CICERO'S ROLE IN THE FALL OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

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Cicero’s Role in the Fall of the Roman Republic

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Just before the end of the Roman Republic, Cicero tried to defend the republican government that Rome had had for almost 500 years. Cicero was unsuccessful because he put too much trust in Octavian to help him preserve the republic when Octavian was the follower and heir of Caesar. Cicero made this error because he was too conceited, because he was unwilling to engage personally in the military conflict, and because he was too willing to trust Octavian. The result was that Octavian overthrew the republic and proscribed and executed many of his enemies including Cicero.

The reasons for Cicero’s error can be understood from Cicero’s Catilinarian Orations. In the Catilinarian Orations, Cicero shows immense vanity, ascribing to himself alone the salvation of the Roman Republic. He also only uses oratory in dealing with his enemy Catiline, rather than force. Most Ancient authors who wrote about Cicero noted that he was disinclined to engage in military service and hated violence. Also, in his Philippics condemning Marc Antony, Cicero showed that he was reluctant to oppose Antony at first but later was compelled to condemn him because Antony threatened him. Cicero also showed his worst mistake in asking the Senate to make Octavian, the heir of the dictator Caesar, propraetor and give him the military command.

The result of Cicero’s policy of appeasing Octavian and avoiding personal involvement in the military struggle over the republic led to the end of Cicero’s life and the republic.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The discussion of the fall of the Roman Republic requires a consideration of Cicero’s role. It was Cicero who, in his *Philippics*, proposed to the Roman Senate that it give Octavian military command, the office of propraetor, and membership in the Senate, and even suggested that Octavian become consul long before the age prescribed by law.\(^1\) Octavian did eventually become consul,\(^2\) and transformed the Roman Republic into a monarchy.\(^3\) Thus Cicero did contribute to the fall of the republic by his efforts to advance Octavian’s career.

The ancient sources tend to confirm the notion that Cicero had an aversion to violence or personal participation in military activity. In the *Catiliniarian Orations*, Cicero displayed also a reluctance to punish Catiline and was only willing to execute a few of his fellow conspirators. Cicero was to show his same aversion to violence in the period just before the fall of the republic, when he urged action against Antony but did not himself lead any military force against him. Instead, Cicero proposed that Octavian lead the military effort that Cicero thought would be directed against Antony but instead was employed to bring an end to the republic and the end to Cicero’s life.

To understand the fall of the republic, it is useful to examine the reasons why Cicero made the decision to support Octavian, instead of handling the military crisis which emerged after the death of Caesar with a command under his own personal leadership. For this reason Cicero’s negative views on violence and military conflict are important for an understanding of his decision. Cicero’s views were important to him, and he was willing to risk himself for them, but in a way that did not involve his personal participation in military activity. Even more important was Cicero’s personality, which was characterized by a desire to avoid

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3 Ibid., 5.
violence and military service, and a vanity which made him liable to trust those who complimented him, as Octavian did. Octavian’s praise of Cicero contributed to Cicero’s policy of using oratory against his enemy Antony, while leaving to Octavian and others the task of military leadership.

This study will be an attempt to explain Cicero’s role in the fall of the republic by an analysis of his views and personality. The first chapter, the introduction, will give the opening argument and provide the historiographical basis for the thesis. The second chapter will discuss the opinions of the ancient sources on Cicero’s views and personality, with an emphasis on Plutarch’s biography of Cicero. The third chapter will deal with Cicero’s *Catilinarian Orations*, to show how reluctant he was to employ violence in suppressing the Catilinarian conspiracy. The fourth chapter will use Cicero’s *Philippics* to show that, although he was willing to use force against Antony, who had strongly criticized him, he nevertheless praised Octavian and substantially contributed to Octavian’s military and political power. The fifth chapter will be concerned with Cicero’s letters, and will demonstrate both how Cicero detested conflict and how he trusted in Octavian almost until the last moment, after Octavian had flattered him. The sixth chapter will be the conclusion, which will sum up the arguments of the previous chapters and expand upon the thesis that Cicero’s views on violence and militarism, as well as his timid and vain personality, contributed to the decision he made to support Octavian’s career.

This chapter will first give the main argument. Then it will give a summary of Cicero’s life, so that the reader can have a background for the events and their dates that were involved in Cicero’s career. After that, it will demonstrate how authors who comment on Cicero’s oratory show that Cicero was more theoretical than practical, and had a high regard for his importance to the state. Next it will show that Cicero thought that law and justice were of supreme importance because he thought they had a divine origin. Subsequently, the chapter will give the opinions of authors on Cicero who believe that Cicero hated civil war and thought it was the worst thing imaginable. Then the chapter will present commentators’ positions on Cicero’s views toward violence, arguing that Cicero thought that violence

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should only be used as a last resort and that there were many exceptions to the use of violence. After that, the chapter will show how historians agree that Cicero detested military activity and tried his best to avoid participation in it. The next section will relate that some authors believed that Cicero was cowardly, while others thought that Cicero had at least moral courage. Then the chapter will show that some authors believe that Cicero contributed to the advancement of Octavian to supreme power. Finally, the conclusion to the chapter will discuss how the historiography of Cicero changed and bring out what is missing in the scholarship.

**SUMMARY OF CICERO’S LIFE**

A summary of Cicero’s life will help in following the various stages of his career and show the background to the strife that eventually destroyed the republic. Cicero was born on January 3, 106 B.C in the town of Arpinum. Cicero studied oratory under the Rhodian rhetorician Molo and strived to be a superior orator. In 75 B.C., Cicero entered on the *cursus honorum*, the set of political offices which led to the consulship, by being elected quaestor for Western Sicily. Cicero began his position as consul, the highest office in Rome, on January 1, 63 B.C. During Cicero’s consulship in 63 B.C., Catiline began a conspiracy against the government of Rome. Cicero succeeded in suppressing the conspiracy with the backing of the , and was honored as the “Father of his Country” for doing so. In March 58 B.C. the tribune Clodius arranged for Cicero’s exile for having illegally executed some of the Catilinarian conspirators.

In August 57 B.C. Cicero returned from exile. Cicero became the proconsul of Cilicia in 51 B.C. From the civil war which broke out between Caesar and Pompey in 49

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6 Ibid., 19.
9 Rawson, 73.
10 Ibid., 80.
11 Ibid., 116.
12 Smith, 122.
B.C. to Pompey’s defeat in 48 B.C., Cicero tended to take Pompey’s side. Cicero made up with Caesar in 47 B.C. and went back to Rome. Caesar was assassinated on March 15, 44 B.C. From September 2, 44 B.C. to April 21, 43 B.C. Cicero delivered his fourteen Philippics against Marc Antony. On August 19, 43 B.C. Octavian became consul, and in October 43 B.C. Octavian, Antony and Lepidus came to an agreement with each other, and ordered the death of Cicero. They had Cicero killed on December 7, 43 B.C.

**CICERO’S ORATORY**

Cicero’s oratory was used in a way that was more inclined to propound ideals than to achieve a practical result. Cicero sought to convey by his consular speeches that he was a “serious politician who serves selflessly the interests of Rome and rallies the Senate and Roman people to work for the good of the *res publica*.” Cicero made a vow, and kept it, not to take a province after his consulship, thus undermining his power. Although he had described himself as a member of the Populares, Cicero unrealistically told the tribunes to reestablish the old authority of the Senate. Cape shows that Cicero’s oratory is dominated by appeal to principle, when he says that he will negotiate openly while his enemies negotiate in the dark. Jérôme Carcopino leads one to believe that Cicero’s ideals were unrealistic, and that he made his principles more important than what was practical. Carcopino says that

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13 Rawson, 164-165.
14 Smith, 221.
15 Ibid., 224.
17 Ibid., 271.
18 Stockton, 318.
19 Ibid., 331.
20 Ibid., 332.
22 Ibid., 123.
23 Ibid., 124.
Cicero was “only an armchair theorist, and he kept a water-tight bulkhead between thought and act, between the writing of books and the conduct of his life.”

Cicero’s oratory was in large part designed to influence others to believe that he was a great person and was liable to be influenced by people like Octavian because of his vanity. Cecil W. Wooten claims that Cicero took up the Demosthenic method of oratory which identified the orator with the existence of the orator’s state. Thus an attack on Cicero was considered by Cicero to be an attack on Rome, and vice versa. By taking up this position, Cicero put himself in the place of someone who could be influenced by those who spoke in his favor, but be irreconcilable to someone who spoke against him. Cicero thus showed himself to be conceited. Rawson believes that it was because Pompey did not praise Cicero’s consulship that Cicero became critical of Pompey.

Cicero’s oratory tended to put him in the position that he was on the approval of others. Cicero’s oratory was characterized, as was Demosthenes’, with taking up a decisive position and sticking with it to the end without compromise. Like the oratory of Demosthenes, the oratory of Cicero portrayed his opponent’s position and his own in black and white terms, which Wooten calls “the struggle of good against evil.”

Works on Cicero’s oratory show that he believed that he had great importance, and that his oratory took on the view that he was on the side of good and his enemies were on the side of evil. What needs to be added is that in consequence of this Cicero tended to trust those who praised him and despise those who criticized him. This led to the situation near the end of the republic in 44 and 43 B.C., when Cicero relied on Octavian to lead military forces against Antony.

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26 Ibid., 57.
27 Rawson, 91-93.
28 Wooten, 58.
THE BASIS OF CICERO’S VIEWS

Cicero’s behavior towards the end of the republic was determined to some extent by his views, so that he was influenced by those who showed sympathy for them by supporting him. Cicero’s views were important to him, because he believed they had a religious basis. Cicero based his philosophy on religion, and thought that philosophy should be the basis of politics. Cicero’s religious beliefs were described in his *Tusculan Disputations*, and his political philosophy is largely to be found in his *On the Laws* and his *Republic*. Neal Wood asserts that Cicero thought politics should be guided by philosophy.29 According to John E. Rexine, Cicero believed in the existence of a supreme being, and thought that philosophy was of divine origin. Rexine also says that Cicero thought law came from a supreme being. He believed that all humans had divinity in them and so they had reason.30 Wood further elucidates that Cicero believed in the principle of natural law, and thought that it was a product of the mind of God and not humans. Although Cicero believed in a supreme God, he did also believe in the existence of gods, identifying the gods with God. Cicero believed natural law was in the souls of all human beings, and was “absolute, eternal, immutable, and universal.”31 Wood relates that Cicero believed that law comes from the reason inherent in all human beings, and that justice has the same absolute and universal quality of law.32 Wood says that, according to Cicero, justice was essential to the preservation of society.33

Wood asserts that Cicero believed that the state was distinct from government and society, and that everything that was human could only exist if the state existed.34 As Radford states, Cicero believed that when there was a form of tyranny in existence, whether it was through a dictator, an oligarchy, or mob rule, there was no state at all in existence.

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31 Wood, 71.
32 Ibid., 72-73.
33 Ibid., 74.
34 Ibid., 120.
Cicero called the state the res publica (republic). Wood says that Cicero believed nothing was more important than the republic, not even life itself.

The scholarship shows that Cicero’s political ideals were based on his religious beliefs. It demonstrates that Cicero thought that law and justice were absolute and of the highest value. What the scholarship does not explain is how Cicero’s beliefs about the divine origins of law and justice affected his political policies. Cicero would highly prize political order and would not want to threaten it. Consequently, he tended to dislike any form of conflict that would imperil it.

**CICERO AND CIVIL WAR**

It is not surprising, in the light of Cicero’s philosophical emphasis on the value of the republic, that he detested civil war, which could destroy it, and so sought to avoid a conflict with Octavian. As Christian Habicht states, Cicero several times said that he believed in the opinion of his mentor Scaevola, that civil war was the worst thing imaginable. In the struggle between Caesar and Pompey, Cicero could see no good result, no matter who won. He thought that in either case it would mean the end of the republic. He thought that peace was necessary. He repeated what Scaevola had said, that even an unjust peace is preferable to civil war.

According to D.R. Shackleton Bailey, Cicero thought that Pompey should seek peace. Bailey states that although he took the side of Pompey in the war with Caesar, Cicero claimed that he had taken no part in the war. Bailey refers to Cicero’s statement that there would never be a free state as long as Caesar and Pompey lived. Bailey again shows Cicero’s aversion to civil war when he describes his meeting with Caesar. Caesar demanded

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36 Wood, 121.


38 Ibid., 62.


40 Ibid., 147.

41 Ibid., 154.
that Cicero support Caesar, but Cicero refused to do it unless Caesar did not put armies in Greece and Spain to fight the Pompeians with.\footnote{Shackleton-Bailey, 155.}

Cicero showed his dislike for civil war when he did his best to end the civil war once it had begun. As Anthony Everitt states, even after the Senate demanded that Caesar disband his army or be outlawed, Cicero sought compromise.\footnote{Anthony Everitt, \textit{Cicero – The Life and Times of Rome’s Greatest Politician} (New York: Random House, 2003), 205.} Even though Pompey had Cicero watch the Campanian coast for him, Cicero still sought to remain neutral.\footnote{Ibid., 208-209.} Everitt reinforces the notion that Cicero saw the victory of either side as the end of the constitution, and states that Cicero believed that Pompey would enact a revolution like that of Sulla.\footnote{Ibid., \textit{Cicero}, 210.} Manfred Fuhrmann brings up Cicero’s preference of peace to war in his speech against Piso,\footnote{Manfred Fuhrmann, \textit{Cicero and the Roman Republic}, trans. W. E. Yuill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 85.} and says that when Cicero went into exile, he claimed that he had done it willingly in order to prevent a civil war.\footnote{Ibid., 95.}

Cicero’s political policies emphasized the importance of harmony in the state, and he sought to bring together as many of what he called “the best people” together against the common enemy. Cicero took up the political slogan \textit{concordia ordinum} (the harmony of the orders). This was a policy designed to prevent the different sectors of society from going into conflict with each other. Cicero thought that justice was necessary for this harmony, and that it was the most effective method of preserving the state. He thought that he had achieved such a harmony during his consulship. Cicero believed that the \textit{concordia ordinum} led up to another principle, \textit{cum dignitate otium}. \textit{Otium} can either mean “peace” or “leisure,” but in this instance Cicero referred to it as seeking the common good and avoiding causing harm to others.\footnote{Radford, 35-36.} Manfred Fuhrmann refers to Cicero’s political policy in favor of what Cicero called the \textit{consensus omnium bonorum} (the consensus of all good people). According
to Fuhrmann, Cicero believed that all good people should come together for the preservation of the traditional order, or republican liberty.\footnote{Fuhrmann, 75.}

The scholarship shows that Cicero believed that civil war was the worst of evils. However, he was willing to take exception near the end of the existence of the Roman Republic in 44 and 43 B.C. The scholarship does not bring up the view that Cicero was willing to engage in civil war if he thought that the stakes were high enough and that it was unavoidable. Nor does it indicate that Cicero’s distaste for civil war meant that he wouldn’t engage in it himself but would use some other individual to promote his aims. Near the end of the republic, Cicero thought Antony was enough of a threat to encourage civil war, but did not engage in it himself. Instead, Cicero encouraged Octavian to take command in order to defeat Antony.

**CICERO’S VIEWS ON VIOLENCE**

Cicero was not totally opposed to violence in principle, but thought that it had its uses only under certain limited conditions, which explains Cicero’s reluctance to engage in civil conflict towards the end of the republic himself while he nevertheless approved of it against the incorrigible Antony. Neal Wood describes Cicero’s attitude toward violence. Wood says that Cicero believed that there should be no leniency towards enemies or law breakers, but that one should always be severe with them. Wood states that Cicero believed that the severity should always be “impartial, consistent, and firm.”\footnote{Wood, 182.}

Wood states that Cicero advocated violence contrary to the law as a political instrument in special cases. When law and order break down, Cicero might perhaps approve of the use of violence when self-defense, survival and the safety of the state were involved. Cicero believed that violence should only be used when there was the possibility of success. He thought that it should not become an end in itself and thus degenerate into tyranny, and be used only when there was no other alternative. Wood shows how Cicero looked upon violence as a terrible thing and always a last resort. Cicero forbade violence at public meetings. Wood quotes Cicero: “Nothing is more destructive to governments, nothing is in

\[\text{\footnote{Fuhrmann, 75.}}\]
\[\text{\footnote{Wood, 182.}}\]
such complete opposition to justice and law, nothing is less suitable for civilized men, than
the use of violence in a state which has a fixed and definite constitution.”  

Wood discusses Cicero’s view of violence in *On Duties*. Wood states that Cicero in
this work said that there were two ways of resolving disputes, one with discussion, which
was the way of humans, and the other with war, which was the way of beasts. Cicero said
that war should only be engaged in when discussion was impossible and even then only in
self-defense. Wood tries to make the point that Cicero approved of violence by referring to
Cicero’s praise of Dolabella’s use of violence on rioters. But Wood admits that Cicero’s
policy toward violence “rests on the assumption that the safety of the state takes precedence
over all other considerations.” Wood believes that the definition of what constitutes a
justification of violence in Cicero’s eyes lies with the *viri boni*, or “good men,” who are to
decide when violence is to be used. The “good men” are the best citizens, or the *optimates*.
When government breaks down the “good men” must take charge and may use violence.  

Wood states that Cicero advocated the assassination of tyrants on the grounds that they
threaten the common good and the state.

Wood gives some examples of exceptions Cicero takes toward violence. Wood states
that Cicero believed that violence must only be used when law cannot be used, and that when
law breaks down violence must be met with violence, but only on “a sudden and pressing
emergency.”  

Again, Wood states that Cicero believed that one must have superior military
force to employ violence. Wood also says that Cicero thought violence should not be
allowed to put the state in the condition in which there are “hostile and irreconcilable
camps.” In such cases the best policy would be to go into retirement. This goes back again
to Cicero’s aversion to civil war, and his reliance on using what he considered the best
people in such a way as not to antagonize them toward his cause.

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51 Wood, 185-186; Cicero, *De Legibus*, trans. Clinton Walker Keyes (Cambridge: Harvard University,
1977), 509.

52 Wood, 185-189.

53 Ibid., 192.

54 Ibid., 189-191.

55 Ibid., 191.
Rawson says that when Cicero entered upon his consulship, he gave a speech expressing his wish to preserve the peace. Rawson says that Cicero said he would “use his consulship to oppose violence and revolution; peace and harmony are what the People really want.” Rawson asserts that Cicero reinforced this idea with his speech on the agrarian law that was proposed during his consulship. Cicero believed that there were two sides: one, the “good people,” who supported the laws, peace, the power of the Senate and property rights, and the other side the “seditious,” the “wicked,” and those whom they misled. Rawson says that “Cicero had always boasted of his mildness.” Rawson relates a speech Cicero made while prosecuting a pro-Clodian tribune, Bursa, for violence. Cicero said: “I rejoice more at this than my enemy’s [Clodius’] death. I prefer the operation of the courts to violence.”

While some scholars believe that Cicero believed violence was sometimes necessary, most do not emphasize that Cicero only believed in the use of violence only under the most pressing conditions. Cicero believed that violence was a last resort and would only engage in it when he thought that the state was in danger of being overthrown. Cicero was not a pacifist, but he tended nevertheless to believe that in most cases violence was undesirable.

**CICERO AND MILITARISM**

Cicero’s personal dislike of engaging in warfare himself is shown in those two times in his life when he was involved in wars, in his youth during the Social War and in his governorship of Cilicia. Bailey believes of Cicero’s engagement at the age of seventeen in the Social War that “though brief, it was apparently enough to give him a lasting distaste for active service.” Fuhrmann discusses Cicero’s appointment as governor of the province of Cilicia, which involved a certain amount of warfare. Fuhrmann states that Cicero hated his

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57 Ibid., 66.
58 Ibid., 81.
59 Ibid., 139.
60 Ibid., 9.
governorship and saw it as a second exile, being obsessed with the date of his return. Fuhrmann refers to Cicero’s “utterly unsoldierly nature,” and says that “he was no soldier, he detested violence.” Fuhrmann also refers to Cicero’s poetic work in which he states: “May the sword give way to the toga, and the laurel yield to the word.” Habicht agrees in saying of Cicero, “He was not made for war and desperately tried to stay out of it.” H. H. Scullard reinforces the notion that Cicero disliked military life, “seeking political advancement through the bar rather than through the army.”

Smith says that Cicero’s service in the Social War was “brief and distasteful,” and against his nature. Smith asserts that Cicero made a deliberate choice to avoid military service, and that it was the cause of his political failure. Smith adds that Cicero preferred intellectual to physical activities. Smith ascribes Cicero’s attitudes towards warfare to his upbringing. He says that Cicero was taught, when a youth, to admire the nobility and the republican constitution, and that if he had not been brought up that way he might have found out “that the future lay not with the politicians but with the generals.” Smith believes that Cicero thought that the republic had failed because of military control. Smith says that Cicero hated military service and had almost no military experience. Smith says of Cicero: “Neither his interests nor his talents inclined him to military pursuits.”

Rawson says that, when Cicero was governor of Cilicia, he was aware of his military incapacity and took on a militarily experienced subordinate, C. Pomptinus. While Pomptinus did most of the fighting, Cicero was nevertheless the one whom the soldiers

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61 Fuhrmann, 123-124.
62 Ibid., 14-15.
63 Ibid., 85.
64 Habicht, 63.
66 Smith, 20.
67 Ibid., 26.
68 Ibid., 61.
69 Ibid., 221.
70 Rawson, 165.
hailed as *imperator*. Rawson also states that although Cicero was openly for Pompey, he said that privately he would urge Pompey to make peace. She believes that Cicero’s claim that he was sick when Caesar and Pompey fought the battle of Pharsalus so he could not participate, just might have been an excuse to avoid battle. Rawson says that even after Brutus and Cassius had killed Caesar, Cicero said that he, Brutus and Cassius only wanted peace. Rawson believed that the reason Cicero set out to go to Greece was that he wanted to avoid the civil war that was imminent. Rawson reports that Cicero, even at this time, “had no intention of quarrelling with Antony.”

Catherine Steel says that “whatever happened to Cicero in the army during the Social war convinced him either that he did not want to be a soldier or that he did not have the skills to make a serious mark in the field.” Even after the Social War, according to Steel, Cicero avoided every chance to be a soldier until he was reluctantly sent as governor to Cilicia. Steel states that Cicero’s idea of letting the arms yield to the toga failed, due to what Steel calls “the inevitable superiority of arms.”

The scholarship is in agreement that Cicero disliked military activity. Cicero only engaged in it twice in his life, first as a soldier during the Social War, then as a commander in Cilicia. On both occasions, Cicero tried his best to get out of military service and did not like it in any way. Nevertheless, the scholarship does not take into account that Cicero did have a military command, which was the case with Cicero’s command in Cilicia. This means that Cicero could have done the same thing near the end of the republic as he had done in Cilicia, and taken command but relied upon an effective and loyal subordinate to bring about success against Antony. Instead, Cicero relied on Octavian, who was the heir of

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71 Rawson, 169.
72 Ibid., 187.
73 Ibid., 201.
74 Ibid., 264-265.
75 Ibid., 268.
76 Catherine Steel, *Reading Cicero: Genre and Performance in Late Republican Rome* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 2005), 17.
77 Ibid., 61.
Caesar and for that reason not a trustworthy advocate for the republic. Cicero’s promotion of Octavian’s career thus contributed to the fall of the republic.

**CICERO AND COURAGE**

Critics of Cicero’s approach towards violent conflict sometimes go so far as to accuse him of cowardice. Theodor Mommsen makes this claim as he narrates Cicero’s policy toward the Catilinarian conspirators who had been caught plotting to assassinate him and overthrow the Roman government. Mommsen claims that when death sentences were considered against the conspirators, Cicero would gladly have rejected execution and be seen as a “liberal.” But Mommsen says that Cicero, “like all cowards anxiously endeavoring to avoid the appearance of cowardice, and yet trembling before the formidable responsibility, in his distress convoked the , and left it to that body to decide as to the life or death of the four prisoners.” Mommsen says that there was no point in going to the Senate, because ultimately the responsibility for the execution of the prisoners fell to Cicero, because he was the consul. Mommsen responds to this with “when was cowardice ever consistent?”

Mommsen undermines his argument somewhat by his reference to Cicero’s defense of Roscius, who was being charged with murder for the benefit of a favorite of the dictator Sulla. Mommsen declares that Cicero “speedily made himself a name by the mingled caution and boldness of his opposition to the dictator.” But he reinforces his argument further by calling Cicero one who went to one party and then the other for support.

John C. Rolfe refutes Mommsen’s view that Cicero was a coward. He says that Cicero had “both moral and physical courage in great emergencies. The man who defied Sulla, impeached Verres, executed the Catilinarian conspirators, joined Pompey’s forlorn hope, and despised Antony’s swords was no craven.” As Rolfe admits, however, Cicero had “no taste for military life.”

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79 Ibid., 266.
80 Ibid., 470.
82 Ibid., 24.
Smith thinks that Cicero showed courage of conviction in spite of his distaste for military activity. Smith refers to Cicero’s defense of Roscius as a dangerous thing, because Cicero was going against Sulla’s powerful freedman Chrysogonus. Smith says that Cicero had to openly attack Chrysogonus without criticizing Sulla. To attack Chrysogonus, Smith says, Cicero needed “both skill and courage.” Smith asserts that all but those who believed in either political extreme thought that Cicero had “courage and sincerity.” Smith believes that Cicero showed courage in refusing an assignment from Caesar, when Clodius was threatening him. According to Smith, Cicero did not resist Clodius because Cicero thought it would lead to bloodshed and perhaps cause a civil war.

Michael Grant gives testimony to Cicero’s moral courage in his “courageous attack upon one of the most unscrupulous – and best protected – governors, Verres in Sicily.” Nevertheless, Michael Grant refers to Cicero as “a hesitant and timid man.” Neal Wood is very sure of Cicero’s dedication to principle, saying that “about his patriotism and dedication to the common good as he perceived it, there can be no reservation.” Nevertheless Wood says that Cicero lacked “ruthlessness” and “unrelenting courage.” Wood says that Cicero displayed “extreme caution” and “habitual temporizing.” Wood also says that Cicero failed to show “military talent or to become a soldier of distinction.” Wood says that of the seven major statesmen of the last century of the Roman Republic Cicero was the only one “without military expertise or experience.” Wood criticizes him for showing “vacillation” and “procrastination, but says that he was “not without courage.”

Michael Grant, like Wood, gives credit to Cicero for dedication to principle. Grant states that Cicero was willing to fight against his opponents in spite of terrible discouragements for his republican principles and against tyrannical rule. Grant says that Cicero was determined to struggle for the freedom of the individual against odds and

83 Smith, 28.
84 Ibid., 84.
85 Ibid., 152.
86 Ibid., 158.
88 Ibid., 34.
89 Wood, 54.
establish the state on consistent moral principles which should never be changed. Grant believes that Cicero held the opinion that right and wrong are irreconcilable and that no law can change one into the other. Grant also asserts that Cicero was completely against the concept of dictatorship. Grant says that throughout his career Cicero did everything he could to prevent tyrannical forms of government from coming into existence, and to support republican government, which he considered to be the only stable and balanced form of government. Grant says that Cicero failed because he could not handle the “cutthroat” politics of late Republican Rome, and was only aided by his eloquence in combating his enemies.90

Although Grant believes that Cicero was dedicated to his cause, he admits that Cicero had certain weaknesses which got in the way of his purpose. Grant says that Cicero was characterized by “snobbery, vanity, extravagance, vacillation and a too emotional and rancorous judgment of political problems – not to mention a tendency to make enemies by injudicious jokes.” Grant says that Cicero’s performance was not up to par with his ideals and statements. Grant believes that Cicero never completely gave up his principles even though he faced great danger and then death. Grant opines that Cicero was courageous in attacking Antony when Antony was “powerful and menacing.”91

Bailey reinforces the idea that Cicero was not a coward, by showing instances where he stood up to dangerous enemies. He refers to Cicero’s statement that the jurors were risking their lives when they voted against Clodius during Clodius’ trial, although he himself was a witness against Clodius at that trial.92 Bailey reports that during Caesar’s first consulate in 59 B.C., Cicero spoke against Caesar and his associates, naming names. Bailey says that “retaliation was prompt,” probably meaning Caesar’s approval of Clodius becoming tribune by adoption into a plebian family, which resulted in the exile of Cicero.93 Bailey then tells us that Cicero’s friend Atticus asked Cicero through an intermediary to give up

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91 Ibid., 9-10.
92 Shackleton-Bailey, 43.
93 Ibid., 50.
opposition to the triumvirate, but that Cicero would not do so because he would not give up on the law.94

Bailey quotes Cicero’s statement that Atticus recommended prudence, but that Cicero did not believe he could easily tell the difference between prudence and “humiliating surrender,” especially when Cicero was being urged to be politically consistent. Cicero said that he was not afraid of anything. Bailey argues that Cicero could have argued that the whole was responsible for the execution of the Catilinarian conspirators, instead of just Cicero, but that Cicero “lost his head” and put himself into the position of being the sole victim.95 Bailey also states that Cicero risked himself by opposing Caesar’s Gallic command.96 Nevertheless, Bailey concludes at the end of the book that Cicero did not have *virtus*, or manly virtue. Bailey says Cicero was variable, “sometimes paltry, sometimes heroic.” But Bailey believes that Cicero kept his principles throughout his life.97

Scullard says that Cicero’s constitutional ideal was courageous amid the sordid struggles of Optimates and Populares. According to Scullard, most political players, in contrast to Cicero, were struggling for personal power and not for preservation of the republic. Scullard states that Cicero wanted a moderate conservative government which could achieve peace with dignity. But Pompey and Caesar rejected Cicero’s pleas for concord.98

Scullard gives further opposition to Mommsen’s assertion that Cicero was a coward and politically unreliable. Scullard says that Cicero showed neither cowardice nor irresolution “in the first act of his public life when he stood up to the dictator Sulla in defence of Roscius, or in his final stand against Antony.” Nevertheless, Scullard says that Cicero had no army to back him, so he gives further support to the notion that Cicero’s weakness was his lack of military force and not a lack of moral courage or principle. Scullard says that Cicero came to realize during the conflict between Pompey and Caesar that there was no other

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94 Shackleton-Bailey, 56.
95 Ibid., 60.
96 Ibid., 80.
97 Ibid., 279.
98 Scullard, 115-117.
method than the use of military might to resolve the disputes of the day, and retired into a scholarly life.99

The scholarship often condemns Cicero for cowardice, but some authors claim that he was courageous. While some scholars emphasize Cicero’s desire to avoid conflict and thus accuse him of a lack of valor, others note how Cicero often stood up to authority and spoke against it. The scholarship does not take into consideration the idea that Cicero had moral, but not physical, courage. Cicero was only involved in military situations twice in his life, and tended to avoid them as much as possible. However, Cicero would speak out for what he believed in even though it might be dangerous, and would use sharp invective. This was particularly the case in his violent condemnation of Antony as an enemy of the republic in Cicero’s *Philippics*. Ultimately, Cicero’s extreme attacks on Antony were to cause Cicero to lose his life. Thus it may be seen that although Cicero did not want to personally engage in military activity, he nevertheless was willing to risk his life for his principles.

**CICERO AND OCTAVIAN**

Cicero made the mistake of furthering Octavian’s career and significantly contributed to Octavian’s rise to power. Ronald Syme says that Cicero “raised up Caesar’s heir against Antonius. The last year of Cicero’s life, full of glory and eloquence no doubt, was ruinous to the Roman People.”100 Jérôme Carcopino believes that Cicero’s alliance with Octavian was “absurd.” Carcopino claims that “in defiance of all common sense, Cicero accepted this offer.”101 Carcopino believes that it was Cicero who was responsible for Octavian’s becoming propraetor, which is supported by the *Philippics*. Carcopino believes that when the consuls Hirtius and Pansa died, Octavian’s rank as propraetor left him in command of the entire republican forces. Carcopino says of Octavian that Cicero was “the architect of his greatness.”102 Carcopino states, “The Senate could do no less than adopt Cicero’s motion that Octavian … should be granted equality of rank with the two Consuls.”103 Rawson states

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99 Scullard, 164.
100 Syme, 4.
101 Carcopino, 2:359.
102 Ibid., 2:377.
103 Ibid., 2:379.
of Cicero: “It is clear … that we cannot altogether absolve Cicero from responsibility for encouraging the habit, fatal to the Republic, of letting the people confer vast extraordinary commands.”104

Cicero’s views and personality had caused him to support Octavian’s career. Octavian may have been able to overthrow the republic without Cicero’s help. However, it is clear that Cicero helped Octavian achieve his aim. Cicero had believed that the concord of all good people, which ultimately excluded Antony but definitely not Octavian, would preserve the state. But Cicero’s disinclination to engage in military activity and his tendency to trust those who allied with him had led him to support Octavian, which caused the ruin of all that he believed in and ultimately caused his death.

CONCLUSION

The scholarship changed a great deal from the opinions expressed by Mommsen in the 19th century. Mommsen condemns Cicero as a coward and so shows a strongly opinionated and extremely negative view of Cicero. Later writers observe simply that Cicero disliked engaging in military activity, and many believe he possessed great moral courage. Earlier writers in the 20th century, such as Carcopino and Syme, believe that Cicero had contributed to Octavian’s rise. Later writers tend to deemphasize Cicero’s importance in regard to Octavian by rarely even mentioning it. Overall, earlier writers such as Carcopino and Mommsen express extremely negative views of Cicero, whereas more recent authors such as Grant praise Cicero highly.

The scholarship on Cicero tends to indicate that Cicero was inimical to militarism and violence in general. While some scholars such as Wood emphasize the idea that Cicero approved of violence under some situations, they tend to be grudging in their acceptance of Cicero’s characteristic position of trying to avoid violence. Cicero saw violence as only to be used as a last resort. The scholarship tends to neglect the concept that Cicero approved of violence in only a few exceptional situations.

The scholarship does not make clear the importance of Cicero’s proposals. Although Octavian already had an unofficial military command before Cicero proposed it consisting of

104 Rawson, 53.
two legions of 3,000 troops,\textsuperscript{105} he did not have enough to handle on his own Antony’s 30,000 troops.\textsuperscript{106} The consul Pansa collected troops throughout Italy and the other consul, Hirtius, obtained partial command of Octavian’s two legions.\textsuperscript{107} Both consuls died because of the two battles of Mutina,\textsuperscript{108} leaving the military command and the consulship open to Octavian. Octavian was to use his military command to make himself consul. Octavian, Antony and Lepidus formed the dictatorial rule of the Second Triumvirate which ultimately ended the republic, and together they proscribed many people, which caused the proscribed to lose their lives and property. Cicero was proscribed along with many others, and killed.\textsuperscript{109}

Thus Cicero did indeed have an effect on the fall of the republic. It is possible that Octavian would have been able to overthrow the republic anyway, but it is sure that Cicero did his best to contribute to Octavian’s power. Thus Cicero had a significant role in the fall of the Roman Republic.

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\textsuperscript{105} Cicero, \textit{Philippics}, 185-186.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 4:77.
\textsuperscript{108} Cicero, \textit{Philippics}, 605-606.
\textsuperscript{109} Everitt, 313-316.
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CHAPTER 2

THE ANCIENT SOURCES

The ancient sources reinforce the notion that Cicero was averse to warfare and disliked violence. They also show that Cicero was serious about what he believed in and was willing to risk himself for it, although in a role that did not involve him personally in violent conflict. They show that the Catilinarian conspiracy was a serious threat, but that Cicero was reluctant to use force against the conspirators, and only did so after he had the support of the . They also demonstrate that Cicero was egotistical, particularly about his suppression of the Catilinarian conspiracy. Most authors that refer to Cicero’s activity in the period toward the end of the republic demonstrate that Cicero was powerful in the and had great influence on what happened in Rome before he lost power to the triumvirate of Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus, and that Cicero supported Octavian almost to the very end of the republic. They relate that Cicero’s behavior towards Octavian supports the notion that Cicero did not anticipate that Octavian would turn against him and his republican ideals. Because Cicero did not like to engage in violence or warfare, he was unwilling to confront the danger which Antony posed and instead entrusted that task to the unreliable Octavian.

This chapter will discuss the views of the ancient historians, who will show that Cicero was inclined to avoid military conflict and violence, and was powerful in the towards the end of the republic and advanced Octavian’s career. This chapter will first summarize the views of Sallust and Pseudo-Sallust, showing that Sallust believed that Cicero did not react strongly to the Catilinarian conspiracy, and Pseudo-Sallust believed that Cicero was inclined to flee. Then it will study the views of Asinius Pollio, showing that Pollio disdained Cicero, thinking he wanted to make up with Antony after Cicero had written the Philippics, and that Cicero died a pitiful death. This chapter will subsequently show that Diodorus Siculus believed Cicero dealt moderately with the Catilinarian conspiracy. Next this chapter will give Livy’s account that Cicero was disinclined towards militarism but nevertheless died bravely.
This chapter will show that Velleius Paterculus admired Cicero very highly and attributed courage to him. Plutarch will next be examined, and it will be observed that Plutarch believed that Cicero avoided violence and warfare whenever he could, but nevertheless died with courage. Plutarch will be used to show that Cicero was powerful in the Roman in 44 and 43 B.C., towards the end of the republic. Appian will then be examined, showing that Cicero was powerful in the in the end as well, and that Octavian was not initially very powerful and did not have many troops to counter Antony but that Cicero aided Octavian’s rise to power. Finally, Dio Cassius will be used to demonstrate that Cicero did indeed participate in the plan to make Octavian consul.

**SALLUST AND PSEUDO-SALLUST**

Gaius Sallustius Crispus (86 B.C. – c. 35 B.C.), also known as Sallust, related the Catilinarian conspiracy in a way that showed it was an extreme threat to Rome, against which Cicero did not immediately and decisively act. Sallust said that Catiline from his youth “reveled in civil wars, murder, pillage, and political dissention.” According to Sallust, Catiline had planned to kill the consuls as early as January 1, 65 B.C., but the plot was discovered. Nevertheless, Catiline plotted again against the Roman government, this time setting the date of the insurrection for February 5, 65 B.C., and planning to kill many senators. Sallust relates that Cicero reacted to Catiline’s plot with merely a speech in the Senate against Catiline when Catiline was present. Catiline just went home, only to go on to urge fire and war against Rome. In the *Invective Against Marcus Tullius*, Pseudo-Sallust claimed that Cicero went from one party to the other, and had “fleeing feet.”

Sallust depicted Cicero as wavering and being unable to deal with the conspiracy at a certain point, so going to the Senate for help. The Senate gave the consuls extra-ordinary powers to deal with the conspiracy. Cicero’s method of dealing with this crisis was merely

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111 Ibid., 31-33.
112 Ibid., 53-57.
to give a speech, although according to Sallust’s description it was a brilliant one, which merely caused Catiline to threaten “devastation” and go home. Because no one acted against him, Catiline was able to go to the camp prepared by his subordinate Manlius to help him lead the war against Rome.\textsuperscript{115}

Sallust portrayed Cicero as irresolute in the face of the crisis. Sallust said that when Cicero had discovered and imprisoned four of the conspirators, who were involved in urging on the Allobroges against Rome, he was both happy and concerned. Sallust wrote that Cicero was uncertain of what to do.\textsuperscript{116} Cicero then went to the Senate and asked it to decide upon the conspirators.\textsuperscript{117} Sallust does not show Cicero taking a lead in the discussions in the , but in executing the conspirators only after the had decided upon that course after an argument between Caesar and Cato on the subject. Cicero only asked the to decide between “wrath and pity,” calling wrath in a ruler “insolence and cruelty,” and proposed that the be dispassionate. Caesar was for merely imprisoning the conspirators, but Cato was for execution. As Sallust related it, it was Cato who argued for the death penalty and not Cicero, whose opinion on the fate of the conspirators Sallust did not record.\textsuperscript{118}

\textbf{ASINIUS POLLIO}

Among ancient historians, Gaius Asinius Pollio (75 B.C. – A.D. 4) believed Cicero had the greatest timidity. Clarence W. Mendell argues that Asinius Pollio believed that Cicero’s oratory was insincere. Pollio claimed that Cicero was so afraid as to be willing to retract his \textit{Philippics} against Antony and even write in favor of Antony. Considering the severity of the terms with which Cicero condemned Antony, this is unlikely to be true. But Mendell has a point in saying that Cicero had a tendency to let words take the place of reality.\textsuperscript{119} According to Elizabeth Denny Pierce, Pollio wrote of Cicero that his death was a “pitiable thing.” But Pierce says that according to Quintilian some thought that Cicero was

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{115} Sallust, \textit{The War With Catiline}, 55-57.
  \item \textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 77-79.
  \item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 87.
  \item \textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 89-111.
\end{itemize}
deficient in courage but that this was disproven by his death, which he suffered with great bravery. Pierce also says that Seneca believed that Asinius Pollio was the only one who refused to admit that Cicero died bravely.\textsuperscript{120}

**Diodorus Siculus**

Diodorus Siculus wrote between 60 B.C. and 30 B.C. He wrote an account of the Catilinarian conspiracy which showed Cicero’s disinclination to employ violence. Diodorus of Sicily wrote that the Catilinarian conspirators planned to kill almost the entire Roman.\textsuperscript{121} Despite the magnitude of the threat, Diodorus said that Cicero asked the Senate for nothing more severe than the banishment of Catiline from Rome.\textsuperscript{122}

**Livy**

Titus Livius Patavinus (59 B.C. – A.D. 17), also known as Livy, believed that Cicero was not inclined for militarism, which lead to his disinclination to use military force to defend the republic and his reliance on Octavian, who had been given so much from his great-uncle Caesar, to do the fighting. Livy said that Cicero was “a man destined by nature for anything rather than war.”\textsuperscript{123} Livy did say that Cicero died bravely, telling his slaves not to resist the attackers, and putting his head out of his litter saying, “Let me die in the fatherland I have so often saved.” Nevertheless Livy said that Cicero did not face any of the adversities in his life as well as he did his death.\textsuperscript{124}

**Velleius Paterculus**

Marcus Velleius Paterculus (c. 19 B.C. – c. A.D. 31) takes a positive view of Cicero’s courage, and was effusive in his praise of Cicero, but adds that Cicero wanted harmony and promoted Octavian’s career. Velleius wrote that, in dealing with the conspiracy of Catiline,

\textsuperscript{120} Elizabeth Denny Pierce, *A Roman Man of Letters: Gaius Asinius Pollio* (New York: Columbia University, 1922), 40-41.


\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 291-293.


\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 219.
Cicero showed “extraordinary courage, firmness, and careful vigilance.” Velleius attributed to Cato the opinion that Cicero had taken up a firm position with respect to Catiline. Velleius nevertheless claimed that Cicero was determined to maintain harmony within the state. Velleius claimed that it was on the motion of Cicero that the Senate passed many resolutions in favor of Octavian. Velleius eulogized Cicero in fulsome terms and declared Antony had killed him in vain. Velleius wrote: “the race of man shall sooner pass from the world than the name of Cicero be forgotten.”

**PLUTARCH**

Livius Mestrius Plutarchus (c. A.D. 46 – 120 A.D.), otherwise known as Plutarch, demonstrates that Cicero’s relationship to Caesar shows his unwillingness to use violence, even when faced with a serious threat, against someone who has not opposed him personally. Plutarch showed that Cicero suspected Caesar of “a tyrannical purpose” in his actions. Nevertheless, Plutarch said that when Cicero had an opportunity of getting rid of Caesar, he did not take it. When the Senate debated the fate of the Catilinarian conspirators, and Cicero asked each senator what they thought, Caesar argued against the death penalty. When Cato spoke, he was against Caesar’s opinion and suspected Caesar of complicity in the conspiracy. After the Senate had decided upon death, while Caesar was leaving the Senate, Cicero’s bodyguard drew their swords and threatened Caesar. Cicero shook his head to indicate that Caesar should not be killed. Plutarch did not know whether Cicero had told his bodyguard not to kill Caesar because Cicero feared the people or because he thought it would be illegal and unjust to kill Caesar. Because Cicero did not mention this incident in his history of his consulship, Plutarch believed that Cicero refused to kill Caesar because of “a cowardly fear.

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126 Ibid., 159.
127 Ibid., 183.
128 Ibid., 193.
130 Ibid., 459.
of the people, who were extravagantly attached to Caesar.”\textsuperscript{131} Whether Cicero did not want to kill Caesar because he was afraid of the people or because he didn’t like the idea of killing Caesar, it shows that Cicero had a distaste for violence.

Plutarch’s work on Pompey shows that Cicero showed a similar reluctance to engage in military activity when the dispute arose between Pompey and Caesar. Cicero made an effort to resolve the dispute in a way disagreeable to Pompey, so Pompey refused Cicero’s solution.\textsuperscript{132} Plutarch wrote that when many were going over to Pompey, “Cicero, too, although he had advocated other measures in his writings and his speeches in the Senate, was ashamed not to be of the number of those who risked all for their country.”\textsuperscript{133} Plutarch reported that Cicero served in the Social War, but that after that, when political factions began to form in Rome, Cicero withdrew from active involvement in political affairs until Sulla created enough stability to reenter public life.

Although Plutarch implies that Cicero wanted to avoid conflict as much as possible, he nevertheless saw sometimes that it was necessary to take a risk to advance a particular principle which he valued. This is demonstrated in Plutarch’s account of Cicero’s defense of Roscius. A freedman Sulla named Chrysogonus had put Roscius’ father’s property for sale in an auction for Chrysogonus’ own benefit, on the grounds that Roscius’ father had been a victim of proscription. Roscius disputed the value of the estate, so Sulla was infuriated and charged Roscius with murdering his father. Chrysogonus fabricated the evidence for Sulla. According to Plutarch, Cicero was the only lawyer who would defend Roscius, because everybody else was afraid of the consequences of going against the powerful Sulla. Cicero won the case, but, being afraid himself of Sulla, left for Greece on the grounds of ill health.\textsuperscript{134}

Cicero showed a combination of disdain for militarism and personal vanity. As quaestor in Sicily, Cicero demonstrated by an incident that he did not value military virtues even when he was not personally at risk. When some young Roman men were accused of

\textsuperscript{131} Plutarch, \textit{Caesar}, 461.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 283.
“lack of discipline and courage in the war” Cicero defended them and won their case. Plutarch said that Cicero had a love of glory and praise which he possessed to the end of his life, and that it was so great that it made him lose his reason.\footnote{Plutarch, \textit{Cicero}, 95-97.}

Cicero’s cooperation with his co-consul, Antonius, shows how he used diplomatic means with those who were potentially dangerous enemies. Plutarch stated that it was believed that Antonius knew about Catiline’s conspiracy, but was not against it because of the great amount of debt he owed. But Cicero gave over to Antonius the prosperous province of Macedonia, while Cicero himself refused to take any province at all in compensation, which it was his right to take as consul.\footnote{Ibid., 111.}

Plutarch related that Cicero not only disapproved of violence, but was willing to take risks in preventing it and was confident of his ability to persuade people to behave in an orderly fashion. Plutarch related a story which demonstrates this point. This event happened during Cicero’s consulship and concerned the public spectacles which the Romans viewed in theaters. In the past, the members of the equestrian order (the Knights) had viewed the spectacles seated together with the people in the theaters. But the praetor Marcus Otho arranged for the equestrian class to be seated in a separate place from the ordinary people. When Otho was in the theater, the people hissed him, while the Knights applauded him. The Knights and the people began to insult each other and there was disorder in the crowd. When this incident was reported to Cicero, he had the people come to the temple of Bellona and criticized them, asking them to behave well towards Otho. Cicero convinced the people and they applauded Otho.\footnote{Ibid., 113-114.}

The Catilinarian conspiracy was dangerous and it required decisive action to deal with it, but Cicero still was cautious and let others handle the more risky external military aspects of the crisis. The Senate gave power to the consuls in order that they might preserve Rome.\footnote{Ibid., 119.} Thus Cicero and the other consul Antonius had power to act to defend Rome from the conspirators. Cicero stayed in Rome and sent Quintus Metellus to handle what was
happening outside the city. Cicero formed an immense bodyguard. Cicero now did not take action against Catiline, but merely told him to leave Rome, so he did and joined Manlius. Antonius, suspected of collusion with Catiline, was sent to fight him.\textsuperscript{139}

According to Plutarch, Cicero remained hesitant, even though another and even more dangerous plot unfolded. Followers of Catiline, led by Cornelius Lentulus Sura, “decided to kill all the senators and as many of the other citizens as they could, to burn down the city itself, and to spare no one except the children of Pompey … as hostages.” The conspirators stored weapons and incendiary materials in Cethegus’ house. Cicero discovered that Lentulus wanted to make Gaul revolt. Cicero read the letters the conspirators had written to the Allobroges, a Gallic tribe they tried to get to revolt. Many weapons were found in Cethegus’ house. Cicero began to think about what he would do with the conspirators. Plutarch writes: “For he shrank from inflicting the extreme penalty, and the one befitting such great crimes … because of the kindliness of his nature, and at the same time that he might not appear to make an excessive use of his power.” But on the other hand Cicero thought that if the conspirators were not executed, they would be even bolder. Cicero also was afraid that he would be considered “unmanly and weak, especially as the multitude already thought him very far from courageous.”\textsuperscript{140}

Plutarch tells us that Cicero’s irresolution continued, even though many encouraged him to act decisively. While he was deliberating in someone else’s house as to what to do with the captured conspirators, the rites of Bona Dea were being celebrated in his house, to which no men were allowed, requiring him to be elsewhere. The women at the house saw a blaze in the fireplace which the Vestal Virgins saw as a portent. They told Cicero’s wife Terentia to tell Cicero “to carry out his resolutions in behalf of the country.” Terentia, Cicero’s brother Quintus, and Cicero’s philosophical friend Publius Nigidus all urged Cicero to act against the conspirators. Next day the Senate discussed the fate of the conspirators. Caesar proposed that the conspirators not suffer death, and Cicero gave strong encouragement to Caesar’s proposal. Cicero continued to waiver, however, and sometimes supported the death penalty and at other times opposed it. But the Senate decided to execute

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{139} Plutarch, \textit{Cicero}, 119-121.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 123-129.
\end{footnotes}
the conspirators. Plutarch adds that Cicero was the only one who knew that Caesar wanted to become dictator, but did not act through fear of Caesar’s friends and his power.  

But Cicero showed great vanity after this act, praising himself continuously for his role in suppressing the conspiracy. When it came time for him to make his oath after leaving his consulship, Cicero swore that “he had saved his country and maintained her supremacy.” His vanity was greatly compounded when the Roman people voted him the father of his country, which Plutarch said was the first time that title had ever been conferred. Cicero began to be hated when he constantly praised himself for his actions during the conspiracy. According to Plutarch, there was never a meeting of the Senate, assembly, or the courts where Cicero would not “endlessly” talk about the conspiracy. He also filled his writings with self-praise and his oratory, which otherwise was very good, dull by flattering himself.

In spite of his exile, Cicero’s execution of the Catilinarian conspirators was not a very dangerous act, so Cicero had not shown resolution for having done it. Cicero’s execution of the conspirators, contrary to appearances, was not what caused his exile. Whereas he had executed the conspirators during his consulship in 63 B.C., his exile began in 58 B.C., almost five years later, and was the result of the personal enmity of Clodius. Clodius had been Cicero’s friend and had even supported him during the Catilinarian conspiracy, aiding and guarding him then. So Clodius was not well disposed towards the conspirators. It was Cicero’s testimony against Clodius that caused Clodius to hate Cicero. Cicero testified against Clodius when Clodius was on trial for having been at Caesar’s house for a liaison with Caesar’s wife during the Bona Dea rituals, which were forbidden to men. It was because Cicero had testified against Clodius that Clodius, when he became tribune, arranged Cicero’s exile for having executed the Catilinarian conspirators without trial.

Cicero showed his fear of violence at the trial of Milo. After Cicero returned from exile, Milo had killed Clodius in a brawl, and was on trial for murder for that reason. Pompey, who was consul during the trial, posted soldiers on the heights above the forum where the trial was held. According to Plutarch, Cicero was “without courage under arms”

141 Plutarch, Cicero, 129-133.
142 Ibid., 141-143.
143 Ibid., 151-159.
and was afraid when he spoke at any time. Cicero could barely begin to speak during the trial of Milo.\footnote{Plutarch, \textit{Cicero}, 171-173.}

In his governorship of Cilicia in 51 B.C., Cicero showed mildness and a disinclination to fight in war, even though he had to engage in some military activity, and also remained peaceful when Pompey and Caesar began to go against each other in 51 B.C. Plutarch stated that Cicero was able to do as he was instructed, and keep Cappadocia friendly and obedient to King Ariobarzanes without war. Plutarch also said of Cicero: “He never ordered any man to be chastised with rods or to have his raiment torn from him, and that he never inflicted angry abuse or contumelious punishments.”\footnote{Ibid., 173-175.} When Caesar and Pompey fell out, Cicero steadfastly pursued the path of peace. He urged both Pompey and Caesar to be peaceful with each other, and did everything to patch things up between them. Cicero did not leave with Pompey when Pompey abandoned Rome.\footnote{Ibid., 175-177.}

Although Cicero had joined Pompey’s side because he opposed Caesar’s power, he would not fight Caesar, but even aided him after his victory. Even after Cicero joined Pompey,\footnote{Ibid., 177.} he was unwilling to fight for him. Plutarch believed that Cicero did not participate in the battle of Pharsalus because of illness. Even if Cicero was really ill and was not faking it to avoid battle, Plutarch showed that he wouldn’t fight. When Pompey fled after losing the battle of Pharsalus, Cato asked Cicero to take the command because he had superior consular rank. Cicero refused to take the command. For this reason, Pompey’s son and his friends called him a traitor and drew their swords on him. Plutarch wrote that if Cato had not intervened they would have killed Cicero.\footnote{Ibid., 181-183.} When Caesar became dictator, Cicero withdrew from public affairs except to pay respects to Caesar, and, according to Plutarch, “he was foremost” in honoring Caesar.\footnote{Ibid., 185.} But Antony said that Cicero wanted to stay home and was unfit for military duty.\footnote{Ibid., 189.}
According to Plutarch, Cicero feared Antony more than anybody else did. For this reason, he sought to sail to Syria. But he heard encouraging news, and criticized himself “for his excessive caution.” Nevertheless, Cicero refused to be present at the Senate when Antony summoned it, claiming fatigue. But the truth was that Cicero suspected a plot against him.\footnote{151 Plutarch, \textit{Cicero}, 191-193.} Then Cicero made an agreement with Octavian that Cicero would help Octavian with his oratory and political influence in return for protection from Octavian.\footnote{152 Ibid., 195.}

Plutarch wrote that Cicero did everything he could to please Octavian and advance his power. Octavian began to pay court to Cicero and even called him father. Brutus was angry over this, and told Cicero’s friend Atticus that because of his fear of Antony Cicero was not trying to gain freedom for Rome but “wooing a kind of master for himself.” Plutarch believed that Cicero’s power in Rome at this time was greater than it had ever been, and that he could do whatever he wanted to do. He drove Antony out of Rome and sent the consuls, Hirtius and Pansa, after Antony. But he also convinced the Senate to make Octavian a praetor, arguing that Octavian was fighting for his country. When Antony was defeated and Hirtius and Pansa died, Octavian took over Hirtius’ and Pansa’s military command.

According to Plutarch, the wanted to lessen Octavian’s power, but Octavian sent to Cicero beseeching him to allow them both to become consuls, Octavian promising that Cicero would be the true leader of affairs. Plutarch asserts that Cicero agreed and helped in Octavian’s election.\footnote{153 Ibid., 197-199.} But Plutarch stated that Octavian fooled Cicero and did not fulfill his promise to make Cicero consul. Octavian joined Antony and Lepidus, who together decided to kill Cicero.\footnote{154 Ibid., 205.} Cicero was then executed trying to flee.\footnote{155 Ibid., 201-207.}

Plutarch attests to both Cicero’s vanity and to his love of peace, and asserts that Cicero was politically important and responsible for Octavian’s rise to power. In his comparison of Cicero and Demosthenes, Plutarch stated that while Demosthenes did not praise himself very much, Cicero greatly praised himself. Plutarch also said that Cicero’s
motto was “that arms must give place to the toga and the laurel of triumph to the tongue.”\footnote{156 Plutarch, \emph{Comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero}, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1919), 213-215.} Plutarch refers to the memoirs of Octavian in stating that both Pompey and Octavian needed Cicero.\footnote{157 Ibid., 215.} Cicero said nothing when Octavian ran for consul, although Octavian was legally too young to hold that office. Plutarch also reported that Brutus wrote that Cicero “reared up a tyranny greater and more severe than that which the writer himself had overthrown.”\footnote{158 Ibid., 4.}

In his life of Antony, Plutarch reinforces the notion that Cicero was very powerful in the final times of the republic, and that Cicero contributed to Octavian’s advance. Plutarch wrote that Cicero was the most influential man in Rome during the republic’s final days, and “persuaded the to vote him [Antony] a public enemy, [and] to send to Caesar [Octavian] the fasces and other insignia of a praetor.”\footnote{159 Plutarch, \emph{Antony}, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1959), 175.} But Plutarch reported that Octavian fell out with Cicero “because he saw that Cicero was devoted to liberty, and he sent his friends to come to Antony with an invitation to come to terms.”\footnote{160 Ibid., 179.}

In his life of Brutus, Plutarch gave an account of Cicero’s role in the last days of the republic which demonstrates Cicero’s unwise attachment to Octavian. Plutarch wrote that Cicero was motivated by hatred of Antony to ally with Octavian, and Brutus criticized Cicero severely for this. Brutus wrote to Cicero that Cicero “did not object to a despot as such, but only feared a despot who hated him, and that when he declared in his letters and speeches that Octavius was a worthy man, his policy meant the choice of a kindly slavery.” Brutus told Cicero: “Our ancestors … could not endure even gentle despots.” Brutus told Cicero that Brutus was unsure of war but was determined not to be a slave. Brutus wrote that “Cicero dreaded a civil war with all its perils, but was not afraid of a shameful and inglorious peace, and that, as a reward for driving Antony from the tyranny, he asked the privilege of making Octavius tyrant.”\footnote{161 Plutarch, \emph{Brutus}, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1961), 175.}

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\footnotetext[156]{156 Plutarch, \emph{Comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero}, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1919), 213-215.}
\footnotetext[157]{157 Ibid., 215.}
\footnotetext[158]{158 Ibid., 4.}
\footnotetext[159]{159 Plutarch, \emph{Antony}, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1959), 175.}
\footnotetext[160]{160 Ibid., 179.}
\footnotetext[161]{161 Plutarch, \emph{Brutus}, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1961), 175.}
Appian of Alexandria (A.D. 95 – c. A.D. 165) demonstrated that it was clear that Octavian could never be reconciled to Cicero’s principles. Appian said that Octavian believed that it would be disgraceful not to avenge Caesar, and assume the name of Caesar. Octavian praised Caesar’s veterans for wanting to avenge Caesar, but Octavian said he would postpone the vengeance. Octavian’s mother told Octavian “to use art and patience rather than open boldness,” and Octavian resolved to employ this method.

Appian shows that the authority of the Senate and the power of Cicero in it were significant in Rome, but that Octavian’s power was not yet great. According to Appian, when the soldiers who had gone over to Octavian asked that Octavian become propraetor, Octavian said that he would refer the matter to the Senate. Appian demonstrated that at this time the majority of the was in favor of Cicero’s motion that Antony be declared a public enemy, showing Cicero’s influence over the . But a tribune adjourned the meeting of the Senate for the following day, using his veto. The Senate then voted that Octavian be allowed to help the consuls fight Antony, run for consul ten years before the legal time and voted money to Octavian’s army.

Appian demonstrates that most of the military power of Rome in the struggle with Rome came not from Octavian, but from the consuls Hirtius and Pansa and also from Cicero. At this time Antony had 30,000 troops, and Octavian only had 3,000 half-armed and ill-organized troops. But the consul Pansa collected recruits throughout Italy, and the Senate ordered Hirtius to share Octavian’s two legions. Ocatavian obeyed Hirtius in everything.

Appian reports what followed: “At Rome, in the absence of the consuls, Cicero took the lead

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163 Ibid., 3:537.
164 Ibid., 3:541.
165 Appian, 4:43-45.
166 Ibid., 4:43.
167 Ibid., 4:51.
168 Ibid., 4:65.
169 Ibid., 4:77.
by public speaking. He held frequent assemblies, procured arms by inducing the armourers to work without pay, collected money ... and exacted heavy contributions from the Antonians.”

Appian recorded that the Senate made Decimus Brutus, one of the assassins of Caesar, the commander of the troops fighting Antony. However, according to Appian, Cicero advocated making Octavian consul when Octavian told Cicero that Cicero could be consul as well. The Senate then appointed Octavian co-commander against Antony with Decimus Brutus. Going along with Plutarch, Appian claims that Cicero sought the consulship with Octavian, but Octavian rebuffed him by saying he was the last of his friends to greet him. Cicero fled and Octavian joined forces with Antony. Asinius Pollio, with two legions, joined Antony after this, then Plancus with three legions.

**DIO CASSIUS**

Lucius Cassius Dio (c. A.D. 155 – A.D. 235), also known as Dio Cassius, reported that Cicero tried to use Octavian against Antony for Cicero’s own cause. Dio Cassius further states that Octavian wanted to get Cicero to try to help Octavian become consul, and proposed Cicero as his colleague. Octavian sent 400 soldiers as envoys to the Senate. They asked the Senate to make Octavian consul. One of the soldiers took a hold of his sword and said, “If you do not grant the consulship to Caesar, this shall grant it.” Cicero answered, “If you exhort in this way he will get it.” According to Dio Cassius, this event led to the

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170 Appian, 4:79.
171 Ibid., 4:93.
172 Ibid., 4:107.
173 Ibid., 4:113.
175 Ibid., 4:127.
176 Ibid., 4:133.
177 Ibid., 4:133.
destruction of Cicero. Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus joined together and went to Rome.\textsuperscript{180} Then the Senate made Octavian consul.\textsuperscript{181}

**CONCLUSION**

Cicero’s contemporaries agreed that he was not inclined to take violent action, particularly in regard to the Catilinarian conspiracy. Sallust’s portrayal of Cicero is complementary to a minor degree, but tends to show Cicero as wavering and uncertain about what to do about the Catilinarian crisis. Sallust also shows that the Catilinarian crisis was a severe threat to Rome, but that Cicero did not play a very forceful role in suppressing it. Coming a little later than Sallust, and like Sallust a contemporary of Cicero, Asinius Pollio was very critical of Cicero, even supposing that Cicero had tried to take back the *Philippics* and had died in a pitiful state. Diodorus Siculus, another approximate contemporary of Cicero, showed Cicero’s role in the Catilinarian conspiracy to have been moderate, at best. Livy wrote that Cicero was disinclined to war but died bravely.

Authors writing soon after Cicero’s death take a more positive view of Cicero. Velleius Paterculus praised Cicero in the highest terms, and also praised Cicero’s bravery. Plutarch characterized Cicero as being unwilling to engage in war and other forms of violence, even accusing Cicero of cowardice at one point. However, Plutarch also noted Cicero’s defense of Roscius as a courageous thing. Along with all other ancient historians except Asinius Pollio, Plutarch praised Cicero for having died well.

The last two historians dwell mostly on the importance of Octavian in the period toward the end of the republic, and discuss Cicero’s relationship to Octavian. Appian explained that Cicero was influential in the Senate in the period near the end of the republic and described Cicero’s efforts to preserve it. Appian also discussed Cicero’s deal with Octavian to make them both consuls, attributing veracity to it as Plutarch does. Dio Cassius agreed with Appian and Plutarch that Octavian proposed to make himself consul with Cicero as his colleague.

\textsuperscript{180} Dio, 5:87.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 5:89.
The ancient sources corroborate the notion that Cicero was disinclined to warfare and violence. They tend to agree that Cicero died bravely, however, and sometimes ascribe dedication of principle to him. Early contemporaries of Cicero tended to take the view that Cicero was mild during the Catilinarian conspiracy, but the writers writing soon after Cicero’s death tended to eulogize him to some extent, particularly Velleius Paterculus. Plutarch took a more balanced view of Cicero, making clear that Cicero was disinclined to violence but also noting that he was dedicated to principle on some occasions. The latest ancient historians discussed extensively the period before the fall of the Roman Republic, both agreeing (along with Plutarch) that Cicero wanted to be consul with Octavian.
CHAPTER 3

THE CATILINARIAN ORATIONS

Cicero’s *Catilinarian Orations* show much about Cicero’s thought and behavior towards those he perceived as threats to his authority and to the state. Cicero represented the Catilinarian conspiracy as being very terrible and dangerous, but he was not very aggressive against it. He did not act forcefully against the conspirators and killed few of them. Cicero’s moderate policy towards the Catilinarian conspirators was to be mirrored in Cicero’s policy toward the end of the republic, when the existence of the republic was again at risk. The *Catilinarian Orations* also demonstrate that Cicero was conceited, particularly because of his success with the suppression of the Catilinarian conspiracy, and that his arrogance clouded his judgment and made him extremely confident in the effect of his oratory.

Cicero’s disinclination to engage in conflict and arrogance shed light on Cicero’s ultimate behavior when he saw that the republic of Rome faced what he considered to be a great threat, the activities of those working against the republic just before its fall in 43 B.C. Cicero’s general policy of leniency was demonstrated throughout his career and was in existence from his first important acts as consul during the Catilinarian conspiracy. Cicero’s willingness to indulge people like Octavian, although they represented a grave threat to the existence of the republic, was due both to his mildness towards those who threatened the republic and his overconfidence in himself and in his oratorical skills to ward off threats to the republic. The *Catilinarian Orations* demonstrate markedly Cicero’s inclination to avoid violence and to be conceited.

This chapter will first examine the historiography to demonstrate that Cicero represented the Catilinarian conspiracy in a fairly accurate manner as a serious threat, so he would be expected to have dealt with it with severity. Then it will show how the historiography in general represents Catiline. The final part of the historiography will demonstrate how many historians believe that Cicero was more lenient than he appears to be. Subsequently the chapter will examine the *Catilinarian Orations* to argue that Cicero saw the Catilinarian conspiracy as a very serious threat to Rome and to Cicero himself. After that,
the thesis will establish that Cicero believed he was entirely in the right to take extreme measures against the conspirators and said that he would be severe. Then the chapter will show that, in spite of his presumed severity, Cicero adopted the most lenient position he could take without allowing the conspiracy to succeed. Finally, the chapter will demonstrate that Cicero thought very highly of himself and considered himself to have been highly praised for his suppression of the conspiracy. Cicero’s behavior during the Catilinarian conspiracy will demonstrate that Cicero was characterized by reluctance to engage in violence and was vain, which show that Cicero would display the same characteristics in the last days of the republic, when Cicero was unwilling to take up a military command but instead relied upon Octavian to lead republican forces, since Octavian had flattered Cicero and thus played upon Cicero’s vanity.

**THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE THREAT**

Some historians have challenged the very notion that there even was a Catilinarian conspiracy, or, if it did occur, that it was a coordinated attempt at rebellion planned by Catiline. Some historians believe that Cicero severely exaggerated or even invented the Catilinarian conspiracy. But it can be seen by comparison with other ancient sources and the consistency of the *Catilinarian Orations* that they were mostly honest representations of what was going on in Rome at the time, and that the Catilinarian conspiracy did indeed represent a serious threat to Rome’s safety.

Arthur Kaplan takes the view that Cicero, and Sallust as well, exaggerated the conspiracy and are not to be trusted or to be taken as reliable sources for the conspiracy. Kaplan states: “Marcus Tullius Cicero was a glib orator and unscrupulous politician whom Dio Cassius considered the greatest boaster who ever lived, as well as a political opportunist and turncoat.” Kaplan asserts that Greek and Roman orators would completely falsify their statements, and that Cicero approved of this in his *De Oratore*.182 S. Usher states that Cicero was not completely honest in his speeches. He says that “suppression and distortion of evidence is thus to be expected in his speeches, as it is in oratory of all ages.”183 Edward


Spencer Beesly writes that “the history of the so-called conspiracy of Catiline, as hitherto written is absolutely unintelligible.”\textsuperscript{184} Walter Allen Jr. says that we should “separate the facts from the libelous accusations usually made about Catiline.”\textsuperscript{185} But Christopher Craig observes that invective was relatively rarely used by Cicero in his \textit{First Catilinarian}.\textsuperscript{186}

Although \textit{ad hominem} attacks can be made against Cicero himself and aspersions can be made upon his honesty, it does not change the fact that Cicero’s \textit{Catilinarian Orations}, taken as they are presented, do show consistency with the other ancient sources. Lester Hutchinson observes that, although Sallust opposed Cicero personally and politically,\textsuperscript{187} he nevertheless took a strong view against Catiline, one of Cicero’s worst enemies.\textsuperscript{188} Charles Matson Odahl takes up the following view: “I have accepted the basic premises of the ancient writers on the following points: that Catiline’s conspiracy was a criminal venture to overthrow the legally constituted government of the Roman Republic; that Catiline himself was something of a reprobate; and that his intimate associates were the derelicts of the Roman nobility.”\textsuperscript{189}

Robin Seager argues against Cicero’s view that there was “a grand revolutionary design conceived by Catilina.” Seager argues that Cicero represented “only loosely connected manifestations of unrest” as a “single scheme.” Seager says that Manlius was connected with Catiline but that Catiline did not involve himself with Manlius’ uprising. Seager says that although Cicero said that Catiline assigned the conspirators their tasks on 5 or 6 November 63 B.C. in the house of Laeca, Manlius created his uprising on 27 October.\textsuperscript{190}

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\textsuperscript{186} Lester Hutchinson, \textit{The Conspiracy of Catiline} (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967), 11.

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 15-16.


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Seager states that Cicero repeatedly said that Lentulus and his confederates were under the command of Catiline without proving it.191

Seager asserts that Cicero arranged for the Allobroges to perhaps have fabricated, on Cicero’s instructions, the story that they were asked to rise up against Rome,192 and that Volturcius, who confessed to having been involved in the conspiracy and was not executed along with other conspirators, “was probably planted by Cicero.” Seager makes the point that Lentulus’ uprising was perhaps just another independent manifestation of unrest which happened to be going on at the same time as the other ones falsely attributed to Catiline.193 Seager explains what he considers Cicero’s plot by saying that Cicero engaged in it because he thought Pompey would be another Sulla and unite all the separate revolts under his direction, and wanted to prevent Pompey from doing so.194

E. J. Philips provides a good refutation of Seager’s views. Philips observes that “while it has long been recognised that the ancient sources for the Catilinarian Conspiracy of 63 B.C. are at times confused and misleading, there has generally been no doubt that they are substantially correct in representing Catiline as both the originator and the leader of the conspiracy.”195 Philips argues against Seager’s contention that there was no connection between Lentulus and Catiline by saying that it ignores the meeting of the conspirators at Laeca’s house, the assassination attempt on Cicero, the letters of Lentulus and his associates, and the testimony of Volturcius and the Allobroges.196 Philips states that there is no proof that Volturcius was planted by Cicero. Indeed, according to Philips, the fact that Volturcius at first tried to lie until he was given immunity by the Senate demonstrates that he was telling the truth about the conspiracy.197

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191 Seager, 241.
192 Ibid., 243.
193 Ibid., 244.
194 Ibid., 246.
196 Ibid., 444.
197 Ibid., 446.
Philips takes particular exception to Seager’s view that Cicero fabricated the Catilinarian conspiracy in order to prevent Pompey from seizing power. Philips notes all the occasions when Cicero gave extremely strong support to Pompey and even “supported the Lex Manilia, which had in effect given Pompey the Eastern command.” Philips also notes that the Commentariolum Petitionis says Cicero was a supporter of Pompey and had Pompey’s approval, and that during his consulship in that same year of 63 B.C. Cicero opposed the Rullan agrarian bill “on the grounds that it was contrary to Pompey’s interests.”

K. R. Bradley observes that in one place in the Catilinarian Orations Cicero stated that Lentulus made an appeal to the slaves. Bradley believes that slaves were involved in the conspiracy. Bradley says that although Catiline rejected the use of slaves, he did so when slaves tried to join him in Etruria, so they did make the attempt to involve themselves, and were, according to Sallust, among Catiline’s forces before they were rejected. Bradley notes that, at the time when Catiline’s followers began open rebellion on October 27, 63 B.C., slave uprisings were reported in Capua and Etruria. Bradley reports that Sallust says that Catiline and Lentulus had not agreed on the use of slaves when Catiline left Rome, and that Cicero and Sallust knew that another conspirator, M. Caeparius, was delegated to go to Apulia to incite slaves. So there is evidence that Cicero was at least not entirely wrong when he referred to the use of slaves in the conspiracy. Thus the Catilinarian conspiracy was real and was a genuine threat to Rome.

**CICERO’S POLICY TOWARDS THE CONSPIRATORS**

Cicero’s leniency is shown above all in the way he would arrest so few of them. Duane A. March refers to Sallust making a list of fifteen conspirators who met at the house

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198 Philips, 447.
200 Ibid., 329.
201 Ibid., 330.
202 Ibid., 331.
203 Ibid., 434.
204 Ibid., 432.
of M. Porcius Laeca. March states that Cicero must have known the names of these conspirators, and knew that L. Vargunteius and C. Cornelius would try to kill him on November 7, 63 B.C. March wonders why Cicero only proceeded against only five conspirators, and not against the full fifteen named.

Robert W. Cape Jr. takes the common view that Cicero had a severe policy towards the Catilinarian conspirators. He refers to a letter written by Cicero to Atticus about Brutus’ comments about Cato, wherein Cicero criticizes Brutus for not recognizing his role in the punishment of the conspirators. Cape states that the letter means that Cicero believed he was entirely for the execution of the conspirators and that Brutus had wrongly assumed that Cato had been the first one to propose their execution. Cape says that historians have generally believed that, when Cicero wrote the Catilinarian Orations in 60 B.C., he heavily edited them.

Cape writes: “Scholars have taken for granted that all Cicero’s so-called consular speeches were heavily edited in 60 B.C. to soften the language toward Caesar and shift the responsibility for the execution of the conspirators onto the.” Cape bases this argument on a letter Cicero wrote to Atticus discussing his publication of his consular speeches. The letter to Atticus states that Caesar was at that time in a powerful position and that Cicero wanted to make him “a better citizen.” It also says that Cicero had a run-in with Clodius, whom Cicero joked about in an insulting way, and says of another conflict with him that “I knocked the stuffing out of him.” Cape shows that in 63 B.C. Cicero was already in a bad situation and needed the backing of the Senate to prevent trouble over his handling of the conspirators.

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207 Ibid., 257.
208 Ibid., 258.
Cicero indeed believed he was entirely in the right in executing the conspirators. Th. M. Mitchell says that Cicero stated in his defense of Rabirius (fl. 100 B.C. – 63 B.C.) that he believed “that a magistrate was justified in taking non-legal action when danger to the state caused the need for it, and where the had instructed him that such a need existed.” Thus it was very important for Cicero to ask the opinion of the first, and only to act against the conspirators if the had approved of it, and to also ensure that he obeyed the ’s instructions on just how to punish the conspirators. Thus he was not manufacturing a new position in 60 B.C. for Caesar’s benefit but merely following a position he had already taken up before the Catilinarian conspiracy in the case of Rabirius, who was accused of doing just what Cicero had done, which was to execute Roman citizens under the authority of the senatus consultum ultimum.

Many scholars believe that Cicero took a policy toward the Catilinarian conspiracy which was much more moderate than it would appear to one who would be critical of the way Cicero executed the five conspirators arrested by the . Hutchinson says that Cicero would have enacted Caesar’s more lenient proposal if the Senate had told him to, and that “the conspirators had been declared public enemies, and therefore could no longer be considered citizens or protected by the Porcian and Sempronian Laws.” Hutchinson also states: “There was nobody more merciful and humane than Cicero and there could be no cruelty in chastising excessive wickedness.”

E. G. Hardy believes that Cicero’s position was not as strong as it seemed and that he did not show the forcefulness that has been attributed to him. Hardy says that “Cicero was throughout the year on the defensive, that the initiative was never for a moment in his hands.” Gesine Manuwald says that “Cicero neither proceeded to immediate drastic action against Catiline nor did he just wait without doing anything.”

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213 Hutchinson, 150-151.
Catiline that “it is strange that no move was made to arrest or at least detain this provocateur, ‘surrounded’ as he was, as he left the or while he delayed in Rome. Cicero indicates that by now the did not question the rumors of revolution.”

While some commentators, such as Cape, believe that Cicero took a severe policy toward the Catilinarian conspirators, Cicero was actually fairly lenient. Cicero’s letter to Atticus does not demonstrate that Cicero was the one who first suggested that the conspirators be executed, but merely states that Cato was not the first one to advocate execution. Cicero did not in his letter to Atticus say that Cicero was the first one to advocate execution or even that Cicero favored execution at all; it merely states that Cato was not the first one. Other scholars affirm that Cicero was indeed moderate toward the conspirators and particularly toward Catiline, to whom Cicero merely directed a speech telling Catiline to leave the city. Cicero’s moderation in the Catilinarian conspiracy shows him as characteristically moderate, so that near the end of the republic Cicero was unwilling to take up a military command to fight Antony, but instead asked that the give Octavian the military command.

**Cicero’s View of the Conspiracy**

In the *Catilinarian Orations*, Cicero depicted the conspiracy in the darkest terms. The extreme nature of the threat, as represented by Cicero, would seem to justify extreme measures. Cicero began with his description of the danger posed by Catiline, saying that Catiline wanted to “carry fire and sword throughout the whole world.” This theme came to its greatest extent when Cicero said that Catiline wanted to destroy the whole world. Thus Cicero was showing that he thought Catiline was the most dangerous person imaginable.

besides saying that the Catilinarian conspiracy represented a threat to the whole world, Cicero also said that it was a threat to the existence of Rome. When Cicero said that he thought Catiline wanted to destroy the world, he also added that he wanted to destroy

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218 Ibid., 41-43.
Rome. Cicero said that the existence of Rome was threatened. Cicero said that Catiline was so wicked that he planned to destroy his native land, which hated him for it. Cicero said that Catiline would destroy the cities of all Italy if he were allowed to.

Even after Catiline had departed, Cicero did not say that the danger to the existence of Rome had ended. Cicero said that those whom Catiline had left in Rome wanted to destroy it on Catiline’s orders. When Cicero was talking about Lentulus, he said that Lentulus believed that the Sibylline books foresaw “the destruction of Rome and her empire.” Cicero further said that there were omens of disaster for Rome if the gods were not placated. Cicero said that the whole empire was threatened. He said that the accused conspirators, who had been arrested, tried to destroy Rome, its empire, and even the name of the Roman people. Cicero later added that a vision came to him of all Rome collapsing in “a single sheet of flame.” Cicero said that the arrested conspirators intended to establish the Gallic tribe of the Allobroges on “the ruins of Rome and the ashes of the Empire.”

Cicero not only saw a danger to the existence of Rome, he also saw a threat to the Roman Republic. When he spoke of Catiline, Cicero saw it as “a time of serious danger for the Republic.” Cicero said that Manlius was in the passes of Etruria and was every day plotting to destroy the republic. Cicero said to Catiline that Cicero’s concern for the republic was much greater than Catiline’s desire to destroy it. Cicero told Catiline that he

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220 Ibid., 51.
221 Ibid., 63.
222 Ibid., 97.
223 Ibid., 109.
224 Ibid., 121-123.
225 Ibid., 139.
226 Ibid., 141-143.
227 Ibid., 147-149.
228 Ibid., 149-151.
229 Ibid., 35-37.
231 Ibid., 41.
was now attacking the whole republic. Cicero stated that if Catiline left, the republic would no longer be afraid, and that if Catiline went into exile he would prevent danger to it. Cicero stated that he believed that, because Catiline did not become consul, he could only attack the republic as an exile and not as a consul. Cicero said that Catiline’s departure would “bring sure salvation of the Republic.”

Cicero made more references to Catiline’s threat to the republic. After Catiline’s departure, Cicero said that his leaving Rome had restored the republic. Cicero also said that, on the day in which the plot regarding the Allobroges had been discovered, the republic had “on this very day been snatched from fire and from sword.” Cicero believed that the only thing which could have saved the republic from danger was the removal of Catiline from the city. Cicero made a strong statement against the conspiracy when he said that all the civil wars Rome had ever experienced before were not engaged in to destroy the republic the way the Catilinarian conspiracy was. Cicero said that the senators were concerned about the danger to the republic. Cicero stated that soothsayers had convinced Lentulus that “his name was destined by fate for the destruction of the Republic.” Cicero urged the senators to put their efforts to the purpose of preserving the Roman state. Cicero said that the conspirators who remained could one day still defeat “the authority of the Republic.”

233 Ibid., 53-55.
234 Ibid., 57.
235 Ibid., 59-61.
236 Ibid., 67.
237 Ibid., 75.
238 Ibid., 101.
239 Ibid., 119-121.
240 Ibid., 129.
241 Ibid., 135.
242 Ibid., 137.
243 Ibid., 139.
244 Ibid., 161.
Cicero also said that the lives of Romans were threatened in a very serious manner by the conspirators. Cicero said that Catiline threatened the Senate “with his frenzy and cold steel,” and that he attended the, marking the senators out one by one for death. Cicero stated that Catiline’s plot was “beyond belief in its ferocity,” and that he planned “the massacre of leading citizens.” Cicero then said that, after some of those citizens had left Rome “to thwart your plans,” Catiline planned to kill those who had remained. Cicero asserted that there were even senators who wanted “the deaths of us all.” Cicero went so far as to say that Catiline threatened the lives of all the citizens, and described Catiline’s accomplices as “deadly.”

Cicero made it clear that he believed Catiline was a threat to Romans’ lives. Cicero said that Catiline had once before planned “to kill the consuls and leading men of the State.” Cicero created an imaginary commentary that he said Rome told to Catiline, telling him that for some time now he had been behind every crime and had killed many citizens without being punished, and was terrifying her. Cicero called Catiline a “murderer of citizens,” and said that “because he has not killed us he feels desolate.”

Cicero talked more of threats to Roman lives. Cicero referred to different parts of Italy being assigned to different persons, and said one of them demanded to accomplish “murder and arson.” Cicero asked if there was any murder over the last several years in which Catiline had not participated. Cicero said that Catiline's companions “think of nothing but murder, arson and pillage,” and talk of murdering loyal citizens and burning

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246 Ibid., 39-41.
247 Ibid., 41-43.
248 Ibid., 45.
249 Ibid., 47-49.
250 Ibid., 51-53.
251 Ibid., 63.
252 Ibid., 69-71.
253 Ibid., 73-75.
254 Ibid., 75.
Rome. Cicero further referred to Catiline as “a violent criminal.” Cicero stated that the old Sullan soldiers who followed Catiline wanted to restore the proscriptions, which involved killing people and taking their property. Cicero said that the days of the proscriptions were so horrible that no one would ever allow them to return. Cicero believed that one set of people who followed Catiline were “parricides, assassins and every sort of criminal.” Cicero said there were people Catiline left in Rome to destroy “all of you.”

Speaking to the people of Rome, Cicero said that on the day in which the plot with the Allobroges was discovered “the lives of you all, your property, your fortunes, your wives and children … have, as you see, on this very day been snatched from fire and from the sword.” Cicero further told the people that the conspirators had planned to burn every part of Rome and even “massacre the whole citizen body.” Cicero repeated that the Catilinarian conspirators desired “the slaughter of citizens,” that the war they would cause would be the “most savage within memory of man,” and that they wanted “indiscriminate slaughter.”

Cicero made it clear that he believed the conspiracy was very dangerous. Cicero referred to the arrested conspirators as having desired “to burn the city, to massacre you all.” Cicero even went so far as to say that “in the universal slaughter there should not survive a single individual even to mourn the name of the Roman people.” Cicero said that the plot was “widespread and deadly.” Cicero said that the conspirators wanted to kill all the senators and the people of Rome, and said that there would be piles of dead citizens and

256 Ibid., 83.
257 Ibid., 89.
258 Ibid., 91.
259 Ibid., 97.
260 Ibid., 101.
261 Ibid., 109.
262 Ibid., 129.
263 Ibid., 139.
264 Ibid., 141.
265 Ibid., 143.
that one of the conspirators, Cethegus, would prance “upon your corpses in his frenzied revels.” Cicero said that the conspirators planned to kill “us, our wives and children.”

Cicero not only said that the Catilinarian conspirators threatened the lives of the Romans, he also said repeatedly that his own life was threatened. Cicero said that Catiline had planned, at the house of Laeca, to have Cicero murdered in his bed. Cicero reported that only the fact that he had been aware of the plot to kill him beforehand and had strengthened the guard of his house prevented him from being killed. Cicero even asserted that, when he had been elected consul but was not yet in office, Catiline threatened Cicero’s life, and then threatened to kill him after he became consul. Cicero said that various times Catiline had tried to kill him.

Further on Cicero repeated that Catiline had tried many times to kill Cicero when Cicero was consul-designate and consul, that Cicero had thwarted him every time but that Catiline still hoped to succeed. Cicero said that only chance had prevented the many attempts Catiline had made on Cicero’s life. Cicero stated that after he had told the Senate that Catiline had tried to kill him, the senators avoided Catiline and would not speak to him.

Cicero told the senators not to worry about his own safety, but that of themselves and their children. Cicero then added that he was the consul who had never been safe from plots and the danger of death. Cicero told the senators to stop protecting him and worry about themselves, implying that he was in danger but was willing to risk it. Cicero said

266 Cicero, In Catilinam, 149.
267 Ibid., 149-151.
268 Ibid., 41-43.
269 Ibid., 43.
270 Ibid., 45.
271 Ibid., 47-49.
272 Ibid., 49.
273 Ibid., 81.
274 Ibid., 135.
275 Ibid., 137.
276 Ibid., 137.
that he had been rescued from many threats and plots and “from the very jaws of death,”277 and that he was not afraid although the conspirators threatened his life.278

CICERO’S LENIENCY

Although Cicero portrayed the Catilinarian conspirators in the starkest terms, he did not in fact take a harsh policy with them. He claimed that the conspiracy was very extensive, very dangerous, and very brutal. But he only personally acted against five of the conspirators as harshly as he could by executing them, and only then with the authority of the Senate which he was determined to follow regardless of what punishment they would decide to inflict. He did not even take sides in the debate on the form of punishment, but merely brought out the two proposals he mentioned and discussed the merits and defects of each.

Cicero would do little against Catiline, even though Catiline was the leader of the conspiracy. After condemning Catiline utterly in Catiline’s presence in the Senate and saying he had every right to kill him immediately, Cicero merely told Catiline to give up his plans of destruction. Cicero said that Catiline would live if anybody at all considered his death an injustice.279

After describing Catiline’s plots again in the most lurid terms, Cicero told Catiline to go to the camp of Manlius and be the general of all his forces there and said that he would not allow him to remain in Rome.280 Thus, in contrast to his prior statement to Catiline to give up his plans, Cicero here was telling him to fight it out. Cicero justified himself in his position by saying that, if Catiline left, he would take his accomplices with him.281 Although Cicero had said before that he would not permit Catiline to stay, he later on said that he merely advised Catiline to leave but did not even command him to do so.282 After telling Catiline what Rome would say to him about how horrible a threat he was to her, Cicero

277 Cicero, In Catilinam, 159.
278 Ibid., 161.
279 Ibid., 37-39.
280 Ibid., 33.
281 Ibid., 45.
282 Ibid., 47.
admitted the weakness of his position by saying that Rome could not even force Catiline to leave.\textsuperscript{283} 

Cicero then told Catiline again to leave and go into exile.\textsuperscript{284} Cicero even went so far as to say that he was protecting Catiline. He told him that he was preventing the Roman Knights from killing Catiline “only with great difficulty,” and would even persuade them to escort Catiline to the gates of Rome so that he could depart safely.\textsuperscript{285} Although he had just told Catiline to go into exile, Cicero said Catiline would not even consider it. Cicero again conceded his weakness by saying that a “storm of unpopularity” would descend upon Cicero if he frightened Catiline into going into exile, but said it would be worth it. However, he again undermined the concept that Catiline would merely go into exile by saying Catiline could not be dissuaded from his “infamy” and “madness” by reason.\textsuperscript{286} Cicero again told Catiline he should go into exile, but that if Catiline wanted to augment Cicero’s “good name and reputation,” he should take his followers to the camp of Manlius and “wage war upon your native land.”\textsuperscript{287} Cicero then said that Catiline was planning on joining Manlius any way and never considered peace but always wanted to fight a war that was “a criminal enterprise.”\textsuperscript{288} 

Cicero justified his actions with regard to Catiline by saying that there were some in the who would say that Cicero was “cruel and tyrannical” for punishing Catiline, but that if Catiline were to go to Manlius’ camp it would prove that Catiline was certainly a traitor. Cicero then said that he would succeed at his task if Catiline brought all the conspirators into one place and allowed them thereby to be completely wiped out, but that if Catiline alone were killed the conspiracy would remain.\textsuperscript{289} Cicero concluded that if Catiline left the problem would be solved, so told him to depart.\textsuperscript{290}

\textsuperscript{283} Cicero, \textit{In Catilinam}, 53.  
\textsuperscript{284} Ibid., 53-55.  
\textsuperscript{285} Ibid., 55.  
\textsuperscript{286} Ibid., 55-57.  
\textsuperscript{287} Ibid., 57.  
\textsuperscript{288} Ibid., 57-59.  
\textsuperscript{289} Ibid., 63-65.  
\textsuperscript{290} Ibid., 65-67.
But Cicero had to defend his moderate course towards Catiline, which he almost admitted had not succeeded. He said that some would not believe his charges, some were too stupid to have any opinion on the matter at all, and some so “criminal” as to defend him. Cicero said that if the Senate thought he could have saved all the Roman people from danger he would have risked his life to get rid of Catiline a long time ago.\textsuperscript{291} With all the talk Cicero had given of Catiline being so dangerous, it seems a weak justification. Cicero went on to say that Catiline was a formidable enemy, but then said that if he had gotten rid of Catiline he would not have been able to handle his followers.\textsuperscript{292} But Cicero weakened his case still further to say that he had not gotten rid of so many powerful followers of Catiline even though Catiline had left, admitting that few of Catiline’s companions had left with him.\textsuperscript{293} Cicero emphasized still further how powerful and prestigious some of Catiline’s followers were whom he described as extremely frightening.\textsuperscript{294}

Cicero continued on his moderate policy toward the conspirators. Cicero merely said of these apparently ruthless conspirators: “Let them depart.”\textsuperscript{295} Cicero believed that their departure would secure the existence of the republic “for many centuries.” But Cicero not only allowed the conspirators to depart, he even said that they did not have to do so if they “kept the peace” and had a “change of heart.”\textsuperscript{296} Cicero wanted to make it plain that he did not even drive out Catiline, but had merely urged him to leave.\textsuperscript{297} Cicero emphasized this point still further when he said that some would believe that he had driven out an “untried and innocent” Catiline by his “violent threats,” and would have pity on Catiline, believing Cicero was “the cruelest of tyrants.”\textsuperscript{298} Cicero was very concerned about what people would be saying about him if he had taken a harsh policy toward Catiline, saying that if they would

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{291} Cicero, \textit{In Catilinam}, 71.
  \item \textsuperscript{292} Ibid., 71.
  \item \textsuperscript{293} Ibid., 73.
  \item \textsuperscript{294} Ibid., 73.
  \item \textsuperscript{295} Ibid., 75.
  \item \textsuperscript{296} Ibid., 73.
  \item \textsuperscript{297} Ibid., 79.
  \item \textsuperscript{298} Ibid., 79-81.
  \item \textsuperscript{299} Ibid., 83.
\end{itemize}
criticize him for driving him out they would even be more critical if he had killed him. Cicero then continued his cautious approach by saying he wanted to reconcile the followers of Catiline to the republic.

At the end of the Second Catilinarian Cicero’s moderation reached its peak with the statement that “I shall handle the situation in such a way, citizens, that if it can possibly be avoided not even a common criminal will suffer in this city the penalty for his crime.” Although Cicero made it clear that he thought the conspiracy was an extensive and terrible war, he said that he wanted to arrange it so that “no patriot perishes” and only a few would be punished.

When Cicero gave his speech before the people about the capture of those who had been involved in the conspiracy with the Allobroges, he showed himself to be taking the most tolerant approach he could toward the conspiracy. After having said how horrible and threatening it was, he said that the punishment of just nine conspirators would be enough to suppress the rebellion, and “bring the others to their senses.”

When Cicero went before the Senate to discuss the punishment of the arrested conspirators, he did not take a solid position on whether they should be executed or not. When discussing the two proposals, one by Silanus for their execution and one by Caesar against execution but for other punishments, he said that each proposal was extremely severe. At first he seemed to favor Silanus’ proposal by saying that Caesar’s idea of imprisonment for life was “an exemplary punishment” and would cause some difficulties. Nevertheless Cicero admitted that Caesar’s policy was more in his interest because Cicero considered Caesar to be a democratic politician and that if the Senate adopted Caesar’s position Cicero would have less need to be afraid of the attacks of the people, but that if they adopted Silanus’ proposal Cicero might be in trouble.

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299 Cicero, In Catilinam, 83-85.
300 Ibid., 85.
301 Ibid., 97-99.
302 Ibid., 117.
303 Ibid., 143.
304 Ibid., 145.
Cicero tried to get out of the situation by saying that Caesar’s proposal was cruel, saying, “Who is gentler than I?” but saying that the conspiracy was so threatening that he could not be as compassionate and humane as he wanted to be. Since Cicero seemed to be considering imprisonment for life as more severe he may have favored it as such. Nevertheless, Cicero ended his oration by making it clear that he would defer entirely to the ’s decision, whatever it was, and enforce it, no matter what he thought personally.

Cicero took a lenient policy toward the conspirators, particularly toward Catiline, the very head of the conspiracy. Cicero’s policy did not measure up to the seriousness of the situation, because he did not meet a dangerous situation with severity. Cicero did not personally lead military action against either threat, and when the republic was about to fall in 44 and 43 B.C. Cicero avoided taking a military command. Because Cicero did not take a military command and advocated that Octavian acquire one, he contributed to the fall of the republic.

**CICERO’S SELF-ESTEEM**

Cicero ascribed to himself the credit for having saved the republic almost alone. In his speech to the people after the expulsion of Catiline, Cicero said, “The preservation of the Republic no less than governing it – what a thankless task it is!” Cicero seemed to mean that he believed he alone was responsible for the salvation of the republic when he said that “the most bitter civil war within the memory of man is suppressed with a single civil magistrate as your general to lead you.”

Cicero only seemed to ascribe to the gods share in the credit for his salvation of all Rome. Cicero almost asked to be deified by saying that Romulus was raised to the immortal gods so he should also be honored, since he saved the same city Romulus had founded. Cicero gave himself extreme praise right after saying this by stating, “It is I who have quenched the fires which were on the point of being set to the whole city …. It is I who

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305 Cicero, *In Catilinam*, 147-149.
306 Ibid., 165.
307 Ibid., 83.
308 Ibid., 97-99.
309 Ibid., 101.
have thrust back the swords drawn against the Republic.” Cicero then gave himself credit for having discovered the plots against Rome.

For the exposure of the plot with the Allobroges, Cicero said that he was given great praise. He said, “I am thanked in the most generous terms because my courage, prudence and foresight freed the Republic from dire peril.” Cicero then said that a thanksgiving to the immortal gods was given in his honor, which he said was the first such thanksgiving given to a civilian in the history of Rome. Cicero said that the thanksgiving was given to him because it said that he had saved Rome from burning, the citizens from massacre, and Italy from war. He said that it was the only thanksgiving ever given for saving the republic.

Cicero said that his handling of the Catilinarian conspiracy showed both “foresight and action” with the help of the gods. Cicero said that no thanksgiving was ever more deserved than his. Cicero told the people that his actions had saved all of them. He said, “I have preserved both city and citizens safe and sound.” He then said that he demanded nothing other for “such great services” than that that day should be remembered forever. Cicero wanted all his triumphs and fame to be in the hearts of the Roman people. He said he wanted the Roman people to constantly talk of his actions. He compared himself to Pompey, saying that Pompey had brought the Roman borders their greatest possible limits but that Cicero had preserved the city from which the empire was ruled. Cicero said that he was the only person whom the “traitors” wanted to attack. Cicero emphasized that his achievements were the result of “meritorious service” and not of chance.

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311 Ibid., 103.
312 Ibid., 115-117.
313 Ibid., 117.
314 Ibid., 121.
315 Ibid., 127.
316 Ibid., 129.
317 Ibid., 129-131.
318 Ibid., 133.
319 Ibid., 133.
Cicero went on to tell the Senate that he had rescued them and the Roman people from massacre, fires, and many other horrors. He said that his consulship was destined for the salvation of the Roman people. He then said that the gods would reward him for his services, and that his death would not bring him dishonor because of his bravery. Cicero told the: “You thanked me in unprecedented terms and proclaimed that by my courage and exertions a conspiracy of criminals had been revealed.” He repeated that his thanksgiving was the first ever to be given to a civilian. He said again that he had saved the republic.

Cicero claimed that in his consulship he achieved the harmony of the orders. He again claimed that he had saved the Roman people. Cicero said that he was a leader who did not care about himself and cared only about the Roman people. Cicero went so far as to say that no one had ever been praised as much as he was by the, and repeated that only he was given a thanksgiving for saving the republic while others had been given thanksgivings merely for serving it. Cicero referred to generals who had expanded the territory of Rome and said that his name could be included amongst theirs unless it was considered a greater achievement to acquire provinces than to do what Cicero did, which was to preserve the homeland to which the generals would return after their victories. Cicero said that he did not want a triumph for his achievement, but simply to be remembered for having done it.

Cicero’s conceit showed clearly in the Catilinarian Orations. Cicero consistently showed in the Orationes that he thought he had saved the republic, and was the only civilian to ever receive the honor of a thanksgiving. Cicero’s vanity was apparent also near the end of the republic, when Octavian flattered Cicero and by flattering Cicero won Cicero over to

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320 Cicero, In Catilinam, 137.
321 Ibid., 137.
322 Ibid., 139-141.
323 Ibid., 147-149.
324 Ibid., 155.
325 Ibid., 159.
326 Ibid., 159.
327 Ibid., 161.
328 Ibid., 163.
329 Ibid., 163-165.
Octavian’s side. When Cicero took Octavian’s side, Cicero advocated that Octavian receive the office of propraetor, membership in the Senate, and a military command, even suggesting that Octavian become consul. Octavian’s consulship was to cause the end of the republic and of Cicero’s life.

**Conclusion**

Cicero showed throughout the Catilinarian conspiracy that he thought of it as a very terrible threat to Rome, using strong language to present it as an unspeakable horror. He made it plain that he considered himself justified in taking severe measures against Catiline and his conspirators. However, he did not act with great severity against either Catiline, whom he just told to leave Rome, or the conspirators, only five of which he executed, only doing so after making sure that he was not the one to be considered responsible for their execution but the . In the debate over punishment of the conspirators he did not take a clear position, but gave the benefits of both sides, tending to lean toward execution but saying that if he enforced it he could be threatened. He also had a high opinion of himself and magnified the thanksgiving as immense praise.

Cicero’s policy toward the Catilinarian conspiracy was to be repeated when he dealt with the final crisis which ended the existence of the republic. Loving those who praised him as he did, Cicero confided in Octavian and concentrated all his efforts against Antony, who had criticized him severely. His success in oratory rather than military efforts in the Catilinarian conspiracy did not work when he dealt with the threat to the republic near the end of its existence. Once again, he stayed in Rome, and this time delegated to Octavian the political and military authority which helped Octavian overthrow the republic.
CHAPTER 4

CICERO’S PHILIPPICS

Cicero’s *Philippics* give a great deal of insight into Cicero’s opinions concerning the precarious position of the republic in the period of 44 and 43 B.C., just before the fall of the republic. Consequently, it is important to use the *Philippics* to understand what Cicero thought about how the republic was threatened with dissolution in the period before its fall to understand Cicero’s impact on the fall.

In his First *Philippic*, Cicero pursued a moderate policy with regard to Marc Antony, seeking to reconcile him. But after Antony condemned Cicero in strong language in response to Cicero’s First *Philippic*, Cicero wrote a scathing denunciation of Antony which came under the name of the Second *Philippic*. However, Cicero did not have the courage to speak it. Even after he took a strong position against Antony after Antony’s denunciation of him, Cicero nevertheless continued to try to prevent conflict. Cicero praised Octavian effusively and recommended to the Senate that Octavian be awarded both the position of propraetor and a command of troops. Octavian used his command to overthrow the republic, and, in collusion with Antony and Lepidus, had Cicero proscribed and killed.

This chapter will first provide a historiography of the work of other scholars on the *Philippics*. The historiography will first deal with Cicero’s efforts to avoid conflict with Antony in the *Philippics*. Next this chapter will show how Cicero praised himself and felt his consulship to be superior, which indicates that he could be overconfident and trustful of those like Octavian who praised him. After that this chapter will discuss Cicero’s relationship to Octavian, pointing out that Cicero’s support of Octavian was an error. This chapter will then commentate on the *Philippics*, showing at first how Cicero initially was reluctant to oppose Antony in harsh terms. Next it will show how in the *Philippics* Cicero would portray himself as opposed to any kind of violence if he could avoid it, while saying that it was Antony who was truly violent and could only be dealt with forcefully. After this,

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the chapter will show how in the *Philippics* Cicero showed that he had a very high opinion of himself. Finally, it will present Cicero’s efforts to give Octavian immense power, suggesting that he be given military command and the office of consul. By promoting Octavian’s rise to the position of consul, Cicero contributed to the fall of the Roman Republic.

**CICERO’S DESIRE TO AVOID CONFLICT WITH ANTONY**

The historiography tends to argue that Cicero wanted to avoid a conflict even with Antony as long as he thought it was possible. Elizabeth Rawson takes up the position that Cicero was reluctant to have a conflict with Antony before he began writing the *Philippics*. She says that Cicero told Hirtius that Cicero, Brutus and Cassius only wanted peace. Rawson says that Cicero wanted to go to Greece, and that he didn’t think he was suitable for warfare. Rawson also asserts that Cicero had no intention of fighting with Antony.

Historians often see Cicero’s First *Philippic* as a weak attack on Antony. Gaston Boissier calls the First *Philippic* “timid” in comparison with the other *Philippics*. Catherine Steel calls Cicero’s First *Philippic* restrained, although she says it was a thorough attack on Antony. David Stockton says that Cicero was anxious to retain Antony’s good will at first. William Forsyth says that when Antony threatened to pull down Cicero’s house, Cicero “rather expostulated with the consul as a friend than attacked him as an enemy.” Forsyth also says that in the First *Philippic*, Cicero “deprecated the idea that he was saying anything against Antony out of anger or in an unfriendly spirit.” So commentators tend to believe that, at least in the First *Philippic*, Cicero was reluctant to oppose Antony.

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331 Rawson, 264-266.
332 Ibid., 268.
334 Steel, 142.
335 Stockton, 287.
337 Ibid., 219.
There is no question that in the *Philippics* in general, however, Cicero took a strong position against Antony, urging decisive action against him.\(^3\)\(^38\) In the *Philippics*, Cicero used what John Hall calls the disjunctive mode, which excludes the possibility of compromise.\(^3\)\(^39\) Hall claims that extreme condemnation of one’s opponents was typical of Romans of that time, and that the *Philippics* represent Cicero’s strongest invective against an enemy.\(^3\)\(^40\)

Nevertheless, as Cecil W. Wooten observes, it was Antony’s speech in condemnation of Cicero that caused Cicero to produce the Second *Philippic*, which excluded the possibility of reconciliation.\(^3\)\(^41\) The fact that Cicero condemned Antony after Antony criticized Cicero implies that it was how others viewed Cicero and spoke about him that strongly influenced Cicero’s behavior. Wooten says that Cicero believed that any attack on him was an attack on the state. Wooten also observes that Cicero apologized for praising himself, which he said was forced upon him by his enemy Antony. Wooten states that Cicero thought his life was in danger as well.\(^3\)\(^42\) Walter Allen Jr. gives the opinion that Cicero was vain because it was common for Romans of the time to be vain.\(^3\)\(^43\) Like Wooten, Allen says that in the *Philippics* Cicero apologized for praising his consulship.\(^3\)\(^44\) So it seems that Cicero’s self-esteem and self-defense were strong motivations for him to take a polarized view of the situation, not any inherent desire to oppose Antony utterly, as can be seen by comparing the First *Philippic* with the other *Philippics*.

Cicero’s vanity led Cicero to condemn and oppose Antony when Antony criticized Cicero and to praise and promote the career of Octavian when Octavian praised Cicero. To a large extent, the *Philippics* were a product of Cicero’s wounded ego. Since Cicero was inclined to support Octavian merely because Octavian opposed Antony, even though


\(^{339}\) Ibid., 284.

\(^{340}\) Ibid., 287.

\(^{341}\) Wooten, 14.

\(^{342}\) Ibid., 53.


\(^{344}\) Ibid., 129.
Octavian saw himself as the heir of Caesar and thus probably of all Caesar’s power, Cicero’s advocacy for Octavian contributed to the fall of the republic.

**CICERO AND OCTAVIAN**

Some commentators believe that Cicero’s promotion of Octavian’s power was illegal or even treasonous. A. C. Dionisotti makes this case quite well. Dionisotti says that the issue of private initiative versus constitutional right was a delicate one in the case of the rise of Octavian. Dionisotti claims that Cicero’s method of dealing with the issue in his *Philippics* was to use “various acrobatics on the theme.” Dionisotti states that Cicero claimed that Octavian had saved the state by raising a private army against Antony and that for that reason the state should be grateful to Octavian. Dionisotti argues that Octavian’s behavior was “illegal conduct.”

Addison Ward says that George, the baron of Lyttleton, believed that Cicero’s support of Octavian was “difficult to justify” and that if it was sincere it was a betrayal of the republic. H. J. Haskell states that when Octavian raised his army he was a private citizen, so that his action “was illegal, even treasonable.” Christian Habicht claims that Cicero violated the constitution and went against the principles of republican government when he obtained the ’s approval of Octavian’s actions. Anthony Everitt says that Cicero was willing to use “unscrupulous and even unconstitutional methods” to restore the republic.

G. E. F. Chilver states that Cicero’s support of Octavian’s authority was based on a theory of *consensus*. According to Chilver, Cicero claimed that some law is unwritten and therefore is established by what Cicero called *consensus*. Chilver says that Cicero believed that if the had not given Octavian *imperium* in January 43 B.C., the would have been removing the *imperium* Octavian already held, since Octavian held it through the necessity of war on the acclamation of his troops. Chilver says that Schönbauer believes that Octavian in

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348 Habicht, 80-81.
349 Everitt, 287.
29 B.C. came by *consensus* into *imperium* over the whole Roman Empire and that this was constitutional.\(^{350}\) In other words, Octavian came into power over the whole Roman Empire through Cicero’s theory of *consensus*, elucidated by Cicero in his *Philippics*.

S. E. Smethurst believes that Cicero was “misguided, if he thought he could use Octavian to promote his cause.”\(^{351}\) Smethurst thinks that Cicero “provoked Antony into a war that was unnecessary and fatal to the republican constitution.”\(^{352}\) Thomas N. Mitchell claims that Cicero had reservations about Octavian. He says that “he was too young, too steeped in a Caesarian heritage, surrounded by too many Caesarian zealots, too intent on glorifying his adoptive father’s name and achievements to warrant much confidence that he would truly befriend the conspirators and defend the Republic.” Mitchell believes that Cicero nevertheless thought that he could play Octavian against Antony.\(^{353}\)

J. L. Strachan-Davidson believes that Cicero thought Octavian was actually in favor of the assassins that killed his adoptive father.\(^{354}\) Strachan-Davidson brings Cicero’s vanity into account in saying that every day Octavian was sending Cicero letters telling him to save the republic a second time.\(^{355}\) D. R. Shackleton-Bailey believes that Cicero thought the risk with Octavian was necessary.\(^{356}\) Nevertheless, Manfred Fuhrmann states that there was plenty of evidence indicated that Octavian would avenge Caesar. Fuhrmann also says that Cicero’s efforts to make an agreement between the republicans and Octavian caused Cicero’s downfall.\(^{357}\)

Cicero made his main support of Octavian in Cicero’s *Philippics*. It is in the *Philippics* that Cicero advocated that Octavian become consul and acquire a military command. The historiography corroborates the opinion that Cicero supported Octavian even


\(^{352}\) Ibid., 73-74.


\(^{354}\) J. L. Strachan-Davidson, *Cicero and the Fall of the Roman Republic* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1894), 393-394.

\(^{355}\) Ibid., 395.

\(^{356}\) Shackleton-Bailey, 274.

\(^{357}\) Fuhrmann, 187-188.
though Caesar had made Octavian Caesar’s heir and given Octavian Caesar’s estate. The
historiography tends to show that Cicero was significant in helping Octavian rise to supreme
power, and when Octavian rose to supreme power he overthrew the republic. Cicero thus
contributed to the fall of the Roman Republic.

CICERO’S RELUCTANCE TO ENGAGE ANTONY

Cicero’s Philippics show that Cicero was reluctant to engage in any sort of conflict
even with his main enemy Antony, until Antony had threatened and insulted him. In the First
Philippic, Cicero demonstrated that he was not strongly opposed as yet to Marc Antony, and
wanted peace. Cicero said that at the Temple of Tellus Cicero had laid “the foundations of
peace.” He also said that every memory of discord should be wiped out of existence for ever.
Cicero called Antony’s speech on that day “praeclara” (“excellent”), and said that through
Marc Antony and his sons peace had been established with the best citizens.358 Cicero went
on to list all the good things Antony had done, including his abolition of the dictatorship.359
Cicero said that this caused the elimination of despotism, and even the fear of despotism.
Cicero then stated that Antony had also ended proscriptions.360

But everything changed for Cicero after the Kalends of June, when Antony took
various measures that alienated Cicero, exiling the assassins of Caesar, doing nothing
through the , and urging the veterans to plunder, yet Cicero still avoided conflict with
Antony. Instead of confronting him, Cicero decided to leave Rome until the Kalends of
January, when the Senate probably would meet again.361 Thus Cicero was trying to avoid a
confrontation with Antony. Instead of facing Antony, Cicero decided to leave for several
months and stay away from Rome. Cicero, however, could change his mind again if he
thought conditions would be better for him. When he heard that Antony appeared to become
more amenable, Cicero decided to return.362

358 Cicero, Philippics, 21.
359 Ibid., 23.
360 Ibid., 23.
361 Ibid., 25.
362 Ibid., 27.
Although Cicero disapproved of Antony’s actions when Cicero related them in the First *Philippic*, Cicero nevertheless called Antony his friend and did not begin his violent denunciations against him. Cicero even said he had always been Antony’s friend and owed him much because of good favors Antony had done for him. Cicero thus used his familiar policy of trying persuasion on an opponent before using severe invective, which he only used when he thought his opponent was irreconcilable to him.

Even though Cicero had returned to Rome, he was still reluctant to engage in any sort of conflict, so stayed away from the Senate for what would appear to be an important meeting, at least from Antony’s point of view. It was a debate over a public thanksgiving for Caesar. When Cicero refused to attend, Antony threatened to tear down Cicero’s house. As his excuse for not attending, Cicero said that he was tired because of his trip, and thought his presence unnecessary. However, it appears that Cicero was again trying to avoid any trouble with the party of Caesar, since his previous absence from Rome was caused by a similar situation.

Cicero showed his reluctance to engage in any conflict with Antony by saying something which went entirely against what he would say later about Antony. Cicero said that if he were to insult him at all Antony had the right to become his worst enemy. Cicero also referred to Dolabella, another person Cicero would thoroughly denounce later, as someone who was very dear to him. Cicero continued to compliment Dolabella for doing good services for Rome. Cicero went on to compliment Antony fulsomely for his acts in the Temple of Tellus. Cicero said that he never saw anything bad or suspicious in Antony. Although Antony had threatened to destroy Cicero’s house, Cicero did not attack Antony with the vehemence he was later to have.

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364 Ibid., 31.
365 Ibid., 47.
366 Ibid., 49.
367 Ibid., 49-51.
368 Ibid., 51-53.
This vehemence showed up after Antony had denounced and threatened Cicero on September 19, 44 B.C., just over two weeks after Cicero’s *Philippic* of September 2. After threatening him, Antony had told him to be present in the Senate on the 19th, but again Cicero refused to come, following the similar behavior he had engaged in before of avoiding conflict. In the Second *Philippic*, Cicero said that he had not abused Antony at all before this time, even though Antony had destroyed the constitution.

Cicero emphasized his peaceful intentions by saying that he had not contributed to the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, which Antony accused him of doing. Cicero said that, on the contrary, if his advice had been followed the civil war, and the present terrible situation, would have been avoided. If his advice had been taken, Cicero stated, the republic would still be in existence and Antony would never have been able to do the horrible things he had done. Cicero said that “it was I who never ceased to urge peace, and concord, and reconciliation.”

Even though Cicero was strongly opposed to Antony, he nevertheless tried to be as lenient as possible and to avoid armed conflict. The Senate proposed to send ambassadors to treat with Antony. Cicero argued against this, but not for unconditional war against Antony. He asked whether Antony wanted peace, then said that if he did he should lay down his arms first, and appeal to the mercy of the . Cicero said: “He will find no man fairer than I.”

Cicero was very harsh to Antony at this point, but wanted his listeners to think that he was a man of peace and was not the instigator of the conflict. Although Cicero said in his Sixth *Philippic* that he wanted war on Antony, he nevertheless backtracked on his position about the envoys to Antony. Although Cicero believed that war was inevitable, he nevertheless advocated waiting for the return of the envoys before war could be commenced.

Even though Cicero ended up strongly opposing Antony in Cicero’s *Philippics*, Cicero nevertheless was reluctant at first to oppose Antony and even complimented Antony

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370 Ibid., 71.
371 Ibid., 87-89.
372 Ibid., 259.
373 Ibid., 329-331.
at the beginning. Cicero merely objected, in mild terms, to the fact that Antony tried to tear
down Cicero’s house because Cicero would not attend the Senate when Antony wanted
Cicero to attend it. Cicero’s reluctance to engage personally in military activity is apparent
throughout the *Philippics*, even though Cicero urged others on orally against Antony. Thus
the *Philippics* show that Cicero was disinclined toward warfare and wanted others to engage
on it in his behalf. So Cicero let Octavian lead military forces against Antony and so
contributed to Octavian’s power, which Octavian used to overthrow the republic.

**CICERO’S VIEW OF VIOLENCE**

Cicero acted in such a way as to avoid any kind of conflict in the First *Philippic*. Cicero made it clear that he did not approve of the recognition of the acts of Caesar, but
nevertheless said that he was in favor of their acceptance because he wanted “peace and quiet.” Cicero continued to show his opposition to discord by opposing a law that was
proposed for allowing those convicted of riot and treason to appeal to the people if convicted.
Cicero asked “is this a law or a rescission of all laws?” Cicero thought that the proposed
measure would threaten the state and cause sedition. Cicero further emphasized his point
by saying: “I denounce armed violence: prevent it.”

Cicero tried to avoid implicating himself in any kind of violent activity, which
Antony accused him of, while accusing Antony of that very thing. Cicero said that Antony
had asserted that his stepfather was punished for involvement in the Catilinarian conspiracy.
In making this comment, Cicero said that Antony had blamed the Senate, which punished the
conspirators, not Cicero himself, who said that he had merely arrested them. Cicero blamed
Antony for violent intentions, for putting armed troops in the Senate, while exculpating
himself from doing so on the slope of the Capitol. Cicero said that while Antony put the
worst people in the Senate with swords in their hands, and yet dared to accuse Cicero of
putting armed slaves on the slope of the Capitol. Denying this, Cicero claimed that the best

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375 Ibid., 41-43.
376 Ibid., 47.
377 Ibid., 83.
Romans had come in arms to the slope because the Catilinarian conspirators had threatened to destroy their country, burn Rome, and kill all the citizens. So these people had merely been defending themselves and Rome. Cicero also said that the Catilinarian conspirators had suffered worse penalties that Cicero had wanted. Cicero also denied that he had instigated the killing of Clodius, and then accused Antony of attacking Clodius.

Cicero contrasted his own peaceful nature with Antony’s violent nature. Cicero denied that he had taken any part in the killing of Caesar. According to Antony, it was on Cicero’s recommendation that Caesar had been killed, but Cicero strongly denied it, although he called it a “glorious deed.” Cicero said that none of the assassins’ names were unknown, so he would certainly have been named as an assassin if he had taken part in the plot. Cicero even accused Antony of being himself involved in the conspiracy.

Cicero made sure to justify himself by referring to Antony’s violent nature. By doing so, Cicero claimed Cicero was not the instigator of the conflict between him and Antony. Cicero said that Antony had battalions of armed men following him. Cicero stated that on the Kalends of June these men had caused Cicero and the other senators to flee in terror. Cicero said that Antony had no need of the, but in fact was happy that it had dispersed, passing laws on his own authority and stealing works of art.

Cicero continued to criticize Antony for his violent conduct. He declaimed against Antony for having an armed guard, which he said had never existed in Rome since the foundation of the city. Cicero said that Antony had put armed soldiers and assassins in the Temple of Concord, making it a prison. Cicero claimed that Antony had come into the Temple of Concord with the intent of beginning a massacre with the killing of Cicero, and since Cicero was not there just “vomited” a speech against him. Cicero said that Antony

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379 Ibid., 65.
380 Ibid., 85.
381 Ibid., 89.
382 Ibid., 99.
383 Ibid., 171-173.
384 Ibid., 273.
385 Ibid., 275.
had brought a large army into Rome. Cicero added that Antony had killed some centurions. Cicero said: “What do you think would have been his temper towards us whom he hated?” Cicero elaborated on this when he related that Antony, in the battle of Pharsalia, had killed many people, including those who had fled from the battle and the “distinguished and noble” Lucius Domitius.

Cicero made it clear that he promoted peace in the strongest terms. Cicero claimed that because of his consulship arms did indeed yield to the toga, as Cicero had said in his poem, but that under Antony it was the other way around. Cicero said that peace was the most important thing, and that he had always been for it. “The whole course of my activity,” Cicero said, “has been spent in the forum, in the house, in repelling danger from my friends.” He only believed that war was necessary with Antony now because peace with him was impossible. He thought that in this case peace would mean slavery, so war was necessary.

Cicero emphasized throughout the *Philippics* that Cicero was against violence in almost all conditions, and that Cicero by no means wanted to lead a military effort against Antony. Instead, Cicero left military leadership of the war against Antony to Octavian. By doing this, Cicero contributed to the republic’s fall. Since Octavian in the end overthrew the republic, any support of Octavian’s power contributed to the fall of the republic.

**CICERO’S PRAISE OF HIMSELF**

Cicero thought that no one had been an enemy of the republic for the last twenty years without also being his enemy. Cicero said that the administration of the republic was given to many, but that he alone had preserved it. Saying that Antony depreciated his consulship, Cicero went on to list many illustrious Romans who had praised his consulship

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387 Ibid., 279.
388 Ibid., 135.
389 Ibid., 85.
390 Ibid., 343.
391 Ibid., 375.
392 Ibid., 65.
and who had died, including Marcus Cato and Pompey. Cicero said that Pompey had told
Cicero, when he first saw him, that it was due to Cicero that Pompey could see his country
again and thanked him for it. Cicero said that not only all of those Romans had praised his
consulship but a full assembly of the . He said that every senator thanked him as he would a
father, and “credited me with the preservation of his life, his fortunes, his children, and the
State.”

Cicero then went on to say that important living Romans also praised his consulship.
Cicero said that Lucius Cotta, “a man of the finest intellect, and of the highest judgment …
moved in the most complimentary terms for a public thanksgiving.” Cicero asserted that the
consulars and in fact the whole Senate had agreed to it. It was declared in his honor for his
deeds during the Catilinarian conspiracy. Cicero said that such an honor had never been
given to any civilian except himself since the foundation of Rome. Cicero stated that he
was the first to defend the liberty of the Romans, and said: “I will leave nothing undone
that I think concerns your liberty.” Cicero said that it was on his advice and with his instance
that the hope for freedom was again brought to the Roman people.

Cicero’s conceit was shown in the Philippics to a great extent. Cicero believed that
he had conducted his consulship in a magnificent manner, and that he had received for his
deeds in his consulship the highest honor ever given to a civilian. For this reason, Cicero
showed himself vulnerable to flattery. Octavian gave Cicero flattery, and induced Cicero to
help Octavian gain the military command and with it Octavian gained the consulship.

**Cicero’s Relationship to Octavian**

Cicero made a great effort to promote Octavian’s career, starting with the Third
Philippic. He praised him in fulsome terms; he proposed that he become propraetor and even
hinted that he could become consul at his age even though the laws of Rome forbade it.
Most importantly, he asked the Senate to give Octavian a military command. Octavian

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393 Cicero, *Philippics*, 77.
394 Ibid., 77-79.
395 Ibid., 237.
396 Ibid., 251.
already had command over some 3,000 troops, but after the Senate approved Cicero’s request, he had an official position as military commander, or imperator. After the battles of Mutina, both the consuls, with whom Octavian shared the command over the Senate’s forces, were killed. For this reason Octavian was in the position of sole surviving military commander and already had the office of propraetor. This position helped Octavian to become consul, and after being consul he ultimately became emperor. The Triumvirate of Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus had seized power and proscribed and killed Cicero. Thus if Cicero’s praise of Octavian and his proposals to increase Octavian’s power had contributed to Octavian’s authority, Cicero arranged his own undoing. Cicero’s Philippics are a valuable source of information on Cicero’s relationship to Octavian because they describe how much Cicero had tried to help Octavian.

It was in the Third Philippic that Cicero first decided to support Octavian in the . When Antony was besieging Decimus Brutus in Mutina, Octavian was gathering a group of soldiers together. Cicero was lavish in his praise of Octavian. He said Octavian had “incredible … god-like intelligence and courage.” Cicero further stated that Octavian was using his soldiers for the salvation of the republic, and that the Romans should have the greatest possible gratitude for Octavian. Cicero said that Octavian had freed Rome and saved the republic from destruction. Finally, Cicero said that the Senate must give the power to Octavian that was necessary for him to use to defend the republic.

Cicero continued to praise Octavian, saying in his usual superlative style that no one was more chaste, more modest, or pure in the traditional way than Octavian. Cicero said that Octavian had suddenly brought safety to the republic. Cicero further magnified Octavian’s importance for the salvation of the republic at the end of his Third Philippic. He

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397 Cicero, Philippics, 186.
398 Ibid., 605-606.
399 Ibid., 193-195.
400 Ibid., 205.
401 Ibid., 217.
said that Octavian had defended the republic and people of Rome from the greatest dangers, and had shown good judgment and courage.\textsuperscript{402}

Cicero showed in the Fourth \textit{Philippic} that he thought Octavian had protected and was continuing to protect the republic and the liberty of the Roman people, and that the had honored him with the highest commendation. Cicero said that when Rome was oppressed by slavery, Octavian had saved the republic from the destruction threatened by Antony. Cicero stated that he commended the Roman people for having such great gratitude for Octavian. Cicero said that the deeds of Octavian belonged to immortality.\textsuperscript{403} Cicero repeated this extreme praise of Octavian later in the Fourth \textit{Philippic}. He said that if it had not been for Octavian, Antony would have ruined Rome and destroyed its freedom. Cicero also praised Octavian’s army of Caesar’s veterans. Cicero said that divine and immortal honors were due to Octavian for divine and immortal services.\textsuperscript{404} Cicero exalted Octavian to heaven.\textsuperscript{405}

Cicero continued to praise Octavian, and say that he was essential in guaranteeing the freedom of Rome and safety from Antony. Cicero said that Octavian had saved Rome from Antony. Cicero stated that when Antony was advancing violently against Rome, Octavian, with the favor of the gods, with divine spirit, intellect and judgment, “and by his own rare virtue,” attacked Antony. According to Cicero, after the Martian legion had seen Octavian, an “excellent commander,” it had no other purpose than to free Rome.\textsuperscript{406} Cicero reported that Antony, after facing Octavian, succumbed.\textsuperscript{407}

Cicero thought so highly of Octavian that he said, “If he had not lived, who of us could have been alive now?” Cicero claimed that the republic had no commanders or forces, yet Octavian only had 3,000 men when he started. Cicero said that before the advent of Octavian, his party was trying to flee in vain and were at the mercy of Antony. Cicero described Octavian as having been sent by heaven, and came with an army to oppose

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\item \textsuperscript{402} Cicero, \textit{Philippics}, 229.
\item \textsuperscript{403} Ibid., 238-239.
\item \textsuperscript{404} Ibid., 239-241.
\item \textsuperscript{405} Ibid., 241.
\item \textsuperscript{406} Ibid., 279.
\item \textsuperscript{407} Ibid., 279.
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Antony. Cicero proposed that Octavian be given the command, “without which no military affairs can be administered, no army held together, no war waged.” Cicero then proposed that Octavian be given the office of propraetor with full powers.408

Cicero then proposed an important decree to the Senate. He advocated a resolution that would make Octavian, as propraetor, a senator, and that whatever office he should seek he should be considered as if he had been quaestor the preceding year. Cicero then suggested that Octavian could become a consul. He asked the Senate why Octavian should not have the fullest honors. He mentioned the laws against anyone too young becoming consul, and said that Octavian’s “excellent and remarkable merit should not wait for the advancement of age.” Cicero said that the laws against young consuls did not exist among the Romans’ “old ancestors.” He asserted that many ancient Romans had become consuls when very young and had done very well in the office of consul. He said that Alexander the Great had died at 33 after achieving many great conquests, ten years younger than the consular age. Cicero then said: “From this it can be concluded that manly spirit advances on a swifter course than that of age.”409

Cicero said that opposition to this proposal was due to envy of Octavian, and that Octavian would certainly be moderate and control himself. Cicero went on to compare Octavian favorably to his adoptive father Caesar, criticizing Caesar for increasing his power with popular support, which Cicero said was something free Romans could not tolerate. Cicero insisted that Octavian was completely different from his adoptive father. He said that hope for freedom and safety rested on Octavian, and that Octavian had given himself over entirely to the republic. Cicero was sure he knew all the feelings of Octavian, and that Octavian loved nothing more than the republic. Cicero told the that they had nothing to fear from Octavian, and that Octavian was going to free Decimus Brutus, an assassin of Octavian’s adoptive father, from siege. Cicero even gave his word that Octavian would never change.410 Although Cicero said that Octavian’s adoptive father had been killed

408 Cicero, *Philippics*, 299-301.
409 Ibid., 303-305.
410 Ibid., 305-309.
“justly,” Cicero insisted that Octavian was going to relieve Decimus Brutus, even in the Fourteenth and last *Philippic*.  

To the end of the *Philippi*, Cicero seemed to completely trust Octavian to support the very assassins who had killed Octavian’s adoptive father, Caesar. Cicero did not expect that Octavian would turn on Cicero and the republic itself. Cicero’s furtherance of Octavian’s career in the *Philippi* shows that Cicero tried his best to promote Octavian’s career, to give Octavian a military command, and even to make Octavian consul. Since in the end Octavian used his military and political power to overthrow the republic, Cicero contributed to the fall of the republic by promoting Octavian’s career.

**CONCLUSION**

In promoting the career of Octavian so much that he even proposed that Octavian become commander of the republican forces and consul, Cicero contributed to the fall of the republic. In the *Philippi* Cicero’s praise of and confidence in Octavian were immense and he seemed to have full confidence in him. Cicero did not seem to recognize the fact that all Octavian had he had received from his inheritance from Caesar. It would be strange indeed if Octavian had relieved Decimus Brutus, who had been one of those who had killed the very person who had given Octavian all the legacies he had inherited. According to Suetonius, Octavian has sworn to avenge the death of Caesar.

Cicero’s reluctance to initiate a conflict with Antony implies that he was unwilling to engage in warfare. This helped to cause him to propose that Octavian be given the command. Also, Cicero had a very high opinion of himself and tended to trust those who praised him, such as Octavian, and disliked as well as opposed those who criticized him, such as Antony. For these reasons Cicero relied completely on Octavian to do all the fighting for him. In the *Philippi* Cicero went out of his way to praise Octavian and to suggest that the Senate give him the highest office of state, the consulship. Although Octavian already had some power, he only had only two legions and 3,000 troops. Cicero’s influence was great.

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412 Ibid., 611.
enough at this point to contribute in a significant degree to allowing Octavian to receive the consulship from the Senate, when he had eleven legions. From his position as consul, Octavian went on to proscribe Cicero and many others, ultimately becoming emperor and ending the republic.
CHAPTER 5

CICERO’S LETTERS

Cicero’s letters show that he was able, but unwilling, to engage in military activity. His governorship of Cilicia (51-50 B.C.) demonstrates that he was able to take up the role of military leader and successfully defeat the enemy. Cicero was chosen imperator by his troops, and asked for and received the Senate’s recognition of his services, although he did not receive a triumph.\(^{414}\) Nevertheless, he never wanted to be governor.\(^{415}\) Cicero’s ability but unwillingness to be a military leader became of great significance for him during the final crisis of the republic in 44 and 43 B.C. Since at that time he never led an army himself or gave the proper military authority to a reliable subordinate, but proposed giving much military and political authority to Octavian, Cicero directly contributed to his own and the republic’s destruction. Cicero’s letters indicate that Cicero was able but unwilling to be a military leader, and that he was influenced by Octavian’s praise to support Octavian’s efforts to become politically and militarily powerful, thus contributing to Cicero’s own downfall.

The letters from Cicero and to Cicero that come down to us were written from November 68 B.C. to July 27, 43 B.C. Cicero wrote most of his letters to his friend Atticus, with whom he was on intimate terms and to whom he could confide his innermost secrets. Cicero wrote more circumspectly to other people. Cicero wrote few letters to important people such as Caesar and Pompey during the civil war between the two, but exchanged several letters with the assassins of Caesar such as Decimus and Marcus Brutus after the assassination. According to Cornelius Nepos, Cicero’s friend Atticus preserved Cicero’s letters in eleven papyrus rolls.\(^{416}\)

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Because Cicero seemed to change his mind a great deal when writing his letters, it is possible to see him as disingenuous. However, Cicero’s wavering in his position and inclination to avoid conflict is apparent not only in letters Cicero sent to others, but it is also seen in Cicero’s letters to his friend Atticus. Atticus was a close friend, and is not known ever to have betrayed Cicero’s trust. Cicero tended to be more frank to Atticus than to other people. Cicero’s conceit is apparent not only in his letters but in other works such as the Catilinarian Orations and the Philippics. So the letters seem to have a rather consistent representation of Cicero’s personality.

This chapter will first show how the historiography of the letters deals with Cicero’s term as governor in Cilicia, and how Cicero was able to be an effective military leader. Then it will demonstrate how the historiography tends to view Cicero’s political behavior as vacillating and inclined to avoid conflict. After this, the chapter will analyze Cicero’s letters, showing first how he tried his best to avoid conflict. Then the chapter will demonstrate how Cicero’s vanity, particularly with respect to his consulship and suppression of the Catilinarian conspiracy, tended to make him think very highly of himself and want people to praise him. This will then lead to the idea that Octavian’s praise of Cicero induced Cicero to trust Octavian almost completely in spite of any indications of Octavian’s antagonism to the republican party and the assassins of Caesar, as some letters from others, particularly Marcus Brutus, pointed out. Finally, the conclusion will argue that Cicero could have been able to try to become a military leader or assign to a reliable republican subordinate a military position for the purpose of defeating Antony while trying to minimize Octavian’s role, but instead Cicero supported Octavian’s power, which led to Cicero’s and the republic’s downfall.

**Cicero’s Governorship of Cilicia (51-50 B.C.)**

Cicero’s governorship of Cilicia showed him to be an effective military commander, which he might also have been in the last days of the republic. L. W. Hunter shows that Cicero was willing to accept the military challenge in Cilicia and the prospect of war with the Parthians. Hunter says that Cicero was faced with great obstacles in dealing with the military situation that emerged in Cilicia. Hunter states that during his governorship Cicero received bad news from the Parthian frontier, but nevertheless sped forward towards it to address the
challenge. Hunter then explains how the son of the Parthian king had crossed the Euphrates with a large force of cavalry. Hunter describes how Cicero then wrote to the Senate that his position was weak and that his defenses on the border were insufficient. Hunter claims that Cicero’s position was indeed bad. His troops were insubordinate, the native auxilia were nearly useless as a fighting force, and he suspected the loyalty of the client rulers. Cicero set out immediately to confront the danger, and expected to have to delay his stay in Cilicia.417

Magnus Wistrand takes the story further, and explains how by a lucky chance Cicero was saved from a serious engagement, but nevertheless had to deal with another military problem which he handled effectively. Wistrand says that Cassius, the commander in Syria, drove back the Parthians from Antioch, sparing Cicero a battle with the Parthians. Cicero then attacked the people living on Mount Amanus and achieved a victory. After this, Cicero was saluted as imperator at Issus. Cicero then attacked and besieged Pindenissum, taking the city after 57 days. Cicero’s correspondent Caelius suggested that Cicero ask for a triumph.418 Cicero subsequently pursued a triumph.419 Although Cicero had been effective, he was assisted by four legates who were more experienced in military affairs than he was.420

Scholarly argumentation with respect to Cicero’s command in Cilicia suggests that Cicero had the ability to be a military leader. Cicero did not do the same thing near the end of the republic as he had done in Cilicia: He did not even seek to take up a military command against Antony. As with Cilicia, he could have had reliable and experienced subordinates who could have helped him in the operations against Antony. In that case, he could have avoided supporting the idea of giving Octavian an official military command and the office of propraetor, or suggesting that Octavian become consul. Cicero might have avoided praising Octavian as much as he did, and instead he could have supported his own position as he did with regard to his efforts to achieve a triumph for his deeds in Cilicia. This would at least have given him the chance of getting rid of Antony without risking an alliance with Octavian, who in the end turned against Cicero and the republic.

418 Wistrand, 4-5.
419 Ibid., 11.
420 Thompson, 375.
CICERO’S INCLINATION TO AVOID CONFLICT

Even with regard to Cilicia, Cicero did everything he could to avoid being personally involved in any kind of military activity or violence, showing that he would be unwilling to take upon himself the responsibility of military leadership in the last days of the republic. Thompson says that with regard to his governorship of Cilicia Cicero “remained as eager as ever to quit the province at the earliest permissible date.”421 Hunter states that Cicero thought of his governorship of Cilicia as a second exile.422 Wistrand observes that immediately after his victory Cicero sought to find a successor to himself so that he would not have to continue serving.423 Wistrand believes that Cicero had a passive role even in his fighting in Cilicia,424 and might be said to have depreciated his own military ability.425

Wistrand goes on to emphasize his point that in the civil war that followed Cicero’s governorship of Cilicia, Cicero consistently pursued a passive role. After passing a senatus consultum ultimum, the Senate gave Cicero the task of defending the republic from Caesar.426 According to Wistrand, Cicero maintained his imperium to play the role of a peacemaker.427 Wistrand relates that Cicero tried to escape Italy with Pompey, and very reluctantly accepted Pompey’s command to continue operating in Italy. Cicero only left Italy when Pompey declared that anyone who remained would be regarded as an ally of Caesar, and so a traitor.428 Wistrand says that Cicero continued to stay in the role of peacemaker and continued to play a passive role in the civil war.429 In Wistrand’s opinion, Cicero remained passive with respect to the conflict between Caesar and Pompey as long as there was a chance of peace.430

421 Thompson, 375.
422 Hunter, 73.
423 Wistrand, 7.
424 Ibid., 11.
425 Ibid., 16-17.
426 Ibid., 61.
427 Ibid., 64.
428 Ibid., 65.
429 Ibid., 70-71.
430 Wistrand, 71-72.
Other commentators, even those from antiquity, claim that Cicero had a policy of wavering in times of trouble. According to M. S. Slaughter, Plutarch was disillusioned with Cicero after reading his correspondence, and wrote that he had overestimated Cicero’s wisdom because he had discovered that Cicero vacillated at the most important point of his career. Helen Wieand Cole has the same opinion of Plutarch’s attitude, saying that Plutarch believed Cicero wavered in his decisions. Slaughter says that “Cicero died like a Roman, and by so doing atoned for many littlenesses: vanity, conceit, ultra-sensitivity, exhibitions of physical timidity, bordering on physical cowardice.” Catherine Saunders believes that Cicero did not vacillate during the civil war. Nevertheless, she says that Cicero thought that an armed conflict between Caesar and Pompey should be avoided because Caesar was stronger, and that “an unjust peace is better than a more just war with fellow-citizens.” Robert Hariman begins by defending Cicero against the charge of vacillating, but does admit that it was characteristic of Cicero to vacillate.

Various commentators believe that Cicero was a strong advocate of peace. Adolph F. Pauli states that during the civil war, “Cicero worked for peace at almost any price.” S. E. Smethurst says that Cicero thought war could only be justified in order to maintain faith or national security. Smethurst says that Cicero thought war was a last resort, when discussion and persuasion had failed. G. A. Harrer states that Cicero thought that rash warfare was similar to the behavior of wild beasts, and that one should always plan for peace.

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433 Slaughter, 129.
438 Smethurst, “Cicero and Roman Imperial Policy,” 220.
Harrer believes that although Cicero was not a pacifist, he preferred discussion to war. Harrer further asserts that “Cicero’s attitude is that war is essentially one of defense.”

The greatest condemnation of Cicero on the basis of his letters comes from Jérôme Carcopino, who adds to the idea that Cicero wavered and avoided conflict the notion that Cicero lacked principle and courage. Carcopino says: “Cicero’s indiscreet revelations needed no commentator to destroy in his fellow-citizens’ eyes whatever remained of his reputation as a statesman and to stamp his name with ineffaceable dishonour.” Carcopino states that Cicero had “no convictions, no loyalty and no courage.” Carcopino adds that Cicero “was so chicken-hearted … that his first gesture of opposition to Caesar was also his last.”

Carcopino says that Cicero changed his mind and betrayed “loyalty and principle.” Carcopino believes that Cicero constantly wavered, and had an “invertebrate character.” Carcopino accuses Cicero of being “timorous,” and having a “faltering will.” Carcopino claims that Cicero hated militarism. Carcopino concludes that Plutarch and Livy believed that Cicero was a coward. Carcopino adds to this point by saying that in Cicero’s letters Cicero said that he was “full of fear,” “had no courage,” and that “if any man is fearful in great and dangerous situations, that man is I.”

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441 Carcopino, 1:37.
442 Ibid., 1:191.
443 Ibid., 1:202.
444 Ibid., 1:205.
445 Ibid., 1:240.
446 Ibid., 1:241.
447 Ibid., 1:244-245.
448 Ibid., 1:255-256.
449 Ibid., 1:252.
450 Ibid., 1:259.
451 Carcopino, 1:261.
Although most commentators do not go so far as to accuse Cicero of cowardice, most of those who study the letters do believe that Cicero tended to waver and try to avoid warfare any way possible. Cicero’s reluctance to engage in warfare shows that he was going to be unwilling to fight personally when the republic’s existence was threatened. He was willing to urge war with Antony, but not willing to engage in it himself. His love of peace made him unwilling to take the steps that could have prevented Octavian from acquiring the military power Octavian received in part from Cicero’s own efforts. Cicero’s unwillingness to take part in the fighting deprived him of the opportunity to save himself and the republic he claimed to love.

**CICERO’S AVERSION TO CONFLICT**

Cicero seemed to demonstrate in his letters that he was inclined to stay away from being personally involved in almost any sort of conflict, and this characteristic of his showed up near the end of the republic, when he would not take any personal part in the struggle against Antony. During his exile, Cicero admitted in a letter to his family (November 29, 58 B.C.) that he had neither avoided the danger that threatened him nor died bravely in fighting his enemy, Clodius. He admitted that he was ashamed to have been found “wanting in courage.”\(^{452}\) When he was governor of Cilicia, Cicero seemed to be afraid of having to fight the Parthians. Cicero told Atticus (February 20, 50 B.C.) that a Parthian war was threatening, and was afraid that his term as governor of Cilicia would be extended.\(^{453}\) Cicero later wrote to Atticus (May/June 50 B.C.) that he thought he should never have been governor in the first place.\(^{454}\)

When civil war threatened between Caesar and Pompey, Cicero appeared to be determined not to take sides and so involve himself in the conflict. Cicero said in a letter to Atticus (October 16, 50 B.C.) that he had made friends with both Caesar and Pompey, and took care to conciliate them “in every possible way.” Cicero said that each of them thought


\(^{453}\) Ibid., 2:119.

Cicero was on their side, and that each of them believed Cicero to be their best friend. Cicero wrote: “If war is to arbitrate, I am clear that defeat with one is better than victory with the other.”\(^{455}\) Cicero wrote to Tiro (January 12, 49 B.C.) of the conflict: “I should dearly have liked to heal the mischief.”\(^{456}\)

Cicero seemed entirely pessimistic about the idea of a civil war, although he ended up taking the side of Pompey. Cicero wrote to Atticus (mid-December 50 B.C.) that he had wanted peace, and that even victory was undesirable, bringing many bad things and a dictator. Cicero stated that he was willing to concede to Caesar’s demands rather than fight a war.\(^{457}\) Cicero wrote (ca. December 18, 50 B.C.) that in the Senate he would support Pompey, but that he would be for “peace at any price.”\(^{458}\) Cicero wrote Atticus (December 19 (?), 50 B.C.) that Pompey wanted to set Cicero up in a command in Sicily. Cicero said that this idea was “senseless,” and that he had no authority to become a commander from either the or the assembly. Cicero said that nevertheless he would stand with the “honest men,” but said that if Caesar won Caesar would be as brutal as former despots Cinna and Sulla had been.\(^{459}\)

Cicero appeared to take up a wavering attitude towards the conflict. He wrote to Atticus (December 25/26, 50 B.C.) that there was no hope for reconciliation between Caesar and Pompey.\(^{460}\) A day or two later (December 27, 50 B.C.), Cicero speculated on possible solutions to the problem. Then, in the same letter, he said that if Caesar was insistent Cicero’s party would have to fight, and he with them.\(^{461}\) In a letter to Atticus after Caesar’s invasion of Italy (January, 18, 49 B.C.), Cicero said that he would leave Rome “before daybreak so as to avoid looks or talks.”\(^{462}\) Not long after this, Cicero asked Atticus (January

\(^{455}\) Cicero, Letters to Atticus, 2:175-177.

\(^{456}\) Cicero, Letters to Friends, 2:75.

\(^{457}\) Cicero, Letters to Atticus, 2:207.

\(^{458}\) Ibid., 209.

\(^{459}\) Ibid., 211-215.

\(^{460}\) Ibid., 217-219.

\(^{461}\) Ibid., 221-225.

\(^{462}\) Ibid., 225.
21 (?), 49 B.C.) why Pompey had abandoned Rome.⁴⁶³ Five days after Cicero told Atticus that Cicero was leaving Rome, Cicero told Atticus (January 23, 49 B.C.) that any terms would have been preferable to Pompey’s leaving Rome.⁴⁶⁴ Two days later (January 25, 49 B.C.), Cicero seemed to show again that he was strongly for peace. He said that there was a possibility of an agreement between Caesar and Pompey,⁴⁶⁵ and the next day said (January 26, 49 B.C.): “Even Cato now prefers slavery to war.”⁴⁶⁶ Cicero wrote to Tiro (January 27, 49 B.C.) that Cicero had always been dedicated to peace, and thought civil war was the worst of evils.⁴⁶⁷

But Cicero seemed to continue to waver. At one point he said (February 10, 49 B.C.) he would gladly die for Pompey.⁴⁶⁸ Having already left Rome for Formiae, Cicero said (February 11, 49 B.C.) he was not thinking of fleeing.⁴⁶⁹ Later, Cicero said (February 13 (?), 49 B.C.) that he would not take part in a civil war as long as peace negotiations were going on, but that if there were to be war he would stay with Pompey.⁴⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Cicero criticized Pompey. Cicero wrote (February 15/16, 49 B.C.): “When all of us feared Caesar, Pompey was his friend; now that he has started to fear him he expects us all to be Caesar’s enemies.”⁴⁷¹ Cicero then wrote to Atticus (February 17, 49 B.C.) that Cicero had sent a letter to Caesar urging a settlement to the conflict, but saying in his letter to Atticus that Pompey has behaved more disgracefully than any other statesman or general had, because Pompey fled Rome when he should have stayed and died. Then in the same letter, Cicero wrote that he would gladly die for Pompey, and that Cicero thought more highly of Pompey than

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⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 2:235.
⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 2:241.
⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 2:243.
⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 2:267.
⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 2:269.
⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 2:273.
anyone else, but said that he would join Pompey only if he sought peace but otherwise was uncertain of what to do.472

Even at this point Cicero seemed to continue to waver in his sympathies and sought peace. He wrote (February 18-19, 49 B.C.) he had endeavored to cultivate Caesar’s friendship in anticipation of trouble. Nevertheless, Cicero wrote that Pompey was the one who was destitute of courage. Cicero enumerated many examples of Pompey’s giving in to Caesar in the past, and criticized Pompey for leaving Rome, even though Cicero had himself done so. Cicero asked whether any peace terms would have been preferable to leaving Rome. Finally, Cicero wrote that he was considering joining Caesar’s government.473 Although he had already wrote in the strongest terms that he would die for Pompey, Cicero wrote later (February 27, 49 B.C.) that Pompey wanted to be a dictator like Sulla, and that Caesar and Pompey both wanted dictatorship.474 Nevertheless, Cicero assured Pompey (February 15/16, 49 B.C.) that he would join him immediately to fight the war.475

Cicero seemed to continue to hope for peace. He wrote to Pompey (February 27, 49 B.C.) that Pompey should either establish peace or stand ground in Italy. Cicero wrote Pompey that he had not joined Pompey for fear of falling into Caesar’s hands. Cicero also told Pompey that Pompey should urge peace “even on bad terms.” Cicero still preferred negotiations to the use of force.476 Cicero wrote Atticus (February 28, 49 B.C.) that he had not been cowardly or treacherous when he had refused to take up the Capuan command, even though he had been ordered to do so. Cicero asked Atticus: “Is a peacemaking role required or does all rest with the warrior?” Then Cicero told Atticus that Cicero was sorry that he had not taken Atticus’ advice of making safety a priority.477

Cicero seemed to continue to vacillate in his sympathies between Caesar and Pompey. After Pompey went to Brundisium, Cicero wrote of Caesar (March 1, 49 B.C.) that

472 Cicero, Letters to Atticus, 2:275-279.
474 Ibid., 2:303-305.
475 Ibid., 2:311.
476 Ibid., 2:313-319.
477 Ibid., 2:321-323.
“if he takes no lives and touches no man’s property those who dreaded him most will become his warmest admirers.”

The next day Cicero wrote Atticus that his decision was wavering. A day later Cicero told Atticus that he was tormented by his duty and didn’t want to be dishonororable. Although he had so strongly supported Pompey in the past and said he was willing to die for him, Cicero wrote later to Atticus (March 4, 49 B.C.) that Pompey did not attract him, and said: “I already knew him to be a hopeless failure as a statesman, and I now find him an equally bad general.”

Cicero seemed to continue to waver between peace with Caesar and war. Cicero told Atticus (March 6, 49 B.C.) that he would carry war into Italy by land and sea, but also referred to the desirability of remaining in Rome if Caesar would not be violent. Cicero wrote: “I am the only one who might take either way.” But Cicero said he would fight because he owed it to Pompey, and again changed his attitude toward Pompey by saying that Cicero would fight only for Pompey’s sake, since Pompey was “fighting not for himself but for the country.”

Only two days later, Cicero made a complete about-face and asked Atticus, “Should I make things up with Caesar?”

Cicero appeared to emphasize his uncertainty further. He asked Atticus a series of questions (March 12, 49 B.C.), to the effect of wondering whether it would be appropriate to remain in the country under despotism or take the risk of opposing it at all costs. Cicero wrote (March 13, 49 B.C.) that he had not confidence in either Caesar or Pompey. He said that “I realize that we shall never have a free state in the lifetime of those two or of one singly.” Nevertheless, Cicero wrote that he owed much to Pompey. In spite of that, Cicero claimed that Pompey would destroy Italy but that Cicero would be with him when he did so. Cicero concluded with “so let’s go away from it all, by any sailing that offers.”

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478 Cicero, Letters to Atticus, 2:335.
479 Ibid., 2:339.
480 Ibid., 2:341.
481 Ibid., 3:3.
482 Ibid., 3:7.
483 Ibid., 3:11.
484 Ibid., 3:29.
485 Ibid., 3:31-35.
At a critical point in the struggle, Cicero kept trying to make it up with Caesar but at the same time declared loyalty to Pompey. Cicero wrote Atticus (March 17, 49 B.C.): “I shall see whether by any means I can avoid taking part in public affairs with Caesar’s good will.” The very next day, Cicero wrote Atticus: “I think I have been out of my senses from the start, and the one thing that tortures me is that I have not followed Pompey like any private soldier.” Cicero said that Pompey’s flight had alienated Cicero but that now Cicero felt close to Pompey. Nevertheless, Cicero declared that he would flee.

Cicero began to veer to the side of Caesar once again. He told Atticus (March 20, 49 B.C.) that he had met a few people who wanted him to come to terms with Caesar. Then Cicero wrote a letter to Caesar (March 19/20, 49 B.C.). Cicero told Caesar that Cicero hoped Caesar wanted peace, and asked to help Caesar to become reconciled with Pompey. Cicero told Caesar that Caesar and Pompey were good friends, even though they were in a desperate struggle with each other.

When the civil war was going badly for Pompey, Cicero disavowed any interest in the conflict, and reluctantly inclined more towards Caesar. When writing to Atticus (March 29/30, 49 B.C.), Cicero said that he wanted to convince Caesar to make peace, and claimed that he had had no part in the civil war. Cicero wrote (April 1/2, 49 B.C.) that there were many undesirable people in Caesar’s camp, and that they were more like beasts than men. Nevertheless, in the same letter he wrote that he did not consider Caesar his personal enemy. In a subsequent letter to Atticus (April 3, 49 B.C.), Cicero wrote that he wanted to remain neutral.

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487 Ibid., 3:53-57.
488 Ibid., 3:63-65.
489 Ibid., 3:67-69.
490 Ibid., 3:99.
491 Ibid., 3:101-103.
492 Ibid., 3:107.
Cicero still seemed to hope for peace, and made overtures to Caesar. In a letter to Atticus (April 4, 49 B.C.), Cicero wrote that he thought there would be peace.\footnote{T.368} Cicero then wrote (April 7, 49 B.C.) that Caesar was not at all offended by the fact that Cicero had not attended a meeting.\footnote{T.368} Although Cicero condemned Caesar as a despot,\footnote{T.368} Cicero wrote (May 3, 49 B.C.) that he would follow Caesar’s advice and not participate in the Civil War.\footnote{T.368} Cicero wrote to Atticus (May 3, 49 B.C.): “I had no thought of acting against Caesar’s interests.”\footnote{T.368} Cicero wrote to Caelius Rufus (May 2/3, 49 B.C.) that he would not go to Pompey but to a place of solitude, and only wanted peace and to prevent civil war.\footnote{T.368} After Caesar won the war, Cicero concluded (May 49 B.C.) that he should join the victors.\footnote{T.368} Cicero wrote (July 46 B.C.) that he had made every effort to please the Caesarians.\footnote{T.368}

Cicero’s policy, particularly during the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, seemed from the letters to be to avoid conflict as much as possible and to waver in his decisions regarding crucial events that were to shape Rome’s destiny. Although Cicero ended up strongly opposing Antony as his worst enemy, Cicero nevertheless would not engage personally in any military effort to defeat Antony. Cicero’s unwillingness to lead in a military effort, or to take charge but rely on subordinates as he reluctantly did in Cilicia, contributed to his decision to rely on Octavian for military leadership. Cicero contributed to Octavian’s career by praising him and proposing that he become propraetor and even consul. For this reason, Cicero contributed to Octavian’s overthrow of the republic and Cicero’s own death.

\footnote{T.368} Ibid., 3:113.
\footnote{T.368} Ibid., 3:115.
\footnote{T.368} Ibid., 3:147.
\footnote{T.368} Ibid., 3:153.
\footnote{T.368} Ibid., 3:109-111.
\footnote{T.368} Ibid., 3:153.
\footnote{T.368} Ibid., 3:199.
CICERO’S VANITY

Cicero’s vanity seemed to lead him to believe that those who praised him, as Octavian did, would also continue to support him. The letters make it appear that Cicero was very proud of his consulship and the services he considered that he had rendered to Rome. In a letter to Metellus Celer after his consulship (January 62 B.C.), Cicero criticized Celer for not honoring Cicero when Celer spoke in the , and Cicero explained it as being due to some people not approving of what Cicero called Cicero’s saving of the republic. Cicero complained that Cicero had praised Celer, but Celer had not reciprocated and the Senate laughed at Cicero for praising Celer because they did not believe Celer would reciprocate. Nevertheless Cicero considered himself to have been at the height of his glory at that time.501

Later in the letter Cicero again said that he was the savior of the republic.502

Cicero subsequently showed the appearance of vanity in his relationship with Pompey. Cicero wrote a letter to Pompey (April 62 B.C.) saying that Pompey did not show enough esteem for Cicero in Pompey’s letter. Cicero told Pompey in his letter that Cicero’s achievements had been so great that he deserved some recognition of them from Pompey, which Cicero claimed he did not receive.503 Nevertheless, in a letter to Atticus after this (January 25, 61 B.C.), Cicero said that Pompey pretended to think very highly of him. Nevertheless, Cicero said that beneath the veneer of praise Pompey was jealous of Cicero. Cicero then told Atticus that Pompey was “awkward, tortuous, politically paltry, shabby, timid, [and] disingenuous.”504 In a subsequent letter to Atticus (February 13, 61 B.C.), Cicero said that no one approved of a speech Pompey gave.505 Cicero then wrote to Atticus that “everything I have written glorifies Pompey at his expense.”506

In a subsequent letter to Atticus (January 20, 60 B.C.), Cicero ascribed to himself supreme importance in the state. Cicero said that the Senate had passed decrees concerning

502 Ibid., 2:45.
503 Ibid., 1:51.
504 Ibid., 1:65.
505 Ibid., 1:67.
506 Ibid., 1:71.
electoral bribery and the courts, but neither of them was allowed to be enacted. Cicero then commented: “Thus the year saw the overthrow of the two foundations of the constitution which I (and I alone) had established.” Cicero then claimed (March 15, 60 B.C.) that Pompey said in the Senate that Cicero had saved not only the Roman Empire but the whole world. Cicero then wrote to Atticus: “You may expect a poem, not to leave any form of singing my own praises unattempted.”

Writing to Lucceius (ca. April 12, 55 B.C.), Cicero said that he hoped Lucceius would praise Cicero. Cicero said that he was encouraged by the idea that posterity would talk of him and the hope of a sort of immortality, but also said that he hoped to enjoy Lucceius’ literary account of Cicero’s actions in Cicero’s lifetime. Cicero told Lucceius that in Lucceius’ history of Cicero’s achievements Lucceius should criticize “the perfidy, artifice, and betrayal of which many were guilty towards” Cicero. Cicero said that Lucceius was a “writer by whom I desire my praises to be sung.” Cicero then said that if Lucceius immortalized Cicero’s glory Lucceius would be a genius. Cicero compared himself to Alexander the Great, and told Lucceius that he did not want to write his autobiography because he would have to be modest where praise was due.

Cicero’s susceptibility to flattery contributed to his reliance on Octavian. Cicero was always seeking approval, particularly for his actions during his consulship and his suppression of the Catilinarian conspiracy. Since flattery had such an influence over Cicero, Cicero tended to trust Octavian and believe that Octavian had told him the truth when he praised Cicero and promised his support for Cicero and Cicero’s cause. This led to Cicero’s decision to promote the career of Octavian in the . The result of Octavian’s advancement was the fall of the republic and the death of Cicero.

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507 Ibid., 1:105.
508 Cicero, Letters to Atticus, 1:115-117.
510 Ibid., 1:159-161.
511 Ibid., 1:163.
512 Ibid., 1:165.
CICERO AND OCTAVIAN

Although Cicero rejoiced in the assassination of Caesar and praised the assassins, he seemed to be willing to trust the goodwill of Octavian because Octavian had given Cicero flattery and had made a show of supporting Cicero and even the assassins of his benefactor Caesar. Cicero wrote Atticus (April 10, 44 B.C.) that even if adversity were to come upon himself and his allies, the Ides of March would be their consolation.\(^513\) Cicero wrote of Marcus Brutus (May 3, 44 B.C.), an assassin of Caesar: “The Ides of March added so much to my love for him that I was astonished to find room for increase where I had long believed all was full to overflowing.”\(^514\) Cicero wrote to Cassius (May 3, 44 B.C.), another assassin of Caesar, that Cassius and Brutus were the only hope of Rome.\(^515\) Cicero wrote to Atticus (April 12, 44 B.C.): “Nothing so far gives me pleasure except the Ides of March.”\(^516\) Cicero went so far as to say (on or shortly after December 9, 44 B.C.) that the assassination of Caesar was the greatest deed in history.\(^517\)

Cicero’s first impression of Octavian in the letters shows that he seemed to suspect him. Upon Octavian’s arrival, Cicero wondered (April 11, 44 B.C.) whether Octavian had been successful in gathering support and asked if there was a chance of a coup, but didn’t think that would happen.\(^518\) In his next letter to Atticus (April 12, 44 B.C.), Cicero said that it was unimportant what happened with Octavian.\(^519\) However, Cicero showed disapproval of Octavian when Octavian was visiting him, saying that he could not be a good citizen, even though Octavian had been “respectful and friendly.” Cicero thought it suspicious (April 22, 44 B.C.) that Octavian took up the name of Caesar and that there were too many people around Octavian who threatened the assassins with death. Cicero was wary of the idea of


\(^{515}\) Ibid., 3:101.

\(^{516}\) Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 4:151.


\(^{518}\) Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 4:149.

\(^{519}\) Ibid., 4:151.
Octavian going to Rome, where the assassins could not be safe.\textsuperscript{520} Later on (May 18, 44 B.C.), Cicero still showed distrust of Octavian, saying he did not like his speech or the look of the preparations for the shows Octavian was putting on.\textsuperscript{521}

But eventually, Cicero seemed to begin to change his mind about Octavian and started to praise him and show trust in him. Cicero wrote to Atticus (ca. June 10, 44 B.C.) that Octavian was intelligent and spirited, and that Octavian’s attitude towards the assassins was what Cicero’s party wanted. But Cicero still wondered whether he could trust Octavian because of the name he had taken up (Caesar), his age, heredity and education. Cicero nevertheless wanted to encourage Octavian and ensure that he was not allied with Antony.\textsuperscript{522}

By October 10, 44 B.C., in a letter to Cornificius, Cicero seemed to have altered his view of Octavian, and praised and supported him more strongly, because he had turned against Antony, but Cicero at this point still expressed reservations. Cicero wrote that he believed Octavian wanted to assassinate Antony, and for the first time called Octavian Caesar. Cicero told Cornificius that Octavian would do anything for honor and glory.\textsuperscript{523} Cicero wrote to Atticus (November 2/3, 44 B.C.) that Octavian had written Cicero a letter, telling Cicero that he wanted to fight Antony and that Octavian wanted to be commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Cicero was still uncertain about following Octavian, writing: “Consider his name, consider his age.”\textsuperscript{524}

Cicero continued to engage in his characteristic wavering and delay. Cicero referred (November 4, 44 B.C.) to Octavian’s sending Cicero two letters asking Cicero to return to Rome and work through the Senate, and adding the words “with your advice.” Cicero wrote that Octavian was urging him on but Cicero said he was playing for time. Cicero added that he didn’t trust Octavian’s age and didn’t know what Octavian was after.\textsuperscript{525} Cicero wrote to Atticus (November 5, 44 B.C.) that Octavian was sending Cicero letters everyday urging

\textsuperscript{520} Cicero, \textit{Letters to Atticus}, 4:167.
\textsuperscript{521} Ibid., 4:225.
\textsuperscript{522} Cicero, \textit{Letters to Atticus}, 4:253-255.
\textsuperscript{523} Cicero, \textit{Letters to Friends}, 3:149-151.
\textsuperscript{524} Cicero, \textit{Letters to Atticus}, 4:345-347.
\textsuperscript{525} Ibid., 4:349.
Cicero to act to save the republic again. Cicero nevertheless said that Octavian was just a boy.  

In November 44 B.C. Cicero was still distrustful of Octavian, but continued to be uncertain and vacillated in making a solid decision or acting for either Octavian or Antony. Cicero strongly agreed with Atticus (ca. November 12, 44 B.C.) that if Octavian were to have much power Caesar’s acts would receive much more approval than they had received when Antony established his original position in the Temple of Tellus. Nevertheless, Cicero asserted that if Antony defeated Octavian, Antony would be unbearable, “so one can’t tell which to prefer.”

In his last known letter to Atticus (November 12, 44 B.C.), Cicero showed extreme distrust of Octavian although Cicero was urging Octavian to join the side of the assassins. Cicero wrote that Octavian was reducing the strength of Antony, but that it was best to wait. Cicero wrote that Octavian swore to rise to Caesar’s honors and raised his hands to Caesar’s statue. Cicero stated: “Sooner destruction for me than a rescuer such as this!” Cicero wrote that he would not support Octavian unless Cicero was sure that Octavian would be a friend of the assassins of Caesar. But Octavian assured Cicero that he would support the assassins. Cicero told Octavian that there was no hurry, and wrote to Atticus that by January Cicero and his confederates would know where Octavian stood on the issue.

Cicero appeared to change his mind about Octavian when Octavian had taken command of the Martian (meaning dedicated to the god Mars) and Fourth Legions to fight Antony. Cicero wrote to Decimus Brutus (December 44 B.C.), one of the assassins of Caesar and commander of Cisalpine Gaul, that Decimus Brutus was wrong in doubting Octavian’s command and said that Decimus Brutus was incorrect in distrusting the two legions Octavian commanded, which Cicero said had rallied to the defense of the republic. In a letter to Trebonius (February 2 or shortly after, 43 B.C.), Cicero wrote that Octavian’s command of

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527 Ibid., 4:365.
528 Ibid., 4:369.
the two legions had saved Cicero’s party from Antony’s crimes and cruelties, and Cicero also said that he admired Octavian and had high hopes for him.  

By March 44 B.C. Cicero showed a complete transformation and seemed to completely trust and back Octavian. Cicero wrote to Cornificius (ca. March 20, 43 B.C.) that Cicero had sent Octavian against the brutal Antony. Cicero said that Octavian was defending himself and the republic, and credited Octavian with saving Rome from downfall due to the menace of Antony.  

Cicero also wrote to Marcus Brutus (April 14 (?), 43 B.C.) that if it had not been for Octavian, Cicero’s party would have been at the mercy of Antony.  

Cicero in early 43 B.C. seemed to have decisively thrown in his lot with Octavian. Cicero wrote to Marcus Brutus (ca. April 21, 43 B.C.) that Octavian’s “natural worth and manliness” were “extraordinary”. Cicero still worried somewhat about his ability to continue to guide Octavian as he had so far been able to, at least from Cicero’s point of view, and admitted that it would be more difficult. Cicero was nevertheless convinced that it was mostly Cicero who had persuaded Octavian to make “our survival his work.” Cicero again claimed that everything would have been lost if Octavian had not defeated Antony at Mutina.  

Cicero slighted the two consuls, Hirtius and Pansa, saying (April 27 (?), 43 B.C.) that in their deaths Rome had lost two good consuls but that good was all one could say of them.  

Cicero stated (ca. March 20, 43 B.C.) that after the battle of Mutina, the danger was over for Cicero’s side.  

In May of 43 B.C., Cicero began to receive warnings of possible treachery on Octavian’s part. Marcus Brutus warned Cicero (ca. May 7, 43 B.C.) that Cicero had been too trusting, and thought that he could sway someone with favors and concessions, “as though a mind corrupted by largesse would not possibly be swayed to bad courses.”  

A few days later Marcus Brutus wrote to Cicero (May 15, 43 B.C.) that Cicero should act at once so that

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531 Ibid., 3:233-235.
532 Cicero, *Letters to Quintus and Brutus*, 221.
533 Ibid., 229.
534 Ibid., 231.
535 Ibid., 233.
536 Ibid., 237-239.
the victory over Antony would not become an illusion, and that a worse danger would not supplant the old one. Marcus Brutus told Cicero that Cicero would be most to blame if things turned out wrongly, because the and people of Rome gave Cicero the greatest authority that a free country could grant.

Marcus Brutus told Cicero that Cicero should show restraint in giving honors. Marcus Brutus wrote to Cicero that Cicero’s generosity should be “tempered by caution and moderation.” Marcus Brutus wrote that the should not give a favor to anyone that would set a precedent to the promotion of bad people. He wrote that he was concerned about the consulship, and told Cicero that Octavian thought he had risen as high as he had because of Cicero’s decrees, and that because of them Octavian thought he could become consul sooner than if Cicero had not granted them. Marcus Brutus told Cicero that Marcus Brutus greatly feared Octavian, and that if Cicero were to become consul, Marcus Brutus would believe there would be a true republic.537

A warning also came from Marcus Brutus’ brother Decimus Brutus (May 21, 43 B.C.). Decimus Brutus had counted upon receiving the two legions Octavian was commanding, but was now concerned because he had not received them.538 In a later letter (May 24, 43 B.C.), Decimus Brutus related an anecdote concerning Octavian that foretold danger. Decimus Brutus told Cicero that Octavian had made no comment against Cicero except one, saying that Cicero had said of Octavian “laudandum adolescentem, ornandum, tollendum,” meaning that Octavian should be praised, honored, and removed. Octavian then said that he had no intention of allowing that to happen. Decimus Brutus wrote to Cicero that the veterans were trying to turn Octavian against Cicero, and that Octavian had not sent Decimus Brutus the legion Octavian had taken from Pansa’s army.539

But Cicero would not pay attention to the warnings. Cicero wrote to Decimus Brutus (June 4, 43 B.C.): “As for this same Segulius’ story that the veterans are grumbling because you and Caesar [Octavian] are not on the Commission of Ten, I only wish I was not on it!” Cicero told Decimus Brutus not to pay any attention to Segulius and wrote “I fear nothing

537 Cicero, Letters to Quintus and Brutus, 239-241.
538 Cicero, Letters to Friends, 3:303.
539 Ibid., 3:307-309.
and shall beware of everything.” Cicero wrote later to Decimus Brutus (June 7, 43 B.C.) that Cicero was very happy that Decimus Brutus had approved of Cicero’s proposal to honor Octavian. Nevertheless, Cicero conceded that Octavian’s two legions would not go to Decimus Brutus “on any terms.”

Cicero seemed to continue to put full confidence in Octavian. Cicero wrote to Marcus Brutus (June 43 B.C.) that Cicero could not at all criticize Octavian’s conduct at the battle of Mutina, but could criticize Hirtius’ conduct there. Cicero also blamed Decimus Brutus, not Octavian, for the failure to succeed after Mutina, saying that Decimus Brutus had made many mistakes even though at Mutina the republic had been victorious. Cicero wrote Marcus Brutus that Octavian had so far been guided by Cicero’s advice, and was “a fine young man,” and “remarkably steady,” but that Octavian had been influenced by bad advisers. Cicero said he thought that he could still rely on Octavian, but that bad advisers could change Octavian’s position.

In a letter to Cicero (July 28, 43 B.C.), Plancus warned Cicero of the threat posed by Octavian. Plancus wrote Cicero that Plancus had asked repeatedly for help from Octavian, and that Octavian had promised to help him but had not given it to him. Plancus told Cicero that Octavian could be seen as the son of Caesar. Lepidus also wrote to Cicero: “The fact that Antony is alive today, that Lepidus is with him, that they have armies by no means contemptible, that their hopes and audacity run high – for all this they can thank Caesar [Octavian].” Plancus told Cicero of Octavian: “You have done more for him than for anyone in the world except myself.”

Cicero began to realize, too late, that he had made a mistake, but was reluctant to completely admit it. Cicero wrote to Marcus Brutus (July 14, 43 B.C.): “Caesar’s [Octavian’s] army, which used to be excellent, is not only no help but forces us to ask urgently for your army.” Nevertheless, Cicero seemed to maintain complete confidence in Octavian.

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541 Ibid., 3:351.
542 Cicero, *Letters to Quintus and Brutus*, 253-257.
544 Cicero, *Letters to Quintus and Brutus*, 269.
Octavian. Cicero wrote Marcus Brutus (July 43 B.C.) that Cicero had guided Octavian to save the lives of Cicero and all Cicero’s party. Cicero told Marcus Brutus that all the honors Cicero had given Octavian were due to Octavian and necessary. Cicero further told Marcus Brutus that Octavian had been their only protector, and that there was no honor which was not due to Octavian. Cicero wrote that he had voted Octavian military authority because Octavian had an army.545

Cicero began to doubt that he could still influence Octavian, but still hoped that he could do so. Cicero wrote to Marcus Brutus (July 27, 43 B.C.): “I am in the greatest distress because it hardly looks as though I can make good my promises” with regard to Octavian. Cicero still believed that other people were turning Octavian against Cicero’s ideas, and hoped that he could still “hold” Octavian. Cicero still claimed that Cicero would not be at fault but Octavian if Octavian were to go wrong.546

Marcus Brutus finally wrote (n.d.) of the letter Marcus Brutus had read that Cicero had sent Octavian, and sharply criticized Cicero’s approach to Octavian. Marcus Brutus wrote of Cicero’s letter to Octavian: “You thank him on public grounds in such a fashion, so imploringly and so humbly …. You commend our welfare to him. Better any death than such welfare!” Marcus Brutus said of the letter that it was a statement that despotism had not ended but that there was a change of despots. Marcus Brutus told Cicero that Cicero’s letter was “the pleadings of a subject to his king.” Marcus Brutus wrote to Cicero that Cicero was responsible more than anyone else for the “weakness and despair” that had caused Caesar to want to become a monarch, that had put Antony in Caesar’s place, and that had put Octavian as high as he had become.547

Brutus wrote a letter to Atticus (n.d.), Cicero’s friend, in which Brutus said that Cicero wanted to please Octavian because Octavian had flattered him. Brutus wrote of Cicero: “So long as he has people from whom he can get what he wants and who give him attention and flattery he does not object to servitude if only it be flattering.” Brutus then wrote that Octavian “may call Cicero his father, ask his opinion on everything, flatter him,
thank him, but it will be plain to see that the words contradict the realities.” Brutus wrote that it was an outrage to call someone a father who was not even free.548

Cicero’s efforts to promote Octavian were disastrous to himself and the republic. Although Cicero at first distrusted Octavian, and continued to doubt his ability to influence him, Cicero nevertheless continued to believe that he had not been wrong in supporting Octavian. Cicero paid little attention to the warnings of Plancus and Marcus Brutus, but continued to believe that Cicero had been responsible for causing Octavian to save the republic. As Marcus Brutus noted, Cicero was susceptible to flattery and Octavian had flattered him and assured him that Octavian would even support the assassins. Marcus Brutus told Cicero that Octavian owed his advancement to Cicero, but that Octavian had not merited it. Thus Cicero contributed to his own and the republic’s fall by supporting the person who would bring about the end of both.

CONCLUSION

Cicero’s governorship of Cilicia showed that he was able to be an effective military leader. Although his actual successes were minor, Cicero faced the threat of a terrible Parthian attack and was willing to engage the Parthians, although he never had to because another commander warded them off. Consequently, when the republic was threatened with destruction in 44 and 43 B.C., Cicero could have done the same thing he had done in Cilicia and taken up a military command or given it to a reliable republican. Instead, Cicero proposed that the give the military command to Octavian. During the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, Cicero took the side of Pompey but continuously wavered and tried his best to avoid any participation in the conflict. Thus Cicero evaded military responsibility and entrusted it to Octavian during the last times of the republic.

As can be seen by various letters Cicero wrote and Marcus Brutus’ commentary on Cicero to Atticus, Cicero was very susceptible to flattery. Cicero wanted others to heap praises on him. Octavian used this weakness of Cicero’s to get Cicero to support Octavian’s effort to rise in military and political authority. Cicero often doubted Octavian’s reliability, but tended to think that Octavian was trustworthy but was being influenced by bad advisers

548 Cicero, Letters to Quintus and Brutus, 303-305.
to take the wrong turn. Marcus Brutus condemned Cicero’s submissiveness to Octavian, and Plancus blamed Cicero’s support of Octavian for the fall in the fortunes of the republic near the very end of its existence. Cicero’s most serious miscalculation was to promote Octavian’s political and military power. Cicero’s reliance on Octavian to lead troops contributed to Octavian’s ability to seize power as consul and ultimately to overthrow the republic.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Cicero contributed to the fall of the Roman Republic through his love of praise and his unwillingness to engage in military activity. Ancient sources such as Plutarch and Appian agree that Cicero had great power in the Senate in the period from 44 to 43 B.C., just before the fall of the republic. Throughout Cicero’s Philippics, written in 44 and 43 B.C., Cicero not only praised Octavian as the savior of the republic but proposed that Octavian become propraetor and acquire a military command, and even suggested that he could become consul before the legal age. After the death of the two consuls in 43 B.C. from the battles of Mutina, Octavian was the sole military commander of the republic’s forces left alive, and the consulship was open to him. Plutarch, Appian and Dio Cassius agree that Cicero made a deal with Octavian that Cicero and Octavian would share the consulship. Cicero thus helped Octavian become consul. Octavian eventually used his power as consul to overthrow the republic and kill Cicero with Antony and Lepidus, the other two members of the Second Triumvirate that came to rule Rome.

The modern historiography tends to agree that Cicero tried his best to avoid his personal participation in any kind of military activity or violence. While Cicero participated in the Social War of 90 to 88 B.C. and assumed a military command in 51 B.C. while he was governor of Cilicia, Cicero on all other occasions left the military responsibility up to others. While governor of Cilicia, Cicero was successful as a military commander, although he left most of the direction of military activity up to a subordinate. Cicero could have done the same thing that he did in Cilicia when he dealt with the crisis of 44 and 43 B.C., when the republic was in danger of being overthrown. Nevertheless, Cicero concentrated his efforts on oratory and left the military command against Antony up to Octavian. Cicero is thus partially responsible for Octavian’s rise to power, that is if Cicero had any influence at all with the Senate of Rome when he proposed that Octavian receive the military command.

In his Catilinarian Orations, Cicero showed that he was disinclined to take forceful action against Catiline and Catiline’s fellow conspirators. Cicero also strongly praised
himself in the *Orations*, claiming that he had saved the republic. Thus Cicero’s personality was characterized by a reluctance to use forceful action against those who conspired against him and against the republic, and also by great conceit. Cicero’s conceit and reluctance to engage in military activity personally were to contribute significantly to Cicero’s proposal for the promotion of Octavian, who had flattered Cicero and was willing to take up a military command to fight Cicero’s enemy Antony.

The ancient historians tend to agree that Cicero was both inclined to avoid conflict and easily susceptible to flattery. Octavian flattered Cicero and led Cicero to believe that Octavian would support Cicero, even suggesting that they both become consul. Consequently, Cicero was willing to support Octavian’s rise to power. Most of the ancient sources show that Cicero disliked any participation in military activity or violence. This meant that in the period before the fall of the republic Cicero did not take up a military command.

The most important source for Cicero’s support of Octavian is Cicero’s *Philippics*, which Cicero produced in 44 and 43 B.C. just before the fall of the republic. Cicero began his *Philippics* by praising but mildly criticizing Antony, because Antony had tried to tear down Cicero’s house to make Cicero attend the Senate. Because Antony strongly criticized Cicero after the *First Philippic*, Cicero wrote the *Second Philippic*, which was a virulent, insulting condemnation of Antony. From that point on, Cicero was to consistently berate Antony in extremely severe terms. It appears from the *Philippics* that Cicero opposed Antony so strongly and supported Octavian to such a great degree as Cicero did because Antony had criticized Cicero but Octavian had flattered Cicero and had promised to support Cicero.

Cicero’s letters reveal that Cicero was susceptible to flattery and was inclined to avoid conflict and seek peace whenever possible. In his letters, Cicero showed that he loved those who praised him. The letters also show that Cicero tried, during the period of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey from 49 to 47 B.C., to avoid the conflict as much as possible. They also show that Cicero wavered in his decision whether to side with Pompey or Caesar, although he leaned towards Pompey. Cicero’s vanity, anti-militarism and wavering were to be a serious weakness that prevented Cicero from taking an active part in
the military operations to defend the republic and made Cicero willing to support Octavian’s acquisition of a military command and the consulship.

Cicero definitely contributed, as far as he was able, to Octavian’s power in that Cicero proposed that Octavian become propraetor, acquire a military command, and even become consul. Because Cicero contributed to Octavian’s power, and Octavian overthrew the republic, Cicero shares some responsibility in the overthrow of the republic, at least near the final stages of the republic’s existence in 44 and 43 B.C. If, as Plutarch and Appian stated, Cicero had great power in the Senate in the period just before the fall of the republic, Cicero’s promotion of Octavian’s power in the *Philippics* contributed to the ability of Octavian to overthrow the republic. So Cicero helped end the very republic that he claimed so often to be trying to defend.


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———. *Cicero*. Translated by Bernadotte Perrin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1919.

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