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“If Men Were Angels”: Constitution-Making and
Ambition in the Careers of Hamilton and Cicero

This paper will draw a comparison between the approaches to republican constitutionality that are made evident in recent biographies of Cicero and Alexander Hamilton. Although their lifetimes were separated by millennia, the similarities between these two figures as lawmakers and interpreters at crucial stages in the evolution of their polities are striking. The differences between them are also obvious, but they too are instructive for polities that are once again at a constitutional crossroads.

The paper will hold constant the idea of a constitution as a framework for lawmaking and as a balance between individual liberty and state security. Constitutionalism will be considered in light of the ambitions of the two protagonists and the fate of each political system during their time in the public arena.

Particular attention will be paid to the education and evolving socio-political status of both figures. Cicero's rapid rise to the consulship and Hamilton's swift rise to the position of *de facto* premier illuminate the interplay of statecraft and ambition. Their roles as famous advocates who used agile, even dangerous, intellects in the service of their own advancement provide excellent examples of the juxtaposition of expediency and patriotic innovation.