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Support Our Troops, Let Leaders and Chaplains Pray— The Case for Military Prayer

***“Endowed by Their Creator”:
A Collection of Historic American
Military Prayers 1774-Present***
Published by First Principles Press
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240 pgs. - \$12.95

In 2001, Colonel Ronald D. Ray collaborated with First Principles Press (FPP) and the Naval Aviation Foundation to defend the right of cadets to pray at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). The case went to an *en banc* hearing before the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond Virginia which deadlocked 6-6. The case went on to the supreme Court, which declined to hear the case formally, but issued a remarkable and

very unusual sixteen page opinion that concluded by declaring, “there was no injunction blocking prayer at the Virginia Military Institute.” The foundation of this book is the official appendix and extensive historical background of Christian prayer in the United States Military (1643-1986).

Building upon that appendix for the VMI case, Col. Ray and FPP uncovered in the Library of Congress and other libraries, 67 military prayer books from as early as 1643 to 1986. These official American military prayer books were distributed to U.S. fighting forces largely during times of war and national crisis, with a significant majority of the prayers concluding in Jesus’ name.

Out of this extensive research which formed the Appendix to the brief filed in the ACLU vs. VMI case, First Principles Press created and published a case for the “Military Necessity” of prayer with “evidence” – a collection of historic American military prayers. This historic case and collection is entitled, *“Endowed by Their Creator”:
A Collection of Historic American Military Prayers 1774-Present*, it contains over 280 uniquely American prayers selected from a total of 74 American military prayer books and hymnals.

Colonel Ronald D. Ray, USMCR, commented on why he created this collection of prayers,

“Prayer is under attack in the military institution. As a Vietnam combat veteran, 34 years as a Marine officer, a former Defense official, and a lawyer, I spent 10 years collecting American military prayer books from before the nation’s founding to the present day. I did this research not as a man of the church, but as a military historian and a lawyer to make the case for the “Military Necessity” of prayer, because there are ‘no atheists in foxholes’. I found that while over 70 percent of those serving today in the US military self identify as Christians, their Chaplains are threatened and discouraged from praying in the name of their God, Jesus Christ and leaders are officially prohibited from leading their troops in pray – even in battle in this, One Nation Under God”.

This collection of prayers is the case to uphold and preserve the right of leaders and chaplains to pray and serves a dual purpose: First, it demonstrates the “Military Necessity” of prayer to the success of America’s military mission. Secondly, at a time when prayer is being disregarded, opposed by political and military leaders, and treated more like ceremonial deism or mere formality in military and non-military circumstances, this collection allows anyone of any rank or station, the opportunity to draw from its pages a prayer associated with an historic occasion or prayed by an historic figure.

As the voices of presidents and military heroes recorded in this book have continuously maintained, America and her fighting forces must not lose touch with our nation’s understanding of the “Creator” named in the Declaration of Independence, and His broad and great endowment of Divine Providence for our “One Nation Under God.” For the military to lose or ignore the “religious fervor of the soul” is done at ‘great peril.’”

“I wanted to send a quick email to you thanking you for the book sent a few weeks ago. Unfortunately, we do not have a chaplain available at the camp I’m stationed at, so finding my own source of spiritual material has been important. I particularly enjoy the historical aspect of the prayers in your book, as it connects me to the long tradition of men serving in America’s military, which is a tradition mostly ignored today by the Army at least. We have little discussion of those that went before us and I don’t think most of the people here feel any connection with that history. That neglects something that could be a real inspiration for those having a hard time here. Others survived it before, and we’ll survive it to. The preface of the book was very interesting as well, particularly its connection to the VMI Supreme Court case a few years ago.”

- Army Reservist Serving in Afghanistan

Our nation certainly needs to be reminded of the importance and necessity of prayer, especially those who are serving in our military and political offices in a time as this. I personally believe that leaders and chaplains at all levels of government and military service will reap spiritual blessings and immense benefit from the inspiring and invigorating compilation of prayers in your book.

- Retired Marine Colonel, Military Missions Director

Thank you so much for the military prayer book, “Endowed by Their Creator”: A Collection of Historic American Military Prayers 1774-Present”. What a beautiful and meaningful book! We are touched by the depth of Godly faith, the love of country, and the honest pleas for help and protection from Almighty God expressed in these prayers. Both known and unknown writers are consistently humble and eloquent in their words, and because the needs are often so personal, they take us to our knees with them to cry for God’s presence and aid for every priceless individual in our fighting force. There’s so much about this book we like. The history of prayer in the U.S. Military, the Chronology of American Wars, the beautiful hymns, and the experts from presidential addresses are all special parts on addition to the prayers. Thank you for putting this wonderful prayer book together and for your efforts to keep prayer before our U.S. military personnel. How much they need it! How much our nation needs it!

- Retired Air Force Pilot