

# THE CHARACTER OF WASHINGTON: A STUDY IN REPUBLICAN CULTURE

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THE PRESENT BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF AMERICA'S FOUNDING PERIOD has occasioned a proliferation of books and essays about the early republic's first hero, George Washington.<sup>1</sup> These reassessments confirm and amplify for our generation the exemplary virtues of Washington's public life. For his own generation, however, George Washington was much more than an esteemed role model; he was, in the most literal sense, a sacred possession. The historian Marcus Cunliffe tells us that "babies were being christened after him as early as 1775, and while he was still President his countrymen paid to see him in waxwork effigy. To his admirers he was 'godlike Washington,' and his detractors complained to one another that he was looked upon as a 'demi-god' whom it was treasonable to criticize."<sup>2</sup> Images of Washington could be found everywhere: his portrait was engraved on coins and adorned the dwellings of both wealthy and poor; he was a favorite subject of song, poetry and drama. When he died, the outpouring of grief was so intense that many clergymen expressed fear that America had provoked the envy of God Himself.

In short, Washington meant something different to his contemporaries in the late eighteenth century than he means to us in the late twentieth century. This essay is an attempt to recover that original meaning. To succeed in this effort is to gain insight into a problem about which the "great man" theories are conspicuously silent, namely, the reconciliation of hero worship to representational government and republican ideals. Thomas Carlyle, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Max Weber said much of those whose genius and ambition shaped the history of their own societies, but many of these heroes would have been repudiated in the new American republic—a society that valued character over genius, conservatism over dedication to change, diffidence over ambition. In such a society we find a different vision of human greatness.

Every society seizes upon great occasions, like the death of a revered leader, to express its heroic vision. The Washington funeral celebrations provide a case in point. News accounts inform us that the hero's passing was mourned in the cities and towns of every state. The high points of these events (which were

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officially encouraged by the national government) usually consisted of a funeral procession that included the major groups in the local community, and a funeral oration delivered by a civic or religious leader. In these orations the masses of the new republic found an expression of their own values. In death, as in life, America's first hero was its "representative man," and it became the task of the eulogist, Michael Gilmore states, to show precisely what Washington represented:

By treating the dead as a kind of cultural ideal, the eulogist seeks in effect to compose the collective biography of an entire people. Thus, the true subject of the eulogy is the speaker and his community rather than the character and career of the person nominally portrayed. For just this reason, the eulogies delivered for American revolutionary leaders during the first half century of the republic's existence yield valuable insights into the ideological and emotional issues that engaged successive generations of their countrymen.<sup>3</sup>

Gilmore's remarks on "eulogy as symbolic biography" apply with special force to those delivered for Washington. Standing far above the nation's other founders in public affection, his eulogies helped create "a national religion whose cardinal tenet was the divinity of the American republic."<sup>4</sup> Saying this, Gilmore echoes the reluctant but sincere admission of John Adams: "I glory in the character of Washington because I know him to be an exemplification of the American character."<sup>5</sup>

Yet Gilmore's point should not be pressed too far. The eulogists' words did reflect the attitudes and values of their generation;<sup>6</sup> however, the issues they addressed were limited by the occasion, and the standpoint from which they spoke was that of the educated class. For these reasons, the Washington eulogies cannot be regarded as a master key of republican culture, or even of public attitudes toward Washington himself. What they tell us about that culture and that hero must be qualified by what other documents tell us. Still, the eulogies give preliminary insights into the early republic's conception of great men, and they show, in an equally preliminary way, how that conception was shaped by prevailing religious, historical, and political ideals.

To dramatize his virtues, Washington's eulogists followed the custom of their time by selecting examples from biblical and classical history. Not in political tracts but in the drama of the Old Testament and, to a lesser but still considerable extent, in the very popular *Plutarch's Lives*, were to be found the standing prototypes of human greatness. Accordingly, some modern writers, like Samuel Eliot Morison and Howard Mumford Jones, see in Washington the embodiment of classical ideals. Other writers, including Robert Hay and James Smylie, see in him the embodiment of religious values. However, Catherine Albanese takes a middle position. In Washington, she says, "Christian and classical motifs are interfused."<sup>7</sup> I find these readings to be too literal and therefore will defend a somewhat different argument. I submit that neither religious nor classical ideals molded the early republic's heroic vision; rather, these ideals were media for the

transmission of a paragon originating in another source: the Anglo-American whig tradition. As Bernard Bailyn puts it, whiggery supplied the American Revolution's ideological substance: religious, classical, and other traditions, its symbols and allusions.<sup>8</sup> Religion and the classical past were exploited according to the political vision of a whig culture, and it was this vision that Washington personified.

According to Bernard Bailyn, the roots of American whig culture go back to the political thought of the English Civil War and the Commonwealth period; but its final form was established by the early eighteenth century in the writings of a group of extreme libertarians who called themselves "Real Whigs." Men like John Trenchard, Thomas Gordon, Benjamin Hoadly, Robert Molesworth, Richard Baron, and James Burgh had limited influence in their own country, but "more than any other single group of writers they shaped the mind of the American Revolutionary generation."<sup>9</sup>

Reiterating ideas worked out by these radical whigs, the early American thinkers dwelled upon one premise: "What lay behind every political sense, the ultimate explanation of every political controversy, was the disposition of power." To the American, power was not a resource for the achievement of collective ends; it was an instrument of domination of the many by the few. Liberty and power were opposites, and one could be expanded only at the expense of the other. Discussions of power therefore "centered on its essential characteristic of aggressiveness: its endlessly propulsive tendency to expand itself beyond legitimate boundaries" and to devour its natural prey, liberty. And so there prevailed among Americans a binary conception of society: the sphere of power, on the one hand; the sphere of liberty and right, on the other. "The one was brutal, ceaselessly active and heedless, the other was delicate, passive and sensitive. The one must be resisted; the other defended."<sup>10</sup>

This perception filled American minds with images of dictators and tyrants, but it also implied something positive, namely, a heroic ideal, a model of exceptional virtue to which men turn for example and inspiration. In a society obsessed with power and its corruption, a society in which "nine tenths of the people are high Whigs,"<sup>11</sup> the stuff of which great men are made was plain to see: not the ability to use power as a tool of domination, but a willingness to respect its institutional limits. This prototype was epitomized in Viscount Bolingbroke's "patriot king," an ideal originally formulated in response to abuses within the British government. Although Bolingbroke was a leader of the extreme right, his conception of political virtue was borrowed by American whigs and pressed to the service of their own cause. George Washington's public career has been seen as a realization of the patriot king ideal: however, the deeper, indigenous lineaments of that ideal remain to be discovered.<sup>12</sup> In this connection, the eulogies delivered on the occasion of Washington's death furnish many useful leads.

Of the eulogies written immediately after Washington's death, 241 have been reproduced and made part of the *Early American Imprints*. The present analysis

is based on a sample of 55 such documents,<sup>13</sup> representing orations by men of different religion, occupation, and residence. Despite the diversity of their circumstances and interests, these men praised Washington on remarkably similar grounds.<sup>14</sup>

Just as Plutarch devoted his efforts to explaining events and exploits as the expression of moral imperatives in the minds of great men, so Washington's eulogists portrayed his achievements and services as being, in essence, a manifestation of his moral fiber. This distillation of character from conduct is the eulogists' most persistent argument. However, character is inferred not only from the quality and magnitude of achievement but also from its "ultimate grounds" or "reasons." In the Washington eulogies, the most important unifying element is found on this second, motivational, level. Political "motive mongering" is the point of reference for a society that refuses to take its leaders' virtues at face value but insists on probing below the surface of public action. As one orator put it, "To determine worth of character . . . we endeavor to ascertain principles and motives, as well as to notice great actions and beneficial services."<sup>15</sup> To recognize this effort makes possible an analysis of the eulogies according to a limited set of motivational grounds abstracted from a profusion of detail on performances and accomplishments. Linked to core values in America's political culture—public virtue, disinterestedness, moderation, resoluteness, private virtue, and piety—these motivational elements define the heroic prototype of American whiggery.<sup>16</sup> In the following pages I will show how Washington personified these elements, how his veneration reflected the concerns of a power-wary society, and how the prototype which shaped this veneration differs from that embodied by "charismatic" and other authoritarian heroes.

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The first element in the American heroic vision brings to mind the new republic's favorite Roman, the younger Cato, whose life and martyrdom were contrived by American whig historians and dramatists into a symbol of their own political ideals.<sup>17</sup> Cato's public service, as we are told, was motivated not by the prospect of personal advantage but by an authentic benevolence whose object was society, and whose aim was society's well-being. In the eighteenth century, the concept of "public virtue"—subordination of private interest to the public good—was regularly employed to express the Catonic ideal. Public virtue, adds Gordon Wood, was society's first line of defense against the bane of power; therefore, "to make the people's welfare—the public good—the exclusive end of government became for the Americans . . . their 'Polar Star,' the central tenet of the Whig faith."<sup>18</sup> Likewise, when Benjamin Rush announced in 1787 that "every man in a republic is public property," and that "his time and talents—his youth—his manhood—his old age—nay more, life, all belong to his country,"<sup>19</sup> he was reaffirming the belief that tyrannical designs could be resisted only in a

society of selfless citizens. To keep the state beyond the grasp of ambitious men was the explicit end of public virtue. By the turn of the century, many Americans felt that the reality of public virtue was in a state of decline; still, the ideal remained and, in the context of frequently voiced fears of a new monarchy, figured prominently among the traits ascribed to Washington.

Assuming that mankind is governed by the opposing principles of selfishness and benevolence, Reverend Fitch devoted his entire eulogy to Washington's public virtue.<sup>20</sup> Unlike heroes of other times and places, Washington did not seek out a position of leadership, and when it was offered he accepted it with reluctance. Through accounts of the many renunciations that went along with this acceptance, Fitch and others could document the great man's "extensive usefulness" and devotion to the public good. Self-sacrifice is the overriding theme. The arduous toils of camp life, military movements and maneuvers, we are told, were all the greater for Washington because of the affluence and congeniality of his private situation. Unlike many charismatic leaders, who, in Weber's words, "stand outside the ties of this world, outside of routine occupations, as well as outside the routine obligations of family,"<sup>21</sup> Washington embraced the Horatian ideal of the good life: cultivation of the soil and tranquil repose by the hearth. Time and again, the eulogists affirmed the strength, and depth, of this domestic attachment. Yet, "his uniform preference of the public good to private enjoyment . . ." led him to forgo "the enjoyment of domestic scenes."<sup>22</sup>

To a man possessed by pacific rather than aggressive instincts, a man long accustomed to domestic rather than military life, this course of duty was heavy with risk. John Mason, among others, pointed out that Washington took the field of battle selflessly, recognizing his own and his army's limitations, knowing that he might very well lose and, in that loss, become the first victim of British vengeance.<sup>23</sup> What greater evidence could be given, asked Samuel Macclintock, "that a pure love to his country and ardent zeal to secure her liberty and independence, were his motives?"<sup>24</sup>

Eventually military success gave to the political phase of Washington's sacrifice special significance. In 1775, when he accepted command of the army, Washington had his life and reputation to lose, but he did stand to achieve fame, or, at the very least, a place in history. By war's end, however, his reputation was so exalted that he had nothing more to gain. Yet here was a virtuoso of self-sacrifice, a man moved by duty, never profit. "Had he consulted only his personal ease and enjoyment," explained Thomas Baldwin, "he would have quitted his elevated station, and returned to private life. But higher motives influenced his mind."<sup>25</sup> In a society that placed great stock in personal honor, and in which the "love of fame" referred not to self-centered ambition but to pride in one's social respectability, Washington's willingness to risk his reputation in the world of politics—without even the prospect of compensating benefits—could be cited as the best proof of his public virtue.

The sacrificial character of Washington's service is underscored by reference

to other motives. Since he refused to accept a salary for his military service, he could not have profited materially from the war. Nor could personal taste—the sheer pleasure of combat—have induced him to accept the command, for everyone knew that Washington's was a domesticated and not an adventurous spirit. And since, as President as well as soldier, he rejected praise, directing his admirers' attention instead to God and to other leaders of the Revolution, he could not have pursued the honor that attached itself to him. His services were "free will offerings at the altar of patriotism."<sup>26</sup>

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In the vocabulary of the new republic, "public virtue" refers to the citizen's willingness to subordinate his private interests to the social good. The closely related virtue of "disinterestedness" refers to the pursuit of social ends without regard for the power one attains in the process. Public virtue is opposed by selfishness, while the bane of disinterestedness is ambition. Of these two vices, selfishness and ambition, the last was regarded as the most dangerous. In whig discourse, the word "ambition" appeared repeatedly. No word better captured the nation's political fears, for most Americans believed that ambition is rooted in man's innate "lust to power." Against this tendency only disinterested men could prevail.

For ancient personifications of disinterestedness, Americans looked to the classics and came up with political and military leaders like Epaminondas, Timoleon, Camillus, and Fabius. Even to virtuous men such as these, Washington compared favorably. With equal frequency, however, Washington's virtues were set off by antiquity's great men of ambition, like Sylla, Scipio, Pompey, Julius Caesar, Marcus Antonius, and Diocletian. Suspicious men set the agenda from which these parallels were drawn. "The possession of power," these men believed, "exposed the ruler to temptations to which the subject, by virtue of his impotence, was immune."<sup>27</sup> Only by resisting the enticement of power could the ruler's disinterestedness be proven.

This belief in trial by temptation directly informed the eulogists' assessment of Washington. Since most men "struggled constantly, the whigs believed, to secure power, and if possible to aggrandize it at the expense of others,"<sup>28</sup> the effortlessness of Washington's victory over the lust for power made a deep impression on his contemporaries and became the most celebrated theme of his legacy. The eulogists delighted in reminding their listeners that Washington rejected the opportunity to take over the government by coup and rebuild the monarchy around himself. He "quitted his high and exalted station with more pleasure than would have been received by the most sanguine votary of ambition and power."<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the one event that eulogists always described with pointed emotion is Washington's voluntary surrender of his commission to Congress after the official termination of the war and his return to Mount Vernon. Cincinnatus, the eighteenth century's prototype of the amateur soldier, is brought in to emphasize the point:

After eight years' faithful and gratuitous service, at the head of our victorious armies, he cheerfully sacrificed, upon the ALTAR of his grateful country, the mighty harvest of laurels he had won, and great, like CINCINNATUS, returned to the plough—to the exercise of his domestic virtues, and, the ever favorite object of his heart, the cultivation of the soft arts of peace. WONDERFUL MAN!—Here was a sight the GODS beheld with pleasure.<sup>30</sup>

Like a god, Washington subdued that lust for power which a Protestant nation believed to be inherent in the very makeup of man. "He who had conquered the proudest nation of Europe, by a nobler achievement, had now 'conquered himself,' had vanquished the frailties and infirmities of nature."<sup>31</sup>

In 1797, Washington gave a repeat performance by refusing a third presidential term. Since he was fully trusted, few would have complained if he had chosen instead to retain and exploit his influence.<sup>32</sup> But Washington's eulogists realized that it was the existence, not the seizure, of opportunity that was essential to his greatness. Had there been no possibility for self-aggrandizement, there would have been no way for Washington to demonstrate his virtue. "However his long and familiar intercourse with the world might have exposed him to temptation, he preserved his morals not only pure but even unsullied by the breath of suspicion."<sup>33</sup> This kind of political apprehension informs every account of Washington's life. In Mason's words: "It was for him to set as great an example in the relinquishment, as in the acceptance, of power."<sup>34</sup>

Sacrifice is made by the taking of power; temptation resisted by giving it up. Such is the measure of Washington's character. Not "Washington the Great" but "Washington the Good" is the designation his eulogists uniformly applied. Inspired by the whig as opposed to the charismatic conception of heroic leadership,<sup>35</sup> this definition differs from that to which the Western world has been accustomed. In Fisher Ames's words, Washington "changed mankind's ideas of political greatness."<sup>36</sup> Against the traditional criteria of stunning military and political accomplishment, Washington distinguished himself by a total disregard of self and spotlessness of motive. But the eulogists dug deep into Washington's character; they revealed not only its essential disinterestedness but also the matrix from which this virtue derived. In doing so, they brought out one of the more evocative ideas of early American whiggery—the idea of moderation.

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The main assumption of the "whig science of politics" was that extremes in anything is bad; the main goal was to make moderation prevail over excess. In Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755), moderation is defined as the "forbearance of extremity" and the "state of keeping a due mean betwixt extremes." Thus, moderation was synonymous with both restraint and balance. In Washington's frugality, in his disdain for luxury and ostentation, the eulogists found proof of

his restraint; but it was to the second aspect of his moderation that they devoted most of their attention.

Just as the whigs derived liberty from the blocking of one institutional power by another, they believed that any one source of individual power, cultivated at the expense of others, could dominate the rest of the personality, making a man suitable, perhaps, for pursuit of private gain, but not for public trust. Accordingly, Washington's superiority was said to inhere not in his possession of one extraordinary quality, such as political or military genius, but in a balanced combination of moderately developed instrumental talents and strong but temperate moral dispositions. Each talent and each disposition was said to be cultivated only so far as to prevent others from exceeding their proper boundaries. In Washington, then, was found a man who was competent but rarely brilliant; virtuous, but never fanatic. To get this point across, some of the eulogists invoked a favored geometrical metaphor. Washington's character, they said, was reminiscent of the most perfect of all forms, the circle, which has no salient points or angles to spoil its symmetry.

As a metaphor of Washington's character, the circle represents a *coincidentia oppositorum*, an agency which blunts exorbitance and so unifies otherwise separate traits. In one oration after another, listeners were presented with a list of desirable qualities, then told that their hero possessed not only these but also a second set of qualities equally desirable yet inconsistent with the first set. In him mildness was matched by firmness; passion by composure; private affection by public duty; grace and compassion by vigor and courage. As one eulogist put it, the great masculine endowments were joined in Washington by the gentle feminine qualities. It is this balance which prepared Washington to perform so miraculously well the contradictory roles of audacious general and prudent statesman, dominating leader and submissive citizen. The result, said the eulogists, was a figure who can "lead without dazzling mankind," a figure whose virtue was "whiter than it is brilliant."<sup>37</sup> Beside such a man, all other ancient and modern heroes shrink in fame and moral stature:

Other Generals have been equally brave in the field, conducted equally difficult enterprises, and made more splendid conquests; other Patriots and Sages have had an equal affection for their country, and have been ready to preserve, or die to defend its liberties; and other private citizens have equalled him in moral and social duties: Yet where is the man (the inspired characters recorded in the holy scripture excepted) who hath united in himself such measure of military, political, and moral excellence? We should do him injustice by comparing him with any one exalted name which hath been celebrated through the world. As a balanced comparison of his character, we must call up to memory a constellation of the brightest luminaries of all antiquity, or all the "sons of glory" in modern times.<sup>38</sup>

Washington's evenly balanced virtues and talents were correlated with his ability to see the big picture, and this comprehensive vision allowed him to act in ways at once successfully and morally proper. Not specialized brilliance and skill,



maintained Samuel Mead, but wisdom, that is, “extensive views of things . . . form the great man.”<sup>39</sup> Time and again, the eulogists found wisdom rather than genius to be the basis of Washington’s greatness. “General Washington was great,” in Timothy Dwight’s opinion, “not by means of that brilliancy of mind often appropriately termed genius, and usually coveted for ourselves and our children, and almost as usually attended with qualities which preclude wisdom. . . .”<sup>40</sup> Although the wise man himself displays little in the way of radiant intelligence, he succeeds in harnessing the genius of others to purposes higher than they could contemplate on their own. To this end, observed Gouverneur Morris, Washington’s wisdom was routinely brought to bear: “Leaving to feebler minds the splendor of genius, which, while it enlightens others, too often dazzles the possessor—he knew how best to use the rays which genius might emit, and carry into act its best conception.”<sup>41</sup> Like Morris, David Ramsay may have been thinking of Washington’s use of the brilliant minds of men like Jefferson and Hamilton (as well as his moderation of their sometimes extravagant views) when he wrote: “Happily for his country [Washington] was not under the domination of a warm imagination; but he possessed, in an eminent degree, what was of infinitely more consequence—a correct, solid judgment.”<sup>42</sup>

Americans discovered in the expansiveness and balance of Washington’s mind a basis for the expansiveness and balance of all his other virtues. In an age which despised “excess” and saw military and political brilliance as a potential threat to freedom, this balance of attributes represented a stunning model. No model was more consistently dwelled upon by the eulogists. In their day, veneration was reserved for ultimates in moderation, not genius.

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Unlike those who condemned classicism as a pagan heritage, nonbelievers and Deists found in Washington’s moderation a reminder of Fabius, Cato, and Brutus, and a counterpoint to both the ambitious Caesar and history’s most incontinent genius, Alexander. Yet most eulogists combined classical and religious imagery, drawing on one heritage to support the other in an effort to epitomize their subject’s virtues. Nowhere is this combination more evident than in the accounts of Washington’s self-possessed and self-reliant willfulness. By expressly recognizing how Washington’s Stoic-Protestant character dominated his talents, eulogists could define his achievement as the most dazzling exemplification of his strength of will.

As the essence of character, will presupposes something to be overcome; however, in the early republic it presupposed no exceptional talents. If Washington led an army to victory, if he brought stability and unity to a new and untried government, his eulogists suggested, it was not because of his talents but in spite of his shortcomings. Based on natural limitations and inexperience, weakness becomes a necessary element for the display of heroic resolve. As

Mason put it, "Had he been neither deflated nor repulsed, we had never seen all the grandeur of his soul."<sup>43</sup> Defeats entail adversity, and the belief in redemption through adversity was shared by most of Washington's contemporaries. In this tradition, as it is assimilated to the whig fear of power, the will is always a defensive, never an offensive, agency, and the greatest triumph of will inheres in self-control and resistance to superior strength rather than in domination of others.

Classical and religious motifs were used to express variant aspects of the eighteenth-century conception of will. In the Stoic tradition, Americans articulated Washington's capacity to persevere in the face of pain and defeat. In the Protestant tradition, they articulated the rational, calculated, and systematic quality of his perseverance. Neo-Calvinists, like David Tappan of Harvard College, were especially apt to dwell on the latter connection. They saw in Washington "an example of successful control of passion by reason, exemplifying worth of time and method in its distribution, diligence, punctuality and perseverance."<sup>44</sup> They saw in Washington a man who regulated events by mastering himself.

Washington's methodical self-control was "discovered" at a time when America was shifting from a revolutionary to an institutional mood. Sensitive observers could see that the passion for liberty which animated American resistance in the 1770s had become a burden during the search for a new order in the late 1780s. Earlier, the libertarian attitudes characteristic of whiggery had "produced a fierce and independent spirit, without which the revolution could not have been effected; but it has also in too many created a licentiousness, at present very detrimental, and incompatible with good Government." Self-control alone could protect liberty from this corrosive licentiousness. It was this belief—that "man is naturally an unruly animal, little capable of governing himself, and very averse to control from others," and that such unruliness makes one an undutiful subject of any government<sup>45</sup>—which induced eulogists to lay extra stress on the connection between Washington's self-control and his resoluteness, and to express this connection in one of their most striking images.

If the perfect symmetry of the circle was reminiscent of Washington's well-balanced attitudes and talents, the immutability of the planetary orbit (often compared to the glittering yet self-consuming meteor) compelled recognition of Washington's self-possession and steadiness in a universe of tumult. Himself a heavenly body, Washington traveled a fixed route, neither elated by success nor dismayed by failure, unaffected by the ragings upon which he threw his own heat and light. "Moving in his own orbit . . . he took his course, commiserating folly, disdaining vice, dismaying treason, and invigorating despondency."<sup>46</sup> Occasions for the application of this metaphor were many. Washington's was the invariant movement amid seething and flux—the constant in both the revolutionary and establishmentarian equation. As a whig hero, his forte was steadiness, not brilliance. In battle, pervasive sentiments of apprehension and danger were never evident in his bearing and conduct. "When surrounded by the

greatest dangers, he never disclosed to those near his person, by a look nor change of voice, nor rash action, his own apprehensions. . . . A rare instance of bravery and self-command."<sup>47</sup> With this same serene strength Washington resisted the reckless measures urged upon him by desperate advisors. Like his classical predecessor, the "American Fabius" prevailed against the superior enemy by a prudent campaign of attrition, not by dramatic assaults that might win temporary acclaim but lose the war. Similarly, in political life, he deeply resented abusive criticisms and intrigues, but he never expressed this resentment publicly. His actions were uniformly calculated and deliberate; never the result of fear or hostility. He "stood collected in himself, like a rock in a tempestuous sea, unmoved by the storms of popular fury that beat upon him."<sup>48</sup>

The social consequences of Washington's iron resolve are made plain by all the eulogists. Military victory, they said, was due to Washington alone. Commitment to the war was faltering everywhere, but in the midst of treason, astonishment, fear, irresoluteness, and despondency, Washington remained erect and unmoved. His was "a spirit unbroken by adversity—a spirit, which not only enabled him to sustain the weight of cares, which devolved on him, but served to revive and animate his fainting troops."<sup>49</sup> The long years that followed the war were also "big with prodigies and monsters—when the elements of social connection seemed in a state of separation, when the moral world was fast falling into chaos."<sup>50</sup> Old traditions of deference and privilege that had previously restrained the vulgar were losing their grip, and as the respectable classes' inveterate dread of licentiousness and "mobocracy" became acute,<sup>51</sup> Washington reacted strongly against domestic uprising. Thereby he preserved order, checked the excesses of democracy, and saved America from the fate of postrevolutionary France. Commitment to the political cause—the cause of national union and national interest—was even less secure and less understood. Assailed mercilessly by demands for action against the British on France's behalf, Washington, as President, served the national union and interest despite the passionate criticism that raged about him. Again "Washington opposed his impenetrable resolution to the mighty deluge"<sup>52</sup> and, again, saved the republic. And so Washington, as military commander, delivered his countrymen from their enemy; as chief magistrate he saved them from themselves. In both instances, his restrained yet resolute power reconciled the Puritan virtue of deliberate, self-possessed industry to the Roman virtues of *gravitas* (seriousness), *pietas* (regard for discipline and authority), *integritas* (serene stoicism), and *gloria* (reputation for service to the public good). In so doing, Washington exemplified the unification, through the whig heroic ideal, of classical and religious fragments into a single political culture.

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If the resoluteness of Washington's character brought together distinctive features of America's cultural heritage, the authenticity of that character

constituted the foundational virtue through which all his other virtues were made credible. By stressing the absolute rectitude of Washington's private life, his eulogists affirmed the priority of morality over achievement in the new republic's hierarchy of values.

Every eulogy contains a chronology of Washington's achievements: his role in the campaigns against the French and the Indians on the western frontier, his command of the Continental Army in the Revolutionary War, his participation in the Constitutional Convention, and his two-term presidency. These accomplishments were well known and did not have to be proven; they represented the substance, not the argument, of Washington's eulogies. It was the motivational grounds for accomplishment that proved problematic.

The questions asked by the eulogists address themselves mainly to this issue. What if Washington were motivated by the desire for personal profit rather than collective well-being? What if he were merely using history to his own advantage? What if below a surface of patriotic magnanimity lurked a spirit of vanity and ambition? What if, like Machiavelli's Prince, he "appears to be full of pity, faithful, human, open, religious," but with his "mind constructed in such a mode that when the need not to be arises, [he] can . . . change to the contrary"?<sup>53</sup> To a generation whose greatest fear was not the flagrant violator of public trust but "the patriot who would contribute to the welfare of the whole out of motives of self-interest,"<sup>54</sup> these questions came naturally. To pacify the suspicions behind them, eulogists were concerned to show that Washington's good deeds were essential, not incidental, manifestations of his character.

If Washington were essentially other than what he appeared to be, then his public virtues would be contradicted by private vices. This would mean that his moral rectitude was merely enacted as part of a social role. In fact, Washington's motivation could not be so conceived, for he believed "that the foundation of national policy, can be laid only in the pure and immutable principles of private morality."<sup>55</sup> Far from considering his public character as a mantle for his private vices, therefore, "he was uniformly correct."<sup>56</sup> (It was this morality, and not Washington's fateful public actions, which every citizen could emulate.)<sup>57</sup> On this matter, all Washington's personal acquaintances gave eyewitness testimony.

"First in war—first in peace—first in the hearts of his countrymen, he was second to none in the humble and enduring scenes of private life . . . his example was as edifying to all around him, as were the effects of that example lasting. . . . The purity of his private character gave effulgence to his public virtues."<sup>58</sup> Thus Washington was regularly beheld in church, where his neighbors saw him exercise the same devotions he publicly engaged in as a national leader. In the midst of his family, far from the view of even his closest neighbor, he displayed all the tender aspects of human character. There especially is witnessed his profound humanity and beneficence. The more intimately he is known, the more he is loved, for beneath the polished image of public perfection no private blemishes can be found. The eulogists revealed that

Washington was the perfect husband and father. In the eyes of other family members, his virtue was such that not so much as a harsh word was ever uttered against him. Even the unfortunate stranger was graced by his private benevolence. During the low points of the war, Washington gave instruction to his Mount Vernon steward to maintain hospitality to the poor, and when present himself, he never degraded his supplicants by keeping them waiting, as was customary among his privileged neighbors. In the matter of moderation as well as beneficence, stated Ramsay, Washington's "private character as well as his public one, will bear the strictest scrutiny. He was punctual in all his engagements—upright and honest in his dealings—temperate in his enjoyments—liberal and hospitable to an eminent degree—a lover of order—systematical and methodical in all his arrangements."<sup>59</sup>

The panegyric does not end here. So authentic and sincere a man was Washington that even upon the prospect of death he displayed his characteristic virtues. His will provided for the bestowal of generous sums for "public utility," and while he kept slaves during his lifetime (because of unspecified "conditions" in the southern states), this same will granted them freedom at his wife's death. Even more, Washington took pains to prepare his slaves for freedom by giving them appropriate training and instruction, or by assuring material sustenance for their old age. In these acts of domestic benevolence, the authenticity of his public virtue was reaffirmed. "Thus uniform in all his conduct was this FRIEND of the Rights of Mankind—thus consistent were his Republican principles."<sup>60</sup>

In Washington's last moments of life were condensed those qualities which graced his life as a whole. Just as he silently endured the pain of military defeat, and, later, the harangues of vile and ill-meaning critics, so at the end, though in extreme pain, not a groan or even a sigh escaped him. At the point of death, he bade his physicians not to trouble themselves further and, just before he expired, closed his own eyes. And so, Washington died a "rational death," a death awaited and accepted with self-control and presence of mind. This death was also a feat of self-affirmation. By evincing in the secrecy of his final moments those qualities publicly displayed during two decades of national service, Washington abolished the last doubts of a suspicious society.

\* \* \*

We have seen how the values of public benevolence, disinterestedness, moderation, resoluteness, and private virtue were exemplified in Washington's character and conduct. We now turn to what the eulogists defined as the sixth and final component of his greatness: religious piety.

Reading and quoting the Bible more widely than any other book,<sup>61</sup> most Americans believed that the virtues required of a republic (virtues that twentieth-century scholarship traces to the whig heritage) were the products of religion. "The religion, which we teach and promote," observed David Tappan, "is

emphatically the guardian angel” of liberty.<sup>62</sup> For most citizens of the new republic, individual greatness was built on a pious relation to God, not on classical antiquity, nor on whiggery. By stressing Washington’s piety, however, the eulogists sent a message that suited the whig political temper. Washington acknowledged that moral standards embodied in religion were superior to his own personal will. He attributed his personal successes to the greater powers of the Creator. In the hands of such a man, a man made humble by the thought of God, a man dedicated to the advancement of His glory alone, the scepter of power could be confidently placed. Thus Washington’s religious piety was celebrated not only for its own sake but also because so many believed that it made him immune to political ambition.

The articulation of Washington’s piety was rendered not only by men who believed in the God of the Bible but also by nonbelievers whose views on religion were strictly utilitarian. Following a tradition carried from Cicero, through Machiavelli, to their own contemporaries like Jefferson, skeptical and nonbelieving eulogists saw in religion a necessary and assured support of civil society. Although guided in their own conduct by secular morality, they felt that only religion could unite the masses and induce their submission to custom and law. So they joined their orthodox countrymen in attributing to the fallen leader a deep religious devotion. These nonbelievers, along with the proponents of natural religion—Unitarians, Freemasons, and other “Infidels and Deists”<sup>63</sup>—did not see Washington as an instrument of divine intervention, but they were effusive in their praise of his piety. Toward religion as well as politics, they said, his attitudes were balanced and moderate. He pursued “the happy mean between the extremes of levity and gloominess, indifference and austerity.”<sup>64</sup> His regular attendance at the house of God was never overlooked, nor were his public addresses, in which he acknowledged the assistance of the Deity in establishing the new republic and recommended religion as a secure foundation for public morals. He sought aid from “the source of Light and Being,” and to this Creator “he gave credit in the day of his success.” And so even for the most “liberated” of his countrymen, Washington’s regard for religion “formed the most brilliant part of his finished character.”<sup>65</sup>

In contrast, eulogists of Calvinist and neo-revivalist persuasions saw Washington as the executor of God’s plan, a “Gift from God”<sup>66</sup> raised up from youth “for the salvation of his country,”<sup>67</sup> a deliverer who presided over the Revolution, itself “fixed in the divine mind long before it took place.”<sup>68</sup> In this regard, Washington was used as an example of faith in an age of infidelity. Time and again the point is made that Washington “was not ashamed” of his religious convictions and “did not disdain to acknowledge and adore a GREATER SAVIOR whom Deists and Infidels affect to slight and despise.”<sup>69</sup> For this group, Washington embodied and reinforced sacred values challenged by the wave of secular enlightenment which swept over the country in the late eighteenth century.

Although much was made by the pious of Washington’s belief in God and

attendance at public worship, little was said of his relation to the distinguishing features of Christianity. Washington was never portrayed as a redeemed sinner, and rarely as a man whose life was directed by the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love. Most often he was represented as a faithful servant of the Old Testament God. Elijah, Gideon, David, and Solomon were among the religious virtuosi with whom he was compared. Given the exigencies of its political situation, however, the story of Moses served best to consolidate the nation's mind.

Already convinced that their land was a New Israel, many Americans saw in their recent political independence a recapitulation of the ancient covenant, and, in their new leader, a reincarnation of the faithful Hebrew deliverer. The parallels were thick, and to many a mind utterly convincing. To Egypt and its Pharaoh were aligned Britain and its king, the latter being the most recent in a long line of liberty's enemies. But "kind heaven, pitying the abject and servile condition of our American Israel, gave us a second Moses, who should, (under God) be our future deliverer from the bondage and tyranny of haughty Britain."<sup>70</sup> What was involved here, most Americans felt, was not an analogy but an historical identity.

Like Moses, Washington was called to his mission from domestic ease and tranquility. Moses and Washington were of nearly the same age when they undertook their missions; both conducted to liberty an approximately equal number of people. Moses faced a superior foe with little likelihood of success. So did Washington. Moses suffered detractors among his own following. Washington did, too. Just as Moses died at the point of bringing his nation to Canaan, Washington succumbed just before his nation's government was settled in a new capital. And if Moses left his people "sage legislation" (Deuteronomy), Washington's Farewell Address was regarded by his people as his most permanent legacy.<sup>71</sup>

That most of these parallels are farfetched, that they could link Washington to many other great men, is necessarily so, and signal proof that the Moses-Washington analogy was *created* in the context of political crisis rather than *discovered* in the careers of the men in question. In its main aspect, the creation was retrospective; it involved a selective rendition of Old Testament history, a harnessing of the past to the whig heroic ideal. Thus if Washington was to be regarded as the American Moses, Moses had to become the Jewish Washington. The values that Washington represented had to be projected backward in time. And so they were. Washington's selfless public virtue was prefigured in Moses, who "endured unintermitted and unparalleled toils and hardships," yet was moved by "no consideration in comparison with the public good." Like Washington, Moses was disinterested. He "appears to have been a stranger to ambition. He sought none of the high offices which he filled." Only "the command of GOD, and assurances of his presence and aid, could have forced him from his calm and delightful retreat." As to the compass and balance of Moses' abilities, "no human character probably ever combined greater, more

numerous, or more useful talents. . . .” Was Washington resolute and self-controlled? So was Moses. He endured with “dignity and calmness” the hardships of his mission and the complaints and ingratitude of his followers. And he was “so great a master of his passions, that he lived as though he had none. . . .” Was Washington’s virtue as evident in private as it was in public life? So was Moses’. His civility and kindness to neighbors, instanced in his protection of Jethro’s daughters, showed that “the virtue of Moses as a man, were as splendid and peculiar as his military and political talents.” Was Washington pious and submissive to the will of God? So was Moses. God chose him out of all men and “sanctified him in his faithfulness.”<sup>72</sup>

In this many faceted parallel, which converts an Old Testament hero into the incarnation of whig political ideals, we have something more than an historical allusion; we have a root paradigm that amplified the masses’ traditional disdain for secular tyranny and fixed the meaning of their political experience.

\* \* \*

Whether Washington was really the man his eulogists said he was is not our concern. Our concern is to understand the heroic prototype he embodied. To use the eulogy as a tool for the analysis of this prototype is to assume that the hero is an image present in the mind, not a solid substance to be captured and examined. It is true that biographical realities impose themselves on the content of the eulogy; but within these limits there is much from which to choose and assess. The eulogist’s statement, therefore, is not an entirely true reading of the hero’s achievements and character but an attempt to convey, by selection and simplification, his significance. Because the standard for this construction resides in the dominant ideas of the time, the qualities of the great man worth talking about are those which associate themselves with concerns already present in the collective consciousness. The “real” hero, then, is a screen on which his and later generations can project their own doubts, troubles and ideals. In this sense, eulogies are neither valid nor invalid but more or less appropriate.

Given the doubts, troubles and ideals of his society, Washington’s eulogies describe a “motivational type” rather than a “behavioral type”; they refer not so much to Washington’s performance as to the motives which inspired them.<sup>73</sup> These motives, along with their dialectical counterparts (to which eulogists often resorted as a rhetorical aid), define both the negation and the paragon of whig character:

Malevolence and Self-Indulgence	vs.	Benevolence and Self-Sacrifice
Ambition	vs.	Disinterestedness
Excess	vs.	Moderation
Passion and Licentiousness	vs.	Resoluteness and Self-Control
Duplicity	vs.	Authenticity
Religious Indifference	vs.	Piety



Taken together, this list of contrasts represents the tensions which organize the content of the eulogies. Toward the motivational attributes in the left-hand column the Americans expressed disdain, or, at best, suspicion; toward the attributes in the right-hand column they expressed reverence, or, at least, admiration. This last set of motives was attributed to the character of George Washington, and in that attribution—expressed through a series of religious and classical allusions—his admirers affirmed a heroic prototype quite different from that which prevailed in late eighteenth-century Europe. Movers of history like Frederick, Catherine, and Napoleon exuded confidence in their extraordinary abilities, thrived on power and glorification, disdained the established order and, by offensive force of arms, changed it according to their own interests, ignoring the chaos and suffering caused in the process. By contrast, Washington supported the traditional values and structures of his society, fought a defensive war, and renounced the power that came with his success. These actions, along with his moderate talents and character, distinguished him from those who incarnated that European ideal against which he was repeatedly compared. Seen by his eulogists to be indifferent to the corrupting rewards that moved other men, George Washington conformed to the heroic ideal implied in the radical whig tradition, and so personified the deepest political values of his society.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Americans fashioned their heroes out of that same mold. Dixon Wecter, in his essay, “How Americans Choose Their Heroes,” tells us that “ordinary Americans [continue to] believe that character is more important than brains. Hard work, tenacity, enterprise, and firmness in the face of odds are the qualities that Americans most admire.” Only “at the boy’s level,” Wecter explains, does hero worship “gravitate toward the doer of spectacular deeds”; in the more mature judgment, “idealism and moral qualities” remain the stuff of which heroes are made.<sup>74</sup> This idealism and these moral qualities are informed by Americans’ continued wariness of political power. While the American hero must be strong, Robert Penn Warren tells us, he must never be a “strong man.” Claims to infallibility, “even to those who cry out for the father figure, is offensive.” Power must be exercised with humility and as an instrument for the common good. Thus employed, “power is depersonalized and becomes a creation, as it were, of the need and will of the people. This is the mystery of democracy.”<sup>75</sup> To muddle through rather than break through, to sacrifice short-term efficiency for long-term stability, to deny prominent place to the imperious personality—these are characteristic American tendencies. In these tendencies our whig ancestors, were they alive today, would recover the spirit of Washington, and so would rest content in the knowledge that their highest ideals had been preserved.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Among the many books and articles published since 1976 are Patricia A. Anderson, *Promoted to Glory: The Apotheosis of George Washington* (Northampton, Mass.: Smith College Museum of

Art, 1980); Marcus Cunliffe, "Symbols We Made of a Man Called George Washington," *Smithsonian*, 12 (Feb. 1982), 75-80; Noemi Emery, *Washington* (New York: Putnam, 1976); James T. Flexner, "George Washington is Alive," *Reader's Digest*, 12 (Feb. 1982), 8+; H. LaFay, "The Man Behind the Myths," *National Geographic*, 150 (July 1976), 90-111; Edmund S. Morgan, *The Genius of George Washington* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980); Howard N. Rabinowitz, "George Washington as Icon," in *Icons in America*, ed. Ray B. Browne and Marshall Fishwick (Bowling Green, Ohio: Popular Press, 1978), 67-86; Wendy C. Wick, *George Washington: An American Icon* (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1982); John R. Alden, *George Washington: A Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1984); Garry Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (New York: Doubleday, 1984); Don Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1985). For an especially rich and varied set of popular articles on Washington's life, see the recent volumes of *American Heritage* and *American History Illustrated*.

<sup>2</sup>Marcus Cunliffe, *George Washington: Man and Monument* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), 15-16.

<sup>3</sup>Michael Gilmore, "Eulogy as Symbolic Biography," in *Harvard English Studies*, Vol. VIII, ed. Daniel Aaron (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978), 131.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>5</sup>John Adams, "Letter to John Jebb," in Charles Francis Adams, ed., *The Works of John Adams*, Vol. IX (Boston: Little, Brown, 1854), 541.

<sup>6</sup>In William A. Bryan's words, the eulogies were "highly important in crystallizing and to a limited degree in forming popular conceptions of Washington," (*George Washington in American Literature* [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1952], 55).

<sup>7</sup>Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Young Man Washington* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1932). Writers who make direct reference to the Washington eulogies include Howard Mumford Jones, *O Strange New World* (New York: The Viking Press, 1952), 262-64; Robert P. Hay, "George Washington: American Moses," *American Quarterly*, 21 (1969), 780-91; James H. Smylie, "The President as Republican Prophet and King: Clerical Reflections on the Death of Washington," *Journal of Church and State*, 18 (1976), 233-52; Catherine L. Albanese, *Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1976), 181. Other writers who have drawn on the Washington eulogies to support preconceived themes are Lawrence Friedman, who studied the new republic's conflicting aspirations for stability and progress in *Inventors of the Promised Land* (New York: Knopf, 1975) and Jay Fliegelman, whose *Prodigals and Pilgrims* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982) concerns itself with the decline of the patriarchal family. All these writers put the Washington eulogies to profitable but limited use. They treat the eulogies not as a body of data that is worth study in its own right but rather as a source of documentation that can be pressed selectively to the service of other interests.

<sup>8</sup>Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), 22-23.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 34-35.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 55-58.

<sup>11</sup>Cited in Clinton Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1953), 143.

<sup>12</sup>For detail, see Ralph Ketcham, *Presidents Above Party* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1984), 57-68; 89-93.

<sup>13</sup>A larger sample would probably add little information to the present sample of 55 eulogies. Well before the last eulogy was read (around the twenty-fifth reading), the pattern of virtues and motives ascribed to Washington had become apparent. By the thirty-fifth reading, that pattern had become clear. Subsequent readings confirmed the pattern, adding only minor individual variations. Thus the decision to stop sampling was based on the criterion of "saturation of knowledge." Saturation occurs when increments to the sample fail to add significant new information. (See Daniel Bertaux, "From the Life-History Approach to the Transformation of Sociological Practice," in Bertaux, ed., *Biography and Society* [Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1981], 37-38). A list of all eulogies considered in this study but not mentioned in the text can be obtained from the author.

<sup>14</sup>Forty of the 55 eulogists in the sample (73 percent) were prominent enough to be listed in either the *Dictionary of American Biography* or *Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography*. These references contain short entries and the facts covered differ from one entry to the next; however, the information does convey a reasonably clear outline of the eulogists' social background. Twenty-two of the orators were born in New England, 13 in the Middle states, and 2 in the South (where people and printing presses were most sparse). About half (19 of 40) of those listed in the biographies

pursued secular careers, mainly law and statecraft; the other half were clergymen. Among six secular leaders whose religious preference is mentioned, we find a Unitarian, two Quakers, an Episcopalian, and a Deist. In this same group are found two Masonic grandmasters. Clergymen, on the other hand, tend to be drawn from the neo-Calvinist denominations: 13 of 21 are Presbyterians or Congregationalists. Whatever their persuasion, clergymen were least acquainted with their subject. Only 3 of them appear to have known Washington personally, compared to 9 of the 19 secular leaders. Yet, the overwhelming majority of all eulogists shared their subject's political outlook. Among 20 cases for whom information is available, 19 are identified as Federalists. In considering the eulogists' political leaning, we may recall that the Federalists had already laid claim to Washington and, on so solemn an occasion, were not inclined to invite their Republican enemies to share in the memory of his glory. Moreover, the eulogies were delivered during an election year (1800), and the declining Federalist "party" was not about to be gracious with one of its few assets. Yet, most Republicans admired Washington as much as the Federalists did, and it is doubtful that they would have given a markedly different account of his virtues. Even the eulogists who had opposed Washington at different points in his career, like Thomas Paine and Henry Lee, employed terms of veneration similar to those used by his steady supporters. Perhaps the most important thing to stress, however, is that for more than half the eulogists no information on political preference could be found in the biographical sources. This vacancy might be attributed to biographers' oversight, but it is also consistent with the fact that in 1800 about half the Congress, and probably far more than half the population, embraced no political party.

<sup>15</sup>Thaddeus Fiske, *A Sermon . . . Immediately Following the Melancholy Intelligence of the Death of General George Washington* (Boston: James Cutler, 1800), 11.

<sup>16</sup>Other values exemplified in Washington's character and conduct, like dignity, honesty, magnanimity, forgiveness, and justice, are differentially invoked and discussed as we moved from one eulogist to another. Against this intermittent coverage, the references to "core values" stand out in bolder relief. Public virtue, disinterestedness, moderation, resoluteness, authenticity, and piety distinguish themselves in the eulogies by the more expansive and persistent attention they command. The essential claim of this paper—that a conception of Washington has been exposed, not imposed—rests on this distinction.

<sup>17</sup>No one was affected more by the whig interpretation of Cato's life than Washington himself. See Henry C. Montgomery, "Addison's Cato and George Washington," *Classical Journal*, 55 (1960), 210-12, and Albert Furtwangler, "Cato at Valley Forge," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 41 (1980), 38-53.

<sup>18</sup>Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1969), 55, 61.

<sup>19</sup>Benjamin Rush, "On the Defects of the Confederation," in *The Selected Writings of Benjamin Rush*, ed. D. D. Runes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 31.

<sup>20</sup>John Fitch, *A Sermon Delivered . . . as a Tribute of Respect for the Memory of the Late General George Washington* (Peachah, Vt.: Farley and Goss, 1800).

<sup>21</sup>Max Weber, "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority" in *From Max Weber*, ed. Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), 248.

<sup>22</sup>Elisha Pick, "Oration," in *The Washingtoniana* (Baltimore: Samuel Sawyer, 1800), 198, 203. Dick was one of the physicians present at Washington's death. His is the only eulogy cited that is not included in the Early American Imprints.

<sup>23</sup>John M. Mason, *A Funeral Oration* (New York: G. F. Hopkins, 1800), 6-7.

<sup>24</sup>Samuel Macclintock, *An Oration Commemorative of the Late Illustrious General Washington* (Portsmouth, N. H.: Charles Pierce, 1800), 7.

<sup>25</sup>Thomas Baldwin, *A Sermon . . . Occasioned by the Death of General George Washington* (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1800), 20.

<sup>26</sup>Charles H. Atherton, *An Eulogy on General George Washington* (Amherst, N.H.: Samuel Preston, 1800), 21.

<sup>27</sup>Richard Buel, "Political Thought before the Revolution," in *Politics and Society in Colonial America*, ed. Michael Kammen (Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden Press, 1973), 105.

<sup>28</sup>Wood, *American Republic*, 21.

<sup>29</sup>Thomas Thacher, *An Eulogy on George Washington* (Dedham, Mass.: Mann, 1800), 14.

<sup>30</sup>Josiah Dunham, *A Funeral Oration on George Washington* (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1800), 14.

<sup>31</sup>George Blake, *A Masonic Eulogy on the Life of the Illustrious Brother George Washington* (Boston: John Russell, 1800), 17.

<sup>32</sup>Henry Lee, *A Funeral Oration Prepared and Delivered at the Request of Congress* (Brooklyn: Thomas Kirk, 1800), 13.

<sup>33</sup>Timothy Bigelow, *An Eulogy on the Life, Character and Services of Brother George Washington* (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1800), 15, 16.

<sup>34</sup>Mason, *A Funeral Oration*, 17.

<sup>35</sup>The distinction between charismatic and whig conceptions of heroic leadership is discussed in Barry Schwartz, "George Washington and the Whig Conception of Heroic Leadership," *American Sociological Review*, 48 (Feb. 1983), 18-33.

<sup>36</sup>Fisher Ames, *An Oration on the Sublime Virtues of General George Washington* (New York: Smith and Stevens, 1800), 130.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 3; Baldwin, *A Sermon . . .*, 23. Among the many other eulogists who discuss this theme are Caleb Alexander, *A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of His Excellency George Washington* (Boston: Samuel Hill, 1800), 13; Atherton, *General George Washington*, 89; Bigelow, *Life, Character and Services of Brother George Washington*, 8-9; Ebenezer Davenport, *An Oration on the Death of General George Washington* (New York: John Furman, 1800), 7.

<sup>38</sup>Thacher, *An Eulogy on George Washington*, 19.

<sup>39</sup>Samuel Mead, *A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of General George Washington* (Salem, Mass.: Joshua Cushing, 1800), 8.

<sup>40</sup>Timothy Dwight, *A Discourse . . . on the Character of George Washington, Esquire* (New Haven: Thomas Green and Son, 1800), 23.

<sup>41</sup>Gouverneur Morris, *An Oration on the Death of General Washington* (New York: John Furman, 1800), 5.

<sup>42</sup>David Ramsay, *An Oration on the Death of Lieutenant-General George Washington* (Charleston, S.C.: W. P. Young, 1800), 21.

<sup>43</sup>Mason, *A Funeral Oration*, 8-9.

<sup>44</sup>David Tappan, *A Discourse Delivered . . . in Solemn Commemoration of General George Washington* (Charlestown, Mass.: Samuel Etheridge, 1800), 28. This address was delivered in a ceremony keynoted by the president of Harvard, whose own eulogy was delivered entirely in Latin.

<sup>45</sup>*The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 8 August 1787, 1.

<sup>46</sup>Lee, *Funeral Oration . . . at the Request of Congress*, 7.

<sup>47</sup>Alexander, *A Sermon Occasioned By the Death . . .*, 22.

<sup>48</sup>Jeremiah Smith, *An Oration on the Death of George Washington* (Exeter: Henry Ranlet, 1800), 70.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>50</sup>Isaac Parker, *An Oration on the Sublime Virtues of General George Washington* (Portland, Me.: Elezer Jenks, 1800), 21.

<sup>51</sup>Wood, *American Republic*, 471-518; Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977).

<sup>52</sup>Parker, *Sublime Virtues of Washington*.

<sup>53</sup>Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Irving, Tex.: Univ. of Dallas Press, 1980), 108-09.

<sup>54</sup>Hatch, *Sacred Cause of Liberty*, 113.

<sup>55</sup>Smith, *An Oration*, 75.

<sup>56</sup>Thacher, *An Eulogy on George Washington*, 16.

<sup>57</sup>The call to emulate Washington's virtues is addressed to every class of citizen. Farmers who imitate him will become prosperous and opulent; statesmen, wise and beneficent. Citizens of the humblest stations may "aspire to be great and immortal in heaven . . . by the remembrance and imitation of his industry, order, integrity and prudence, his disinterestedness and humanity, his piety and humility." Likewise, parents will teach their children "to be excited to every generous purpose by the charm of his name." Freemasons, by their memorials to Washington, are inspired "to square our actions by the rules of rectitude, persevere in the line of our duty and sustain our passions within the compass of propriety." And if slaveholders "would emulate the benevolence of Washington, [they] would abandon the savage claim of holding human beings in slavery." See Joseph Blythe, *An Oration of General George Washington* (Boston: I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1800), 21-22; Bigelow, *Life, Character and Services of Brother George Washington*, 16, 19.

<sup>58</sup>Lee, *Funeral Oration . . . at the Request of Congress*, 14-15.

<sup>59</sup>Ramsay, *An Oration on the Death . . .*, 22.

<sup>60</sup>Thacher, *An Eulogy on George Washington*, 17.

<sup>61</sup>Donald S. Lutz, "The Relative Influence of European Writers on Late Eighteenth Century American Political Thought," *American Political Science Review*, 78 (March 1984), 189-97.

<sup>62</sup>Cited in Hatch, *Sacred Cause of Liberty*, 97.

<sup>63</sup>Washington's own Deist convictions and his friendly but utilitarian attitude toward Christianity are discussed in Paul F. Boller, Jr., *George Washington and Religion* (Dallas: Southern Methodist Univ. Press, 1963).

<sup>64</sup>Smith, *An Oration*, 76.

<sup>65</sup>Moses Cleaveland, *An Oration, Commemorative of the Life and Death of General George Washington* (Windham, Conn.: John Byrne, 1800), 14; Abraham Clarke, *A Discourse Occasioned by the Death of General George Washington* (Providence, R.I.: n. p., 1800), 8.

<sup>66</sup>Fitch, *A Sermon Delivered*, 7.

<sup>67</sup>Blyth, *An Oration*, 7.

<sup>68</sup>Abraham Wood, *A Funeral Elegy on the Death of General George Washington* (Boston: I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1800), 9.

<sup>69</sup>Jonathan Sewall, *An Eulogy on the Late General Washington* (Portsmouth, N. H.: William Treadwell, 1800), 17-18.

<sup>70</sup>Isaac Braman, *An Eulogy on the Late General George Washington*, cited by Hay, "George Washington: American Moses," 783.

<sup>71</sup>For detail, see Jedidiah Morse, *A Prayer and Sermon . . . on the Death of General Washington* (Charlestown, Mass.: Samuel Etheridge, 1800). See also Sewall, *An Eulogy*, 19-21; Hay, "George Washington: American Moses."

<sup>72</sup>Morse, *A Prayer and Sermon*, 22-29.

<sup>73</sup>Alfred Schutz, cited in Harold Garfinkel, "Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies," *American Journal of Sociology*, 61 (March 1956), 420.

<sup>74</sup>Dixon Wecter, *The Hero in America* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1972), 485-86.

<sup>75</sup>Robert Penn Warren, Introduction to *ibid.*, xxii.