after four or five weeks close attendance and continual reasonings with each other—our different sentiments on almost every question, several of the last producing as many noes as ayes, is methinks a melancholy proof of the imperfection of the Human Understanding....

I therefore beg leave to move—that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service.<sup>4</sup>

The Declaration of Independence, our nation’s birth certificate establishes,

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

The acknowledgment of our Creator stretches across the pages of American history in an unbroken line. The supreme Court affirmed our roots in 1892 by declaring,

...no purpose of action against religion can be imputed to any legislation state or national, because this is a religious people. This is historically true. From the discovery of this continent to the present hour, there is a single voice making this affirmation...we find everywhere a clear recognition of the same truth...this is a Christian nation.<sup>5</sup>

George Washington recorded in his Orderly Book on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1776,

The honorable Continental Congress having been pleased to allow a chaplain to each regiment, the colonels or commanding officers of each regiment are directed to procure chaplains accordingly, persons of good characters and exemplary lives, and to see that all inferior officers and soldiers pay them a suitable respect. The blessing and protection of Heaven are at all times necessary, but especially so in times of public distress and danger. The General hopes and trusts, that every officer and man will endeavour to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier, defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country.<sup>6</sup>

General George Washington issued this order from Valley Forge on May 5, 1778,

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<sup>3</sup> C. F. Adams (Ed.). 1841. *Letters of John Adams Addressed to His Wife*. Boston: Little & Brown, Vol. I, at 23-24.

<sup>4</sup> June 28, 1787. James Madison. *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787*. NY: W. W. Morton & Co. Original, 1787, reprinted, 1987. Vol. I, p. 504. See also, Gaillard Hunt and James B. Scott, Eds. 1920. *The Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787 Which Framed the Constitution of the United States of America*, Reported by James Madison. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>5</sup> *Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States*, 143 U.S. 457 (1892).

<sup>6</sup> Jared Sparks. *The Writings of George Washington*. Vol. XII. Boston: Ferdinand Andrews, Publisher, 1838, at 401.

If having pleased the Almighty Ruler of the universe to defend the cause of the United American States, and finally to raise up a powerful friend among the princes of the earth, to establish our liberty and independence upon a lasting foundation, it becomes us to set apart a day for gratefully acknowledging the divine goodness, and celebrating the important event, which we owe to His divine interposition.<sup>7</sup>

And later that year, Washington wrote,

The hand of Providence has been so conspicuous in all this, that he must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more than wicked, that has not gratitude enough to acknowledge his obligations.<sup>8</sup>

During the Revolution, John Adams wrote to his wife,

Our favorite Dr. Tillotson observes that “in all our concernments we ought to have particular regard to the Supreme Disposer of all things, and earnestly to seek his favor and blessing upon all our undertakings, but more especially in the affairs of war, in which the providence of God is pleased many times in a very peculiar manner to interpose and interest itself, because all war is as it were an appeal to God, and a reference of those causes to the decision of His providence which through pride and injustice and perverse passions of men can receive no other determination.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1796, President Thomas Jefferson wrote,

And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath?<sup>10</sup>

## The War of 1812

Andrew Jackson, the victorious Major General in the Battle of New Orleans, wrote of the experience,

It appears that the unerring hand of Providence shielded my men from the shower of balls, bombs, and rockets, when every ball and bomb from our guns carried with them a mission of death.<sup>11</sup>

On March 4, 1829, Andrew Jackson was inaugurated President of the United States. In his address, he offers a prayer for the nation:

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<sup>7</sup> Henry Whiting. 1844. *Revolutionary Orders of General Washington, Selected from MSS. Of John Whiting*, p. 74. From *America's God and Country* by William J. Federer. Fame Publishing, 1996.

<sup>8</sup> The Writings of George Washington, supra., note 2, at 402.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Frances Adams. 1898. *Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife Abigail Adams, During the Revolution*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., at 318.

<sup>10</sup> Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1794, Query XVIII, p. 237

<sup>11</sup> Burke Davis. 1977. *Old Hickory: A Life of Andrew Jackson*. p. 150. NY: Dial Press. Quoting a January 8, 1815 letter to Robert Hays.

And a firm reliance on the goodness of that Power whose providence mercifully protected our national infancy, and has since upheld our liberties in various vicissitudes, encourages me to offer up my ardent supplications that He will continue to make our beloved country the object of His divine care and gracious benediction.

The War of 1812 also brought us the words to our National Anthem, penned by Francis Scott Key during the Battle of Baltimore. The concluding verse is a prayer for the nation:

Oh, thus be it ever, when free men shall stand  
Between their loved homes and war's desolation!  
Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven rescued land  
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!  
Then conquer we must, when our cause is just,  
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust."  
And the Star-Spangled Banner in triumph shall wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Although the Army and the Navy had for some years regarded "The Star-Spangled Banner" as the national anthem, its designation as such first became official by executive order of President Wilson in 1916. This order was confirmed by act of Congress in 1931.

## The Civil War

On March 30, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued a historic Proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day:

Whereas, the Senate of the United States devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God in all the affairs of men and of nations, has, by a resolution, requested the President to designate and set apart a day for national prayer and humiliation:

And whereas, it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history: that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord:

And, insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisement in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people?

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown.

But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious Hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.

Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!

It behooves us then to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Now, therefore, in compliance with the request and fully concurring in the view of the Senate, I do, by this my proclamation, designate and set apart Thursday, the 30<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting and prayer.

And I do hereby request all the people to abstain on that day from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite, at their several places of public worship and their respective homes, in keeping the day holy to the Lord and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.

All this being done, in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the nation will be heard on high and answered with blessing no less than the pardon of our national sins and the restoration of our now divided and suffering country to its former happy condition of unity and peace.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed. By the President: Abraham Lincoln.<sup>12</sup>

## World War I

Having been involved in World War I for less than a year, President Woodrow Wilson set apart October 30, 1917 in May 30, 1918 as days on which the people of the United States were urged to pray for victory:

Whereas, the Congress and the United States, by a concurrent resolution adopted on the fourth day of the present month of October, in view of the entrance of our nation into the vast and awful war which now afflicts the greater part of the world, has requested me to set apart by official proclamation a date upon which the people should be called upon to offer concerted prayer to Almighty God for his divine aid in the success of our arms;

And, Whereas, it behooves the great free people, nurtured as we have been in the eternal principles of justice and of right, a nation which has sought from the earliest days of its existence to be obedient to the divine teachings which have inspired it in the exercise of its

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<sup>12</sup> Abraham Lincoln, March 30, 1863, in a Proclamation of a National Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer. James D. Richardson (U.S. Representative from Tennessee), Ed. *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents 1789-1897*. 10 Vols. Washington D.C.: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, published by authority of Congress, 1897, 1899.



liberties, to turn away to the supreme Master and cast themselves in faith at his feet, praying for his aid and succor in every hour of trial, to the end that the great aims to which our fathers dedicated our power as a people may not perish among men, but be always asserted and defended with fresh ardor and devotion and, through the Divine blessing, set at last upon enduring foundations for the benefit of all the free peoples of the earth:

Now, therefore, I, Woodrow Wilson, president of United States, gladly responding to the wish expressed by the Congress, do appoint October twenty-eighth, being the last Sunday of the present month, as a day of supplication and prayer for all the people of the nation, earnestly exhorting all my countrymen to observe the appointed day, according to their several faiths, in solemn prayer that God's blessing may rest upon the high task which is lay upon us, to the end that the cause for which we give our lives and treasure may triumph and our efforts be blessed with high achievement...<sup>13</sup>

On January 20, 1918, President Wilson, "following the reverent example of his predecessors" enjoined the military and Naval forces to regularly observe the Sabbath:

Such an observance of Sunday is dictated by the best traditions of our people and by the convictions of all who look to Divine Providence for guidance and protection, and, in repeating in this order the language of President Lincoln, the President is confident that he is speaking alike to be hearts and to the consciences of those under his authority.<sup>14</sup>

## World War II

World War II has numerous examples of a nation at prayer. Perhaps the most famous instance of prayer in the troops was a circulated prayer by General George Patton in December, 1942. In the interview with Chaplain Brigadier General James H. O'Neill, General Patton confided,

Chaplain, I am a strong believer in prayer...We were lucky in Africa, in Sicily, and in Italy, simply because people prayed. But we have to pray for ourselves, too. A good soldier is not made merely by making him think and work. There is something in every soldier that goes deeper than thinking or working.—it's his 'guts.' It is something that he has built in there: it is a world of truth and power that is higher than himself. Great living is not all output of thought and work. A man has to have intake as well. I don't know what you call it, but I call it Religion, Prayer, or God...We've got to get not only the chaplains but every man in the Third Army to pray. We must ask God to stop these rains. These rains are the margin that holds defeat or victory...I believe that prayer completes the circuit. It is power.<sup>15</sup>

On December 11th and 12th, 3,200 training letters on prayer were distributed to every chaplain and organizational commander down to and including the regimental level, and 250,000 prayer cards were distributed to every soldier in the Third Army with the now famous Patton prayer:

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<sup>13</sup> President Woodrow Wilson, October 30, 1917, A Proclamation of a National Day of Supplication and Prayer. Bertram Benedict, *A History of the Great War*, Vol. 1. New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1919, p. 386.

<sup>14</sup> President Woodrow Wilson, January 20, 1918, A Proclamation for the Military and Naval Forces Observance of Sabbath. Bertram Benedict, *A History of the Great War*, Vol. 1. New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1919, p. 387-388.

<sup>15</sup> Chaplain James H. O'Neill. 1948. The True Story of the Patton Prayer. *The Military Chaplain*. Vol. 19, No. 2, p. 2.

Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for Battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory, and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies, and establish Thy justice among men and nations. Amen.

The Chaplain reports, “On December 20, to the consternation of the Germans and the delight of the American forecasters who were equally surprised at the turnabout—the rains and the fogs ceased. For the better part of a week came bright clear skies and perfect flying weather. Our planes came over by tens, hundreds, thousands.”<sup>16</sup>

The president throughout World War II, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, took his oath of office on Saturday, March 4, 1933. He prayed in his address,

In this dedication of a Nation we humbly ask the blessing of God. May He protect each and every one of us. May He guide me in the days to come.

Roosevelt’s most famous prayer would come eleven years later, when on D-Day, June 7, 1944, he asked his fellow Americans to join him in prayer for American troops facing the most difficult battle of World War II. As people gathered around their radios for his famous fireside chat, Roosevelt prayed,

My fellow Americans:

Last night when I spoke with you about the fall of Rome I knew at that moment the troops of the United States and our allies were crossing the channel in another and greater operation. It has come to pass with success thus far. And so in this poignant hour I ask you to join with me in prayer.

Almighty God, our sons, pride of our nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor. A struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity. Lead them straight and true; give strength to their arms, stoutness to their hearts, steadfastness in their faith.

They will need Thy blessings. Their road will be long and hard, for the enemy is strong. He may hurl back our forces, success may not come with rushing speed. But we shall return again and again. And we know that by Thy grace, and by the righteousness of our cause, our sons will triumph. They will be.... night and day without rest until the victory....

The darkness will be rent by noise and flame. Men’s souls will be shaken with the violences of war. For these men are lately drawn from the ways of peace. They fight not for the lust of conquest. They fight to end conquest. They fight to liberate. They fight to let justice arise and tolerance and good will among all thy people. They yearn but for the end of battle, for their return to the haven of home. Some will never return. Embrace

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<sup>16</sup> Id., p. 3, 13.

these, Father, and receive them Thy heroic servants into Thy Kingdom. And for us at home, fathers, mothers, children, wives, sisters, and brothers of brave men overseas, whose thoughts and prayers are ever with them, Help us almighty God to rededicate ourselves to renewed faith in Thee in this hour of great sacrifice.

Many have urged that I call this nation into a single day of special prayer. But because the road is long, the desire is great, I ask that our people devote themselves in a continuance of prayer. As we rise to each new day, and again when each day is spent, let words of prayer be on our lips invoking thy help to our efforts. Give us strength too. Strengthen our daily tasks. Redouble the contributions we make in the physical and material support of our armed forces.

Let our hearts be stout to wait out the long travail. To bear sorrows that may come. To impart our courage to our sons wheresoever they may be. And, O Lord, give us faith, Give us faith in Thee, faith in our sons, faith in each other, faith in our united crusade.

Let not the keenness of our spirits ever be dull. Let not the impact of temporary events, of temporal matters of but fleeting moments, let not these deter us in our unconquerable purpose. With Thy blessing we shall prevail over the unholy forces of our enemy. Help us to conquer the apostles of greed and racial arrogances. Lead us to the saving of our country and with our sister nations into a world unity that will spell a sure peace, a peace invulnerable to the [unintelligible] of unworthy men, and a peace that will let all men live in freedom, reaping the just rewards of their honest fight. Thy will be done, Almighty God. Amen.<sup>17</sup>

After the Great War's end, an aging Herbert Hoover reflected on "The Meaning of America" on August 10, 1948:

At the time our ancestors were proclaiming that the Creator had endowed all mankind with rights of freedom as the children of God, with a free will, there was being proclaimed by Hegel, and later by Karl Marx, a satanic philosophy of agnosticism and that the rights of man came from the State. The greatness of America today comes from the one philosophy, the despair of Europe from the other.<sup>18</sup>

In one of his final addresses to the Republican National Convention on July 8, 1952, approaching his 78<sup>th</sup> birthday, Mr. Hoover declared, "And I shall continue to fight for those principles which made the United States the greatest gift of God to freedom. I pray to Him to strengthen your hands and give you courage."

General Omar Bradley, the first chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the newly created Department of Defense, contributed a prayer to the Armed Forces Prayer Book published in 1951. General Bradley wrote:

"Since my cadet days at the Military Academy I have always gotten a great deal of comfort and consolation from the Cadet Prayer. This prayer is an integral part of cadet

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<sup>17</sup> Audio recording transcribed from [www.wavethemes.org/lusa/index.html](http://www.wavethemes.org/lusa/index.html), Franklin Delano Roosevelt, June 7, 1944

<sup>18</sup> Herbert Hoover. The Meaning of America. August 10, 1948. Homecoming Address at the Reception Tendered by West Branch, Iowa, the President's birthplace.

life at the United States Military Academy.” General James Lawton Collins, Chief of Staff, also named his favorite prayer for inclusion in this book, the Cadet Prayer.

O God, our Father, Thou Searcher of men’s hearts, help us to draw near to Thee in sincerity and truth. May our religion be filled with gladness and may our worship to Thee be natural.

Strengthen and increase our admiration for honest dealing and clean thinking, and suffer not our hatred of hypocrisy and pretense eve to diminish. Encourage us in our endeavor to live above the common level of life. Make us to choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong, and never to be content with a half truth when the whole can be won. Endow us with courage that is born of loyalty to all that is noble and worthy, that scorns to compromise with vice and injustice and knows no fear when truth and right are in jeopardy. Guard us against flippancy and irreverence in the sacred things of life. Grant us new ties of friendship and new opportunities of service. Kindle our hearts in fellowship with those of a cheerful countenance, and soften our hearts with sympathy for those who sorrow and suffer. May we find genuine pleasure in clean and wholesome mirth and feel inherent disgust for all coarse-minded humor. Help us in our work and in our play to keep ourselves physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight that we may the better maintain the honor of the Corps untarnished and unsullied, and acquit ourselves like men in our effort to realize the ideals of West Point in doing our duty to Thee and to our Country. All of which we ask in the name of the Great Friend and Master of men. Amen.<sup>19</sup>

Another World War II General, Dwight David Eisenhower, was elected president in 1953. He began his inaugural address with a prayer for Divine power and discernment:

My friends, before I begin the expression of those thoughts that I deem appropriate to this moment, would you permit me the privilege of uttering a little private prayer of my own. And I ask that you bow your heads:

Almighty God, as we stand here at this moment my future associates in the executive branch of government join me in beseeching that Thou will make full and complete our dedication to the service of the people in this throng, and their fellow citizens everywhere. Give us, we pray, the power to discern clearly right from wrong, and allow all our words and actions to be governed thereby, and by the laws of this land. Especially we pray that our concern shall be for all the people regardless of station, race, or calling. May cooperation be permitted and be the mutual aim of those who, under the concepts of our Constitution, hold to differing political faiths; so that all may work for the good of our beloved country and Thy glory. Amen.

On March 16, 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, with the “War on Terrorism” underway, reaffirmed the centrality of the unbroken line of the military’s first principles, and called for the Armed Forces to renew its attention to the Declaration of Independence and the

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<sup>19</sup> Daniel A. Poling. 1951. *The Armed Forces Prayer Book*. New York: Prentice Hall, at 12-13.

Constitution,<sup>20</sup> to which every member of the uniformed services takes a sacred oath to “support and defend.” Without “God” there is no basis for the “sacred oath” to which Secretary Rumsfeld refers.

## CONCLUSION

That American military spirit borne of the military’s first principles, virtue, honor and patriotism, is confirmed in the public prayers, public speeches, and writings of senior military leadership in an unbroken line from the nation’s founding to the present. There are prayers found in the speeches and writings of military leaders and published in a plethora of Armed Forces Prayer Books utilized by servicemen through our entire national history, of which only a sampling is hereafter provided. In two of 77 Military Prayer Books identified in preparation for making the case for prayer, thirty-three senior military authorities acknowledged the essential nature of prayer for every member of the armed forces.

President George W. Bush remarked at a National Day of Prayer gathering on May 3, 2001,

Our country was founded by great and wise people who were fluent in the language of humility, praise and petition. Throughout our history, in danger and division, we have always turned to prayer. And our country has been delivered from many serious evils and wrongs because of that prayer.<sup>21</sup>

The concept that prayer is a private exercise without impact on the common morale is novel and without foundation. The conduct of soldiers is highly regulated with uniformity being a priority for combat readiness. The morale of the unit is dependent upon members deferring their individual interests to the function of the whole. This is not a matter of requiring a certain faith or creed. The consequence of eliminating common prayer has implications for military readiness. General Patton called on all men of faith to pray, and even provided the words for them to voice a request. Chaplain James O’Neill, Chaplain for General Patton and the Third Army wrote, per the request of General Patton, in Training Letter No. 5, “we must urge, instruct, and indoctrinate every fighting man to pray as well as fight . . . This Army needs the assurance and the faith that God is with us. With prayer, we cannot fail.”

Historically, the military has acknowledged almighty God as sovereign over the affairs of men, especially men of valor in war. Prayer must not be made into a wedge of exception or treated as a dispensable triviality. Great military leaders as well as our Presidents throughout our history have acknowledge a Divine Providence who has created all men equal, and Whose favor has been earnestly sought. Those who cannot participate in this military act, according to General Marshall, are not the soldiers whose souls would sustain them in battle. Prayer is, in law, fact and history, a military necessity, and we offer this collection and case for military prayer now as a form of humble gratitude and honor for the continuous line of shed blood and sacrifice that has maintained the American Spirit and America’s Liberty.

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<sup>20</sup> Sol Bloom, *The Story of the Constitution*, House Office Building: Washington, D.C., 1937,p. 79.

<sup>21</sup> White House News Release, Office of the Press Secretary, at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).