

American Minute with Bill Federer
"Two Roads Diverge in the Woods ..." - Robert Frost,
Four Time Pulitzer Prize-Winning Poet

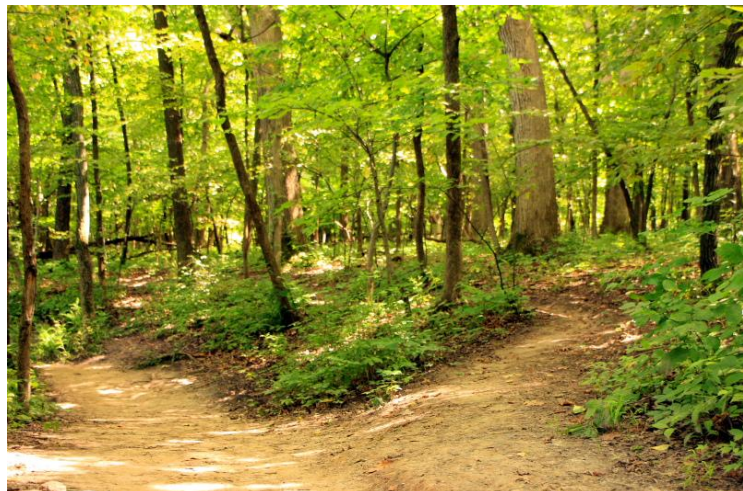
"Two roads
diverged in a
yellow wood
And sorry I could
not travel both
And be one
traveler, long I
stood
And looked down
one as far as I
could



To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same.

And both that
morning equally
lay
In leaves no step
had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first
for another day!
Yet knowing how
way leads on to
way,



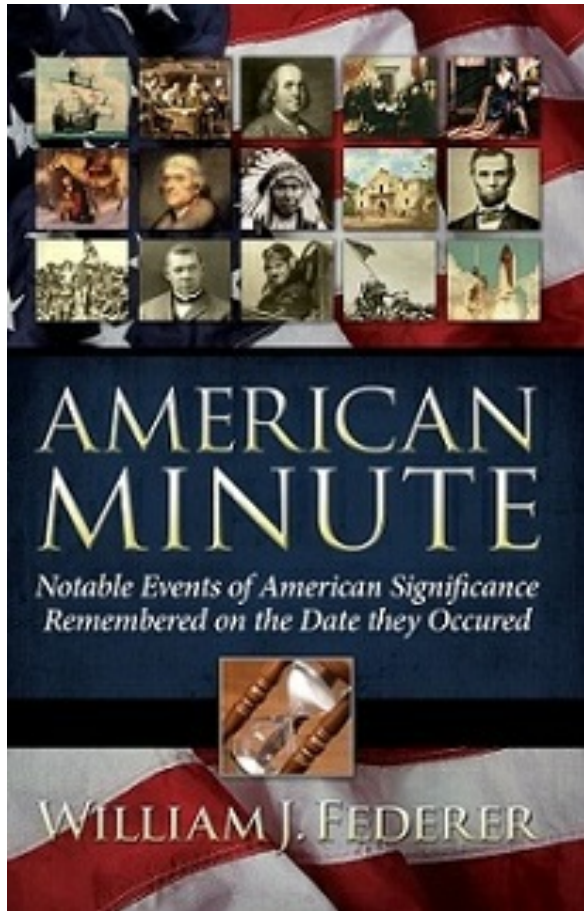
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."

-Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken" (1951)

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[American Minute-Notable Events of American Significance Remembered on the Date They Occurred](#)

Robert Lee Frost began publishing poems in his high school bulletin.

In 1892, he graduated co-valedictorian with the woman he was to marry, Elinor Miriam White.



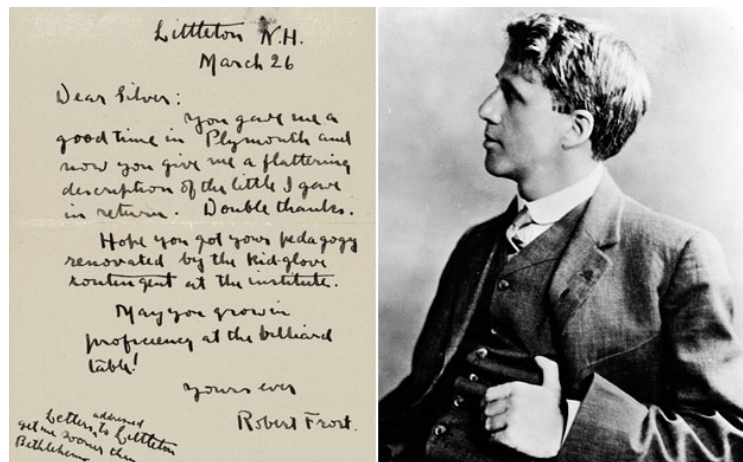
He briefly attended Dartmouth, then Harvard, but left to go back to teaching.

When his grandfather, William Prescott Frost, died in 1901, **Robert** inherited the family farm along with a significant annuity, writing poetry on the side.

He taught at New Hampshire's Pinkerton Academy, 1906-1911, and New Hampshire Normal School, now Plymouth State University.



Robert Frost was a contemporary of notable poets and writers, some of whom, because of World Wars I, wrote in a reflective, pensive tone:



- **T.S. Eliot,**
- **James Joyce,**
- **William Butler Yeats,**
- **Wallace Stevens,** and
- **Ernest Hemingway.**



In 1912, **Frost** moved to England where he met many literary minds and "war poets."

Britain entered **World War I** on August 4, 1914,

and in the next four year saw **over a million casualties.**

While in England, **Frost** met poets who wrote in a style called "**imagism**," most notably:

- **T.E. Hulme;**
- **Ezra Pound** -- a controversial expatriate; and
- **Edward Thomas**, who inspired **Frost's** poem "The Road Not Taken."

Imagism

- Poetry written that evokes pictures or images for the reader
- Direct presentation of images, or word pictures
- Word choice is specific
- Adjectives are used to enhance the specificity of word choice, **BUT** they are not over-used.
- Attempt to freeze a single moment in time and capture the emotions of that moment
- Imagist poetry often reflect influences of haiku or tanka

T.E. Hulme wrote in "**The Embankment**":

"(The fantasia of a fallen gentleman on a cold, bitter night.)



... That warmth's the very stuff of poesy (poetry).
Oh, God, make small
The old star-eaten blanket of the sky,
That I may fold it round me and in comfort lie."



In 1909, though eccentric and unorthodox, **Ezra Pound** wrote an old-English style poem titled **Ballad of the Goodly Fere (Friend)**, as an account of disciple Simon Zelotes witnessing the crucifixion.

Angry at modern church leaders for portraying Jesus as weak, **Ezra Pound** responded by describing Jesus as "a

man o' men was he":

"Ha' we lost the goodliest fere (friend) o' all
For the priests and the gallows tree?
Aye lover he was of brawny men,
O' ships and the open sea.

When they came
wi' a host to take
Our Man
His smile was
good to see,
'First let these go!
quo' our Goodly
Fere,
'Or I'll see ye
damned,' says he.



Aye he sent us out through the crossed high spears
And the scorn of his laugh rang free,
'Why took ye not me when I walked about

Alone in the town?' says he.

Oh we drank his 'Hale' in the good red wine
When we last made company,
No capon (neutered) priest was the Goodly Fere
But a man o' men was he.

I ha' seen him
drive a hundred
men
Wi' a bundle o'
cords swung free,
That they took the
high and holy
house
For their pawn and
treasury.



They'll no' get him a' in a book I think
Though they write it cunningly;
No mouse of the scrolls was the Goodly Fere
But aye loved the open sea.

If they think they ha' snared our Goodly Fere
They are fools to the last degree.
'I'll go to the feast,' quo' our Goodly Fere,
'Though I go to the gallows tree.'

'Ye ha' seen me heal the lame and blind,
And wake the dead,' says he,
'Ye shall see one thing to master all:
'Tis how a brave man dies on the tree.'

A son of God was the Goodly Fere
That bade us his brothers be.
I ha' seen him cow (awe) a thousand men.
I have seen him upon the tree.

He cried no cry when they drave the nails

And the blood gushed hot and free,
The hounds of the crimson sky gave tongue
But never a cry cried he.

I ha' seen him cow
(awe) a thousand
men
On the hills o'
Galilee,
They whined as he
walked out calm
between,
Wi' his eyes like
the grey o' the
sea,

Like the sea that
brooks no
voyaging
With the winds
unleashed and
free,
Like the sea that
he cowed at
Genseret
Wi' twey words spoke' suddently.



A master of men was the Goodly Fere,
A mate of the wind and sea,
If they think they ha' slain our Goodly Fere
They are fools eternally.

I ha' seen him eat o' the honey-comb
Sin' (before) they nailed him to the tree."

Robert Frost returned
to America in 1915, the
year after World War I
started.



He taught at **Amherst College** from 1916 to 1920, but resigned because he thought the president, Alexander Meiklejohn, was too morally permissive.

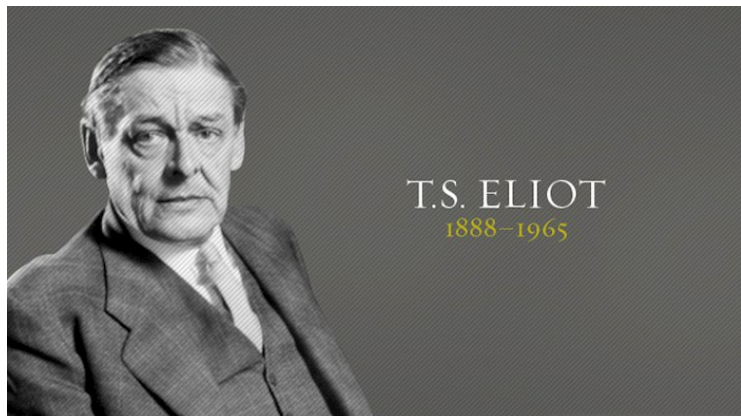
He was on staff at the University of Michigan, where he arranged a poet lecture series with Carl Sandburg, Louis Untermeyer, and Amy Lowell.

In 1923, after Meiklejohn was dismissed, **Frost** rejoined the teaching staff at Amherst College.

Having several children die prematurely, **Frost** and his wife struggled with depression.

In 1928, they traveled to Europe where they met poet **T.S. Eliot**.

T.S. Eliot had gained international fame from his 1922 poem "**The Waste Land**," expressing the disillusionment after World War I.



He was put off reading **Bertrand Russell's** agnostic essay "A Free Man's Worship," purporting that man must worship man.

Considering Russell's work shallow, in response, **Eliot**

shook the literary world by **renewing his Christian faith**, being confirmed in the Church of England in 1927.

In 1930, **Eliot** wrote the poem "Ash Wednesday," which commemorates the introspective season of Lent, that culminates with the celebration of Christ's resurrection:

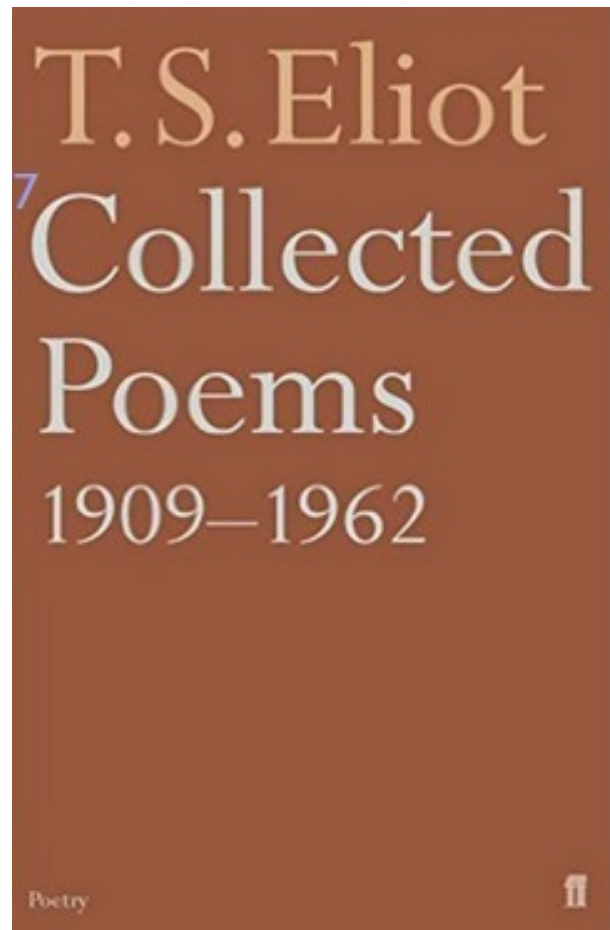
"And pray to God to have mercy upon us
And pray that I may forget
These matters that with myself I too much discuss
Too much explain
Because I do not hope to turn again ...

May the judgement not be too heavy upon us ...
Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still.
Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death
Pray for us now and at the hour of our death."

Eliot believed that society should be ruled, not by the church, but by **Christian principles**.

In 1939, he wrote in *The Idea of a Christian Society*, that secular "rational" civilization would inevitably crumble from within:

"The experiment will fail ... but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time: so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization, and save the world from



suicide."

In 1943, **T.S. Eliot** wrote "Four Quartets," which alluded to the Holy Spirit descending on the Day of Pentecost:

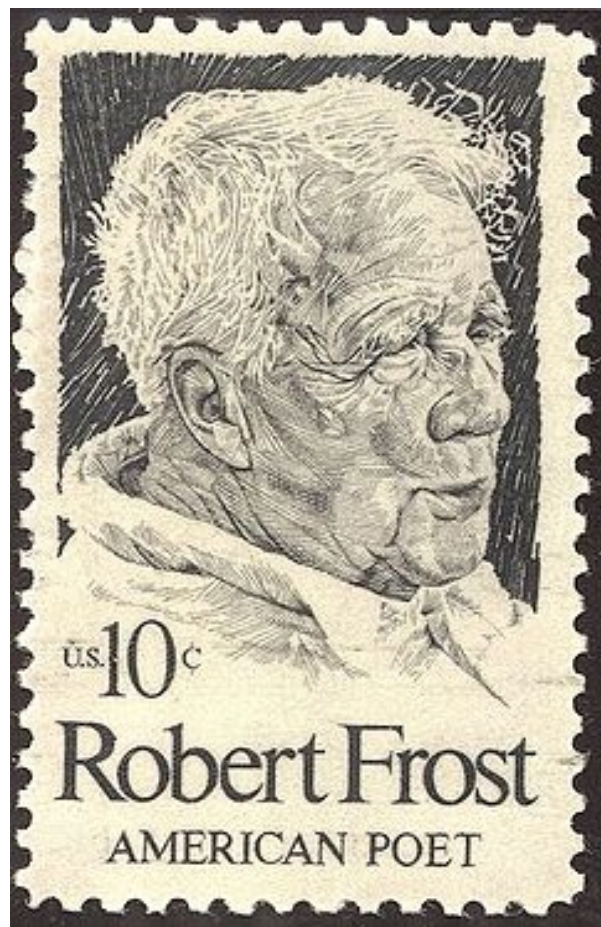
"The dove descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—
To be redeemed from fire by fire."

Greatly respected by his contemporaries, **Robert Frost** won **four Pulitzer prizes** and was awarded over **40 honorary degrees**.

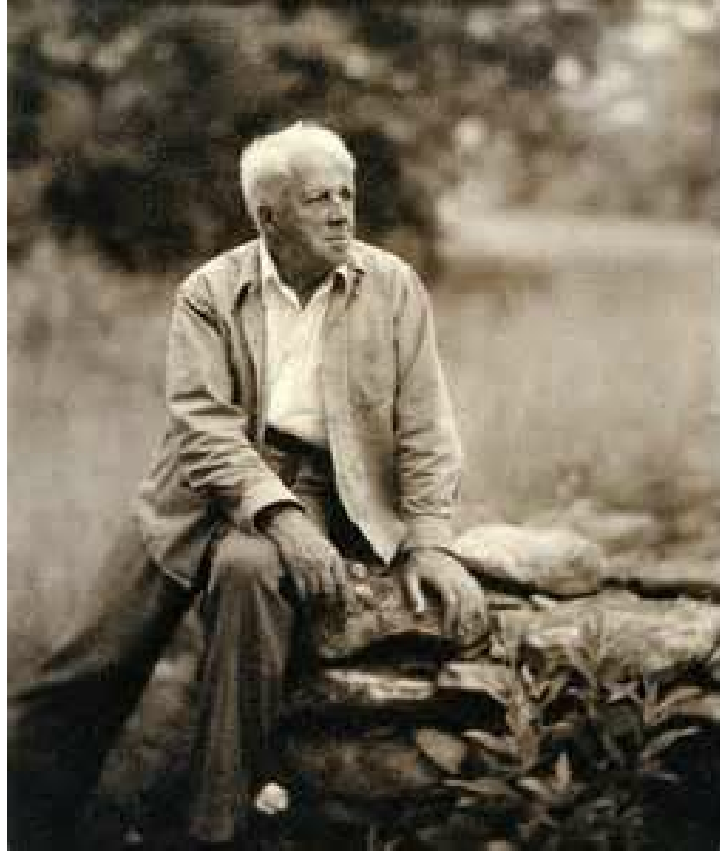
In the poem, "**Nothing Gold Can Stay**," **Robert Frost** reflected on the world's beginning:

"Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay."

In the poem "**Fire and Ice**," **Frost** reflected on the world's end:

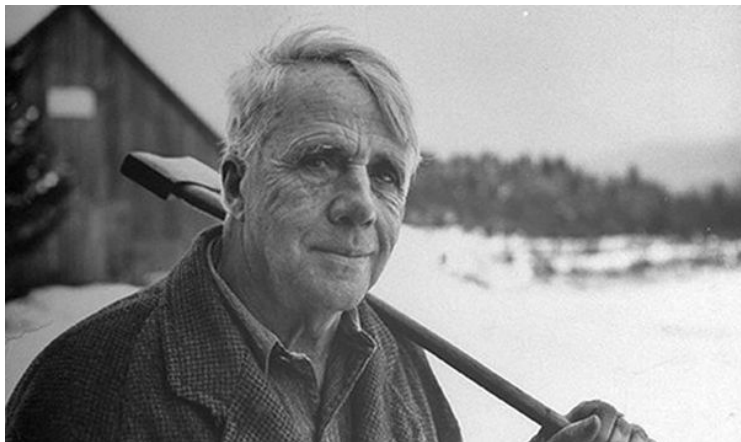


"Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice."



Robert Frost
wrote in "**A Prayer
in Spring**":

"For this is love
and nothing else is
love,
The which it is
reserved for **God**
above



To sanctify to what far ends **He** will,
But which it only needs that we fulfill."

In 1950, the **U.S. Senate** honored
Robert Frost with a
resolution.

In 1958, **President Dwight Eisenhower**
invited him to the
White House.

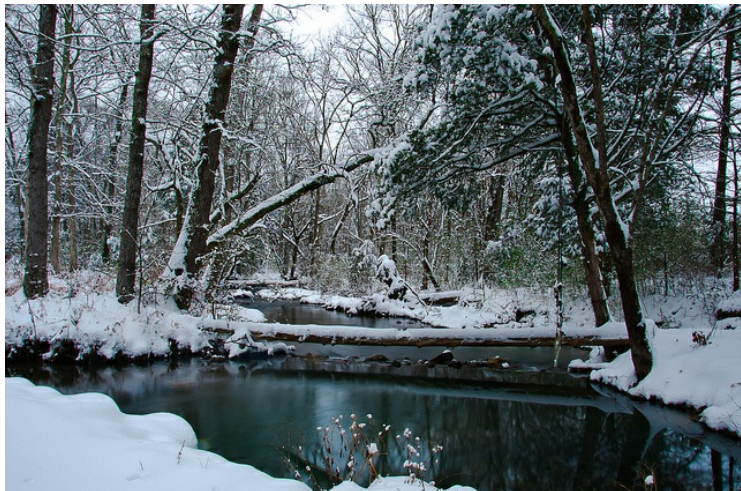
Robert Frost was a consultant to the Library of Congress, and, in 1960, was awarded the **Congressional Gold Medal**.



In 1961, **Robert Frost** read a poem at **President John F. Kennedy's** inauguration.

In "**Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening**," **Frost** wrote

"Whose woods these are I think I know
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here



To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He give his
harness bell a
shake
To ask if there is
some mistake,
The only other
sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and
downy flake.



The woods are
lovely, dark and
deep.
But I have
promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep."



In 1961, the
Vermont's State
Legislature named
Robert Frost
"Poet laureate of
Vermont."

Frost commented
on the Father of
the Country:

"I often say of
George

Washington that he was one of the few men in the whole history of the world who was not carried away by power."



Frost wrote:

"Freedom lies in being bold."

Robert Frost died
JANUARY 29,
1963.

In a 1956 interview on station WQED, Pittsburgh, **Robert Frost** stated

"Ultimately, this is what you go before **God** for: You've had bad luck and good luck and all you really want in the end is **mercy.**"

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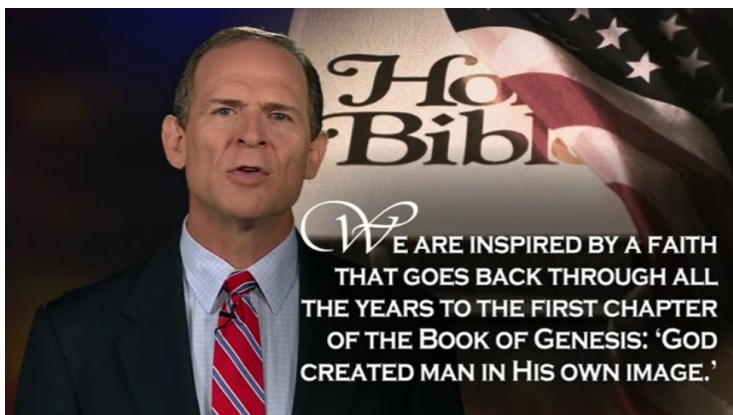
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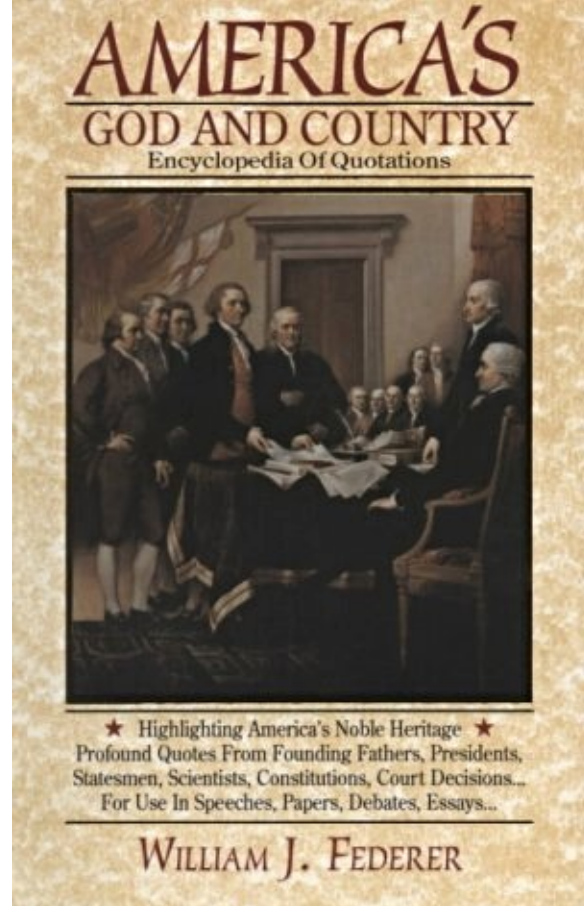
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