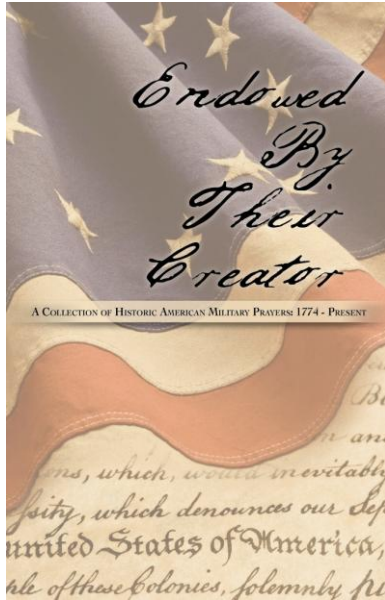


Support Our Troops, Let Leaders and Chaplains Pray— The Case for Military Prayer



First Principles Press
www.firstprinciplespress.org
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.

Building upon that appendix from the VMI case, Col. Ray and FPP uncovered in the Library of Congress and other libraries, 74 military prayer books from as early as 1643. These books were produced and officially distributed, often at taxpayer expense, for those serving in harm’s way largely during times of war and national crisis, with a significant majority of the prayers concluding in Jesus’ name.

From that research, which formed the Appendix to the brief filed in the *ACLU vs. VMI* case, Col. Ray collaborated with First Principles Press to create and publish a collection drawn from these historic American military prayer books entitled, “*Endowed by Their Creator: A Collection of Historic American Military Prayers 1774-Present*” (2012). The historic collection contains over 280 uniquely American prayers, a chronology of American wars, excerpts acknowledging God from every President’s inaugural address, a list of 58 senior American Commanders and civilian leaders who contributed to prayer books, and 24 hymns.

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 prayer – 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 leaders and mission.
- Secondly, military prayer is being disregarded, officially opposed by political and military leaders, and often treated as ceremonial deism or mere formality in military and non-military circumstances. This historic collection allows anyone regardless of rank or station, the opportunity to understand the crucial history of prayer, draw from its pages an evidentiary military prayer associated with a historic occasion or prayed by a significant historic figure, and use the collection individually or in groups to serve as inspiration in time of trial. As an Army Reservist currently serving in Afghanistan, who received a copy of the book, put it, *“I particularly enjoyed the historical aspect of the prayers in your book, as it connects me to the long tradition of men serving in America’s military...Others survived it before, and we’ll survive it too.”*

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.” Prayer is ultimately vital to America’s national security, perhaps more so than any other nation in the world, because God has put His name here. Our official national motto, since its origin in the War of 1812 and official adoption in 1956 has been, “In God We Trust”. Our way of life is inextricably linked to our “Creator” by whom we were endowed with the right to Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. Our soldiers in the field today need the support of prayer, especially when prayed by their chaplains and led by their Officers. As General George Marshall declared, for the military to lose or ignore the “religious fervor of the soul” is done at ‘great peril.”