

American Minute with Bill Federer

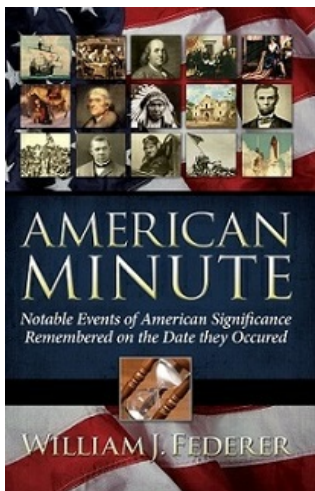
Memorial Day -- Honoring American Heroes of Courage, Sacrifice, & Faith

Memorial Day in America, as an annual observance, can be traced back to the end of the **Civil War**, a war in which over a half-million died.



Southern women scattered spring flowers on graves of both northern **Union** and southern **Confederate** soldiers.

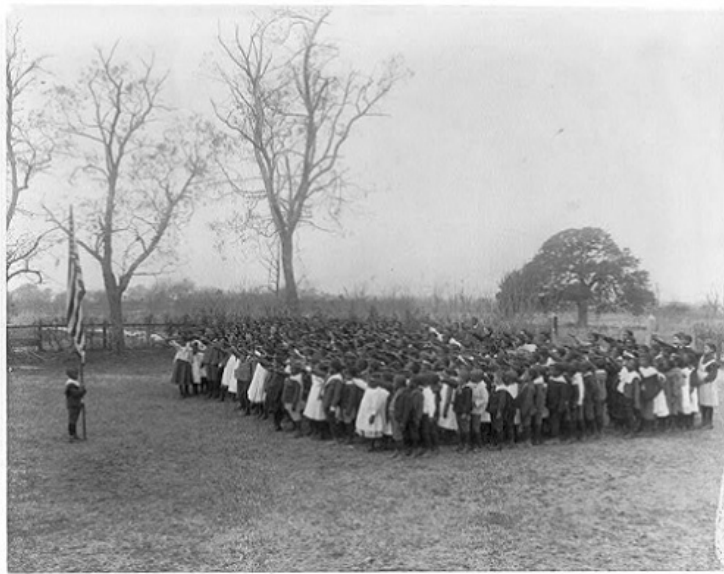
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[American Minute-Notable Events of
American Significance Remembered
on the Date They Occurred](#)

Many places claimed to have held the **original Memorial Day**, such as:

- **Warrenton,** Virginia;
- **Columbus,** Georgia;
- **Savannah,** Georgia;
- **Gettysburg,** Pennsylvania;
- **Boalsburg,** Pennsylvania;
- **Waterloo,** New York.



One such place was **Charleston,** South Carolina, where a mass grave was uncovered of **257 Union soldiers** who had **died in a prison camp.**

On May 1, 1865, **former slaves**

organized a parade, led by **2,800 singing black children,** in which they prayed, read Bible verses, sang spirituals, and **reburied the soldiers with honor as an act of gratefulness** for their **ultimate sacrifice** which **gave them freedom.**

In 1868, **General John A. Logan,** commander of the Civil War veterans' organization "**The Grand Army of the Republic,**" called for a **Decoration Day** to be observed annually on May 30.



President James Garfield's only executive order was in 1881 where he gave government workers May 30th off so they could **decorate the graves** of those who died in the Civil War.



In 1921, **President Warren Harding** had the remains of an unknown soldier killed in France during **World War I** buried in the **Tomb of the Unknown Soldier** at Arlington Cemetery.



Inscribed on the Tomb is the phrase:

"HERE RESTS IN
HONORED
GLORY AN
AMERICAN
SOLDIER
KNOWN BUT TO
GOD."



Since 1921, it has been the tradition for Presidents to lay a wreath on the **Tomb of the Unknown Soldier**, which is guarded 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.



The number 21 being the highest salute, the sentry takes 21 steps, faces the tomb for 21 seconds, turns and pauses 21 seconds, then retraces his steps.

On **Memorial Day**, 1923, **President Calvin Coolidge** stated:

"There can be no peace with the forces of evil.
Peace comes only

through the establishment of **the supremacy of the forces of good.**

That way lies through sacrifice ... 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man **lay down his life** for his friends.'



The **Memorial Day poem, "In Flanders Fields,"** was composed during **World War I**, by a Canadian Expeditionary gunner and medical officer named **John McCrae**, who fought in the **Second Battle of Ypres near Flanders, Belgium.**



Describing the battle as a **"nightmare,"** as **the enemy** carried out one of the **first chlorine gas attacks**, **McCrae** wrote:

"For seventeen days and seventeen nights none of us have had our clothes off, nor our boots even, except occasionally. In all that time while I was awake, gunfire and rifle fire never ceased for sixty seconds ...

And behind it all was the constant background of the sights of the dead, the wounded, the maimed, and a terrible anxiety lest the line should give way."



Finding one of his friends killed, **McCrae** helped bury him along with the other dead in a field.

Noticing the field covered with poppy flowers, he wrote:

"In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,

That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,

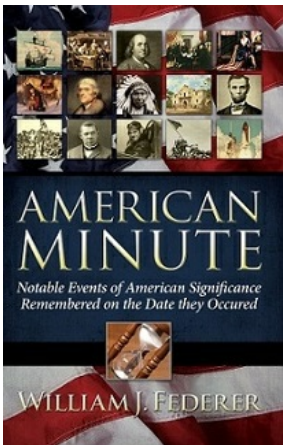


Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our
quarrel with the
foe:

To you from failing
hands we throw
The torch; be
yours to hold it
high.

If ye break faith
with us who die
We shall not
sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields."



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

Notable individuals
who fought in **World
War I** include:



- **Sergeant Alvin York**, who single-handedly took out 35 machine guns and captured 132;
- **John J. Pershing**, General of the Armies;
- **Douglas MacArthur**, Brigadier General;

- **George S. Patton**, tank commander;
- **Leonard Wood**, future Army Chief of Staff;



- **Harry S Truman**, artillery officer and future 33rd President;
- **Eddie Rickenbacker**, commander of 94th Aero Squadron;
- **Quentin Roosevelt**, a pilot, son of President Theodore Roosevelt, was shot down and died;
- **Charles Whittlesey**, commander of the "Lost Battalion" behind lines;
- **Frank Luke** -"balloon buster";



- **Irving Berlin**, composer of "God Bless America";
- **Edouard Izac**, naval officer captured on a U-Boat, who escaped;
- **Henry Johnson** of the "Harlem Hellfighters";
- **Dan Daly**, Marine Sergeant charged and captured machine gun nests;
- **Ernest Hemingway**, author of *A Farewell to Arms*;
- **J.R.R. Tolkien**, British author of *The Lord of the Rings*;
- **C.S. Lewis**, British author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*.





One soldier was **Orval William Epperson**.

Born on a rugged Ozark farm near Anderson, Missouri, he fought in France, being assigned to the **338th Machine Gun Battalion 88th Division**.

Upon returning to America, he married **Therese DeBrosse**, and had three children: **Joan**, **Orval Wilford**, and **Tirzah**, the mother of the author of this article.

Orval and Therese's only son was **Orval Wilford "Billy" Epperson**.

He served in **World War II** as a bombardier on a **B17 Flying Fortress**, 525th Squadron, 379 Bomb Group A.P.O. 550 (#0-768946).



23-year-old "Billy" Epperson flew from Camp Crowder in southwest Missouri



to Kimbolton,
England.

He had written a Mother's Day note to his mom, tied it with a handkerchief to a small weight and dropped it from the plane as it flew over his hometown of Neosho, Missouri.



A neighbor got it and brought to his mother, who lived at 344 S. Hamilton.

Little did either know that that would be the closest they would be again, as **Billy** was **shot down** by the Nazis over the English Channel near Holland on July 9, 1944.

Joplin Globe Friday, July 28, 1944 - Page 16

These four district boys are reported missing in aerial combat in the European war theater. From left to right, they are: Lieutenant **Orval** W. (Bill) **Epperson**, son of Mr. and Mrs. O. W. **Epperson** of Neosho; Staff Sergeant Harold H. Hindman, son of Mrs. Anna Hindman, 2027 Main street, Joplin; Cor-

In 1958, **President Eisenhower** placed soldiers in the tomb from **World War II** and the **Korean War**.



In 1968, one hundred years after the first observance, **Memorial Day** was moved to the **last Monday in May**.



In 1984, **President Ronald Reagan** placed a soldier from the **Vietnam**

War in the tomb.



DNA test later identified him as pilot **Michael Blassie**, whose A-37B Dragonfly was shot down near An Loc, South Vietnam.

He had graduated from the **U.S. Air Force Academy** in 1970, and prior to that, graduated from **St. Louis University High School** in 1966, ten years before the author of this article.



In 1998, **Michael Blassie's** remains were reburied at **Jefferson Memorial Cemetery, St. Louis, Missouri.**

In 2000, Congress passed **The**

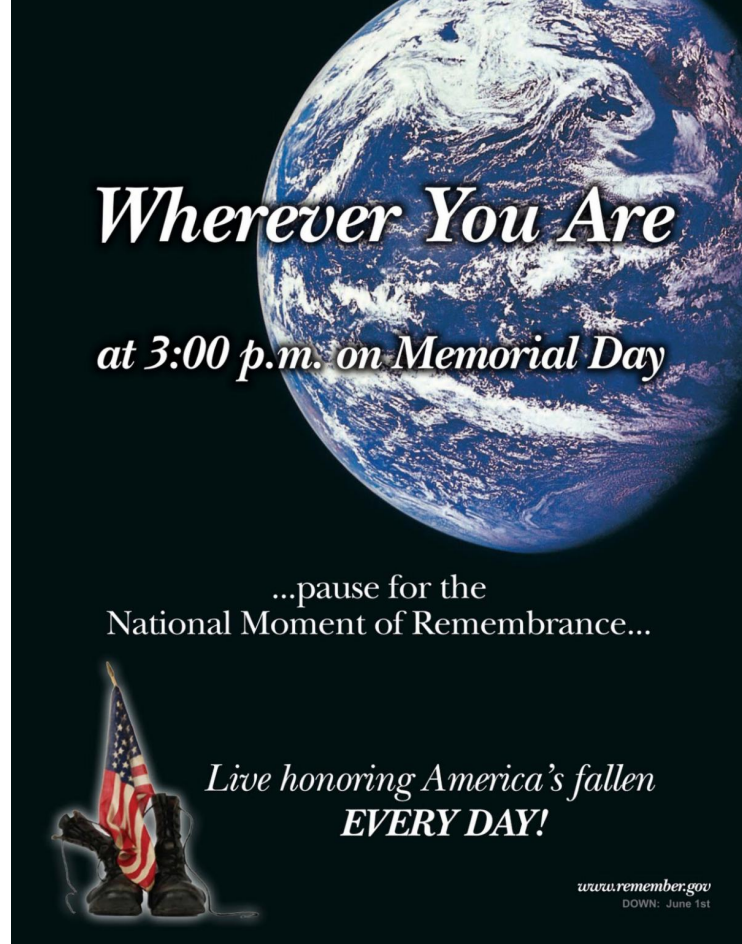
National Moment of Remembrance Act (Public Law 106-579), whereby on **each Memorial Day**, at **3:00pm**, citizens should pause for a moment of prayer:

"Congress finds that ... **it is essential to remember** and renew the legacy of **Memorial Day** ... to **pay tribute** to individuals who have made the **ultimate sacrifice in service to the United States** ...

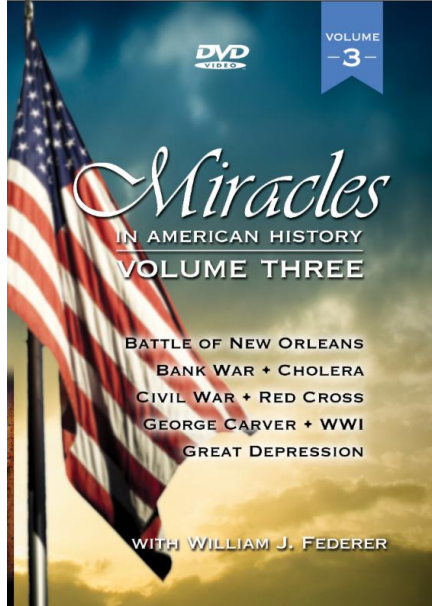
Greater strides must be made to demonstrate **appreciation for those loyal people** ... whose **values**, represented by **their sacrifices**, are critical to **the future of the United States** ...

and to **encourage citizens to dedicate themselves** to the ... **principles** for which those **heroes of the United States died** ...

A symbolic **act of unity** ... to **honor the men and women of the United States** who died in the pursuit of **freedom and peace** ... as a day of prayer for **permanent peace**."



[Miracles in American History - video series](#)



Memorial Day grew to honor all who **gave their lives** defending America's freedom in every war, including:

- **Revolutionary War** (1775-1783) 25,000;
- **Barbary Wars** (1801-1805; 1815) 45;
- **War of 1812** (1812-1814) 20,000;
- **Mexican-American War** (1846-1848) 13,283;
- **Civil War** (1861-1865) 625,000;
- **Spanish-American War** (1898) 2,446;
- **World War 1** (1917-1918) 116,516;
- **World War 2** (1941-1945) 405,399;
- **Korean War** (1950-1953) 36,516;
- **Vietnam War** (1955-1975) 58,209;
- **Persian Gulf War** (1990-1991) 258;
- **Operation Enduring Freedom** in Afghanistan (2001-2014) 2,356;
- **Operation Iraqi Freedom** (2003-2012) 4,489; and
- ongoing wars against **Islamic terrorism**.



At the **Memorial Day Ceremony**, May 31, 1993, **President Bill Clinton** remarked:

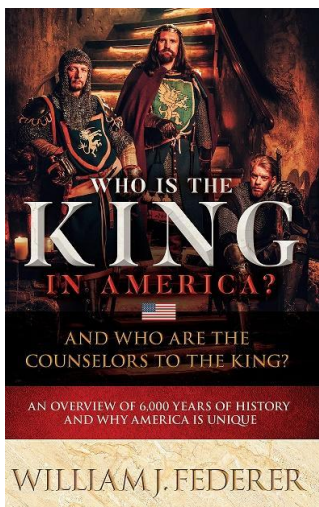
"The inscription on the **Tomb of the Unknown Soldier** says that he is **'Known but to God.'**



But that is only partly true. While **the soldier's name is known only to God**, we know a lot about him.

We know he **served his country, honored his community, and died for the cause of freedom**. And we know that no higher praise can be assigned to any human being than those simple words ...

In the presence of those buried all around us, **we ask** the support of all Americans in **the aid and blessing of God Almighty."**



[Who is the King in America? And Who are the Counselors to the King? An Overview of 6,000 Years of History & Why America is Unique](#)

Charles Michael Province, U.S.

Army, wrote the poem:

"It is the **Soldier**,
not the minister
Who has given us
freedom of religion.

It is the **Soldier**,
not the reporter
Who has given us
freedom of the press.

It is the **Soldier**, not the poet
Who has given us **freedom of speech.**

It is the **Soldier**, not the campus organizer
Who has given us **freedom to protest.**

It is the **Soldier**, not the lawyer
Who has given us the **right to a fair trial.**

It is the **Soldier**, not the politician
Who has given us the **right to vote.**

It is the **Soldier** who salutes the flag,
Who serves beneath the flag,
And whose coffin is draped by the flag,
Who allows the protester to burn the flag."



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Memorials are
important in
Scripture. The
Lord told **Moses** in
Exodus 12:

"Speak ye unto all
the **congregation**
of Israel ...

In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man **a lamb**, according to the house ... Your **lamb** shall be **without blemish** ... And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day ... and the **whole assembly of the congregation of Israel** shall **kill it in the evening**.

And they shall take of **the blood**, and **strike it on the two side posts** and on the **upper door post of the houses** ... For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and ... execute judgment ... and **when I see the blood, I will pass over you**, and **the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you** ...

And this day shall be unto you for a **MEMORIAL** ... **throughout your generations** ... an ordinance for ever."

Memorial is mentioned in Joshua, chapter 4:

"When all the people were **clean passed over Jordan** ... **Joshua called the twelve men ... out of every tribe** ...



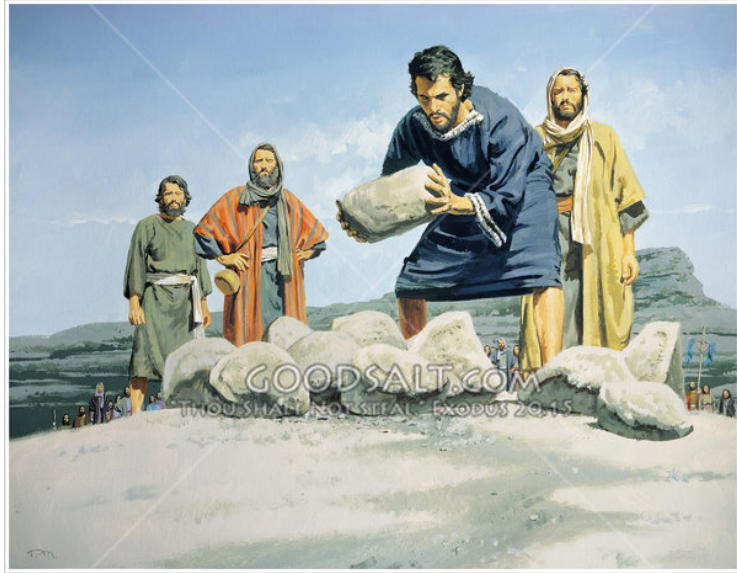
And **Joshua** said unto them, **Pass over before the ark of the LORD your God** into the **midst of Jordan**, and **take ye up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder** ...

... **That this may be a sign among you**, that when **your children ask their fathers** in

time to come,
saying, **What
mean ye by these
stones?**

Then ye shall
answer them, That
the **waters of
Jordan were cut
off** before the **ark
of the covenant
of the LORD;**

when it passed over Jordan ... and **these stones** shall be
for a **MEMORIAL** unto the **children of Israel for ever."**



**Noah Webster's
1828 Dictionary**
stated in its
definition of
"MEMORIAL":

"That which
preserves the

memory of something ... A monument is a **memorial** of
a deceased person, or of an event. **The Lord's supper** is
a **memorial** of the **death and sufferings of Christ."**

In his **Memorial
Day Address**,
May 31, 1923,
**President Calvin
Coolidge** said:

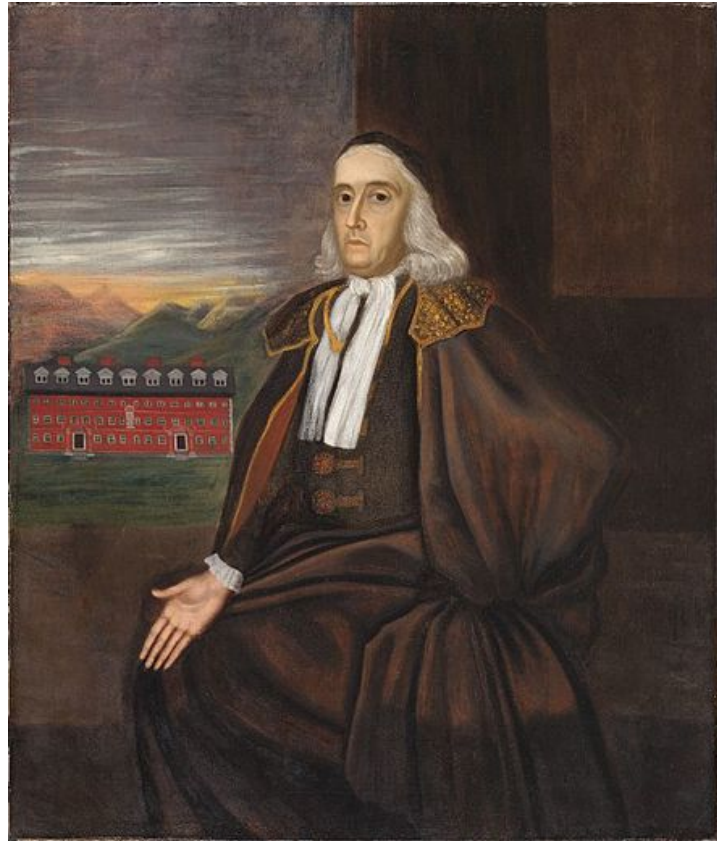
"Settlers came
here from mixed
motives ...
Generally defined,
they were seeking
a broader freedom.



They were intent upon establishing a **Christian commonwealth** in accordance to the principle of **self-government** ...

It has been said that '**God sifted the nations that He might send choice grain into the wilderness.**'"

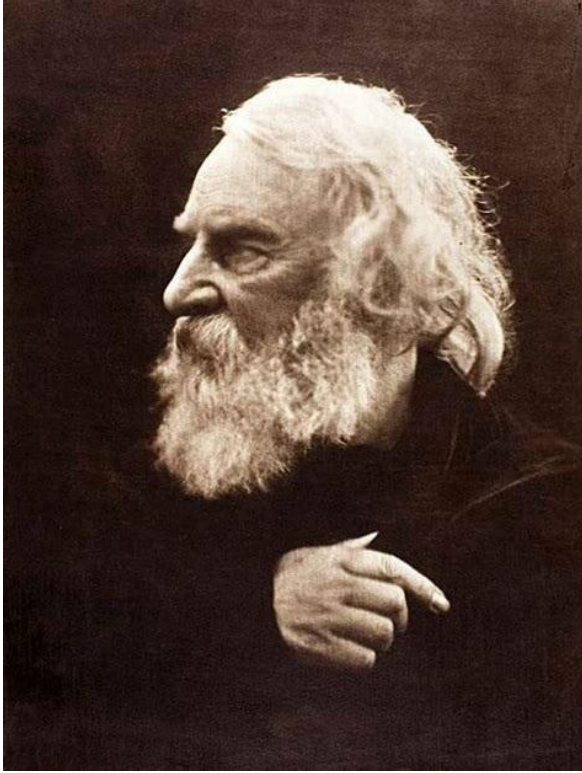
Coolidge was citing an Election Sermon given in Boston, April 29, 1669, by Massachusetts Governor **Judge William Stoughton**, who described the Puritans fleeing persecution in England to settle in the New World:



"God sifted a whole nation that he might send choice grain over into this wilderness."

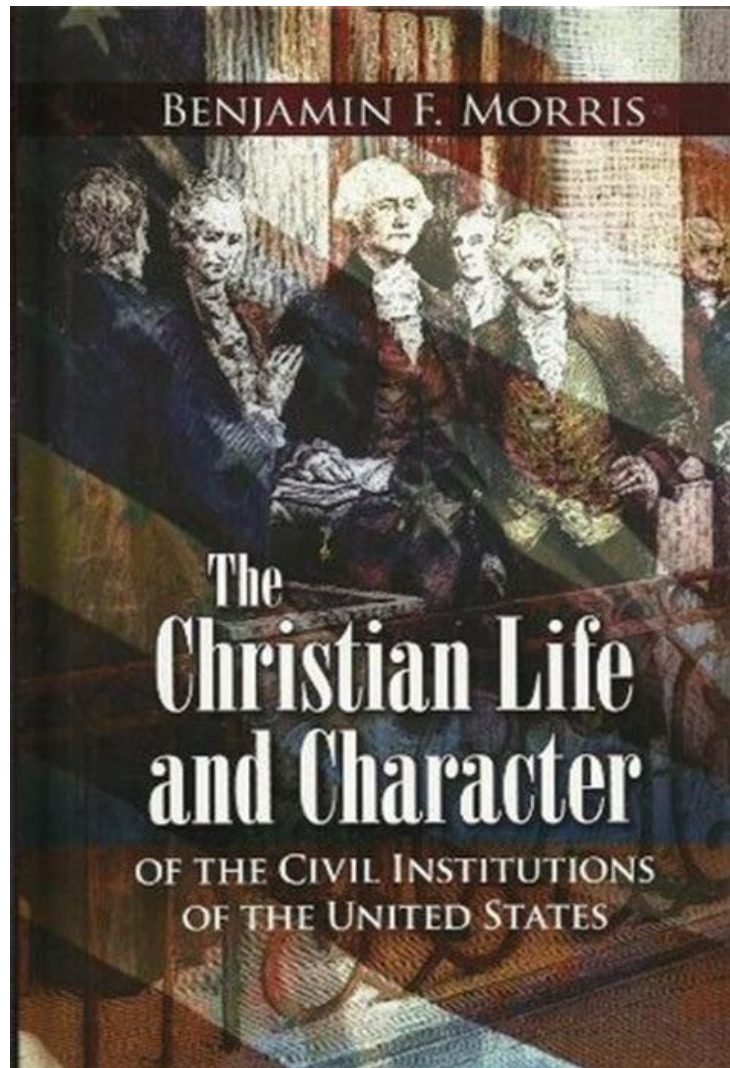
Henry W. Longfellow used a similar line in his classic *Courtship of Miles Standish*:

"God had sifted three kingdoms to find the wheat for this planting."



This was explained further in **Benjamin Franklin Morris'** classic ***The Christian Life and Character of The Civil Institutions of The United States*** (1864):

"The persecutions of the **Puritans** in **England** for **non-conformity**, and the religious agitations and conflicts in **Germany** by **Luther**, in **Geneva** by **Calvin**, and in **Scotland** by **Knox**, were the preparatory **ordeals** for qualifying **Christian** men for the work of **establishing the civil institutions** on the **American continent**.



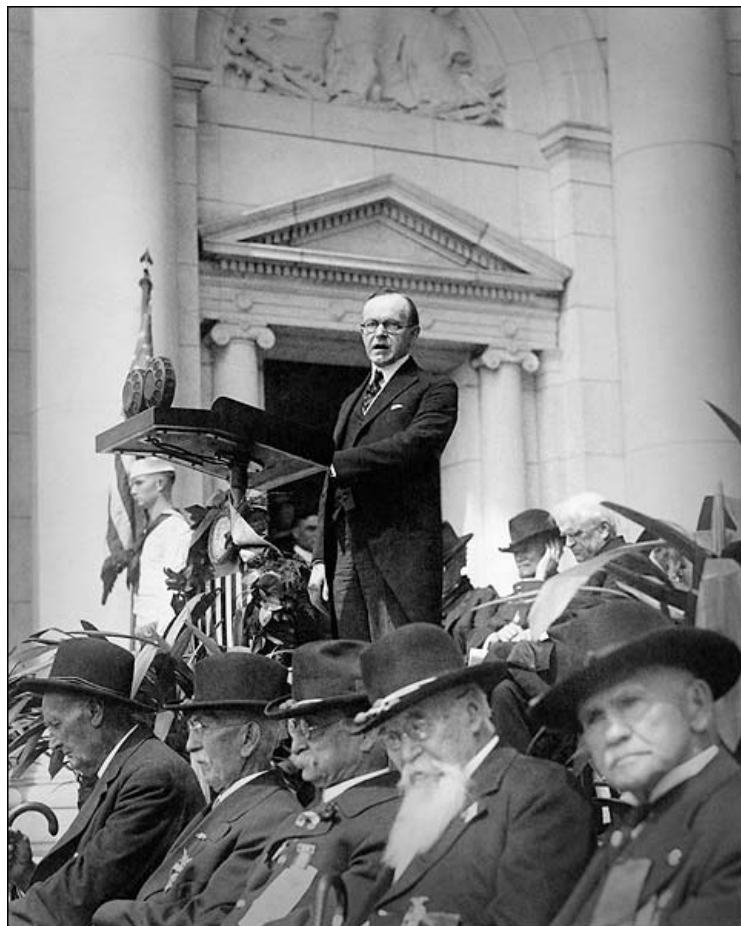
'God sifted' in these conflicts 'a whole nation that He might send choice grain over into the wilderness'; and the blood and persecution of martyrs became the seed of both the church and the state ...

It was in these schools of **fiery trial** that the **founders of the American republic** were educated and prepared for **their grand Christian mission ...**

They were **trained in stormy times**, in order to prepare them to ... establish the **fundamental principles of civil and religious liberty** and of just systems of civil government."

Concluding in his **Memorial Day Address** that America's republic is worth preserving, **President Calvin Coolidge** stated May 31, 1923:

"They had a genius for organized society on the foundations of **piety, righteousness, liberty, and obedience of the law ...**



Who can fail to see in it **the hand of destiny?** Who can doubt that it has been guided by **a Divine Providence?"**

Douglas MacArthur
told West Point

cadets, May 1962:

"The soldier, above all other men, is required to practice the greatest act of religious training-sacrifice.

In battle and in the face of danger and death, he discloses those Divine attributes which his Maker gave when He created man in His own image ...

No physical courage and no brute instinct can take the place of **Divine help** which alone can sustain him.

However horrible the incidents of war may be, **the soldier who is called upon to offer and to give his life for his country is the noblest development of mankind."**

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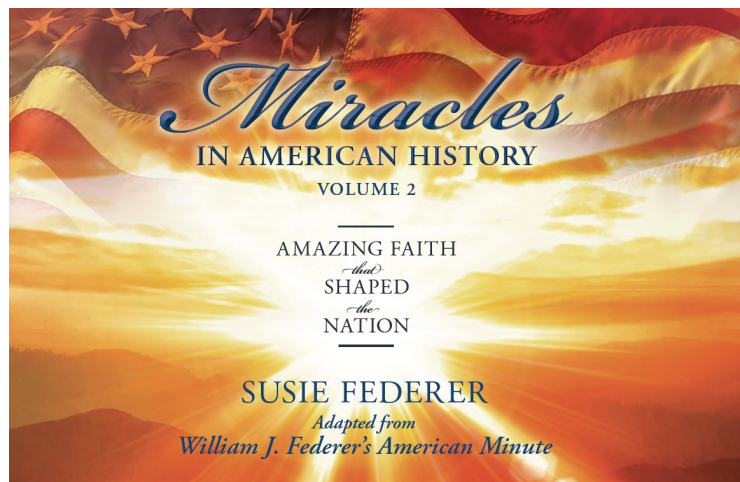
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