

GEORGE WASHINGTON AND THE PATIENCE OF POWER

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In contemporary American society, the relationship between patience and power is often wary and distant: if people have power, then they won't have to wait. Recently, however, these two nouns have been joined in the trendy phrase "the power of patience." This theme has become the subject of popular books and articles that teach calmness and the avoidance of hurry and stress: focusing on the task at hand, enjoying life in the moment, practicing mindful living. This salutary approach is reflected in the Slow Movement: slow eating, slow reading, slow travel, slow gardening, even slow church.

George Washington would come to know the power of patience, but the more valuable lesson to take from his life and career is the deep value of the patience of power. Most of us are capable of practicing patience, and we often have to, but we hold little power. George Washington, on the other hand, had little innate patience but held immense power. He was thoroughly familiar with the uses of power, including its potential

for both benefit and harm.¹ As Edmund S. Morgan has stated, "Washington's genius lay in his understanding of power, both military power and political power, an understanding unmatched by that of any of his contemporaries."²

Among the virtues that did not come naturally to George Washington, patience was probably foremost. He was exceedingly ambitious: avid for advancement and fame, eager to claim wealth and status. He craved control and eschewed dependency in any form.³ Especially as a young, inexperienced officer serving the British army, Washington could be not only courageous but also impetuous. He was, as one historian has remarked, "by natural disposition inclined to be fiery and temperamental."⁴ Speaking of Washington's efforts to restrain his worst impulses, another historian says it became easy for later generations to see only the steady demeanor of the Father of Our Country and to overlook the "powerful latent forces" lurking just beneath his surface calm. Consequently, "we have forgotten the effort

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his self-control required. We treat what was a result as a natural condition, as if Washington had been carved from the same stone as his monument.”⁵

The results of Washington’s fiery temperament are well known to any student of his life: his reckless actions could lead to disaster. Such was the case in 1754, when he was a lieutenant colonel and second in command (and, after his colonel’s death, fully in command) of the Virginia Regiment in engagements with the French in the region of Great Meadows, not far from present-day Uniontown, Pennsylvania.⁶ One of his leading biographers provides a quick, unflattering pen portrait: “Although in moments of reflection conscious of his inadequacies, in action he could be rash, brash, impolitic, over-self-confident. He made dreadful mistakes.”⁷

Looking at this same period, another historian concludes that “there is something unlikable about the George Washington of 1753–1758 [aged twenty-one to twenty-six]. He seems a trifle raw and strident, too much on his dignity, too ready to complain, too nakedly concerned with promotion.” Young Washington could come across as pushy and impertinent, altogether too hungry for honor and preferment. “He had yet to learn,” this biographer notes, “the wisdom of patience; or rather, he was learning it in a painful school.”⁸

Although the lesson was hard, Washington knew that patience was a good habit, one well worth acknowledging and making his own: “Patience is a noble virtue,” he declared, “and, when rightly exercised, does not fail of its reward.”⁹ And, just as he learned from experience about the military command of men in the field, so he learned about the inner command of his own wayward instincts. Over the decades, as Washington gained experience in leadership, the narrative

arc of his character gradually bent down and away from unalloyed self-assertion; in him the quality of patience became less strained.

The theory of behavior that Washington and his peers knew and attempted to live by did not view any virtue as natural. What is natural, they thought, is human beings’ self-interested seeking after their own success and longing for others’ acclaim. People do not give unselfishly of themselves or perform heroically because they are naturally altruistic or fearless in the face of threats to their lives or social positions. By the same token, a zeal for acknowledgment of their worth—for honor—is innate, Washington and his contemporaries believed.

While fortifying their own self-esteem is an activity that individuals gladly beaver away at, self-mastery, the seemingly control and direction of *amour-propre*, is a much harder slog—and needs all the props of morality and religion that society can muster. Washington’s peers knew this desire for distinction as “pride” or “emulation.” A gentleman could win approval in the eyes of those he respected by manifesting a moral character and acting in a socially approved manner—and most praiseworthy of all were enterprises that served the commonweal.¹⁰

By these means could a person both practice a virtue such as patience and “not fail of its reward.” Washington was always realistic about human motives and the power of interest; he believed that the best deeds men and women can accomplish in this world are acts that are generous but never completely free of the taint of self-regard. “Patience is a noble virtue.” In time, even if Washington was under considerable strain when making the attempt, he came to exemplify his maxim, writes Douglas Southall Freeman, “and he scarcely lost patience except in dealing with three classes—cowards, those

whom he believed to be of habitual rascality, and, above all, those who were cheating the American people for their own profit in the life-and-death struggle for independence.”¹¹

For the commander in chief of the Continental Army, waiting might not have come easily, but it did bring results. A military historian has summarized the positive effects of patience on the course of the American Revolution: “With [British general Henry] Clinton bottled up in New York, it was patience that brought the war to a successful conclusion: patience with dilatory French assistance; patience with an army that mutinied twice; patience with a Congress that demanded but did not provide; patience while [American general Nathanael] Greene lost the battles but won the war in the South”; and, finally, to help bring about the war’s rather surprising conclusion, “patience that was at last rewarded when the French navy briefly won control of the sea around Yorktown, enabling Washington to deliver the coup de grâce.”¹²

At least as crucial to American victory as waiting for the right coalition of forces at the right moment was waiting’s close companion in the school of virtue: perseverance. During the winter of 1777–78 at Valley Forge, twenty miles northwest of Philadelphia, men froze and starved to death before their commander’s eyes. As typhus, pneumonia, and dysentery ran through the camp, the death rate soared. Hospital care was doubtful at best, often riskier than trying to cope on one’s own. For this reason, many soldiers stayed in their huts and spread their diseases throughout the camp.¹³ From Valley Forge, General Washington wrote of “Men without Cloathes to cover their nakedness, without Blankets to lay on, without Shoes, by which their Marches might be traced by the Blood from their feet,

and almost as often without Provisions as with.”¹⁴ His officers went home on furlough; Washington stayed in camp with his men. And the snowy, frigid winter of 1779–80 was even worse: Continental Army soldiers encamped at Morristown, New Jersey, were reduced to eating dogs, the bark from trees, and their boots.

Through the long years of war, Washington continually thought of Mount Vernon and yearned to be there. He persevered in the face of crippling supply and money problems, second-guessing by Congress, and military setbacks, such as the British capture of the American capital, Philadelphia (1777), and the fall of Charleston and the destruction of Camden, in South Carolina (1780)—defeats that made the Patriot cause look uncertain in the extreme.¹⁵

By 1777, following the capture of Philadelphia, Washington realized that he had to be patient, for he must do whatever was necessary not to lose the war; he had to preserve the Continental Army as a fighting force. This strategic recognition not only went against his own aggressive nature, which urged him to fight—and win—but also went against the wishes of many Patriots, including critics of his military prowess. Washington, however, declined to launch an imprudent attack.¹⁶

In his courage and perseverance throughout the Revolution, George Washington revealed his reliance on patience—and feelingly used the word when referring to his men at Valley Forge. To George Clinton, governor of New York, he wrote: “A part of the army has been a week, without any kind of flesh, and the rest three or four days. Naked and starving as they are, we cannot enough admire the incomparable patience and fidelity of the soldiery, that they have not been ere this excited by their sufferings, to a general mutiny and dispersion.”¹⁷

By war's end, both officers and men were aware of Washington's sacrifice, of which serving without pay was the least significant aspect. His officers' appreciation of his endurance with them of what they had suffered for the cause of independence was the only real chink in their armor during their 1783 revolt at Newburgh, New York, over not receiving their wages from Congress in the long interim between victory and peace treaty. On March 15, 1783, Washington would soften their rebellious hearts by stumbling over words in sentences his aging eyes had trouble making out and by putting on his new spectacles—his officers had never seen him wear glasses—and in that simple way remind them of all they had been through together.¹⁸ “The disarming gesture of putting on his glasses,” biographer Ron Chernow writes, “moved the officers to tears as they recalled the legendary sacrifices he had made for his country. When he left the hall moments later, the threatened mutiny had ended, and his victory was complete.”¹⁹

Perseverance as a type of patience helps to resolve questions about an anomaly that appears when we hold George Washington up to the light of moral scrutiny—for patience seems a strange virtue to claim for any fighting revolutionary. Within the effort to achieve victory once war is under way—that is, as a tactical weapon to win battles or a strategic policy to prevail in the long run over a powerful foe—waiting and endurance make sense. But is it right—specifically from the vantage point of just-war criteria—to call a principal actor in an armed rebellion *patient*?

Moral theologians, just-war theorists, ethically minded historians, and certainly Christian pacifists would have trouble agreeing to that designation.²⁰ Should not George Washington have worked with other

Americans—men and women representing the full range of interest groups and social classes—to resolve issues of taxation and political representation nonviolently? Then, in good time, the contending parties might well have achieved a suitable accommodation of their differences and realized just results without bloodshed.

The issues raised are too vast for this essay, but a partial answer might invoke the similarly curious case of Job. The New Testament epistle of James appears to offer Job as a role model of suffering and patience (5:10–11). And yet even a casual observer can see that Job is not patient at all; he complains about his afflictions, proclaims his righteousness, and demands his day in court. If he is patient, then he is patient in some manner other than passively accepting his fate.

Job was indeed patient, scholars say, in the sense that he persevered; and in this way he exemplified the proper range and limits of protest as well as the obligation to be steadfast in proclaiming what is true. Job's voice, writes John Barton, is “the voice of a man unjustly tormented, who refuses to abandon his right to complain about it.” Dynamic perseverance in a cause committed to overturning injustice and to fostering true peace—we will have to set to one side the question of whether the American Revolution was a just war and simply assume that it can be fairly evaluated as such—can be an example of patience. “Perhaps the reception of Job shows that James was not so wrong,” Barton says, “if we gloss ‘patience’ as ‘endurance’ or ‘persistence.’”²¹ As Mark Larrimore writes: “Maybe the attitude of persistent Job, insisting on justice, is not impatience but true patience. The narrator's assurance that Job ‘didn't sin with his lips’ (2:10) and God's claim (twice) that Job had ‘spoken of me what is right’ (42:6, 7) led premodern readers to see the book of Job as demonstrat-

ing just how much a patient person *could* say without sinning.”²²

Fighting for a just cause—especially one that is alarmingly novel and transformative—will strike many people as “impatient”: thus civil rights leaders were often urged to “wait.” But perseverance in a worthy undertaking may be one of the highest expressions of patience, where patience means being truly responsive to citizens’ just claims and a willingness to go to the limit on behalf of what is right.

Josef Pieper helps to nail down this point when he removes some possible misunderstandings of what “patience” implies. He notes that patience does not mean “an indiscriminate, self-immolating, crabbed, joyless, and spineless submission to whatever evil is met with.” Quite to the contrary: patience enables a person not to be done in by evil, not to be bowed down forever by sorrow and grief. It certainly does not mean automatically capitulating to the way things happen to be and surrendering to a terrible status quo. “Patience does not imply the exclusion of energetic, forceful activity. . . . Patience keeps man from the danger that his spirit may be broken by grief and lose its greatness.” For example, godly patience would never counsel an abused woman to sit there and take it; for patience, as Pieper makes clear, is completely on the side of preserving the “ultimate integrity” of the human person.²³

This discussion of perseverance provides a valuable backdrop to consideration of a form of patience that is particularly intriguing in its relation to power: namely, the relinquishing of power. Indeed, in their treatments of this topic in biographies of Washington, most writers do not use the word *patience* at all. Thus notable contributions by the English priest W. H. Vanstone and the American theologian David Bailly Harned alert us to this dimension of the virtue, for this facet

of patience can shine a light on the most significant episodes of Washington’s career.²⁴

Surrendering power—resigning as commander in chief of the Continental Army on December 23, 1783—was an act astonishing to many because so unnatural: everyone knew that great victors’ thirst for power was unquenchable. As historians have pointed out, that assumption was based on the evidence of two thousand years of world history. In his discussion of this event at the end of a conservative revolution, historian Gordon S. Wood draws attention to its dramatic features: “Washington, consummate actor that he was, made his most theatrical gesture, his most moral mark, and the results were monumental.” This resignation, “the greatest act of his life,” made him “internationally famous.” By handing over his sword to Congress and retiring to Mount Vernon, he “stunned the world.” Its reverberations were felt throughout Europe. “It was extraordinary; a victorious general’s surrendering his arms and returning to his farm was unprecedented in modern times. Cromwell, William of Orange, Marlborough—all had sought political rewards commensurate with their military achievements.”

Washington, many believed, could have become king or autocrat, but he refused the opportunity. “He was sincere in his desire for all his soldiers to return home,” and people took him at his word. His resignation “filled them with awe.” King George III said that if Washington followed through on his promise and retired to his farm, then he would be “the greatest man in the world.” In 1784 Thomas Jefferson indicated that Washington’s virtuous act of relinquishment likely prevented the Revolution from being seized by firebrands and its liberal goals perverted into ends radically different. Through his dramatic gesture, Wood writes, Washington

became “a living embodiment of all the classical republican virtue the age was eagerly striving to recover.”²⁵

His decision to retire to Mount Vernon meant that, as Garry Wills explains the paradoxical achievement, George Washington “gained power from his readiness to give it up.” And Wills goes on to elucidate the nub of Jefferson’s concern: “in accepting the ideal of Cincinnatus, Washington automatically limited the dangers of charismatic leadership, which is always at least quasi-religious, an assertion of semi-divine ‘grace.’”²⁶

What enabled Washington to be so different from other victorious commanders? How—and where—did he learn patience? One answer highlights his growth in the small virtues of social etiquette: learning the basic courtesies of giving heed to others. A historian points out that “his statesmanship”—including his refusal to become an American Caesar—“evolved from codes of conduct and self-scrutiny he began developing as a young man.”²⁷ Although his father died when he was only eleven, and his mother consistently withheld her approval, George Washington “refused to yield to self-pity, and devising a regimen of self-improvement that was at once moral and practical, he mastered the maxims of ‘genteel’ etiquette even as he taught himself the practical art of land surveying.”²⁸ As he matured, Washington became willing to attend to the views of those better informed than he, to weigh their opinions, and often to adjust his ideas accordingly.²⁹

Other forces probably contributed to his patience, as well. Surviving deadly illnesses and armed attacks, discovering as a young officer that aggressiveness alone did not yield favorable results, receiving remarkable opportunities following the deaths of others, caring for his extended family at Mount Ver-

non, working his fields and raising crops and attending to the rhythms of nature, reading encouragements to equanimity and gratitude in philosophical and religious texts, identifying with a national cause and subordinating his personal aggressive instincts to a goal that required a defensive strategy—all these experiences undoubtedly taught Washington various aspects of the virtue of patience.³⁰

He believed in a benevolent Providence that looked out for him and for his country. And certainly toward the end of his public career, in his presidential administration, he saw and lamented the consequences of intemperate self-assertion by Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. He told the latter that “his earnest wish” and “fondest hope” were that “instead of wounding suspicions and irritable charges,” there might be “liberal allowances,” “mutual forbearances,” and “temporising yieldings on *all sides*”; in other words, replace rancor with patience.³¹

Moreover, Washington’s response to the Patriot cause—his republican turn—effected modifications in his conceptions of honor, power, and patience, as well as in his view of slavery.³² Addressing the historical conundrum of what caused such first-class leadership as the Founding Fathers to arise in a nation with a white population of fewer than three million souls, Henry Steele Commager pointed to the urgent, inviting opportunities present in the public arena in the 1770s and 1780s. Washington’s generation had to win independence, set up state governments, write a federal constitution, and make their new government succeed. These challenges summoned character and resourcefulness. Dramatically new occasions brought new duties, which called for fresh understandings of power and virtue.³³

Never a saint, Washington was a man whose intense desire for honor dovetailed with the American people’s need for leader-

ship. During the quest for independence, as Washington responded to the meaning of the Revolution, he became more republican and egalitarian in his apprehension of honor.³⁴ “By Yorktown,” writes Alan Pell Crawford, “Washington seemed less the Old World patrician than New World democrat, as he relied increasingly on the sound judgment and native ingenuity of men such as Henry Knox.”³⁵

A school dropout, Knox was a devoted student of military history who impressed Washington not with his professional experience—for he was a bookseller, not an army officer—or his place in the social hierarchy but with his energy, commitment, and resourcefulness. Washington put him in command of the artillery of the Continental Army, where Knox performed responsibly and well. He and Nathanael Greene—who began his education in military tactics by reading manuals from Henry Knox’s bookshop—became their commander’s favorite generals.³⁶

The larger cause of liberty not only transformed Washington’s understanding of honor; it also reduced his assessment of the value of possessing authority not granted by the people. What was important was what this dangerous instrument, power, was used for, who wielded it, and whether it was in accord with the consent of the governed. Attending to the demands of this nascent republic, with its new political realities, required patience in all its forms. As Harned writes: “Patience is a civic virtue.” In society at large, “there can be no representative government without the patience that sustains an electoral process.”³⁷

And in a republic, leaders must accommodate themselves to what Harned, following Kierkegaard, refers to as “the slowness of the good.”³⁸ Edmund S. Morgan describes the

development of Washington’s “remarkable” ability to tolerate temporary problems while waiting for the people first to feel the wrong that needs fixing and then to discern the best way forward. Morgan praises Washington’s “patience in waiting for the people to do the right thing.”³⁹

During the Revolution, despite endless frustrations with obtaining needed resources from Congress, Washington remained patient. Morgan writes: “Although Washington’s complaints to Congress were fruitless, he never appealed over the heads of Congress to their constituents”—for two reasons. First, he did not want the British to know the true condition of the Continental Army—“when the only thing between him and defeat was the fact that the enemy did not realize how weak he was.” Second, his forbearance in working with elected representatives was directly linked to his republican virtue: “In spite of the imperious manner in which he bolstered his ability to command, Washington was a republican. He had been fully persuaded that the king of England and the minions surrounding him were conspiring to destroy the liberties of Americans.” Therefore he accepted that the “principles of republican liberty” required that the military “be forever subordinate to the civil power.” Congress and the state governments might be shortsighted and stingy, but Washington “never even suggested that he and his army should be anything but their servants.”

He could have raised a large popular following on his own and commanded troops “in defiance of the do-nothing congress”—and his officers and men would have supported him. “But he accepted the premises of republican government as an Oliver Cromwell never did.” Even if he had to submit to “a body that became increasingly incompetent, irresponsible, and corrupt, he never sought power on any other terms than those on

which he had initially accepted it, as servant of the people.” Therefore he stood against all threats—whether mutinies by the men or revolts by his officers—to undermine the civil authority; and, in the end, he willingly handed over the power entrusted to him.⁴⁰

Another possible influence on Washington’s commitment to patience is one that is easily overlooked, especially in the context of relinquishing power. Although he almost never referred to Jesus in his written statements, in his “Circular to State Governments” (1783), Washington did mention him as a pattern. Composed in the last months of the Revolution, this message incorporated Washington’s “earnest prayer...that God would...incline the hearts of the Citizens...to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another...and to demean ourselves with that Charity, humility and pacific temper of mind, which were the Characteristicks of the Divine Author of our blessed Religion, and without an humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy Nation.”⁴¹ “Charity, humility and pacific temper of mind” embraced in imitation of Jesus and exercised in relation to others are three moral habits that effectively circumscribe the substance of the virtue of patience.

Throughout his life, a fairly regular—although by no means an every-Sunday—participant in divine worship, Washington was apparently not an orthodox Trinitarian believer (although he was so reserved about personal matters that no one knows for sure).⁴² But even if he was a latitudinarian Anglican, an Enlightenment Christian, or a conservative Deist, he would have viewed Jesus as—at least—an exemplar of virtue. In the published circular just quoted, he goes

further, of course, and refers to Jesus as “the Divine Author of our blessed Religion.” Whenever he was in church, Washington could not have failed to be aware of the core elements of the narrative of Jesus Christ. Described not only in hymns and prayers and creeds, in scripture readings and sermons, but also in visible symbols, the patience of Christ was everywhere exhibited.

As a soldier or statesman more attracted by the moral behavior enjoined by religion or philosophy than by metaphysical doctrine or sacred ritual, Washington would have attended to the lineaments of Jesus’s life. As David Harned makes clear in *Patience*, Jesus’s story features the central paradox of handing over and thereby realizing his destiny. And his followers’ vocational truth is expressed in a related paradox: patient service yields perfect freedom.⁴³ As Harned writes: “Paradoxical as it may seem, self-denial can provide us with unexpected strength that otherwise we never could have found for ourselves.”⁴⁴

For George Washington, his stature and his standing down were two sides of the same coin of character and command. He achieved nobility in the way he responded to the initiatives—and the yearnings—of his countrymen; their patriotic hopes drew out the best in him. The paradigm of the “Divine Author” of his religion may have influenced him as well. In his lifetime at least, Washington the man did not become a mere monument; he remained, almost literally, too grounded in the soil of his beloved Mount Vernon to let that happen.⁴⁵ Thus he never became completely absorbed by his role as general or president; he preserved his integrity as a person. In George Washington’s leadership as well as in its lasting benefits, we can appreciate the good fruits of the patience of power. †

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- 1 Peter R. Henriques, *Realistic Visionary: A Portrait of George Washington* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 41, 42.
- 2 Edmund S. Morgan, *The Genius of George Washington* (New York: Norton, 1977), 6.
- 3 Henriques, *Realistic Visionary*, 2; Joseph J. Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington* (New York: Vintage, 2004), 47, 51, 64.
- 4 Don Higginbotham, *George Washington and George Marshall: Some Reflections on the American Military Tradition*, the Harmon Memorial Lectures in Military History, no. 26 (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 1984), 12.
- 5 Richard Brookhiser, *Founding Father: Rediscovering George Washington* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 6; see also 116, 118–19.
- 6 See Edward G. Lengel, *General George Washington: A Military Life* (New York: Random House, 2005), 34–42.
- 7 James Thomas Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (New York: Back Bay, 1974), 37. See Ellis, *His Excellency*, 12–18.
- 8 Marcus Cunliffe, *George Washington: Man and Monument* (New York: New American Library, 1958), 54. See Henriques, *Realistic Visionary*, ch. 1.
- 9 Letter of George Washington to Reverend John Rodgers, June 11, 1783, in *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, 39 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1931–44), 27:1.
- 10 Gordon S. Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 34–35; Myron Magnet, *The Founders at Home: The Building of America, 1735–1817* (New York: Norton, 2014), 109.
- 11 Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington: A Biography*, 7 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1952), 5:489. See Magnet, *The Founders at Home*, 160.
- 12 Hugh Bicheno, "Washington, Gen. George," in *The Oxford Companion to Military History*, ed. Richard Holmes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 985.
- 13 Lengel, *General George Washington*, 269–72.
- 14 Letter of George Washington to John Banister, April 21, 1778, in *George Washington: Writings*, ed. John Rhodehamel (New York: Library of America, 1997), 303.
- 15 Joseph Ellis believes that "in the end, steadfastness was [Washington's] most valuable attribute, along with the stamina that accompanied it," *His Excellency*, 88.
- 16 Ellis, *His Excellency*, 92, 95, 97, 99, 107, 109; Lengel, *General George Washington*, 150.
- 17 Letter of George Washington to George Clinton, February 16, 1778, in Rhodehamel, *George Washington: Writings*, 292.
- 18 See Ron Chernow, *Washington: A Life* (New York: Penguin, 2010), 433–36.
- 19 Chernow, *Washington*, 436. See Lengel, *General George Washington*, 349.
- 20 For analysis by an ethically minded historian, see George Marsden, "The American Revolution: Partisanship, 'Just Wars,' and Crusades," in *The Wars of America: Christian Views*, ed. Ronald A. Wells (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 11–24.
- 21 John Barton, "Angry in Verse," review of *The Book of Job: A Biography*, by Mark Larrimore, *Times Literary Supplement*, March 14, 2014, 24.
- 22 Mark Larrimore, *The Book of Job: A Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 14–15 (emphasis in original).
- 23 Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), 129.
- 24 W. H. Vanstone, *The Stature of Waiting* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1982), ch. 6; David Baily Harned, *Patience: How We Wait Upon the World* (1997; rev. ed., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), chs. 1, 2, 6.
- 25 Wood, *Revolutionary Characters*, 41, 42.
- 26 Garry Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 23.
- 27 Michael Knox Beran, "The Private Faces of Public Virtue," review of *The Founders at Home: The Building of America, 1735–1817*, by Myron Magnet, *Claremont Review of Books* 14, no. 3 (Summer 2014): 63.
- 28 Beran, "The Private Faces," 64.
- 29 John R. Alden, *George Washington: A Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 90.
- 30 See Vanstone, *The Stature of Waiting*, 35; Brookhiser, *Founding Father*, 121–36; Ellis, *His Excellency*, 109.
- 31 Letter of George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, August 23, 1792, in Rhodehamel, *George Washington: Writings*, 817 (emphasis in original).
- 32 Wood, *Revolutionary Characters*, 37–41.
- 33 Henry Steele Commager, "Leadership in Eighteenth-Century America and Today," *Daedalus* 90, no. 4 (1961): 655.
- 34 Beran, "The Private Faces," 64. See David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 273; Lengel, *General George Washington*, 196; Chernow, *Washington: A Life*, 196.
- 35 Alan Pell Crawford, "A Few Men of Character," review of *George Washington: Gentleman Warrior*, by Stephen Brumwell, and *Sons of the Father*, by Robert M. S. McDonald, *Wall Street Journal*, December 10, 2013, A17.
- 36 Lengel, *General George Washington*, xxviii; Magnet, *The Founders at Home*, 139.
- 37 Harned, *Patience*, 17.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 100.
- 39 Morgan, *The Genius*, 14.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 12–13.
- 41 George Washington, "Circular to State Governments," June 8, 1783, in Rhodehamel, *George Washington: Writings*, 526. See Mary V. Thompson, "In the Hands of a Good Providence": *Religion in the Life of George Washington* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 102–3; Michael Novak and Jana Novak, *Washington's God: Religion, Liberty, and the Father of Our Country* (New York: Basic, 2006), 156–58; and Brookhiser, *Founding Father*, 147–48.
- 42 See David L. Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), ch. 6; Magnet, *The Founders at Home*, 208–9.
- 43 See Harned, *Patience*, 39.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 86.
- 45 See Magnet, *The Founders at Home*, chs. 3–5; Wood, *Revolutionary Characters*, 34. In his last will and testament, George Washington divided Mount Vernon into five separate plots with different heirs, thereby precluding the possibility of a dynasty. And he made provisions to free the slaves that he owned and to provide funds to care for very young freed slaves as well as the old and infirm. Joseph Ellis sees Washington's will as "his ultimate exit statement, a wholly personal expression of his willingness to surrender power in a truly final fashion as he prepared to depart the stage of life itself," *His Excellency*, 265.