

American Minute with Bill Federer "Don't Shoot Until You See the Whites of Their Eyes!" -June 1775, The Battle of Bunker Hill

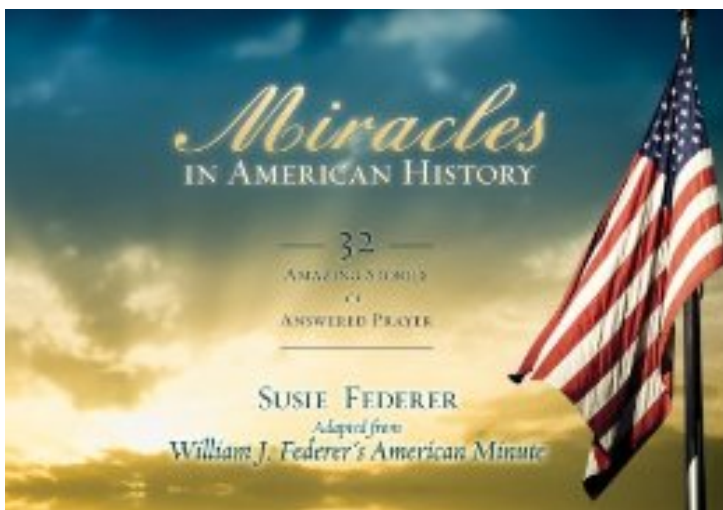
"Don't Shoot Until You See the Whites of Their Eyes!"

commanded **Colonel William Prescott**, repeating the order of **General Israel Putnam**, JUNE 17, 1775.



Colonel William Prescott's men were in the center redoubt located on **Breed's Hill**, adjacent **Bunker Hill**, guarding the **north entrance to Boston Harbor**.

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Samuel Swett wrote in his ***History of Bunker***

Hill, that as the 2,300 British soldiers advanced:

"The American marksmen are with difficulty restrained from firing. **Putnam** rode through the line, and **ordered that no one should fire till they arrived within eight rods ...**



Powder was scarce and must not be wasted. They should '**not fire at the enemy till they saw the whites of their eyes ...**'

The same orders were reiterated by **Prescott** at the redoubt."

Franklin Roosevelt proclaimed March 20, 1942:

"Our Army is a mighty arm of the tree of liberty.

It is a living part of the American tradition, a tradition that goes back to **Israel Putnam**, who left his plow in a New England furrow to take up a gun and fight at **Bunker Hill.**"



At the beginning of the battle, a **stray musket ball** from a British gun killed

an American soldier, **resulting in other soldiers running away.**



To stop the confusion, **Colonel William Prescott** climbed on top of the the wall of the fortification, **stood upright and walked back and forth, rallying his men.**



When **British General Thomas Gage** saw **Prescott** through his telescope, he asked a local loyalist, Abijah Willard, who happened to be Prescott's brother-in-law, if **Prescott** had enough courage to fight.



Willard replied:

"Prescott is an old soldier, he will fight as long as a drop of blood is in his veins."

Another recorded Willard's statement as:

"As to his men, I cannot answer for them, but Colonel Prescott will fight you to the gates of hell."





Historian George Bancroft wrote that at the redoubt in the center of battle:

"No one appeared to have any command but **Colonel Prescott** ... His **bravery** could never be

enough acknowledged and applauded."

British General Gage had no respect for the rag-tag Americans, resulting in him pridefully committing the serious mistake of ordering a direct assault.



British General William Howe had intended to unleash an **artillery bombardment** from field pieces on the Americans **prior to the British advance**, but providentially for the Americans, the **British brought the wrong caliber ammunition**.

They had **six pounder cannons** but **nine pound shot**. As a result, British artillery was not able to soften the resistance.

General Howe ordered some **2,300 British**



soldiers to fix bayonets, and in their wool uniforms, charge in the hot sun up the hill covered with fences and uneven rows of uncut grass.

Twice the Americans repelled them, but the third time they ran out of gunpowder.

Over 1,000 British were killed or wounded in this **first major action of the Revolutionary War**.

There were nearly **500 American casualties**, including the notable **Dr. Joseph Warren**.



Amos Farnsworth, a corporal in the **Massachusetts Militia**, made this entry in his diary immediately after the **Battle of Bunker Hill, JUNE 17, 1775**:

"We within the entrenchment ... having fired away all ammunition and having no reinforcements...were

overpowered by numbers and obliged to leave ...

... I did not leave the entrenchment until the enemy got in. I then retreated ten or fifteen rods.



Then I received a wound in my right arm, the ball going through a little below my elbow, breaking the little shellbone.

Another ball struck my back, taking a piece of skin about as big as a penny.

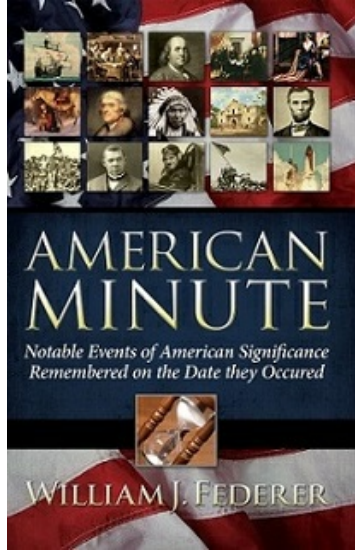
But I got to Cambridge that night ...

... Oh the goodness of God in preserving my life, although they fell on my right and on my left!



O may this act of deliverance of thine, O God, lead me never to distrust thee; but may I ever trust in thee and put confidence in no arm of flesh!"

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The British then burned the nearby town of **Charlestown**.

Daniel Webster declared at the Bicentennial Celebration at Plymouth Rock, December 22, 1820:



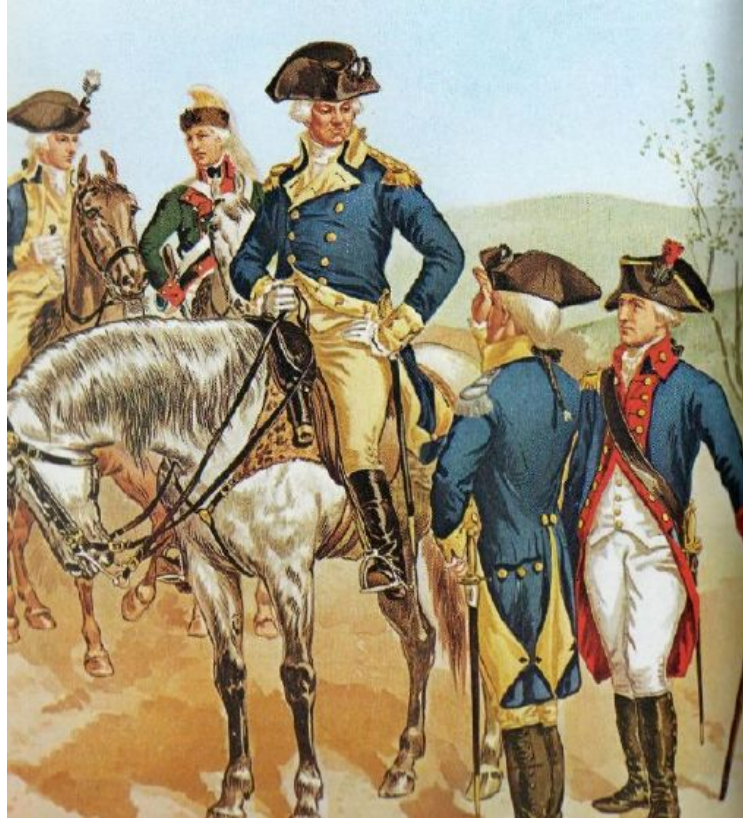
"In **New England** the war of the **Revolution** commenced.

I address those who ... saw the **burning spires of Charlestown**; who beheld the deeds of **Prescott**, and heard the voice of **Putnam** amidst the storm of war, and saw the generous **Warren** fall, the first distinguished victim in the cause of liberty.

It would be superfluous to say, that no portion of the country did more than **the States of New England** to bring **the Revolutionary struggle** to a successful issue."

This same day as the **Battle of Bunker Hill**, 300

miles away in Philadelphia, the **Continental Congress** drafted **George Washington's** commission as commander-in-chief, for which **he refused a salary.**



Washington wrote to his wife, Martha:

"Dearest ... It has been determined in Congress, that the whole army raised for **the defense of the**

American Cause shall be put under my care, and that it is necessary for me to proceed immediately to Boston to take ... command ...

I shall rely therefore, confidently, on that **Providence** which has heretofore preserved, and been bountiful to me."

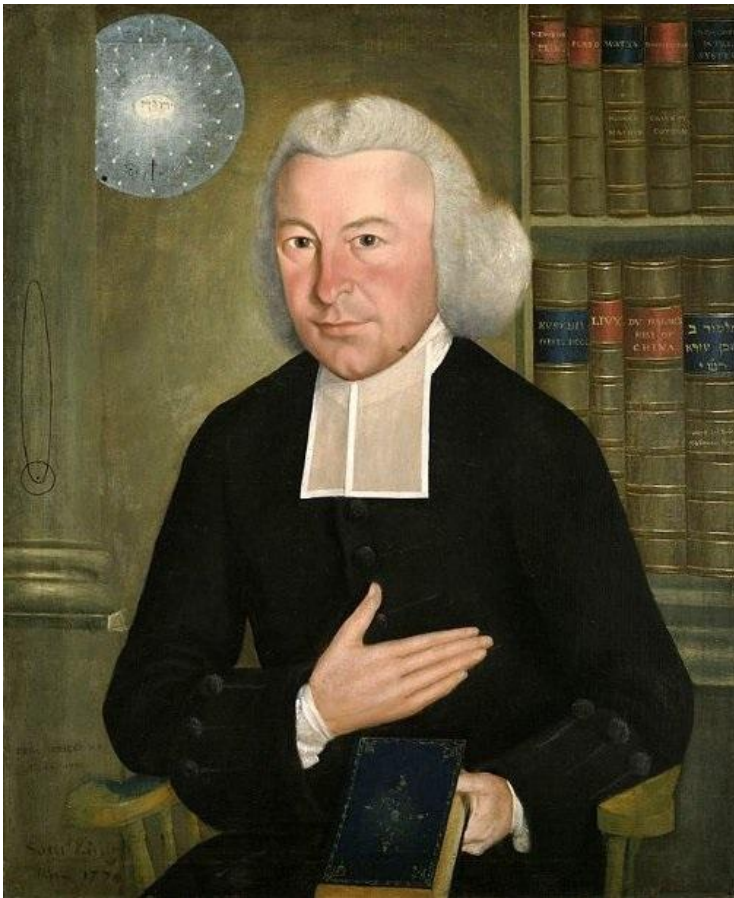
Washington ended:

"I ... got Colonel Pendleton to Draft a Will ... the

Provision made for you, in case of my death, will, I hope, be agreeable."



WASHINGTON TAKING COMMAND OF THE AMERICAN ARMY.
At Cambridge, Mass. July 3^d 1775.



Yale President Ezra Stiles wrote May 8, 1783:

"Every patriot trembled till we had proved our armor, till it could be seen, whether ... (we) could face the enemy with firmness.

They early gave us the decided proof of this, in the memorable **Battle**

of Bunker Hill (June 17, 1775) ...

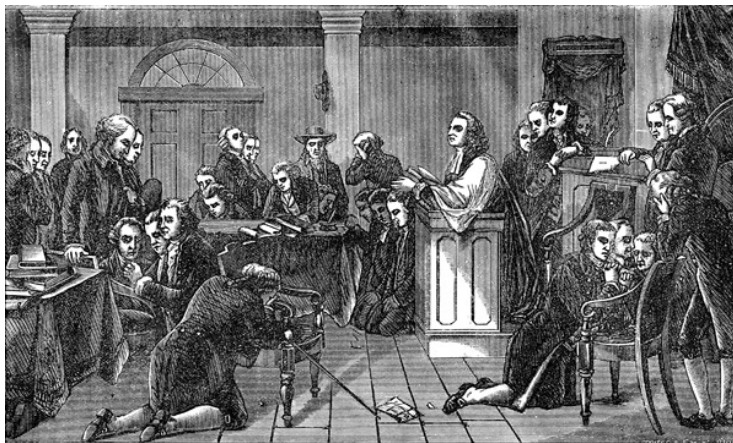
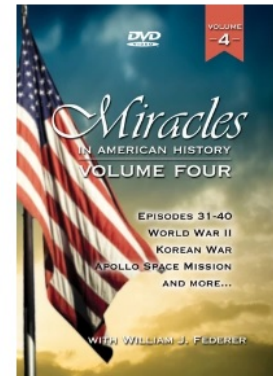
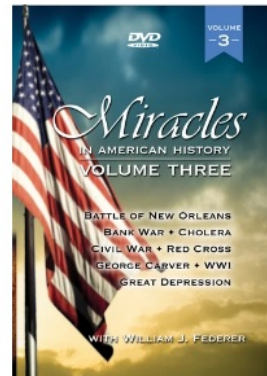
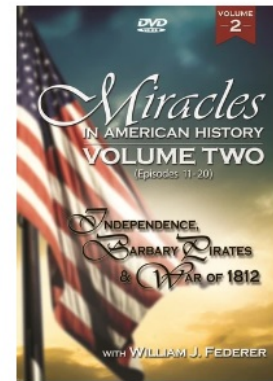
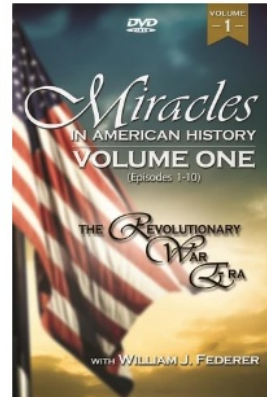
This instantly convinced us, and for the first time convinced Britons themselves, that Americans both would and could fight with great effect.

Whereupon Congress put at the head of this spirited army, the only man, on whom **the eyes of all Israel** were placed (George Washington) ...

This American JOSHUA was raised up by **God**, and

divinely formed by a peculiar influence of the **Sovereign of the Universe**, for the great work of leading the armies ... to liberty and independence."

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Less than a month after the **Battle of Bunker Hill**, the Continental Congress proclaimed a **Day of Public Humiliation, Fasting and**

Prayer, as **John Adams** wrote to his wife, **Abigail**, July 12, 1775:

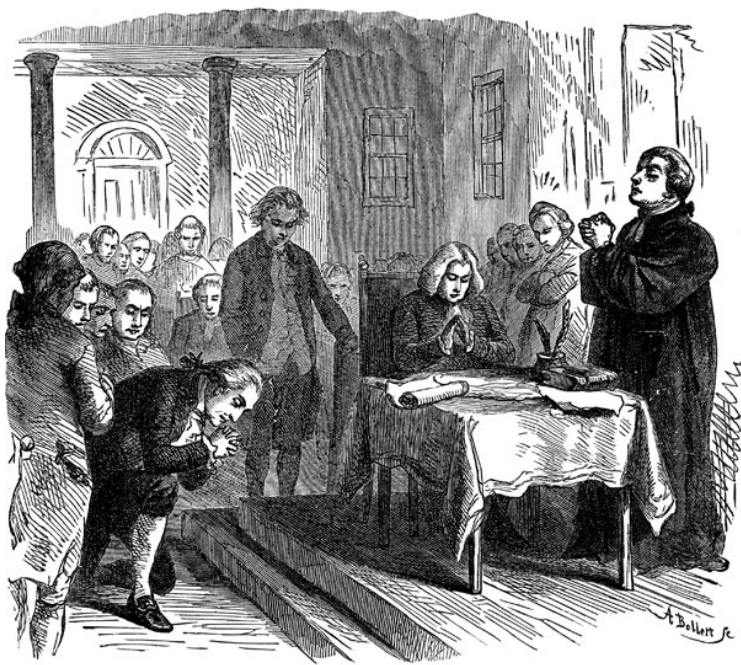
"We have appointed a Continental fast.

Millions will be upon their knees at once before their **great Creator**, imploring **His forgiveness and blessing**; His smiles on American Council and arms."

Georgia's Provincial

Congress also passed a motion, July 5, 1775:

"That this Congress apply to his Excellency the Governor ... requesting him to appoint a **Day of Fasting and Prayer** throughout this Province, on account of the disputes subsisting between America and the Parent State."



Georgia's Royal Governor James Wright replied July 7, 1775:

"Gentlemen: I have taken the...request made by ... a Provincial Congress, and must premise, that I cannot consider that meeting as constitutional;

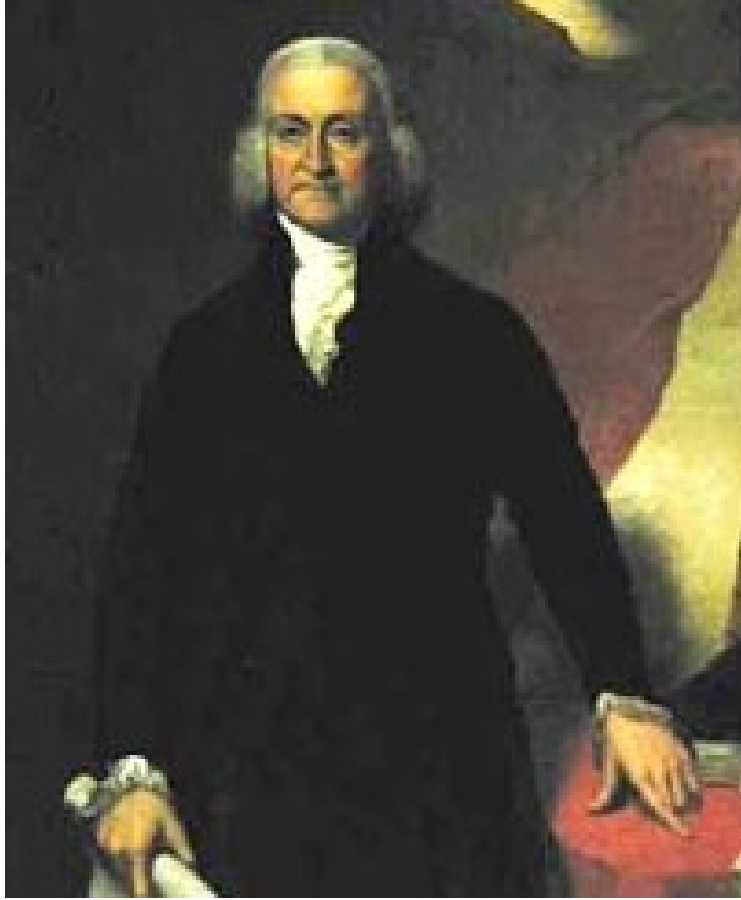
but as the request is expressed in such loyal and

dutiful terms, and the ends proposed being such as every good man must most ardently wish for, I will certainly appoint a **Day of Fasting and Prayer** to be observed throughout this Province."

Connecticut

Governor Jonathan Trumbull wrote to General Washington, July 13, 1775:

"The Honorable Congress have proclaimed a **Fast** to be observed by the inhabitants of all the English Colonies on this continent, **to stand before the Lord** in one day, with **public humiliation, fasting, and prayer,**



to **deplore our many sins**, to offer up our joint supplications to **God**, for **forgiveness**, and for **his merciful interposition** for us in this day of unnatural darkness and distress.

They have, with one united voice, appointed you to the high station you possess. **The Supreme Director of all events** hath caused a wonderful union of hearts and counsels to subsist among us ...

... Now therefore, be strong and very courageous.

May the **God of the armies of Israel** shower down the blessings of **his**

Divine Providence on you, give you wisdom and fortitude, cover your head in the day of battle and danger, add success, convince our enemies of their mistaken measures,



and that all their attempts to deprive these Colonies of their inestimable constitutional rights and liberties are injurious and vain."



On July 19, 1775, the **Journals of the Continental Congress** recorded:

"Agreed, That the Congress meet here tomorrow morning, at half after 9 o'clock, in order to attend divine service at Mr. Duche's Church; and that in the afternoon they meet here to go from this place and attend divine service at Doctor Allison's church."

On July 20, 1775,
General Washington

issued the order:

"The General orders this day to be **religiously observed** by the Forces under his Command, exactly in manner directed by the Continental Congress.



It is therefore strictly enjoined on all Officers and Soldiers to **attend Divine Service**;

And it is expected that all those who go to **worship** do take their Arms, Ammunition and Accoutrements, and are **prepared for immediate action, if called upon.**"

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