

Substance or Window-Dressing?: Classical Conceptions of Patriotic Citizenship  
in the Eulogies of George Washington and Andrew Jackson

Stephanie Kaye Lawton  
Lompoc, California

Bachelor of Arts, University of California Los Angeles, 2013  
Associate of Arts, Allan Hancock College, 2011

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At dawn on Wednesday, January 15, 1800, the residents of Oxford, Massachusetts woke to the sounds of the Worcester Artillery firing a sixteen-gun volley. The artillery fired another gun every half hour until eleven that morning, at which time a procession assembled on Main Street. At the front of the procession were Captain Kingsbury's cavalry; the 14th, 15th, and 16th United States army regiments; the Worcester Artillery; the brigade band; and the local clergy. Behind them, six pall bearers accompanied a hearse covered in black velvet and bearing a hat, a sword, and an urn embossed with a golden laurel wreath and shrouded in black crape. Following the hearse were two liveried attendants leading a general's horse, many U.S. Army officers, and members of the Society of the Cincinnati. Behind these persons marched numerous Masons bearing a sword, staves, a black marble obelisk, two silver urns, and the U.S. Constitution. Finally, at the end of the procession came the militia officers and the sheriffs.<sup>1</sup>

Five thousand spectators watched as the procession preceded to the local meetinghouse. While the band played a funeral dirge, participants placed the hearse and other regalia at the front of the hall. Reverend Austin of Worcester opened the ceremony with prayer, after which Captain Josiah Dunham of the 16th U.S. Infantry delivered a stirring eulogy. The service concluded with another funeral dirge and the Masonic funeral rites. The procession re-formed and marched a mile down Main Street, where they buried

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<sup>1</sup>“Funeral Honors at Oxford, *The Massachusetts Spy*, January 22, 1800, in George F. Daniels, *History of the Town of Oxford, Massachusetts with Genealogies and Notes on Persons and Estates* (Oxford, Massachusetts: George F. Daniels, 1892), 153-155.

the funeral urn and fired three more volleys. The troops returned to barracks with flags unfurled and drums playing, while the rest of the participants went back to their homes.<sup>2</sup>

This ceremony was Oxford's funeral service for George Washington, first president of the United States, commander of the Continental Army, and lieutenant general of the United States military. At the news of Washington's death on December 14, 1799, a tremendous outpouring of grief spread throughout the United States, France, and even England. Between Washington's death and February 22, 1800, Americans held funeral ceremonies in at least two hundred towns, with Boston and other large cities often holding several services. Although these services varied in size, length, activities, and participants, they had one common feature – the eulogy. Americans delivered at least 340 separate eulogies articulating their collective grief and describing Washington's remarkable character and feats. Yet these eulogies shared another intriguing feature: they contained nearly innumerable analogies between George Washington and ancient Greek and Roman heroes. These comparisons proved so successful and popular that eulogists forty-five years later still invoked classical heroes in their homages to Andrew Jackson.<sup>3</sup>

The ubiquity of classical comparisons in presidential eulogies in the early nineteenth century invites the question: what purpose did these seemingly trivial references serve? To answer this question, this paper will examine the function and interpretation of classical allusions in 66 eulogies commemorating George Washington

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<sup>2</sup> *The Massachusetts Spy*, in *History of the Town of Oxford*, 153-155.

<sup>3</sup> F. Adrian Van der Kemp and Margaret Bingham Stillwell, ed., *Washington Eulogies: A Checklist of Eulogies and Funeral Orations on the Death of George Washington, December, 1799- February, 1800* (New York: New York Public Library, 1916), 21.

and Andrew Jackson in the years 1800 and 1845. As the first president of the United States, Washington's life set the standard for all subsequent presidents; in his funeral services, Americans established the rituals and thematic content they considered appropriate to commemorate a chief executive. To understand the function and meaning of classical allusions in presidential eulogies, one must start with Washington. Jackson shared certain characteristics with Washington: he experienced the Revolution, served as a general and statesman, founded a new political party, and became president. These similarities between Jackson and Washington make it possible to identify examples of continuity and change in how Americans used and interpreted classical archetypes between 1800 and 1845.

By drawing upon Washington and Jackson's eulogies and paying particular attention to their social purpose, this paper partially answers classicist Meyer Reinhold's call in 1984 for a "study of the classical allusions in the funeral eulogies for Washington" and their "numerous analogies to antiquity, particularly to Plutarchan heroes." This paper also partially addresses the 1970 working conference at the University of Michigan's Center for Coordination of Ancient and Modern Studies, which called for research that examines classical models, the classics' social functions, and the classical self-imagination of American leaders. This paper moves beyond the confines of the Founding Fathers and presidents, however, to discover how American eulogists from across the social spectrum used ancient examples to cultivate American nationalism. In the process, this paper also addresses the 1970 conference's desire for scholarship that examines the

classics' influence on American political history and morality and their role in providing stability and continuity amid rapid social change.<sup>4</sup>

Classical allusions in nineteenth-century political rituals were not merely superficial displays of oratorical prowess. Instead, presidential eulogists used classical models to construct the character of the ideal citizen, foster national loyalty, and imagine the United States' place in history. In the process, Americans envisioned the president as the embodiment of the ideal citizen and adapted classical models to conform to changes in American republicanism and democracy. Indeed, Americans' extensive adaptation of classical models suggests that historians must revise the prevailing Cincinnatus / Caesar paradigm, which juxtaposes the selfless citizen with the greedy tyrant, to show that other classical and Biblical archetypes could exist alongside of or merged within this paradigm.

American historians traditionally have paid little attention to the significance of ancient Greek and Roman texts on the formation of American politics and political culture. Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* describes the ubiquity of classical allusions in revolutionary pamphlets and orations but also argues that this display of classical knowledge was shallow. Colonial intellectuals, Bailyn contends, had a superficial knowledge of the majority of classical texts with a more detailed knowledge of works concerning the fall of the Roman Republic during the first century B.C. Bailyn concludes that colonists' displays of classical knowledge were

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<sup>4</sup> Meyer Reinhold, *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United States* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 302-303, 306.

rhetorical flourishes, or “window-dressing,” used to illustrate ideas the colonists had gleaned from Enlightenment rationalism.<sup>5</sup>

The scholarly resurrection of the classics in America fell to classicist Meyer Reinhold. With the publication of his monograph *Classica Americana* in 1984, Reinhold undertook the first complete study of the topic in America from 1620 to 1880, covering everything from eighteenth-century political thought, to debates about classical learning, to American tourists in Greece and Rome. Meyer rejects the investigation of “influence” as a nebulous and unrewarding area of study and instead urges the study of the classics’ more concrete “function” in early American society. Reinhold’s narrative primarily recounts the “rise and fall” of the classics. Prior to 1735, the classics aided the moral instruction of clergy and civil servants, thereafter the classics served as a valuable source of political inspiration during the Revolutionary Age. Labeling the years 1760 to 1790 the “golden age” and the years 1790 to 1830 the “silver age,” Reinhold contends that the classics achieved their highest social and political function during the ratification debates for the U.S. Constitution in the 1780s and then declined into an obsolete and archaic area of specialized academic study in the nation’s universities by the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

In 1994, Carl Richard undertook the first thorough examination of the Founder’s classical reading in *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment*. In contrast to Bailyn, Richard asserts that the classics had a formative effect on the Revolutionary generation. Richard argues that the Founders used the classics

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<sup>5</sup> Bernard, Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, enlarged edition (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1992), 23-26.

<sup>6</sup> Reinhold, *Classica Americana*, 17-20, 174-195.

to establish their social status as cultured men and to facilitate communication through a “common set of symbols, knowledge, and ideas.” Richard disputes the historiographical tendency to claim that only classical republicanism or Enlightenment liberalism determined Americans’ political and cultural development. Instead, he demonstrates that the American founders synthesized Greco-Roman, Christian, Whig, and colonial strands of thought into a single, and seemingly contradictory, intellectual tradition. Richard further establishes a useful methodology when he demonstrates that Americans used examples from ancient history to develop models and anti-models of “personal behavior, social practice, and government form.” Richard goes beyond the Roman pattern of Cincinnatus versus Caesar to include a large cast of classical heroes and civilizations from which the Americans borrowed freely. Finally, Richard claims that the persistence of classical republican thought and debates about the classics’ relevance proves their continuing importance in the early national era.<sup>7</sup>

Eran Shalev’s *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic* demonstrates that Americans used the classical idiom, or language, to express their understandings of historical time and to imagine themselves as ancient republicans in a reborn Rome. As participants in the perpetual struggle between liberty and tyranny, revolutionary Americans believed they would be the next heirs to the westward movement of political dominance and culture, concepts known as *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii*, that had begun with the Greeks and of which

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<sup>7</sup> Carl J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 5-11, 53-122.

Britain had been the most recent beneficiary. Through essays, pseudonyms, oratory, plays, and elegies, Americans acted out their new status as American Romans and prized the republican values of simplicity, virtue, and patriotic duty.<sup>8</sup>

Shalev contends that Americans, having received the torch of western civilization, developed sectionally distinct understandings of historical time. Americans in the South adhered to a cyclical understanding of time in which America would eventually, and inevitably, succumb to corruption and decay. Americans in the North adopted a conception of time that Shalev terms classical typology, in which Americans adapted Christian millennialism and envisioned ancient Rome as the imperfect prefiguration of the perfected and eternal American fulfillment. The South's view of history meant inevitable decline, and the North's view brought inevitable prosperity. However, nineteenth-century Americans in all sections continued to confront their temporal anxieties concerning the historical battle between liberty and tyranny through the Cincinnatus / Caesar paradigm: virtuous Cincinnati would arise to overcome the tyrannical Caesars, internal and external, who threatened American liberty. The only difference of opinion concerned whether such Cincinnati would always arise when needed, or if, one day, a lack of republican virtue meant no more Cincinnati would remain.<sup>9</sup>

Carl Richard moves beyond the Founding Era in *The Golden Age of the Classics: Greece and Rome in Antebellum America*. In contrast to Reinhold's thesis of decline in

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<sup>8</sup> Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 2-8, 28-35.

<sup>9</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, 73-113, 217-240.



the nineteenth century, Richard argues that the expanding educational system democratized the classics by exposing an ever-increasing number of men and women to this canon. The promotion of universal, white male suffrage also made Americans more receptive of both Athenian and contemporary democracy. Reacting to industrialization and utilitarianism, some Americans claimed that ancient Greek and Roman texts cultivated individual morality while classical pastoralism protected society from the worst excesses of urban commercialism. Antebellum Americans' claims to superiority over the ancients resulted in a pantheon of American heroes, a preference for the republican simplicity and grandeur of neo-classical architecture, and a desire for a territorial empire that rivaled Rome's. Ancient history, mythology, and philosophy inspired American authors and historians such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, Edgar Allan Poe, and Herman Melville. Americans continued to use ancient examples to develop and / or support their opinions on democracy, republicanism, federalism, minority rights, and slavery. Ultimately, Richard presents a complex narrative in which the classics' adaptability allowed their application to every area of American life.<sup>10</sup>

*Classical Visions of George Washington*

Washington's death marked the end of a very turbulent decade. Shortly after Washington took office in 1789, the French Revolution ignited a series of European wars that threatened the security of the United States. Despite Washington's attempt to

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<sup>10</sup> Carl J. Richard, *The Golden Age of the Classics in America: Greece, Rome, and the Antebellum United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), ix-xiii, 2-15, 33-35, 46-53, 83-88, 94-104, 112-116, 125-151, 211.

maintain American neutrality, domestic factions quickly developed: Jeffersonians eagerly supported the French Revolution, moderate Federalists promoted neutrality, and Hamiltonian Federalists desired an economic alliance with Great Britain. As the wars in Europe continued, France and England violated United States neutrality by attacking American ships and impressing their crews. During Washington's administration, John Jay secured a controversial peace treaty with England in 1795; however, John Adams' attempt to negotiate peace with France in 1798 ended after the French Foreign Minister Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord tried to bribe the American delegation before consenting to formal negotiations. Known as the XYZ affair, news of France's attempted bribery caused a popular backlash against the pro-French Jeffersonians. Congress authorized the Quasi-War with France, abrogating all treaties, placing an embargo on trade, allowing American vessels to attack French ships, and significantly expanding the U.S. Navy. Adams also commissioned the aging Washington as lieutenant general of the planned New Army, a plan that never achieved fruition.<sup>11</sup>

But Adams also feared a Jacobin revolution at home. In 1798, he signed the Alien and Sedition Acts, which stipulated the deportation without trial of any non-naturalized citizen suspected of plotting against the United States and allowed the imprisonment of anyone spreading sedition against the federal government. Angered at what seemed like the Federalists' unconstitutional attempts to ensure their own power, Jefferson and Madison wrote the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions in 1798. These resolutions argued

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<sup>11</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 174-208, 239-247, 262-267.

that the Alien and Sedition Acts violated the constitutional rights of both individuals and the states. Jefferson's Kentucky Resolution further argued that the states had the power to nullify unconstitutional federal laws. By 1799, the Federalists had divided into two coalitions, and Thomas Jefferson, riding resurgent popular support for the Jeffersonians, secured the 1800 presidential election. Yet amid the significant political upheaval, Americans nearly unanimously expressed their grief at Washington's death and their desire to commemorate him as the foremost hero of the Revolution and the Father of his Country (*Patria Patriae*).<sup>12</sup>

During his life, Washington's feats on behalf of the new republic appeared so heroic that his admirers envisioned him as a classical hero long before his death. Historian Gary Wills has established the remarkable extent to which Americans constructed a classical iconography of Washington in poetry, prose, and artwork such as Jean-Antoine Houdon's statue of Washington for the Virginia State Capitol. Eulogists readily built upon this foundation of hero worship and made it into a full-fledged heroic pantheon. In the course of the thirty-three eulogies examined in this paper, eulogists compared Washington to Aemilius, Aeneas, Alexander the Great, Archimedes, Aristides, Belisarius, Caesar, Cimon, Cyrus, Epaminondas, Fabius Maximus, Fabricius, Hannibal, Hercules, Leonidas, Lycurgus, Marcus Aurelius, Minerva, Numa Pompilius, Philopoeman, Pompey, Pyrrhus, Romulus, Scipio, Socrates, Solon, Timoleon, and Titus.

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<sup>12</sup> Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 247-250, 253, 256, 258-262, 268-271, 272-277, 282-286; George Blake, "A Masonic Eulogy on the life of the Illustrious brother George Washington, Pronounced before the Brethren of St. John's Lodge, on the Evening of the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, 1800. At their particular request," in *Eulogies and Orations on the Life and Death of General George Washington, First President of the United States of America* (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1800), 107; Jeremiah Smith, "An Oration on the Death of George Washington, Delivered at Exeter, February 22, 1800," in *Eulogies*, 179.

Washington's foes, primarily the British, became tyrants like Julius Caesar, Lucius Cornelius Sulla, and the emperor Trajan, or mythical monsters like the giant Enceladus. Yet to Americans and even his European admirers, Washington, in both life and death, seemed most similar to the fifth-century Roman dictator Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus.<sup>13</sup>

It is ironic that the paradigm of Cincinnatus versus Caesar has so dominated the life, death, and even historiography of George Washington. The historically and chronologically accurate comparison should have been Cato Minor versus Caesar, reflecting the actual confrontations between these two Romans. Indeed, Washington modeled his personal behavior upon the virtuous Cato Minor depicted in Joseph Addison's *Cato*, Washington's favorite play and arguably his greatest source of classical knowledge. This preference for Cincinnatus over Cato Minor appears all the more odd when it was Cato, and not Cincinnatus, whom Plutarch included in his immensely

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<sup>13</sup> Gary Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1984), 220-241; Jonathan Sewall, "An Eulogy on the late general Washington, pronounced at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, on Tuesday, December 31, 1799, at the Request of the inhabitants" in *Eulogies*, 33-34; Thomas Paine, "An Eulogy on the life of General George Washington, written at the Request of the Citizens of Newburyport, and delivered at the first Presbyterian Meeting-House in that Town, January 2, 1800" in *Eulogies*, 61, 64; Fisher Ames, "An Oration on the Sublime Virtues of General George Washington, Pronounced in Boston, before his Honor the Lieutenant Governor, the Council, and the two Branches of the Legislature of Massachusetts, at the Requests, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February, 1800," in *Eulogies*, 113-114, 128; Timothy Bigelow, "An Eulogy on the Life, Character and Services of Brother George Washington. Pronounced before the Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons, by Request of the grand Lodge, at Boston, February 11, 1800," in *Eulogies*, 132-133; John Davis, "An Eulogy on General George Washington. Pronounced at Boston, February 19, 1800, before the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, by their Appointment," in *Eulogies*, 152-153, 155; William Linn, "A Funeral Eulogy on General Washington. Delivered February 22, 1800, before the New-York State Society of the Cincinnati," in *Eulogies*, 171; Jeremiah Smith, "An Oration," in *Eulogies*, 179; James Brown, "Eulogy on the late illustrious citizen, George Washington, delivered in Lexington, on Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup> January, 1800," in *The Kentucky Gazette*, February 6, 1800; James Madison, D. D., "A Discourse on the Death of General Washington, late President of the United States; Delivered on the 22d of February, 1800, in the Church in Williamsburg" (Richmond: T. Nicolson, 1800), 7, 12, 16, 19; Rev. Rosewell Messenger, "An Oration delivered at Old York on the Death of George Washington; late President; and Commander in Chief of the armies of the United States of America; who departed this life, at Mount Vernon, in Virginia, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, in the 69<sup>th</sup> year of his age" (Charlestown: Samuel Etheridge, 1800), 7.

popular *Parallel Lives*; for the life of Cincinnatus, Americans had to use Livy's far more marginal *Ab Urbe Condita*. However, Americans refused to compare their hero to the tragic Roman who committed suicide after being defeated by Caesar. Instead, they favored the victorious Cincinnatus as their heroic model for Washington, and none of the thirty-three Washington eulogists in this study compared him to Cato Minor.<sup>14</sup>

Americans established Cincinnatus as a republican hero through a selective reading of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*. In 461 B.C., the tribune of the plebeians Aulus Verginius arrested Cincinnatus' son Caeso on charges of committing murder and violence against Roman plebeians who had supported the *lex Terentilia*, a land redistribution bill proposed in 462 B.C. After Caeso's arrest, Cincinnatus attempted to intercede on his son's behalf without success. Caeso skipped bail and fled to Etruria, forcing Cincinnatus to sell all his possessions to cover his son's bail. Cincinnatus then settled on a minuscule farm outside Rome. As the *paterfamilias*, Cincinnatus surely possessed both the knowledge and power needed to stop his son's activities, yet he did not do so. After becoming consul in 460 B.C., Cincinnatus chastised the Senate for allowing the plebeians too much power through their tribunes. Cincinnatus did not think common plebeians should have equal representation in the Roman government and instead favored a hierarchical Rome in which patrician patrons directed the political actions of their plebeian clients.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Richard, *The Founders and the Classics*, 57-60.

<sup>15</sup> Livy, *The Early History of Rome: Books I-V of The History of Rome from Its Foundations*, ed., S. P. Oakley, trans. Aubrey de Séincourt, and introduction by R. M. Ogilvie (1960; reprint, London: Penguin Books, 2002), 203-211, 217-221.

Ignoring Cincinnatus' aristocratic political policies, Americans emphasized his individual character and his resignation of the dictatorship, which allowed a decidedly more republican interpretation. In 458, the Aequians and Sabines attacked Rome; the Senate summoned Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus from his three-acre farm and appointed him dictator of Rome. Within fifteen days, Cincinnatus had rescued the consul Minucius's besieged army from the Aequians, celebrated a triumph, convicted his son's accuser Marcus Volscius of false testimony, and resigned his magistracy. In 439 B.C., the consul Titus Quinctius Capitolinus again made Cincinnatus (now over eighty years old) dictator in order to prevent the grain merchant Spurius Maelius from mounting a coup and becoming the king of Rome. Cincinnatus, fearing dishonor in his old age, reluctantly accepted the commission, quickly stopped Maelius' planned coup, warned Roman citizens about the dangers of monarchical tyranny, and again resigned absolute power. Cincinnatus, in Americans' opinion, proved himself the perfect republican citizen-soldier who only accepted power reluctantly in order to preserve the republic, and then immediately relinquished his authority to return to a peaceful, pastoral life.<sup>16</sup>

Admirers cast Washington as a modern Cincinnatus even before he resigned his commission as commander of the Continental Army. On August 23, 1783, Francois-Jean de Beauvoir, the Marquis de Chastellux, wrote a letter to his friend George Washington, expressing his desire to visit Mt. Vernon, "where I am told, your excellency is retired like another Cincinnatus." When the officers of the Continental Army formed a fraternal association for mutual assistance, they named it the Society of the Cincinnati and selected

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<sup>16</sup> Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, 226-230, 305-307.

Washington as their first president. Both their name and their choice of leader showed their readiness to emulate Cincinnatus as citizen-soldiers, willing to fight but eager for peace. Yet the Society's provision for hereditary membership and its support for army pensions made many Americans, including Thomas Jefferson, fear that the Society would establish a hereditary aristocracy. Washington, living up to his Cincinnatian image, threatened to resign unless the Society removed its hereditary provisions and refrained from politics; the Society complied and public concern largely subsided.<sup>17</sup>

The republican Cincinnatus became the eulogists' foremost classical vision of Washington. However, only eight out of the thirty-three eulogists made explicit references to Washington as Cincinnatus. Reverend William Linn exulted, "General Washington, like Cincinnatus, left his retirement and the pursuits of agriculture merely for the service of his country." Thomas Paine drew attention to Washington's actions after the war, declaring, "We might behold the majestic Cincinnatus, who, like thee [Washington], in the vigor of Roman heroism, could return from the conquest of his country's enemies, to his humble Mount Vernon beyond the Tyber." Dr. Joseph Blyth and Capt. Josiah Dunham praised Washington for refusing a public salary and for "like another Cincinnatus, returning to the plough" and "the cultivation of the soft arts of peace." Francis Kinloch remarked that "scarcely had our General...returned to his farm like another Cincinnatus" when Virginia called him to attend and preside over the

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<sup>17</sup> "To George Washington from Francois-Jean de Beauvoir, marquis de Chastellux, 23 August 1783," Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-11733> [last update 2015-02-20]) accessed 14 Mar 2015; Minor Myers, Jr., *Liberty Without Anarchy: A History of the Society of the Cincinnati* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1983), 15-19, 25-26, 31, 48-64.

Constitutional Convention. These explicit comparisons repeatedly established the contours of Washington's Cincinnatian image by highlighting his readiness to sacrifice domestic comfort to serve his country as a general and statesman and, most especially, his manifest eagerness to relinquish power and return to a peaceful life cultivating the land.<sup>18</sup>

Although containing few explicit references, twenty-three out of the remaining twenty-five eulogies contain implicit allusions to Washington as Cincinnatus. Major General Richard Henry Lee remarked that Washington resisted the aggrandizing lures of seditious faction, surrendered his sword to Congress, and returned to private life. George Richards Minot claimed that Washington's resignation as commander of the Continental Army proved that human nature could be virtuous and not only desire power. James Wallis praised Washington for leaving his retirement at Mt. Vernon to preside over the Constitution convention. David Ramsay noted that Washington's sense of patriotism induced him to give up retirement and become the first president. John M. Mason exulted over the matchless patriotism and humility of Washington for accepting the lesser post of lieutenant general after he had been president and commander-in-chief. John Davis,

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<sup>18</sup> Rev. William Linn, *Eulogies*, 165-166; Thomas Paine, *Eulogies*, 64; Dr. Joseph Blyth, "An Oration on the Death of General George Washington. Delivered at All Saint's Parish, (S.C.) On the 22d of February, 1800," in *Eulogies*, 206; Capt. Josiah Dunham, "A Funeral Oration on George Washington. Pronounced at Oxford, Massachusetts, at the Request of the Field Officers of the Brigade, stationed at that Place, on the 15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1800," in *Eulogies*, 276-277; Francis Kinloch, "Eulogy on George Washington" (Georgetown, SC: John Burd, 1800, reprint: New York, 1867), 13-14; George Pfeiffer, "An Eulogium to the Memory of General George Washington," (Natchez: B. M. Stokes, 1800), 28-29; Benjamin Trumball, "The Majesty and Mortality of created Gods Illustrated and Improved. A Funeral Discourse, delivered at North-Haven, December 29, 1799. On the Death of General George Washington; who died December 14, 1799" (New Haven, CT: Read & Morse, 1800), 28; Henry Holcombe, "A Sermon occasioned by the death of Lieutenant-General George Washington, late President of the United States of America; who was born , February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1732, in Virginia, and died December 14, 1799, on Mount Vernon, his favorite seat in his native country; first delivered in the Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1800, and now published, at the request of the honorable city council" ([Savannah]: Seymour & Woolhopter, [1800]), 11.



Charles Pinckney Sumner, Jonathan Sewall, Gouverneur Morris, John Brooks, George Blake, Fisher, Ames, Timothy Bigelow, Jeremiah Smith, Isaac Parker, Maj. William Jackson, John Thornton Kirkland, James Brown, Isaac Stockton Keith, Bishop James Madison, David Tappan, Rev. Rosewell Messenger, and Seth Williston all developed Washington's classical image through implicit but clearly understood references to the Cincinnatus model.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Richard Henry Lee, "Funeral Oration on the Death of General Washington. Delivered at the Request of Congress, Dec. 26, 1799," in *Eulogies*, 12, 16; George Richards Minot, "An Eulogy on George Washington, Late Commander in Chief of the Armies of the United States of America. Delivered before the Inhabitants of the Town of Boston, at the Request of their Committee, Jan. 9, 1800," in *Eulogies*, 22-23; James Wallis, "An Oration on the Death of General George Washington, late President of the United States; delivered in Charlotte, February 22, 1800, to the Citizens of Mecklenburgh County, and published at the Request of the Militia Officers of said county" (Raleigh, NC: Joseph Gales, 1800), 13; David Ramsay, *Eulogies*, 86, 93, 95; John M. Mason, "A Funeral Oration on General Washington. Delivered February 22, 1800, by Appointment of a number of the Clergy of New-York," in *Eulogies*, 233-238, 240; John Davis, *Eulogies*, 144-145, 147; Charles Pinckney Sumner, "Eulogy on the illustrious George Washington. Pronounced at Milton, 22d February, 1800," in *Eulogies*, 266; Jonathan Sewall, *Eulogies*, 34-36; Gouverneur Morris, An Oration upon the Death of General Washington, Delivered at the Request of the Corporation of the City of New-York, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, 1799," in *Eulogies*, 48, 52-53; John Brooks, "An Eulogy on General Washington. Delivered before the Inhabitants of Medford, (Mass.) at the request of their committee, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January, 1800," in *Eulogies*, 70, 73-74; George Blake, *Eulogies*, 103-106; Fisher Ames, *Eulogies*, 125-126; Timothy Bigelow, *Eulogies*, 132, 135, and 137; Jeremiah Smith, *Eulogies*, 180, 183, 187, and 189; Isaac Parker, "An Oration on the Sublime Virtues of General George Washington. Pronounced at Portland, February 22, 1800, by Appointment of the Selectmen, agreeable to the Vote of the Town," in *Eulogies*, 222-225, 227; Major William Jackson, "Eulogium on the Character of General Washington. Pronounced before the Pennsylvania Society of the Cincinnati, February 22, 1800, in the City of Philadelphia," in *Eulogies*, 246, 251-253, 257-258; John Thornton Kirkland, "A Discourse occasioned by the death of General George Washington. Delivered December 29, 1799," in *Eulogies*, 287-288, 290-291; James Brown, "Eulogy on the late illustrious citizen," *The Kentucky Gazette*; Isaac Stockton Keith, "National Affliction and National Consolation!: A Sermon on the Death of General George Washington, late Commander in Chief of the Armies; and formerly President of the United States of America: who died at Mount Vernon, December 14, 1799, in the 68<sup>th</sup> year of his age. Delivered on the twelfth of January, one thousand eight hundred, in the Independent, or Congregational Church, in Charleston, South Carolina" (Charleston, S.C.: W. P. Young, 1800), 6, 15-16; James Madison, D.D. "A Discourse on the Death of General Washington," 10, 18-23; David Tappan, "An Address in Latin, by Joseph Willard, S. T. D., L. L. D, President; and a Discourse in English, by David Tappan, S. T. D Hollis Professor of Divinity; delivered before the University in Cambridge, Feb, 21, 1800. In solemn commemoration of General George Washington (Cambridge, MA: Samuel Etheridge, 1800), 18-19, 24; Rev. Rosewell Messenger, "An Oration delivered at Old York," 8-10.

Yet eulogists also created numerous other classical visions of Washington that they used to augment or adapt the Cincinnatus model to the American context. After Cincinnatus, eulogists most frequently invoked comparisons to Fabius Maximus, a Roman general and dictator during the Second Punic War. According to Plutarch, Fabius Maximus possessed a cautious character, free from “overmastering passions” with a sound and prudent judgement that, once he had reached a decision, proved “steadfast and resolute in all circumstances.” As dictator in 217 BC, Fabius needed these character traits when he faced public disapproval for his defensive “Fabian strategy” against the great Carthaginian general Hannibal. Realizing that his smaller army could not directly defeat Hannibal’s larger one, Fabius avoided pitched battles and instead attacked Hannibal’s supply lines and straggling troops. Fabius only received some popular support for his tactics after the Romans suffered a horrendous defeat in a pitched battle against Hannibal at Cannae in 216 BC. Plutarch also lauded Fabius for his lenient treatment of allies and deserters, his careful observance of Roman religious rites, his submission to law, and his insistence on public obedience towards civil magistrates.<sup>20</sup>

Eulogists saw many parallels between Fabius and Washington. Gouverneur Morris acknowledged that Washington had a passionate nature and was prone to anger, which he controlled through a fierce effort of will. David Ramsay, William Linn, Jeremiah Smith, and Isaac Parker also acknowledged that Washington had learned to control his emotions, to exercise prudence, to judge without prejudice, and to pursue his decisions with unwavering resolve amid partisan passions. Thomas Paine, David Ramsay,

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<sup>20</sup> Plutarch, *Makers of Rome*, 54, 57-76.

Capt. Josiah Dunham, and Rev. Dr. James Madison recounted how Washington, like Fabius, could “save a nation by delay.” Fisher Ames drew parallels between Fabius and Washington because both had conducted warfare with restraint and order. Timothy Bigelow pointed out, however, that Washington’s Fabian policy drew censure as accusers charged him with timidity and doubted his military abilities. Bigelow concluded, however, that Washington’s strategy proved successful as it gave the army time to train and kept it in the field against the British forces. Because Washington used delay to preserve his army despite popular disapproval and emerged victorious, he proved to be another Fabius.<sup>21</sup>

The Reverend William Linn especially preferred classical military heroes as models for Washington. In addition to references to Cincinnatus and Fabius, Linn favorably compared Washington to Marcellus, Hannibal, Cimon, Cyrus, Scipio, Philopoemen, and Pompey. According to Plutarch, Marcellus served as consul, Rome’s chief magistrate, five times and was a daring general and soldier who still remained modest and humane in all other pursuits. Borrowing from William Gordon’s *History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment of the Independence of the United States of America*, Linn made the case that Washington was more like Marcellus than Fabius because he boldly attacked the enemy when needed and risked his personal safety to lead his men. Just as the Carthaginian general Hannibal showed great ingenuity and

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<sup>21</sup> Gouverneur Morris, *Eulogies*, 45; David Ramsay, *Eulogies*, 90; William Linn, *Eulogies*, 168-168 and 171; Jeremiah Smith, *Eulogies*, 188; Isaac Parker, *Eulogies*, 220; Thomas Paine, *Eulogies*, 64; David Ramsay, *Eulogies*, 80; Capt. Josiah Dunham, *Eulogies*, 276; James Madison, “A Discourse on the Death of General Washington,” 14; Fisher Ames, *Eulogies*, 113; Timothy Bigelow, *Eulogies*, 133-134.

perseverance when he marched his army and war elephants from Spain over the Alps to attack Rome in 218 BC, Washington could also overcome extreme wartime difficulties, including a lack of supplies and manpower, and still undertake daring campaigns like the Battle of Trenton.<sup>22</sup>

Linn also established Washington's prowess and integrity by equating him with some of the greatest military heroes of the eastern Mediterranean. Linn stated that Washington was frugal like Cimon, chaste like Scipio, humble like Philopoemen, successful like Pompey, and desirous of harmony like Cyrus. Cyrus founded the Achaemenid Persian Empire and was famous for his military success, his just rule, and his religious tolerance. Pompey was a Roman consul who eradicated piracy in the Mediterranean, defeated Mithradates VI in the Third Mithradatic War, and established Roman control over Judaea. Philopoemen was a famous Greek general who helped the Achaean League rise to power in Greece in the second century BC. Linn's reference to Scipio could refer to either Scipio Africanus or Scipio Africanus Minor, both of whom were committed republicans and successful generals during the Second and Third Punic Wars. Cimon was an Athenian statesman and general who successfully overcame charges of bribery by appealing to his Spartan frugality. Linn showed that Washington's

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<sup>22</sup> Plutarch, "Marcellus," *Makers of Rome*, 85; Rev. William Linn, *Eulogies*, 164-165, 171. For Gordon's discussion of George Washington as Fabius, see William Gordon, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Establishment, of the Independence of the United States of America, Including an Account of the Late War; and of the Thirteen Colonies, from their Origin to that Period*, Vol. IV (London: 1788), 406.

militarily success, chastity, frugality, humbleness, and eagerness for peace made him as deserving of public adulation as these famous ancient men.<sup>23</sup>

Fisher Ames produced an especially convoluted and puzzling mixture of statesmanship and military heroism when he cast Washington as a modern Leonidas. In Ames' opinion, Washington's patriotism led him to risk his personal fame "when he stood, like Leonidas at the pass of Thermopylae, to defend our independence against France." Leonidas was a Lacedaemon king and warrior who died at the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC when he and approximately 1,000 troops tried to prevent Xerxes I and his army of 100,000 to 200,000 men from marching south through the mountain pass towards Thebes and Athens. Leonidas's stand became known as one of the most heroic deeds in world history. Although one would expect Ames to draw parallels between Washington's and Leonidas' military feats, he instead compares Washington's insistence on American neutrality to Leonidas' stand against the Persians. Clearly, this analogy is problematic. Leonidas died but did not halt the Persian advance; Washington lived and successfully maintained American neutrality from France. Yet the very different outcomes of Washington's and Leonidas' lives was not Ames's point. Rather, Ames demonstrated that the willingness to risk one's life, either through a literal or civic death,

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<sup>23</sup> Rev. William Linn, *Eulogies*, 171; Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans., Tom Holland, introduction by Paul Cartledge (London: Penguin Books, 2013); Plutarch, "Life of Philopoemen," in *Plutarch's Lives*, Vol. 10, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935) I:108-130, 141, 153-162, 177-178, 204-214; Allen Ward, Fritz M. Heichelheim, and Cedric A Yeo, *A History of the Roman People*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed (Boston: Prentice Hall, 2010), 107-109, 123-125; Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, vol. 2, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 449.

on your country's behalf would actually bring an individual everlasting fame and historical respect.<sup>24</sup>

Washington's eulogists also thought his political prowess entitled him to a place among the very greatest of ancient statesmen, including Solon, Lycurgus, and Aristides. Timothy Bigelow claimed that Washington's legislative achievements resulted from a wisdom that resembled the renowned ancient legislators Solon and Lycurgus. According to Plutarch, Lycurgus was a Lacedaemonian ruler in the eighth century B.C. famous for traveling to other nations to study their laws and using them to establish Sparta's highly controlled society. Americans usually paired Lycurgus with Solon, an Athenian statesman who also completely reordered his city's laws, assemblies, land usage, and social classes and relationships. According to Plutarch, Aristides was an Athenian statesman whose steadfast commitment to justice initially earned him great praise; however, the Athenians ostracized Aristides due to the schemes of his jealous rival Themistocles. John Brooks cast Washington as a modern Aristides who retained his composure amid adversity, success, and excessive praise. David Ramsay also depicted Washington as an Aristides whose only enemies were those who envy and despise the just. These eulogies emphasized that Washington, as an innovative and just statesman, helped create the U.S. Constitution and a new federal government that equaled the nation-building achievements of the greatest ancient statesmen.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Fisher Ames, *Eulogies*, 126; Herodotus, *The Histories*, 521-528; For information on the estimated size of the Persian army, see Andrew Robert Burn, *Persia and the Greeks: The Defence of the West, c. 546-478 B.C.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962), 326-332.

<sup>25</sup> Timothy Bigelow, *Eulogies*, 133; John Brooks, *Eulogies*, 73; David Ramsay, *Eulogies*, 90; Plutarch, *Lives*, Vol. 1, 213-283, 437-477; Plutarch, *Lives*, Vol. 2, 211-231.

John Davis used Plutarch's "Life of Timoleon" to produce one of the most extensive analogies between Washington and an ancient hero. According to Plutarch, Timoleon was a Corinthian commander in the fourth century B.C. Timoleon detested tyrants, even to the point of helping murder his own brother, who had tried to become tyrant of Corinth. Timoleon emerged from twenty years of melancholy self-exile to free the Sicilian city Syracuse from the tyrant Hicetas and his Carthaginian allies. He then freed all of Sicily from its tyrants, helped establish free governments, and retired in the Sicilian countryside after going blind in old age. After his death, throngs of grief-stricken men and women buried him in great honor. Davis linked Timoleon and Washington with the almost trite remark that "In this description, the analogy...is apparent." Through his analogy, Davis demonstrated that Washington, like Timoleon, freed Americans from British tyranny, helped establish free government through the U.S. Constitution, retired to a pastoral life at Mt. Vernon, enjoyed the gratitude of the people into his old age, died after a slight illness, and was buried amid throngs of lamenting men and women.<sup>26</sup>

Not only did Davis' analogy contain clear parallels to Washington, but it also encompassed all the main points of Washington's Cincinnatian image: the liberation of a subject people, the resumption of internal concord, and a return to private life. Yet Davis moved beyond the Cincinnatian image by emphasizing Timoleon's, and therefore Washington's, achievements as a law-giver and statesman and the people's gratitude and grief at their deaths. In so doing, Davis played down Washington's military fame and

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<sup>26</sup> Plutarch, *Lives*, Vol. 6, 261-355; Davis, 153-155.

instead placed the primary focus on Washington's status as a founder and president whose commitment to peace and freedom earned him the adoration of the people.<sup>27</sup>

Yet Davis also took pains to note the ways in which Washington and Timoleon differed from one another. Davis pointed out that Timoleon's complicity in his brother's death resulted in despair and estrangement from his family. Rather than enjoy the approbation his fellow Corinthians, Timoleon had to seek such esteem among foreigners. Washington, however, withstood life's trials with "dignity and equanimity" and achieved recognition for his talents "in his own beloved country." Timoleon allowed the Syracusans to seek revenge against the tyrant Hicetas by killing his wife and daughter, while Washington never sought vengeance and always acted on humane principles. Timoleon's blindness and helplessness in old age inspired pity, but Washington remained strong and vigorous until his brief but fatal sickness. Davis concluded that Washington's desire for his fellow citizen's good opinion, his concern for posterity, his sense of morality, and his belief in God allowed Washington to live a uniformly virtuous and excellent life superior to that of Timoleon.<sup>28</sup>

Many eulogists joined Davis in proclaiming Washington superior to classical personages; Julius Caesar merited their special condemnation. George Richards Minot believed that Washington's government records and Farewell Address left a far superior legacy to the United States than Caesar, who left money for the people's entertainment, or Attalus III, who bequeathed his kingdom of Pergamon to Roman tyrants. Jonathan Sewall

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<sup>27</sup> Davis, 153-155. For another reference to Timoleon, see Francis Kinloch, "Eulogy on George Washington," 13.

<sup>28</sup> Davis, 154-156.



asked the rhetorical question “did [Washington], like Caesar, after vanquishing his country’s foes, turn his conquering arms against that country?” Thomas Paine’s earlier references to Fabius and Cincinnatus occurred within an extended passage announcing Washington’s superiority to these heroes, a passage Paine concluded by again pointing out that Washington, unlike Caesar, preserved the republic. John Brooks clearly articulated the Cincinnatus / Caesar paradigm when he said that Washington resigned command “when a Caesar would have assumed the purple.” David Ramsay likewise offered his thanksgiving that Washington was not a Caesar, or else Americans would have exchanged one King George for another. Eulogists repeatedly used Caesar as the antithesis of Washington, thereby throwing his patriotic duty and republicanism into sharper relief.<sup>29</sup>

Alexander the Great made his most frequent appearance in the eulogies as the anti-model for Washington. Disgusted at the historical tendency to give honors to undeserving men, Isaac Parker described Alexander the Great as an “inebriated incendiary” who burned the ancient city of Persepolis to the ground and murdered a friend who had previously saved his life. William Linn contended that Washington fought for the rights and happiness of men, unlike Alexander who fought only to conquer and enslave all mankind. Josiah Dunham also condemned Alexander as a “meanly brave and wretchedly victorious” man who “laid waste the fairest portion of humanity” in madness and fury. George Minot also ridiculed Alexander for supposedly weeping that there were

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<sup>29</sup> Jonathan Sewall, 34; Thomas Paine, *Eulogies*, 64; John Brooks, *Eulogies*, 73; David Ramsay, *Eulogies*, 84; William Linn, *Eulogies*, 166; Isaac Parker, *Eulogies*, 224; Charles Pinckney Sumner, *Eulogies*, 264-265; George Richards Minot, *Eulogies*, 24, 27 John Thornton Kirkland, *Eulogies*, 295.

no more lands to conquer. Washington, in contrast, fought to protect his people and build a great nation that would preserve their equal rights and liberties under the law. John Thornton Kirkland insisted that Washington's history, unlike Alexander's (or Caesar's, too) would be singular since it did not tell of the sacking of cities and widows' tears but "the trophies of wisdom and humanity, the peace, prosperity, and order of his country."<sup>30</sup>

Eulogists also established Washington's unmatched virtues and talent through a host of other classical anti-models. Isaac Parker and George Blake contended that Washington, unlike Lucius Cornelius Sulla, had no tyrannical ambition to rule the American people through the fear of arms. Parker and Timothy Bigelow both concluded that Washington enjoyed the public favor denied to Camillus, Aristides, Miltiades, Socrates, and Belisarius, who suffered blindness, exile, or death despite all they had done for their respective nations. Captain Josiah Dunham declared Washington superior to Solon and Lycurgus because his understanding of human nature came from heavenly guidance and self-instruction, making Washington a divine and natural leader. George Pfeiffer contended that Washington outshone Solon, Lycurgus, Romulus, Alexander the Great, Caesar, Fabius, and Cincinnatus by combining their individual virtues within one individual. Such assertions demonstrated that Washington's remarkably virtuous character ensured that his only ambition was for the freedom of the United States and the adoration of its people.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Isaac Parker, *Eulogies*, 218; William Linn, *Eulogies*, 166; Josiah Dunham, *Eulogies*, 275; John Thornton Kirkland, *Eulogies*, 295.

<sup>31</sup> George Blake, *Eulogies*, 103; Isaac Parker, *Eulogies*, 223-224; Timothy Bigelow, *Eulogies*, 132; Josiah Dunham, *Eulogies*, 277; George Pfeiffer, "An Eulogium," 27-28. According to legend, the jealous Emperor Justinian blinded Belisarius and turned him into a beggar. Although historians now consider the story apocryphal, Jean-Francois Marmontel's novel *Bélisaire*, published in 1767, and a number of plays and

Some eulogists decided that only a blanket proclamation of Washington's superiority to all ancient historical figures could best convey their intent. Richard Henry Lee stated that "the records of ancient Greece...the annals of mighty Rome" could not produce a man like America's Washington, a remark with which David Ramsay concurred. John Davis and William Linn congratulated themselves that they need not fear exaggerating their subject's merits since Washington surpassed all men of past ages in fame, glory, humility, and happiness. Jonathan Sewall moved beyond even George Pfeiffer's immodest claim to assert that Washington alone combined the virtues of *all* ancient heroes in a single individual. George Blake stabbed at the famous reputations of Plutarch and Polybius by proudly proclaiming that the "boasted virtues" of their heroes "would but serve as an appendix to the biography of *our* Washington." Finally, John M. Mason conflated both past, present, and future when he forbade any "future Plutarch" from drawing parallels between Washington and any man living or dead because Washington's excellent character should stand alone throughout all history.<sup>32</sup>

Most especially, eulogists believed that Washington's Christian faith ensured his ascendance above classical models. According to David Ramsay, Washington was God's chosen instrument to lead Americans in their fight for independence. Jonathan Sewall described Washington as a "hero, sage, and Christian" unrivaled except by Moses. This statement clearly precluded all Roman, Greek, and Carthaginians from competition.

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paintings such as Jacques-Louis David's *Bélisaire demandant l'aumône* (1781), popularized the myth among followers of the Enlightenment.

<sup>32</sup> Richard Henry Lee, *Eulogies*, 16; David Ramsay, *Eulogies*, 94; John Davis, *Eulogies*, 151-152; William Linn, *Eulogies*, 159 and 171; Jonathan Sewall, 31; George Blake, *Eulogies*, 102; John M. Mason, *Eulogies*, 241.

David Tappan best articulated this point when he stated that Washington's "life presents a model of excellence superior, not only to the real, but even to the fabulous heroes of paganism" in the works of Virgil and Homer. Because Washington believed in and submitted to the will of the true God, he must therefore, by definition, possess greater wisdom and morality than ancient heroes who followed false and ineffective gods. Americans could thus take comfort in the knowledge that the United States had fulfilled its Providential destiny by following its Christian hero to independence.<sup>33</sup>

Yet eulogists also used Washington's Christian superiority to merge Biblical archetypes with his classical image. Jonathan Sewall performed an especially lengthy examination of the similarities between Washington and Moses. First he pronounced Washington's Farewell Address as a legacy rivaling Moses' final bequest, the Book of Deuteronomy, containing God's commands to the people of Israel. He then proceeded to identify Moses' and Washington's equal achievements: both were destined by heaven to create great nations, both were wise judges and legislators, both freed the chosen nation from the yoke of bondage and tyranny, both were the paragons of piety and morality, both received no pecuniary compensation, both died in honor before God. Yet Sewall seemed to believe that Washington was actually Moses' superior. Moses may have had children, but all Americans called Washington their father. Moses only led the people to the Promised Land and did not enter it; Washington joined Americans in possessing their fathers' full heritage. Sewall's discussion contains several parallels with the Cincinnatus model, including the protagonists' wisdom as judges, their excellent moral characters,

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<sup>33</sup> David Ramsay, *Eulogies*, 78; Jonathan Sewall, 38; David Tappan, "An Address in Latin," 35.

their lack of financial profit, and especially their role in preserving their people amid great dangers.<sup>34</sup>

Eulogists also moved beyond the Mosaic-Cincinnatus combination to fuse Washington's Christian image with Hercules, Samson, Leonidas, Fabius, and Hannibal. John M. Mason asserted that Washington won the Revolution not just with Fabius' caution or Hannibal's fierceness, but with "the sword of the Lord," which brings justice to the wicked and destruction to those who rebel against God. Jonathan Sewall also stated that Washington's death might accomplish as much as "herculean Samson" did for Israel. Not only does this reference combine the two strongest heroes in the classical and Christian texts, Sewall's claim that Washington's death united the nation in grief corresponds with the patriotic and sacrificial overtones of Leonidas' heroism. These fusions demonstrate Americans' reluctance to abandon the classical aspects of Washington's heroic image and their continuation of the western intellectual tendency to merge Christianity and the classics into a single, uneasy tradition.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, the successful integration of Biblical and classical models led to Washington's apotheosis as semi-divine but uniquely American hero. George Richards Minot described Washington's death as a glorious departure that silenced all envy and party strife. Josiah Dunham described Washington's death like that of Elijah, "ascending

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<sup>34</sup> Jonathan Sewall, 36-39. This paragraph contains only a selection of Sewall's much longer list of similarities. For another, briefer example of the Mosaic-Cincinnatus combination, see George Richards Minot, *Eulogies*, 22.

<sup>35</sup> John M. Mason, *Eulogies*, 232; Jonathan Sewall, 43. For some biblical examples of the Sword of the Lord, see Isaiah 34:6, Isaiah 65:12, and Jeremiah 12:12. These texts prophesy the destruction of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians and the subsequent exile of the Israelites because they broke their covenant to worship and obey God alone.

to heaven in the bright chariot of his glory,” where, as Isaac Parker assured his listeners, Washington’s spirit would receive its eternal reward. Rosewell Messenger declared that because Washington had carried out “the divine pleasure” on earth and saved his country, he would sit in heaven “at the head of all the spirits” while pillars of fire guarded his earthly tomb and angels envied his fame. Finally, Josiah had Washington usurp Christ’s messianic role and become a special intercessor for the American people to God. Although occasionally blasphemous, eulogists agreed that Washington’s divinely-ordained and heroic actions on earth merited him the highest seat in the heavenly hierarchy.<sup>36</sup>

Yet Washington’s immortality depended upon future Americans fulfilling their duty to preserve his earthly legacy and to imitate his heroic example. Thomas Paine intoned that Washington’s intellectual legacy would “descend, unsullied as its purity, to the wonder and instruction of succeeding generations,” who would preserve his eternal memory. David Tappan in his address at Harvard told his students that they must not only apply the same method and reason to their endeavors as Washington, but all Americans must put aside their “little domestic animosities” and unite together as “independent Americans” to preserve for posterity “that glorious inheritance, which his toils purchased and secured.” Here Tappan made plain the true goal of these eulogies: to honor Washington as he deserved, Americans must set aside their factionalism and local

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<sup>36</sup> George Richards Minot, *Eulogies*, 26; Isaac Parker, *Eulogies*, 228; Rosewell Messenger, “An Oration delivered at Old York,” 16; Josiah Dunham, *Eulogies*, 281.

prejudices and embrace his vision of Americans as a single people dedicated to freedom and republican government.<sup>37</sup>

*Classical Visions of Andrew Jackson*

By 1845, the United States' dramatic growth in population, religious belief, political participation, and territory produced a nation George Washington would not have recognized. Between 1810 and 1850, the United States' population grew more than threefold from 7.2 million to 23.2 million. In the Second Great Awakening, Charles Finney and other circuit preachers from the Methodist, Congregationalist, and Baptists churches sparked a religious revival that doubled church membership by 1850. The Second Great Awakening's emphases on free will and a personal relationship with God promoted individualism, while its emphasis on moral improvement allowed adherents their first experience of "direct democracy through the creation, administration, and financing of churches and others voluntary societies."<sup>38</sup>

In the 1828 presidential election, Andrew Jackson's campaign capitalized on the democratic impulses of population growth and evangelical religion. Jackson's campaign emphasized his frontier origins, his military exploits against Indians and the British, and his belief in the common white man's capacity for self-government; this strategy proved a huge success as Jackson won a landslide victory over incumbent John Q. Adams. As the touted defender of the common white man, Jackson tried and failed to substitute the electoral college with popular election of the president, purged the federal government of

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<sup>37</sup>Thomas Paine, *Eulogies*, 65-6; David Tappan, "An Address in Latin," 43.

<sup>38</sup>Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 164-202.

supposedly corrupt officeholders, dismantled the Bank of the United States, and promoted white settlement by removing the Five Civilized Tribes from Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Jackson's imperialist vision led to his fervent support for the annexation of Texas, and he continued to fight for this measure in the months before his death. Crafting a republican interpretation of Jacksonian democracy and imperialism became the central project of his eulogists in the summer of 1845.<sup>39</sup>

On March 18, 1845, United States Commodore Jesse D. Elliott wrote Andrew Jackson to offer a surprising gift - the sarcophagus of the Roman Emperor Alexander Severus.<sup>40</sup> Elliott had transported the sarcophagus from Palestine and hoped that Jackson would use the sarcophagus as his "final resting-place." Elliott urged his friend "to live on in the fear of the Lord; dying the death of a Roman soldier; an emperor's coffin awaits you." A few days later, Jackson wrote Elliott a gracious but firm reply, stating that "I cannot consent that my mortal body shall be laid in a repository prepared for an emperor or a king." Jackson explained that all commemorations and monuments to American heroes and statesmen must exhibit the same simplicity and economy as the nation's republican government and its virtuous and sovereign citizens. Although Jackson refused to be buried in a Roman emperor's coffin, he could not stop his eulogists from using classical models to praise their hero. Ultimately, Jackson's eulogists still found the classics useful as a common cultural language that could both adapt to the many

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<sup>39</sup> Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 275-84, 328-34, 342-357, 367-95, 414-23 669-70, 684, 698-99.

<sup>40</sup> The author has been unable to verify the authenticity of this sarcophagus.



transformations in American society and transmit traditional understandings of citizenship, nationalism, and history.

Andrew Jackson had a complex and ambivalent relationship with the classics. Some Americans, including his eulogists, emphasized his lack of classical education and praised him for the innate intelligence he had gleaned from nature and experience. Yet another eulogist, Wilson McCandless insisted that Jackson had learned the “dead languages” from a Reverend Humphries, which provided the foundation of his evident intellect. Jackson built the Hermitage in a neo-classical style and decorated its interior with classically-themed artifacts and ornamentation. Unlike Washington, Jackson did not consciously model his behavior on a single classical hero like Cato or Cincinnatus. Yet Jackson’s political opponents accused him of being a Caesar, intent on destroying the laws and liberty of the nation. Self-reliant and determined, Jackson as a general had disobeyed orders and single-mindedly pursued his own course. His unilateral invasion of Spanish Florida, the execution of English citizens Alexander Arbuthnot and Robert Ambrister, and his ruthless tactics during the Seminole and Creek wars endangered the country’s fragile relationship with foreign nations and native peoples. As president, he ignored his cabinet’s advice and often let personal vindictiveness guide his decisions, a trait made all too clear in his vendetta against Nicholas Biddle and the Second Bank of the United States. To many concerned Americans, Jackson appeared alarmingly similar to

a vengeful and arbitrary tyrant, which placed him on the wrong side of the Cincinnatus / Caesar paradigm.<sup>41</sup>

Jackson's eulogists sought to overturn his Caesarian image by obscuring the historical record and establishing him as Washington's heir to the image of Cincinnatus. Eulogist Benjamin F. Butler implied that Washington designated Jackson as his successor by appointing Jackson the U.S. attorney of the Southwest Territory in 1790. In fact, Jackson received his appointment as attorney general from territorial governor William Blount in 1791. George Bancroft related how Jackson retired from the Tennessee Superior Court in 1804 to run his Hermitage plantation. According to George Van Santvoord, Jackson answered the call of his countrymen in 1812 and emerged, "Like Cincinnatus...from his plough to gird on the sword in defense of his country, and like [Cincinnatus], when the rude alarms of war had subsided, he laid aside his weapon and retired to the shades of private life." Hendrick B. Wright glossed over the congressional investigation that led to Jackson's resignation from the army in 1821 and instead claimed that Jackson, "like the immortal Washington," had voluntarily relinquished power and retired to his plantation, where he remained until the people summoned him to serve "in a more exalted sphere." The Reverend D. D. Lore concluded that Jackson surpassed

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<sup>41</sup> Hugh A. Garland "Eulogy delivered at Petersburg, VA, July 12, 1845, by Hugh A. Garland, Esq." in B. M. Dusenbery, ed., *Monument to the Memory of General Andrew Jackson: containing twenty-five eulogies and sermons delivered on the occasion of his death. To which is added an appendix containing General Jackson's proclamation, his Farewell Address, and a certified copy of his last will. The whole preceded by a short sketch of his life* (Philadelphia: Walker & Gillis, 1846), 184; Andrew Stevenson, "Eulogy delivered at Richmond, VA., June 28, 1845, by Andrew Stevenson, Esq.," in *Monument*, 253-254; Wilson McCandless, "Eulogy delivered at Pittsburgh, July 17, 1845, by the Hon. Wilson McCandless," in *Monument*, 110; Carl Richard, *The Golden Age of the Classics*, 44-45, 62-69.

Washington in Cincinnatian virtue by relinquishing civil and military authority at least seven times.<sup>42</sup>

Jackson epitomized Cincinnatus not only for his readiness to assume and resign power, but also for his patriotic character. George Van Santvoord took many of the character traits that Jackson's enemies associated with Caesar and argued that these traits truly made Jackson an American Cincinnatus. Santvoord acknowledged that Jackson's "ardent feelings...unconquerable energy and firmness of purpose... indomitable will...sleepless vigilance, and a far reaching sagacity" made him a superb military commander. However, Jackson's commitment to republican institutions, his sense of principle, and his "high-souled patriotism" made him "a patriot soldier, and not a military conqueror, a Cincinnatus, and not a Caesar." The energy, will, and individualism that so frightened Jackson's enemies were ultimately subordinated to his fervent republicanism, proving that Jackson was a hero of republican liberty.<sup>43</sup>

To a greater extent than Washington's eulogists, however, Jackson's actually admired Julius Caesar for his military prowess and compared their American military

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<sup>42</sup> Benjamin F. Butler, "Eulogy delivered at New York City, June 24, 1845, by B. F. Butler, late Attorney-General of the United States," in *Monument*, 61; George Bancroft, "Eulogy delivered at Washington City, June 27, 1845, by George Bancroft, Secretary of the Navy of the United States," in *Monument*, 37; George Van Santvoord, "Eulogy of the Life, Character and Services of Andrew Jackson, Delivered at Lafayette, Indiana, June 28, 1845," 26; Hendrick Wright, "Eulogy delivered at Wilkesbarre, PA., July 4, 1845, by the Hon. Hendrick B. Wright," in *Monument*, 242; Mark R. Cheatham, *Andrew Jackson, Southerner* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 29, 46, 73-78; Andrew Burstein, *The Passions of Andrew Jackson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 40, 147; Rev. D. D. Lore, "Eulogy delivered at Pottsville, PA., July 10, 1845, by Rev. D. D. Lore," in *Monument*, 340. For other indirect references to Jackson as Cincinnatus, see George Dallas, "Eulogy delivered at Philadelphia, June 26, 1845, by George M. Dallas, Vice-President of the United States," in *Monument*, 54; William Irvin, "Eulogy delivered at Lancaster, Ohio, July 12, 1845, by William Irvin, Esq.," in *Monument*, 312-314; and Wilson McCandless, *Monument*, 112.

<sup>43</sup> George Van Santvoord, "Eulogy of the Life, Character, and Services of Andrew Jackson," 13-14.

hero to this controversial ancient general. Jeremiah Black described Jackson's campaign against the Red Stick Creeks in 1813-1814 as a military feat worthy of Julius Caesar's Gallic conquests. Not only did Jackson exhibit a speed of campaign that rivaled Caesar's famous claim of "*Veni, Vidi, Vici*," but he also conquered an equally impressive enemy. Black denied that Jackson owed his victory to the weakness of the enemy and his own superior numbers of troops, which numbered nearly 5,000 soldiers against approximately 1,000 Red Stick warriors at the Battle of Tohopeka in 1814. Instead, in Black's account, the savage and "well-armed" Creeks outnumbered Jackson's troops, knew the terrain, and exhibited "their characteristic cunning and treachery." Furthermore, Tecumseh's skill and "fiery eloquence" united the Creek warriors and aroused "their fierce passions...to madness." Black therefore portrayed Tecumseh as an American Vercingetorix who leads the numerous and savage Red Stick Creeks (filling the part of the savage but gullible Gauls) into an ill-fated war against Jackson, the American Caesar.<sup>44</sup>

Jackson's victory at the battle of New Orleans in January 1815 only confirmed his legacy as an American Caesar. George Dallas conflated the histories of Rome, Greece, and the United States when he depicted the Battle of New Orleans as the equal to the ancient battles of Thermopylae and Marathon and therefore "a masterpiece of work which Caesar...and Washington, could unite in applauding." Herschel Vespasian Johnson described the defense of New Orleans as an event at which Jackson stood "brave as Caesar" and routed a seemingly superior foe. Americans could praise their Caesar as a

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<sup>44</sup> Jeremiah Black, "Eulogy on the life and character of General Andrew Jackson, delivered at Bedford Pa., July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1845," (Chambersburg: office of the "Weekly Messenger," 1845), 12; Mark R. Cheatham, *Andrew Jackson, Southerner*, 63-65.

republican hero because Jackson used his military skills to defeat the nation's British and Indian enemies and expand the empire of liberty – goals many Americans fervently supported.<sup>45</sup>

Eulogists also favored the Carthaginian general Hannibal as a model for Jackson. These eulogists especially respected Hannibal for his righteous vengeance against enemies. Hugh Garland reveled in Jackson's well-known hatred of the British, declaring "He had no father, like Hannibal, to lead him to the altar of his country and make him swear eternal hostility to Roman power. But in the silent depths of his orphan heart, and in the presence of the God that guided his footsteps, did he swear eternal vengeance against that modern Rome." John Van Buren, however, asserted that Jackson did inherit his hatred of the English from his father Andrew Jackson, an Ulster Scot from Ireland. Eulogists portrayed Jackson's vengefulness as a just reaction to the deaths of his brothers Hugh and Robert, his uncle James Crawford, and his mother Elizabeth during the Revolution. Eulogists therefore claimed, implicitly or explicitly, that Jackson's vengefulness made him an ardent republican who protected virtuous American families from foreign tyranny.<sup>46</sup>

Yet eulogists also drew parallels between Jackson and Hannibal's resourcefulness, endurance, and bravery. Benjamin F. Butler claimed that Jackson exhibited "the hardihood, the patience, and the self-denial of a Hannibal" while fighting the Creeks.

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<sup>45</sup> George Dallas, *Monument*, 56; Herschel Vespasian Johnson, "Oration on the life and character of Andrew Jackson, delivered at the request of the citizens of Baldwin Co, in the Representative chamber, at Milledgeville, Ga, on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of July, 1845," (Milledgeville, GA: 1845), 10.

<sup>46</sup> Hugh A. Garland, *Monument*, 87; John Van Buren, "Eulogy delivered at Albany, June 30, 1845, by John Van Buren, Attorney-General of the State of New York," in *Monument*, 103.

Furthermore, Garland remarked upon Jackson and Hannibal's similar boldness, self-reliance, and resourcefulness in undertaking dangerous campaigns with few supplies in unfamiliar territory crawling with enemies. A. F. Morrison's effusive praise for Jackson resulted in one of the most impressive conflation of Roman, Carthaginian, Greek, and American history, claiming as he did that Jackson's heroic and long-suffering victory over the Creeks equaled the "chivalric struggles of the Athenian and Roman armies," the "laurels of Hannibal or of Caesar," and the "valorous men...at Marathon or Thermopylae." In an obviously unequal analogy, Levi Woodbury thought Jackson's use of cotton bales to form fortifications at New Orleans exhibited a resourcefulness similar to Hannibal's crossing of the Alps. However much the eulogists exaggerated their analogies, they carried their point that Jackson, like Hannibal, could innovate when needed to secure victory against heavy odds and so preserve the American republic from its enemies.<sup>47</sup>

Eulogists largely compared Jackson to the military heroes of antiquity, but they also used classical politicians as models to demonstrate his abilities as a lawgiver and statesman. According to George Bancroft, Jackson's modesty, determination, boldness, and self-effacement made him the greatest man at the Tennessee constitutional convention in January and February 1796. As the foremost delegate, Jackson exhibited a majesty and wisdom greater than "the Solons, and Lycurguses, and Numas of the Old

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<sup>47</sup> Hugh A. Garland, *Monument*, 192; Benjamin F. Butler, *Monument*, 63; A. F. Morrison, "Eulogy delivered at Indianapolis, June 28, 1845, by A. F. Morrison, Esq.," in *Monument*, 138; Levi Woodbury, "Eulogy delivered at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, July 2, 1845, by the Hon. Levi Woodbury," in *Monument*, 79.

World.” To Bancroft, it was only proper that Tennessee should choose Jackson as its first representative and later senator to the U. S Congress, where he steadfastly promoted man’s capacity for self-government.<sup>48</sup>

Andrew Stevenson produced perhaps the most surprising classical analogy when he positively compared Jackson to Augustus Caesar. According to Stevenson, Jackson believed that only a nation of virtuous free men could ensure the nation’s freedom and prosperity. For this reason, Jackson feared the corruptive effects of wealth and luxury that led to “intrigues and the artifices of remorseless speculators” and would result in the overthrow of the United States, just as had occurred to ancient Rome. Stevenson claimed that Jackson prevented such corruption by opposing paper money and insisting upon specie based on the gold standard. Just as Augustus Caesar had turned Rome from “a city of brick, and left it of marble,” Stevenson concluded that Jackson “found the government one of paper and he determined to leave it one of gold.” However, Stevenson’s attempts to justify Jackson’s fiscal policies by comparing him to the emperor Augustus Caesar clearly risked violating Americans’ republican standards. Moreover, Stevenson’s assertions may have provided little comfort to a nation that still remembered the Panic of 1837, a recession many Americans blamed on Jackson’s fiscal policies.<sup>49</sup>

Ultimately, eulogists believed Jackson superior to classical heroes for two reasons. The first was his incorruptible republicanism. Although Jackson’s military feats did not have the magnificence of Alexander the Great’s, Jackson earned something far

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<sup>48</sup> George Bancroft, *Monument*, 35-37.

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Stevenson, *Monument*, 264-265.

superior to Alexander's empty, worldly success: the eternal gratitude of his countrymen for protecting their lives and securing their liberties. When fined in court for wrongfully enforcing martial law, Jackson did not cross the Rubicon and attack his own country like Caesar; instead he submitted to civil authority and peacefully paid the fine. When South Carolina's insistence on nullification nearly provoked secession and civil war, Jackson declared that the "Union must be preserved" and chastised his native state, just as Lucius Junius Brutus, the founder of the Roman Republic, permitted the executions of his two sons after they tried to overthrow the Roman Republic. Jackson's eulogists thus promoted a nationalist patriotism that required the subordination of domestic and regional loyalties to the Union.<sup>50</sup>

Just like Washington's eulogists, George Barstow promoted Jackson as the superior to all ancient heroes and insisted that only Washington could serve as an appropriate comparison to Jackson. Barstow asserted that Epaminondas' patriotism, Hannibal's vigor, Caesar's swiftness, Aurelius' virtue, and Cincinnatus' resignations could not match Jackson's attainment of all these virtues. Only Washington's "Spartan virtue" and readiness to resign his "victorious sword" rather than celebrate a triumph could match Jackson's "Roman firmness" and his willingness to sacrifice personal fame while reforming the nation and fighting against corruption and treason. Barstow concluded that Washington and Jackson did not possess "those petty vices that often disfigure the finest characters in history...Washington was the father – Jackson was the

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<sup>50</sup> Herschel V. Johnson, "Oration on the life and character of Andrew Jackson," 8, 14-15; Levi Woodbury, *Monument*, 77-78, 82-83.



savior of his country.” Barstow demonstrated that both men lived as true patriots, sacrificing their personal glory for the state, withstanding corruption, investing the nation with liberty, and working to preserve that liberty until their deaths. Barstow therefore claimed that America’s presidential heroes, while possessing ancient characteristics, possessed a uniquely American patriotic virtue that made them superior to all previous heroes and set them apart in their own heroic pantheon.<sup>51</sup>

The second reason for Jackson’s superiority was his Christian faith. According to Herschel V. Johnson, Jackson’s pious mother had wanted to educate him for the ministry; Jackson had therefore been intended for God’s service since his youth. Although Jackson did not personally adopt the Christian faith until late in his life, still his mother’s instruction and Providence remained with him throughout his whole life. Benjamin F. Butler combined his references to Caesar and Hannibal with the assertion that Jackson was God’s chosen instrument at the Battle of New Orleans, declaring “We seem to follow some heaven-appointed and heaven-assisted warrior of the ancient dispensation...who, in these things, does not see the hand of God, the agency of an instrument ordained, prepared, and guided by Himself?” William Irvin perceived Jackson’s greatness in the “stern and heroic warrior’s” submissive faith and service to God. As Reverend Thomas Fisher simply stated “General Andrew Jackson was a Christian. This was the crowning glory of his life.” By emphasizing Jackson’s relationship with God, eulogists not only gained the support of popular religion, but also promulgated an interpretation of Jackson

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<sup>51</sup> George Barstow, “Eulogy on the Life and Character of Andrew Jackson, by George Barstow, Esq., at Manchester, N.H. on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1845,” 7.

as a divinely-inspired American hero. Eulogists therefore assured their audiences that Jackson's actions and policies, no matter how controversial, were in accordance with God's will and would work out for the nation's good. Furthermore, because Jackson enjoyed God's blessing, so should he receive the unanimous blessing of the American people.<sup>52</sup>

Just as Washington's eulogists had merged Christian and classical models, so did Jackson's eulogist Hugh Garland. Turning to the start of the War of 1812, Garland recounted that "Like Moses called from the land of Jethro to deliver his people from bondage, Jackson had now to come from his retirement that he might avenge his family and his fatherland, and save his country from captivity." In this statement, Garland successfully intertwined the Mosaic, Hannibal, and Cincinnatus models. First, Garland invoked the Cincinnatus model: Jackson is called forth from his peaceful retirement to save his country, except that this time a divine entity, and not the people, summons Jackson. Second, Garland layered the Moses and Cincinnatus themes with Hannibal: God summons Jackson from retirement not only to save his nation, but also to secure his vengeance against his family's killers and his mortal enemies, the English. Garland's statement is thus one of the most elegant applications of biblical and classical models in either the Jackson or Washington eulogies of this study.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Herschel V. Johnson, "Oration on the life and character of Andrew Jackson," 5, 15-16; Benjamin F. Butler, *Monument*, 63; William Irvin, *Monument*, 314; Rev. Thomas Fisher, "Eulogy on the Life and Character of Gen. Andrew Jackson, Referred to in the foregoing Proceedings," 9.

<sup>53</sup> Hugh A. Garland, *Monument*, 188.

The mixture of classical models, Christianity, and American superiority served as the foundation, and indeed, justification for Jackson's apotheosis. John Bolles pronounced, "' Socrates died like a philosopher;' but it was the happier lot of Jackson to die like a Christian....His life... sprang from the dark valley of obscurity...piercing through every cloud, it towered aloft till its summit was bathed in the light of Heaven." Thomas L. Smith contemplated the immortal life that awaited Jackson in heaven as the reward for his cheerful resignation of power and grateful Christian faith. John Van Buren consoled his listeners that Jackson's fame would continue in history, poetry, marble, and song. J. G. Harris told his listeners that Jackson would not need a commemorative pillar like Trajan because the memory of his virtuous deeds, so superior to the conquering and tyrannizing heroes of antiquity, would live on in American hearts throughout all generations. Finally, as William Irvin anticipated, Jackson's immortality would exist as long as America's eternal institutions of freedom. The adoration of posterity, the peoples' commitment to freedom, and the promises of God ensured the immortal glory of Jackson both on earth and in heaven. Just like Washington's eulogists, Jackson's therefore used his apotheosis as a classical and divine hero to assure the people that the United States would a glorious and divine destiny if they remained committed to republican institutions and virtue.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> John A. Bolles, "Eulogy delivered at Lowell, Mass., July 15, 1845, by John A. Bolles, Esq.," in *Monument*, 234; Thomas L. Smith, "Eulogy delivered at Louisville, KY., July 3, 1845, by Thomas L. Smith, Esq.," in *Monument*, 279; John Van Buren, *Monument*, 107; J. G. Harris, "Eulogy delivered at Charlottes, Tenn., July 17, 1845, by J. G. Harris, Esq.," in *Monument*, 331; William Irvin, *Monument*, 307.

### A Heroic America

Americans in both 1800 and 1845 acknowledged the important connection between eulogies and the cultivation of patriotism. Indeed, they believed this connection had existed since ancient times. In his eulogy in Natchez, Mississippi on February 21, 1800, George Pfeiffer stated that the eulogy was an ancient custom that cultivated the public good more than the wisdom of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, or Seneca. Indeed, he asked, “For what can so powerfully incite to generous and valiant deeds, as the portraits of those, who...for their virtues and their valor, have been celebrated by the applauding voice of nations?” James Brown also outlined the historical origins of the eulogy in the Roman and Athenian funeral customs and concluded that eulogies both transmitted historical truth to future generations and inspired men to imitate the “the example of illustrious characters.” These sentiments persisted in 1845 when the Reverend D. D. Lore remarked that the ancient republics of Greece and Rome used eulogies to preserve “the spirit of patriotism.” He also believed that eulogies were a vital part of republican institutions because they paid tribute to “pure patriotism” and inspired emulation across the nation. Even those eulogies that lacked explicit ancient references were arguably still part of the classical tradition because Americans understood eulogies as part of an ancient custom intended to cultivate patriotism.<sup>55</sup>

Americans therefore criticized those eulogists who did not portray their subjects in appropriately heroic terms. Seth Williston, a missionary to the classically-named Scipio,

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<sup>55</sup> George Pfeiffer, “An Eulogium,” 2-3; James Brown, “Eulogy on the late illustrious citizen,” *The Kentucky Gazette*; Rev. D.D. Lore, *Monument*, 333-334.

New York, published his sermon to Washington in part as a defense against objections that it was not appropriate for the occasion and portrayed Washington as a mere soldier who was no better than the infamous traitor Benedict Arnold. Notably, Williston's sermon "The Agency of God in Raising up Important Characters, and Rendering Them Useful" does not contain a single, explicit comparison between Washington and a classical, or even biblical, heroic figure. Instead, Washington, biblical individuals, and revolutionary soldiers are all instruments of God, chosen for His purposes, and who possess no greatness apart from what God grants to them. While Williston therefore gave a notable articulation of the Calvinist beliefs of *Soli Deo Gloria* and original sin, he failed to conform to the classical republican standard for patriotic eulogies.<sup>56</sup>

Having established the classical legacy of eulogies, Americans in 1800 and 1845 used them to instruct citizens in the ancient values desired in the true American citizen and patriot. From the tale of Cincinnatus, Americans learned that the citizen-soldier should only reluctantly accept power to defend his country, after which he should quickly relinquish that power and return to a peaceful life, ideally as a farmer. In contrast, Caesar, Alexander the Great, and Lucius Cornelius Sulla showed that personal ambition led to tyranny, the wanton destruction of life, and the demise of ordered government. The actions of Fabius demonstrated that caution, prudence, and self-control prevented needless destruction and allowed a citizen to do what he believed right even amid intense

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<sup>56</sup> Seth Williston, "The agency of God, in raising up important characters, and rendering them useful: illustrated in a Discourse, delivered at Scipio, on the twenty-second day of February 1800; being the day set apart by the Government of the United States, for the people to testify, in some suitable manner, their grief at the Death of General Washington" (Geneva, NY: Eaton, Walker, & Co., 1800).

opposition. Yet the example of heroes like Marcellus and Leonidas showed that the citizen must be ready to risk both his life and reputation on his country's behalf. In addition, much as military heroism could defend the republic, the United States needed wise and just statesman like Solon, Lycurgus, Aristides, and Timoleon to create the republic through laws and institutions that ensured a just, free, and virtuous society. Finally, the true republican subordinated his domestic and regional loyalties to his national loyalty, even as Lucius Junius Brutus placed his loyalty to the Roman Republic before his family.

Eulogists in 1800 and 1845 also agreed that the president of the United States embodied, or at least should embody, all the virtues of the ideal citizen. Eulogists such as George Pfeiffer and Richard Henry Lee in 1800 and George Barstow in 1845 insisted that George Washington and Andrew Jackson, as American heroes, possessed all the virtues and none of the vices of ancient heroes. The two presidents epitomized both the citizen-soldier and the statesman, relinquishing their military power to civil authorities and only emerging from retirement to lead the nation and preserve the Union amid the partisan rancor of the 1790s and South Carolina's nullification threat in 1832. Both men ultimately confessed their faith in God and acknowledged His providential care, and their Christian faith truly made Washington and Jackson superior to all ancient heroes, who had trusted in false gods. As God's chosen instruments on earth, Washington and Jackson had carried out His will just as Moses had done, freeing Americans from British tyranny and establishing a republican nation. By combining all the ancient virtues with their Christian beliefs, Washington and Jackson demonstrated Americans' moral superiority to

classical heroes and ensured that the Lord would bless and protect the United States. In the end, eulogists concluded they could only validly compare American presidential heroes against one another because all other heroes were intrinsically inferior to American ones.

Yet one notable difference between the two men was Americans' partisan reaction to Jackson's eulogies. Throughout December 1799, the *Philadelphia General Advertiser* (later the *Aurora*), the most virulent Jeffersonian newspaper, published perfectly respectful and amicable coverage of Washington's death. In contrast, Americans' opinions regarding Jackson's death and legacy became a marker of political affiliation. According to a report from *The Kentucky Yeoman* contained in the front matter of Rev. Thomas J. Fisher's sermon for Jackson, a number of Whigs took exception to Fisher's laudatory comments and refused "to hear him preach." In 1846, *The Baltimore Patriot* published three anonymous letters that denounced eulogist George Bancroft, a former Whig, as a turncoat for praising Jackson as a second Washington. Even as late as 1863, the Democrat Milton Sayler's "Eulogy of Andrew Jackson" made it clear that Republicans and Democrats fervently disagreed about Andrew Jackson's legacy. Americans might agree about what constituted the heroic values of citizenship, but many did not believe Jackson fulfilled them. Jackson's eulogists therefore often obscured the historical record to establish Jackson's heroic reputation and to seek popular consensus of this depiction.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *The Philadelphia General Advertiser*, December 19, 20, 21, 24, 27, 28, 30, 1799; *The Kentucky Yeoman*, August 23, 1845, in Thomas J. Fisher, "Eulogy on the life and character of Gen. Andrew Jackson, referred to in the foregoing proceedings (Louisville, KY: G. H. Monsarrat & Co, 1845), front matter; *To George*

These partisan opinions also contributed to changes in the quantity and quality of classical content in Jackson's eulogies. His eulogists recognized the public's polarized opinion of his presidency and chose to emphasize his military feats through a narrow selection of ancient military heroes. First, eulogists showed that Jackson's resemblance to Caesar and Hannibal did not present a danger to the republic: by uniting Caesar's dispatch with Hannibal's fierceness and innovation, Jackson could defeat America's enemies and expand the empire of liberty. Furthermore, eulogists showed that Jackson's submission to civil authority and repeated resignations of authority made him a Cincinnatus, not a Caesar. Only then could eulogists address Jackson's statesmanship and claim that he brought innovation and material prosperity to the United States just as Solon, Lycurgus, Numa Pompilius, and Augustus Caesar had done. By converting Jackson's self-will and individualism into hallmarks of his success, Jackson's eulogists attempted to show that democracy did not constitute a danger to the United States but actually produced a society in which every man could be a patriotic Cincinnatus capable of quickly and individually acting to promote the nation's common welfare.

Far from being empty instances of "window-dressing," classical allusions in presidential eulogies cultivated Americans' understandings of patriotism, citizenship, and national history. From their interpretations of ancient heroes, American citizens learned the values and talents necessary to be a republican citizen in a monarchical world. By holding up American presidents as the ideal citizens, Americans could claim their

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*Bancroft...the traducer and eulogist of General Andrew Jackson* [in letters subscribed Northampton] (Washington, 1846); Milton Saylor, "Eulogy of Andrew Jackson," *Pamphlets in American History* (1863).



historical superiority over all other nations past and present and provide examples of patriotism for future generations to emulate. The integration of Christian and classical traditions assured the United States republic a divine and glorious destiny as the chosen and faithful people of God. Furthermore, the classics served as a common language capable of expressing both continuity in patriotic and moral values while adapting to the subject's individual personality and to changes in American political thought, most notably the shift from classical republicanism to democratic republicanism in the Age of Jackson. Indeed, Americans' classical adaptations suggest that intellectual and cultural historians need to pay greater attention to how the Cincinnatus versus Caesar paradigm could both incorporate or be integrated into other classical and biblical narratives. For these reasons, classical references in American presidential eulogies are shown to possess surprising substance as they performed a vital function in helping develop American nationalism between 1800 and 1845.