

American Minute with Bill Federer

How Lee's Lost Order No. 191 altered the course of the Civil War

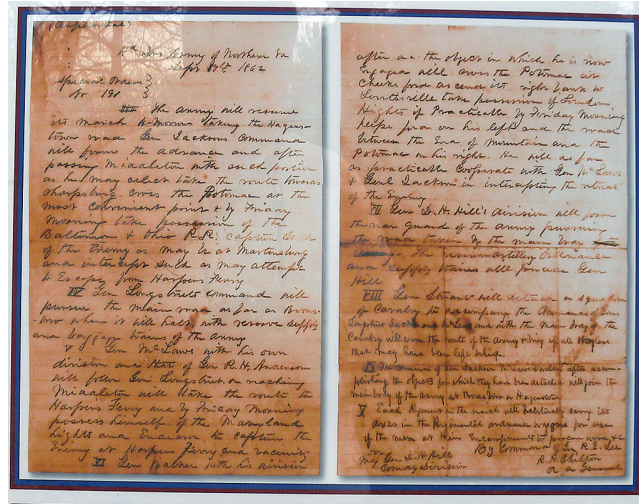
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The Confederate Army was unstoppable - within weeks of winning the Civil War.

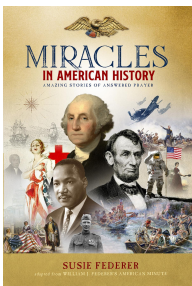
General Robert E. Lee had won the Second Battle of Bull Run and was marching 55,000

Confederate troops into Maryland on September 3, 1862 ...

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The Confederate Army was welcomed into Maryland as anti-Union protests had been filling Baltimore's streets.

On September 13, 1862, President Lincoln met with Rev. William Patterson, Rev. John Dempster and other Methodist, Baptist and Congregational leaders.

The ministers presented Lincoln with a petition urging him to emancipate the slaves.

Lincoln told them:

"I am approached with the most opposite opinions and advice ...

I hope it will not be irreverent for me to say that if it is probable that God would reveal His will to others, on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed He will reveal it directly to me;

for, unless I am more deceived in myself than I often am, it is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence in this matter ...

These are not, however, the days of miracles, and I suppose it will be granted that I am not to expect a direct revelation."

The same day, September 13, 1862, **Union Private Barton W. Mitchell** was drinking coffee and inadvertently noticed **three cigars** on the ground **wrapped with a piece of paper**.

The paper was a copy of **Lee's Special Orders No. 191** addressed to Confederate General D.H. Hill **revealing his plan to divide the Confederate Army**.

With this information in **Union** hands, the **South's** anticipated victory was cut short.

Union General George McClellan was now able to intercept and **ambush** several **Confederate brigades** just 70 miles from Washington, DC.

This erupted into the **Battle of Antietam**, September 17, 1862.

75,000 Union troops attacked 38,000 Confederate troops.

It was the **single bloodiest day** of the **Civil War**.

Though **outnumbered nearly 2 to 1**, the **South** rallied, and with the notable generalship of **Stonewall Jackson**, inflicted more than 12,400 casualties on the **North**, while sustaining 10,316 of their own.

Since **McClellan** failed to make better use of his intelligence advantage, **President Lincoln** soon **removed him** from being in command.

The **Battle of Antietam** was tactically inconclusive, but it proved costlier to the **South**, as they did not have the **immigrants**, as the **North**, did from which to draft **new recruits**.

With the urging of **religious leaders**, **Lincoln** announced that he would issue the **Emancipation Proclamation**.

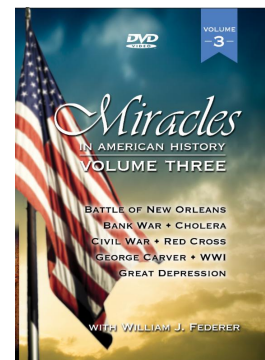
In political parlance, this action allowed the **North** to **seize the moral high ground**.

On September 22, 1862, as reported by Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon Portland Chase, **President Lincoln** told his **Cabinet** after the **Battle at Antietam**:

"The time for the annunciation of the **emancipation policy** can no longer be delayed.

Public sentiment will sustain it, many of my warmest friends and supporters demand it, and I have promised God that I will do it."

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To foreign powers, the **Emancipation Proclamation** changed the international perception of the War from the issue of **States' Rights** to the **ending of slavery**.

Henry Adams, the great-grandson of John Adams, wrote "**Why Did Not England Recognize the Confederacy**," in which he stated:

"On October 13, 1862, Lord John Russell, British Foreign Secretary, sent our a call for the Cabinet to assemble ... Mediation in the **American Civil War** was the subject to be brought up ...

It was expected that ... it would be voted to ... **recognize the South as an independent nation** ...

The day passed and no action was taken.

Everyone, including the **American minister, Charles Francis Adams**, believed that ... a decision to recognize the South was reversed ...

Charles Francis Adams ... accounted for this shift ... because ... the preliminary **Emancipation Proclamation** was made known, and that approval of the **Proclamation** by the working classes of England made it impossible thereafter to recognize a **slave-holding** people as a nation."

As **Britain** did not want to be perceived as supporting **slavery**, they declined to recognize the **Confederacy**, thus dealing a severe trade and **economic blow** to the **South**.

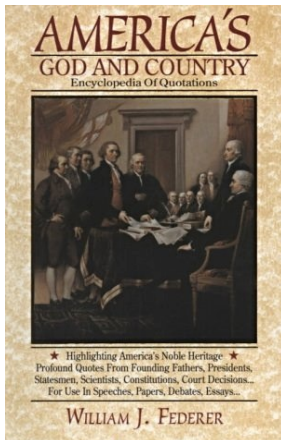
France landed troops in **Mexico** in 1861, and favored the **Confederacy**, as its clothing industry was heavily **dependent on southern cotton**.

The **Union** blockaded ships sailing from **Confederate states** to **France**.

In addition to **Britain** refusing to support the **Confederacy**, **France** now faced threats of war from both the **United States** and **Prussia**.

This led **France's** leader, **Napoleon III**, to refuse to recognize the **Confederacy**.

After the Civil War, the **United States** pressured **France** to withdraw its troops from **Mexico**.



[America's God and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations](#)

Three weeks after the **Battle of Antietam**, **President Lincoln** met on October 6, 1862, with Eliza Gurney and three other Quaker leaders, saying:

"We are indeed going through a great trial-a fiery trial.

In the very responsible position in which I happen to be placed, being a humble instrument in the hands of our Heavenly Father, as I am, and as we all are, to work out His great purposes,

I have desired that all my works and acts may be according to His will, and that it might be so, I have sought His aid ..."

Lincoln continued:

"But if, after endeavoring to do my best in the light which He affords me, I find my efforts fail, I must believe that for some purpose unknown to me, He wills it otherwise.

If I had my way, this war would never have been commenced.

If I had been allowed my way, this war would have ended before this. But we find it still continues;

and we must believe that He permits it for some wise purpose of His own, mysterious and unknown to us ..."

Lincoln concluded:

"... and though with our limited understandings we may not be able to comprehend it, yet **we cannot but believe, that He who made the world still governs it.**"

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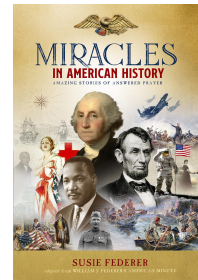


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