

# ***Alexander Hamilton, Montesquieu, and the Humanity of the Modern Commercial Republic***

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Alexander Hamilton's vision of a commercial republic ameliorates some of the harsh iniquities of antiquity's martial republics, so is more conducive to a culture of life than were the ancient republics. Hamilton believed that a commercial republic could and would be built on virtuous citizens; the contemporary American republic has many benefits, but does not live up to Hamilton's hopes and expectations. One central problem in modern America is rampant avarice, a vice that Hamilton found dangerous and discouraged.

What are we to make of the fact that modern life is shot through with commerce? In coming to grips with such a fundamental question, it behooves us to turn to the thought of Alexander Hamilton, one of the primary architects of the American commercial republic. It is generally acknowledged that, with the possible exception of James Madison, Hamilton did more than anyone to shape, defend and explain the Constitution. In light of his tremendous influence on the American founding and the subsequent development of the American political regime, it is worth considering why he championed the commercial way of life. To this end, I first explore the connection Hamilton saw between the commercial republic and a type of virtue and attempt to defend him against the charges that he promoted avarice and that he scorned merchants. I then argue that to the extent that the modern commercial republic ameliorates some of antiquity's harsh inhumanities, that republic is more conducive than was the ancient martial republic to a culture of life. The many other fundamental disagreements between the ancient and modern political philosophers, some of which may also bear on the culture of life, are beyond the scope of this study. The totality of ancient thought may be more compatible with the culture of life than are most modern teachings. I argue that the modern embrace of commerce, though, appears to be more affirming and supportive of a culture of life than is the ancient alternative.

## ***The Commercial Republic Nourishes Commercial Virtues***

Hamilton viewed himself as practicing a statesmanship aimed at preserving sufficient virtue among his fellow citizens for self-government. To be sure, he

realized that it would be utopian to expect more than a few citizens to exercise a virtue of a higher order, so he and other founders took care to establish, and even to rely heavily upon, institutional contrivances and “effectual precautions” to help protect liberty.<sup>1</sup> They also realized, however, that republican government “presupposes the existence” of civic virtue to a greater extent than does any other political regime.<sup>2</sup> Hamilton publicly acknowledged that “The institution of delegated power implies that there is a portion of virtue and honor among mankind, which may be a reasonable foundation of confidence.”<sup>3</sup> Associating the “portion of virtue and honor among mankind” with one of the institutions of republican government that increases the likelihood that such government is also free, Hamilton would have been loathe to undermine what he proclaimed to be a “reasonable foundation for confidence.”

Hamilton thought the modern commercial republic and the commercial virtues it fosters such as diligence, thrift, foresight, sobriety, prudence and strenuous enterprise would help to maintain “a portion of virtue and honor among mankind.” He never denied that some people have higher callings than to practice the virtues that lead to commercial prosperity, but he figured that as America was by no means a “nation of philosophers,” most Americans most of the time would be better off practicing the commercial virtues.<sup>4</sup>

Some scholars assert that in championing the commercial republic, Hamilton promoted avarice. This assertion is worth taking seriously because if it is true, it would be hard to avoid the conclusion that Hamilton’s vision of America had a tendency to undermine virtue by promoting vice. Marc F. Plattner asserts that “[f]ar from encouraging public spirited virtue, it [Hamilton’s praise of the political utility of commerce] promotes what traditionally has been considered a vice--namely avarice.”<sup>5</sup> In a similar vein, James F. Pontuso writes that Hamilton “unabashedly appealed to the avarice of his fellow citizens.”<sup>6</sup> A careful analysis of *The Federalist* calls these assertions into question.<sup>7</sup>

The term “avarice” appears a dozen times in the work, each time it is used by Hamilton, and in nearly every instance (with two possible exceptions considered below) the term is employed in an unambiguously negative sense. Typical examples of its usages include the first *Federalist* essay, where Hamilton lists avarice second among four motives that are “not . . . laudable” (p. 5), and *Federalist* No. 6, where he identifies avarice as one of the “irregular and violent propensities” (p. 32) and remarks that the Duke of Marlborough’s avarice prolonged the War of the Spanish Succession “beyond the limits marked out by sound policy” (p. 33). Also, in *Federalist* No. 15 Hamilton writes: “I have unfolded to you a complication of the dangers to which you would be exposed should you permit that sacred knot which binds the people of America together to be severed or dissolved by ambition or by avarice, by jealousy or by misrepresentation” (pp. 89-90). Hamilton nowhere mentions how “that sacred knot” was established. He presupposes that it exists, and assumes it is worth

preserving. He lets it be known that whether the “sacred knot” will be preserved depends at least to some extent upon the choices of the people. It would “be severed or dissolved” by any of the four vices he lists. It is scarcely possible that Hamilton would promote one of these vices insofar as he realizes it undermines “that sacred knot which binds the people of America together.”

The term “avaricious” appears four times in *The Federalist*. As was the case with “avarice,” the term only appears in papers written by Hamilton. In addition, every time “avaricious” appears in the work, the term is given an unambiguously negative connotation. In *Federalist* No. 71, Hamilton observes that “[t]hey [the people] know from experience, that they sometimes err; and the wonder is, that they so seldom err as they do; beset as they continually are by . . . the avaricious, [and] the desperate . . .” (482). Similarly, in *Federalist* No. 72, Hamilton remarks that “[a]n avaricious man, who might happen to fill the [executive] offices, . . . might not scruple to have recourse to the most corrupt expedients to make the harvest as abundant as it was transitory” (489). Hamilton also points out in this essay that the avaricious man is sometimes so dominated by avarice that it “would be likely to get the victory over his caution, his vanity, or his ambition” (489). Finally, in *Federalist* No. 75 Hamilton expresses concern that “[a]n avaricious man might betray the interests of the state” to gain wealth (505).

Neither Plattner nor Pontuso mention Hamilton’s use of the term “avaricious.” If Hamilton intended to “promote . . . avarice,” one wonders why he saw fit to cast the avaricious man in such a denigrating light. A reading of *The Federalist* which takes into account all the work’s references to the terms “avarice” and “avaricious” casts doubt upon the assertion that Hamilton’s praise of the political utility of commerce promotes avarice. Rather, Hamilton thought that the commercial way of life would foster commercial virtues and, all things considered, thereby improve the characters of most Americans.

Plattner refers to only one of the dozen times the term “avarice” appears in Hamilton’s *Federalist* essays. He quotes extensively from *Federalist* No. 12:

The prosperity of commerce is now perceived and acknowledged by all enlightened statesmen to be the most useful as well as the most productive source of national wealth, and has accordingly become a primary object of their political cares. By multiplying the means of gratification, by promoting the introduction and circulation of the precious metals, those darling objects of human avarice and enterprise, it serves to vivify all the channels of industry and to make them flow with greater activity and copiousness. The assiduous merchant, the laborious husbandman, the active mechanic, and the industrious manufacturer--all orders of men look forward with eager expectation and growing alacrity to the pleasing reward of their toils. (73-74).

Nowhere in the passage above does Hamilton encourage the promotion of avarice. To be sure, he refers to “the precious metals” as “those darling objects

of human avarice and enterprise” (73). However, Hamilton is here noting a statement of fact, he is not advancing a judgment about that fact. In this particular instance, he neither commends nor condemns the fact. If this were the only mention of avarice in *The Federalist*, it would not be wholly implausible to conclude that Hamilton’s use of the term is shrouded in some degree of ambiguity. However, as there are ten references to avarice with negative connotations, along with four references denigrating to the avaricious man, it is unwarranted to view *The Federalist* and the Constitution as avarice-promoting works. Such a view is not only inconsistent with a careful reading of these texts but it may also have politically harmful effects insofar as it has the tendency of undermining the attachment of decent American citizens to the principles of their political regime.

If Plattner and Pontuso are correct to assert that Hamilton promotes avarice, then the extent to which devout Christians may support the American political regime would have to be diminished. Christ exhorts us to “Watch and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for life does not consist of possessions, even when someone has more than he needs” (*Luke* 12:15). St. Paul writes that “the love of money [not money itself] is the root of all evil” (1 *Timothy* 6:10). Plattner points out that avarice “traditionally has been considered a vice,” which seems to imply that it is no longer seen in this way (8). This implication, however, receives no support from either Christianity or the American political regime. “Avarice” remains one of the seven deadly sins and, along with “avaricious,” it is condemned fourteen times in *The Federalist*.

In response to these comments made above, one might point to *Federalist* No. 31, where Hamilton refers to “the usual sharp-sightedness of avarice” (193). However, while Hamilton here attributes the quality of sharp-sightedness to a vice, he by no means implies that avarice is worth promoting. To think that he so implies would be similar to thinking that in exhorting us to “be as cunning as snakes” Christ wanted us to be snakes (*Matthew* 10:16). This view is mistaken because it fails to acknowledge that Christ also wanted us to be “as innocent as doves.” Just as one may be cunning without being a snake, so too one may seek sharp-sightedness but abhor avarice.<sup>8</sup>

The assertion that Hamilton promotes avarice goes too far in one direction and Naomi Emery’s claim that Hamilton scorned commercial pursuits leans too far in the other. She writes:

What resentments [fueled by Hamilton’s father leaving the family when Alexander was ten] filled her [Hamilton’s mother] or her children are conjectural, but they may have resulted in Alexander’s later scorn for purely commercial pursuits, in his sense of merchants to be used in the interests of the state. Years later in an outburst to his friend John Laurens he wrote, “You know I hate [the] money making men.”<sup>9</sup>

Hamilton's comment in the letter to Laurens is striking because it is one of a very few instances of which scholars are aware in which Hamilton speaks disparagingly about "money making men." In light of the importance Emery attaches to the observation, the context in which it was made is worth recounting.<sup>10</sup>

Silas Deane was chosen in March, 1776 to represent the United Colonies in Europe. One of his responsibilities in this capacity was to secure military supplies from France. After Deane single-handedly carried out this work for almost half a year, Benjamin Franklin and Arthur Lee were selected along with Deane to a committee entrusted with the responsibility of securing the supplies. After treaties were signed with France in February, 1778, Deane was notified that he had been recalled by Congress, chiefly because Lee leveled the charge that France had already given military supplies to the United States and Deane intended to divert to himself any money appropriated by Congress for the purchase of the supplies. According to Syrett, "Deane's accounts were never settled during his lifetime, and by the end of the Revolution he was an exile."<sup>11</sup>

In the letter to Laurens, Hamilton writes: "I hate money making men--I am no partisan of Deane--but Lee ought not to be supported."<sup>12</sup> Hamilton then argues that it would be imprudent to credit Lee's accusations, in part because Vergennes, the Minister of France, distrusted Lee, as did "The Court of Spain." In light of these facts, when Hamilton writes that he "hate[s] the money making men," he means that he does not sanction the dishonest behavior of which Deane had been accused.<sup>13</sup> Also, the letter to Laurens was written during the Revolutionary War, from one military officer to another. Forrest McDonald's description of some of the practices in the colonies at this time helps us to better understand why patriotic officers might have been disgusted with the behavior of some of their fellow Americans.

Meanwhile, Americans on all levels, not just in Congress, were disregarding honor and even decency in their actions. Merchants were profiteering through price-gouging and manipulation of markets; they preyed upon the very troops defending them. In New England state politicians played loose with the war effort in order to facilitate private speculations.<sup>14</sup>

Far from scorning merchants, Hamilton regards them as the "natural representatives" in the new American political regime.<sup>15</sup> Emery asserts that Hamilton saw "merchants as tools to be used in the interests of the state" but she nowhere tries to substantiate this assertion nor does she even attempt to explain how merchants might be used in this way. The primary reason Hamilton presents for opposing "[e]xhorbitant duties on imported articles" is that such duties "oppress the merchant," especially "when the markets happen to be overstocked" (216). If Emery's claim that Hamilton saw merchants as tools "to be used in the interests of the state" were accurate, we would not expect Hamilton to care if merchants were oppressed. An oppressed person is used as

a means to an end, and it is apparent from passages in the *Federalist* that Hamilton opposed oppressing merchants.

“Merchant” appears eleven times in *The Federalist*, and ten of these usages appear in essays written by Hamilton. The term is nowhere in the document given a negative connotation and most citizens would be pleased to have the commercial virtues Hamilton attributes to the merchant applied to themselves. In *Federalist* No. 11, he recommends conditions that would make “the operations of the merchant . . . less liable to any considerable obstruction, or stagnation,” thereby implying that the merchant’s operations are good for the merchant and/or the country (71). He writes in *Federalist* No. 12 that “[t]he assiduous merchant, the laborious husbandman, the active mechanic, and the industrious manufacturer, all orders of men look forward with eager expectation and growing alacrity to this pleasing reward of their toils” (74).<sup>16</sup>

“Merchant” appears seven times in Hamilton’s *Federalist* No. 35. He mentions that “discerning citizens,” many of whom “are immediately connected with the operations of commerce . . . know that the merchant is their natural patron and friend” (219). Such citizens “are aware that however great the confidence they may justly feel in their own good sense, their interests can be more effectually promoted by the merchant than by themselves” (219). Hamilton then asks: “Will not the merchant understand and be disposed to cultivate as far as may be proper the interests of the mechanic and manufacturing arts to which his commerce is so nearly allied?” (221). We would not expect a man who scorned commercial pursuits to so eloquently describe how merchants help “discerning citizens.”

As was the case with “merchant,” the term “merchants” also appears eleven times in *The Federalist*, and all but one of these references appear in papers written by Hamilton. With two exceptions, which concern English merchants rather than their American counterparts, Hamilton associates only praiseworthy characteristics with merchants.<sup>17</sup> He refers in *Federalist* No. 11 to “[t]hat unequalled [sic] spirit of enterprise, which signalises [sic] the genius of the American Merchants and Navigators, and which is in itself an inexhaustible mine of national wealth” (69). Hamilton also points out in *Federalist* No. 35 “that the influence and weight and superior acquirements of the merchants render them more equal [than mechanics and manufacturers] to a contest with any spirit which might happen to infuse itself into the public councils unfriendly to the manufacturing and trading interests” (219).

### ***The Modern Commercial Republic Ameliorates Some of Antiquity’s Harsh Inhumanities***

Hamilton advocated the pursuit of commerce but discouraged avarice. His ideal merchant is “assiduous,” infected with the “spirit of enterprise” and is the “natural patron and friend” of discerning citizens” without being avaricious (74, 69, 219). We also noted earlier that “[m]any,” not all, of these “discerning

citizens” “are immediately connected with the operations of commerce” (219). Insofar as Hamilton’s merchant is the “natural patron and friend” of “discerning citizens,” we would expect this merchant and anyone worthy of the name “discerning citizen” to realize that people are America’s best asset and therefore to choose the population growth associated with culture of life rather than the infanticides, abortions, forced miscarriages and homosexual actions in the culture of death. The first three sins kill (in a worldly sense) lives already created while homosexual actions simulate procreative actions without the possibility of procreation. The victims of the first three sins were made in the image of God and will live forever. Those who engage in homosexual actions were also made in God’s image and likeness but their homosexual actions do not create life.

Hamilton and his wife helped God bring nine children into the world and he rejected infanticide:

When Hamilton contemplated certain harsh features of antiquity, he recoiled in horror. Concerning the Spartan practice of exposing infants who were deformed, sickly, or weak, his notes on Plutarch remark: ‘A horrid practice, mentioned with no mark of disapprobation.’ As remarkable to Hamilton as the horrid practice of infanticide was the lack of disapproval of this Spartan practice by the ancient non-Spartan who wrote about it.<sup>18</sup>

In promoting the modern commercial republic, Hamilton rejected the teachings of ancient thinkers such as Aristotle, Plato and Plutarch. They viewed the pursuit of commerce and civic virtue as mutually exclusive because the latter requires a considerable degree of self-abnegation while the former is usually driven by, and unleashes selfish desires.<sup>19</sup> The ancient thinkers looked down on commerce to such an extent that Aristotle excluded merchants from what he considered the best regime.<sup>20</sup>

As we have seen, Hamilton, contra the ancient thinkers, considered merchants to be the “natural representatives” of the new American political regime.<sup>21</sup> This view of merchants is most comprehensively articulated and defended by Montesquieu. In *Federalist* No. 9, Hamilton refers to Montesquieu as “that great man,” (p. 52) and in *Federalist* No. 78 he writes of “the celebrated Montesquieu” (p. 523). Montesquieu argued that the more humane and civilized way of life fostered by commerce is superior to the harsh features of antiquity. According to Flaumenhaft, Hamilton found it remarkable that Plutarch did not mark his disapproval of “the horrid practice of infanticide.” The following observations from the *Politics* suggest that although Aristotle did not sanction infanticide, as Hamilton understood Plutarch to do, Aristotle advocated forced miscarriages in certain situations:

Concerning exposure and rearing of offspring when they are born, let there be a law that no deformed [child] should be raised, but that none should be

exposed after they are born on account of number of offspring, where the arrangement of customs forbids [procreation beyond a certain number]. A number should indeed be defined for procreation, but in cases of births in consequence of intercourse contrary to these, abortion should be induced before perception and life arises (what is holy and what is not will be defined by reference to perception and life).<sup>22</sup>

Plato's Socrates observes that in his "perfectly just city," the babies of women over forty years of age and men over fifty-five would be either aborted or victims of infanticide:

Now I suppose that when the women and men are beyond the age of procreation, we will, of course, leave them free to have intercourse with whomsoever they wish . . . ; and all this only after they have been told to be especially careful never to let even a single foetus see the light of day, if one should be conceived, and, if one should force its way, to deal with it on the understanding that there's to be no rearing for such a child [461b9-c8].

Aristotle also apparently did not disapprove of homosexuality. Montesquieu writes: "The vile means employed by the Cretans to prevent having too many children [i.e., homosexual actions] is reported by Aristotle, and I have felt modestly frightened when I wanted to report it."<sup>23</sup> As Plutarch mentions the infanticides carried out by the Spartans "with no mark of disapprobation," Aristotle refers to the homosexual acts of the Cretans without disapproving of them. As Hamilton is horrified that Plutarch would mention infanticides in such a blasé manner, Montesquieu is "modestly frightened" by the vile actions of the Cretans so he only alludes to them, directing us to the explicit report in Aristotle. "Strange though it may seem," maintains historian Paul Rahe, "the Greeks regarded the homoerotic passion linking a man with a boy as the cornerstone of political liberty."<sup>24</sup>

Montesquieu points out a crucial difference between the ancients and the moderns: "just as the Greek political men always tell us that the republic is tormented by having a large number of citizens, today political men tell us only of the means proper for increasing it [the number of citizens]."<sup>25</sup> In Montesquieu's view, the concern raised by Aristotle and other Greeks over the possibility that the republic might have too many citizens led them to endorse population control.

The Greek political men were thus particularly attached to regulating the number of citizens. Plato fixes it at five thousand forty, and he wants propagation to be checked or encouraged according to need, by honors, by shame, and by the warnings of the old men; he even wants the number of marriages to be regulated in such a way that the people replace themselves without overburdening the republic.

If the law of the country, says Aristotle, prohibits the exposing of infants, the number of children each man is to beget has to be limited. To someone who has more children than the number specified by the law, he counsels causing the woman to miscarry before the fetus has life.<sup>26</sup>

In contrast, the modern democratic commercial republic, according to Montesquieu, has a greater number of life-affirming and humane characteristics than did the ancient martial republic. This partly explains why political men alive at the time Montesquieu wrote talked “only of the means proper for increasing” the number of citizens. “Modern, commercial political life,” in Thomas Pangle’s view, “will have room for every human being.”<sup>27</sup> This is not the same as saying that the modern commercial republic provides room for every human being for all the right reasons. Still, a diversified economy provides a healthy environment for the people to cultivate diverse talents and the full capacities of their minds. As we saw in the excerpts advocating forced miscarriage in Aristotle’s *Politics*, infanticide and abortion in Plato’s *Republic*, and homosexual actions in Crete, there was not room for every human being in the ancient martial republic. “Therefore, one should not be surprised,” remarks Montesquieu, “if our [modern commercial] mores are less fierce than they were formerly. Commerce has spread knowledge of the mores of all nations everywhere; they have been compared to each other, and good things have resulted from this.”<sup>28</sup>

The commercial republic welcomes population growth because people produce, transport and consume goods, which fuels prosperity and economic growth. Hamilton noted that compared to Europe the United States, at the time he lived, had a “scarcity of hands” and a “dearness of labor.”<sup>29</sup> As one of the primary architects of the American commercial republic, Hamilton welcomed population growth as good in itself and as a means by which to remedy the shortage of workers. He called for “the United States to open every possible [avenue to] emigration from abroad” in order to “extend the population, and with it the useful and productive labor of the country.”<sup>30</sup> Commerce is like fertile land, according to Pangle, quoting Montesquieu, in that it “gives, with ease, softness and a certain love for the conservation of life.”<sup>31</sup>

Hamilton grew up poor and never acquired much wealth, though he probably could have had he wanted to. He was largely indifferent to personal, not to say national, wealth because he was more moved by the public-spirited part of his soul to become a statesman of a great nation than he was by his desire for comfortable self-preservation. This did not prevent him from befriending many wealthy men, though. His intelligence, background and connections gave him a unique perspective from which to reflect upon the virtues and vices of the rich and the poor. In a statement he addressed to the New York ratifying convention, he argued that these classes have different vices:

Experience has by no means justified us in the supposition that there is more virtue in one class of men than in another. Look through the rich and poor of the community . . . Where does virtue predominate? *The difference indeed consists, not in the quantity, but kind of vices, which are incident to the various classes; and here the advantage of character belongs to the wealthy. Their vices are probably more favorable to the prosperity of the state than those of the indigent and partake less of moral depravity.*<sup>32</sup>

The characteristic vice of the rich is avarice and that of the poor is sloth. As we have seen earlier, the claim that Hamilton promoted avarice is unwarranted. But he realized that in any political regime some people will act avariciously. The passage quoted above reveals that he thought the vices of the rich “are probably” more conducive to the prosperity of the state than are those of the poor. He asserted with more confidence that the vices of the rich are less morally depraved than those of the poor and that the wealthy tend to be better than the poor in terms of character. Insofar as avarice and sloth are both deadly sins, they are probably equally pernicious to the soul but from the perspective of the country’s good, which is a statesman’s lens, avarice may be, all things considered, more politically salutary than is sloth. If that is true, then the commercial republic and the commercial virtues associated with the legitimate gain-seeking that it fosters, along with the particular vices it might inadvertently encourage, may be politically preferable to any practical alternatives.

Insofar as the political thought of Montesquieu and Hamilton promotes the modern commercial republic, it is more conducive to population growth and the culture of life than is the teaching of the ancients. This is not to suggest that the modern commercial republic is anywhere near flawless. There is much truth in the comparison of today’s young urban professional with Midas in that each is so affluent that whatever he touches turns to gold. Many “yuppies” are not having children perhaps because they are too selfish to raise them. Also, five Northeastern states are reaching a point at which they do not have enough people coming into the workforce to fill available jobs.<sup>33</sup> Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan is concerned that American productivity and market competitiveness are being undermined by an ever tightening labor force. He favors increased immigration so that immigrants might fill the void of a dearth of workers.

It is outrageous that in our advanced modern commercial republic the organs of aborted babies are now being bought and sold as part of a moneymaking business. Partial birth abortion, still legal in the United States, involves delivering intact babies for the convenience and profit of abortionists. Whether this atrocity is mostly attributable to commerce or to perversions such as moral relativism is not clear, however. Also, the excessive desire for material gain is particularly dangerous because there are few, if any, natural limits on how much money the avaricious man can accumulate.<sup>34</sup> In comparison, there are obvious natural limits to the extent to which the gluttonous man can gorge

himself. Hamilton attempted to avoid the problems associated by the excessive desire for material gain by discouraging avarice.

Some of Hamilton's thoughts regarding the commercial republic call to mind the Church's teaching about sanctification through our work. The pursuit of commerce might even be ennobling if it is ordinate, and if it gives people an opportunity to do their jobs well, put their talents to good use, develop their abilities and offer the achievements to God. Hamilton's thought tends to point in this direction in three ways. First, he wrote that "a habit of labour in the people is . . . essential to the health and vigor of their minds and bodies,"<sup>35</sup> that is, the habits and discipline engendered by labor shape our minds and bodies. We bring glory to God when we use our capacities for good. It would seem disproportionate for people with healthy and vigorous minds to buy into the culture of death.

Second, Hamilton appears to have had a glimpse of a sense in which God calls us to be co-creators. As Flamenhaft points out:

[W]riting of the need for funding to make the public debt solid and stable, one important effect being to make it "useful as Capital," Hamilton showed how even an "edifice" of "business," a structure of interested enterprise that one would not think to call noble, may present a "spectacle" so "wonderful" as to evoke, by its vast liveliness, a kind of disinterested delight.<sup>36</sup>

In the words of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "By means of his labor man participates in the work of creation."<sup>37</sup>

Third, as noted earlier, Hamilton observed that "the genius of the American Merchants and Navigators" is their "unequalled [sic] spirit of enterprise" (69). The modern commercial republic provides opportunities for those who are gifted in that way to give that spirit an outlet. "When all the different kinds of industry obtain in a community," according to Hamilton, "each individual can find his proper element, and can call into activity the whole vigour of his nature."<sup>38</sup> God has blessed different people with different gifts and it is desirable that they have opportunities to exercise these gifts, whether they lead to action or contemplation.

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### Notes

1. Federalist No. 57, p. 384. (Unless otherwise indicated, *Federalist Papers* quoted in this essay were written by Hamilton). No. 57 was written by Madison. In other essays, Hamilton observes that statesmen should not expect citizens to exercise "superior virtue," "stern virtue," or "superlative virtue" (*Federalist* No. 22, 73 and 75; pp. 142, 493, 505). All parenthetical page citations from *The Federalist* refer to Jacob E. Cooke's edition of the work (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961).

2. *Federalist* No. 55, p. 378 (Madison).

3. *Federalist* No. 76, p. 514.

4. *Federalist* No. 49, p. 340 (Madison).

5. "American Democracy and the Acquisitive Spirit," in Robert A. Goldwin and William A. Schambra, eds., *How Capitalistic Is the Constitution?* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1982), p. 8.

6. "Constitution-Making and the 'New Political Science': Alexander Hamilton's America," p. 3. The paper was delivered at the 1999 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, Ga., September 2-5, 1999 and can be accessed at <http://pro.harvard.edu/abstracts/062/062001PontusoJam.html>.

7. *The Federalist* was written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay under the pseudonym Publius. According to Douglass Adair, Hamilton wrote 51 papers, Madison 29 and Jay 5. ("The Authorship of the Disputed Federalist Papers," in *Fame and the Founding Fathers: Essays by Douglass Adair*, edited by Trevor Colbourn. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), pp. 27-74.

8. In *Federalist* #72, Hamilton considers the possibility that in certain circumstances, the "avaricious man's . . . avarice might be a guard upon his avarice" (489). As elsewhere in the *Federalist*, avarice is here presented as something to be guarded against.

9. Naomi Emery, *Alexander Hamilton: An Intimate Portrait*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), p. 18. The last line of the excerpt is quoted from a letter from Hamilton to John Laurens, May 22, 1779, *Papers of Alexander Hamilton* [hereafter referred to as *PAH*], Harold C. Syrett, ed. and Jacob E. Cooke, assoc. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press), vol. 2, p. 53. The word "the" does not appear between "hate" and "money" in Hamilton's letter, so Emery probably inserted it into the quote.

10. The historical context presented here draws heavily from Syrett's *PAH*, vol. 2, p. 54.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

13. *Ibid.* Unlike Hamilton, John Laurens's father Henry, a South Carolina delegate to Congress, gave credence to Lee's charges against Deane.

14. Forrest McDonald, *Alexander Hamilton: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), pp. 19-20.

15. *Federalist* No. 35, p. 220. Not all the founders shared this view. Thomas Jefferson, for example, entertained an entirely different opinion of merchants than that presented in the *Federalist*: "The cultivators of the earth are the most virtuous citizens and possess most of amor patriae. Merchants are the least virtuous, and possess the least of the amor patriae." (quoted from "Answers to Demeunier's First Queries, January 24, 1786," in *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 10, p. 16).

16. One who is assiduous is "Constant in application to the business in hand, persevering, sedulous, unwearyingly diligent." *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Glasgow: Oxford University Press, 1971), vol. 1, p. 127.

17. In the only reference to merchants not made by Hamilton that appears in the work, in *Federalist* No. 4 John Jay praises "the enterprize [sic] and address of our merchants" (19). The only disparaging comments made about merchants in the

*Federalist* are contained in No. 6, where Hamilton argues that the War of Jenkins' Ear "sprang from the attempts of the English merchants to prosecute an illicit trade with the Spanish main" and that "[t]he complaints of the [English] merchants kindled a violent flame throughout" Europe that led to war (34).

18. Quoted from Harvey Flaumenhaft, *The Effective Republic: Administration and Constitution in the Thought of Alexander Hamilton* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), p. 29.

19. Plato, *The Laws*. Thomas L. Pangle, trans. (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 739e11-740a6, 741b3-6, 741c6-11, 741e1-8, 742c6 and 743e2-4. Plato, *The Republic of Plato*. Allan Bloom, trans. (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 416d4-417b80. Aristotle, *The Politics*. Carnes Lord, trans. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1255b31-40, 1258a33-40 and 1280a20-1281a5.

20. Aristotle's *Politics*, 1328b37-29a2.

21. *Federalist* No. 35, p. 220.

22. Aristotle's *Politics*, 1335b20-26. Inasmuch as Aristotle considers decisive the point at which "perception and life arises," it is possible that if he knew that life begins at conception, he would oppose abortion. There appears to have been an ambiguity in the ancient evidence in establishing when human personhood begins.

23. *The Spirit of the Laws*, p. 438, cf. Aristotle's *Politics* 1272a24-26.

24. *Republics Ancient and Modern* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. 133. See also pp. 71, 131 and Aristotle's *Politics*, 1265a38-b12, 1267b21-1268a12, 1330b21-31 and 1335b22-23.

25. *The Spirit of the Laws*, p. 453.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 438. Montesquieu cites Plato's *Laws*, 737e, Plato's *Republic*, 460a and Aristotle's *Politics*, 1335b21-23 and 1335b23-25.

27. *Montesquieu's Philosophy of Liberalism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 246.

28. *The Spirit of the Laws*, p. 338. Montesquieu and Hamilton each endorsed the commercial republic, and the latter agreed more than he disagreed with the former on the benefits of commerce, but it should be noted that Hamilton was not as sanguine as was Montesquieu that commerce would lead to fewer wars among nations. (Cf. *Federalist*, No. 6, p. 33).

29. *PAH*, vol. 10, pp. 269-270.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 252-56.

31. *Montesquieu's Philosophy of Liberalism*, p. 204; quoting from *The Spirit of the Laws*, p. 287.

32. Jonathan Elliot (ed.), *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution* (5 vols.; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1836), vol. 2, p. 257 (emphasis added).

33. The five Northeastern states are Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Connecticut. See "infonet-request@prolifeinfo.org" Pro-Life Infonet 12/18/99 #2069. "Depopulation in New England States?" Source: Population Research Institute Weekly Briefing, 12/16/99.

34. Stephen T. Worland, "The Benevolence of the Baker," *The Review of Politics*, Spring, 1996, p. 358.

35. *PAH*, vol. 2, p. 167.

36. *The Effective Republic*, p. 17. Quoting from Hamilton's "Defense of the Funding System," July 1795, *PAH*, vol. 19, pp. 66, 69-70.

37. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Missouri: Liguori Publications, 1994), p. 590, 2460.

38. *Ibid.*, vol. 10, pp. 252-56.