

The Higher Purpose of Children in American Society

Matthew T. Mehan

The purpose of children is to provide a certain just way of life that is full of meaning and consolation for parents, for the children themselves, and for the whole of the citizenry in their public service to the common good as they secure a peaceful and happy life that can be perpetuated generation after generation. It also seems clear that the purpose of children in this process opens up a deeper understanding of the natural liberty of human beings and the young's need for guidance toward the proper use of that liberty, which in turn orients or reorients civic life away from totalitarian constitutions and toward social and political arrangements that favor such a measured liberty confirmed in law.

Introduction

When in 1773 George Washington's 17-year-old stepdaughter died suddenly from a seizure, the future father of our country prayed and wept at her bedside. "Our Dear Patsy Custis," as he called her the next day in a doleful but modest letter to his brother-in-law, died "in less than two minutes without uttering a word, a groan, or scarce a sigh."¹ He confided in that same letter that "the distress of this family" was "an easier matter to conceive, than to describe."

Indeed, paternal, maternal love and loss, which includes Washington's adoptive love and loss of Patsy Custis, have always proven difficult to describe.

Perhaps the reason for this difficulty stems from the remarkable intensity of our love, a love special to our human, rational nature and far above the power of the animals. That was the opinion of the great Roman defender of republican liberty Marcus Tullius Cicero: “[Nature] implants in [mankind] above all, I may say, a strangely tender love for his offspring.”² This primary and intense love of one’s children, Cicero continues, prompts one “to provide a store of things that minister” to the “comforts and wants” for one’s spouse and children, both natural and adopted, while also “stimulat[ing] courage” and making that courage “stronger for the active duties of life.”³

A loss of such a powerful and loving relationship would be as difficult to describe as the love itself; the intensity and mystery of Washington’s sorrow mirrors the intensity and mystery of the joyful power of his love for his adopted daughter.

Washington’s personal example of parental love and loss may provide a window into the purpose and meaning of children in the life of our country. In a time of alarming declines in the American birth rate,⁴ we ought to push past the difficulty of describing that great and intimate yet very public and common good that children represent in the United States of America. While many have taken up the economic contributions of a rising birth rate and the corresponding financial harms of a falling birth rate, such studies look at children as individual potential adults entering the workforce. That leaves open for inquiry a deeper consideration of children simply as children and a corresponding consideration of the good they represent for our democratic republic beyond their more easily quantified economic benefits.

While the following qualitative investigation of the purpose, meaning, and benefits of children must give way to certain difficulties of description, this much we can assert from the start with simple confidence: Children play a profound and essential role in the promotion of “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” not only for their parents, but also for the entire citizenry of the United States of America in ways that go well beyond the economic benefits to the labor force and the replenishment of entitlements.

Children, Justice, and the Rule of Law

The introduction of new life, of a child, into a family and thus into the community is a universal joy celebrated even under difficult circumstances, and when a child enters the world, new relationships are made that are the foundation of all justice and our American way of life. The achievement of justice, which is the purpose of all our laws, concerns relationships among people in the community.⁵ The very presence of a single new human person

creates relationships and bonds for which we have many names: mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, grandson, granddaughter, uncle, aunt, cousin, nephew, niece, half-brother, neighbor, and fellow American. A single child can create all of these new relationships and bonds of affection. A second child adds brother and sister to the list.

These relationships are the foundation of justice and the rule of law, the signature mark of a democratic republic. What is more, these relationships comprise a key portion of what Cicero called the complex of charity (*caritates...complexa est*), which can be summed up as love of country. Cicero—to whom our Founding Fathers referred fondly by his nickname “Tully”—writes, “[D]ear are children, relatives, friends; but one native land embraces all our loves,” and he makes clear that this deep network of loves is the primary source of any and all sense of civic duty to one’s republic when he continues in the next breath, “and who that is true would hesitate to give his life for [his country], if by his death he could render her a service?”⁶

Children are a crucial part of the complex of loves and relations that constitute mutual obligation and duty and thus the protection of one another’s natural rights, which then, in justice, find expression in our laws. The joy and loving relations children help to create, the profound gratitude we recognize in ourselves for those relationships, children’s most basic effects in our community—taken as a whole, the very existence of children provides a fundamental cause of civic duty, justice, fellowship, and, in the end, powerful motive force in our hearts to establish, protect, and maintain our constitutional republic and equality under the law.⁷ As the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution puts it, we “ordain and establish” (and we today can add conserve, uphold, and restore) “this Constitution for the United States” in no small part “in Order to...secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity...”

Strengthening the Bond of Marriage

Clearly, children create bonds of love, gratitude, and, by extension, duty, but they also strengthen the preexisting bond of marriage. Abigail Adams, wife to Founding Father and President John Adams and mother to President John Quincy Adams, gives some testimony to this powerful dual effect in a letter celebrating the birth of their first child and daughter Abigail, nicknamed “Nabby.” Just a few short lines from her brief note to a friend contain a wealth of testimonies to this effect:

Bless'd with a charming Girl whose pretty Smiles already delight my Heart,
who is the Dear Image of her still Dearer Pappa. You my Friend are well

acquainted with all the tender feelings of a parent, therefore I need not apologize for the present overflow. I have many things to say to you. Gratitude demands an acknowledgment for your kind present to my Daughter. She I hope will live to make you some return for your unmerrited goodness to her.⁸

Joyful love of the child, increased love of her husband, a new opportunity for the exchange of gifts and expression of gratitude among friends and mothers, and the hope and promise of new bonds of affection and gratitude formed in the child—all of these intimations from one of our most famed Founding-era matrons reveal the inner workings and engines of love that power our American way of life. The letter demonstrates the joyful giving of gifts wherein “friends have all things in common,” as Plato put it,⁹ but hold them privately, as our friend Tully warns, relying on that trust in human nature that love and gratitude will cause people to give freely that which they have acquired.

Sometimes lost in discussions of private property is its foundational justification:¹⁰ that it be used to conserve ourselves, to trade with our neighbors, and ultimately to serve others. Such service to others concerns especially service to the next generation, both one’s own children, as Abigail Adams does, and the children of others, as Washington does by loving adoption of his “Dear Patsy Custis,” or as Abigail Adams’ friend does in a lesser way by means of the infant’s birthday gift, which Abigail Adams gratefully mentions in her letter.

Adams’ letter also alludes to the strengthening of the marriage, for she sees in her child’s “Dear Image” the image of the child’s “still Dearer Pappa”—still dearer to Nabby’s mother, that is, who now shares quite literally the one flesh of their natural child. But that is not the only way children strengthen marriage. The other way, which is open to both natural and adoptive parents of children, is by providing a kind of deep purpose, a work of the husband and wife, that constitutes a primary aspect of our way of life. That is the considered view of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (1972), an opinion issued even after the high-water mark of the sexual revolution. As Chief Justice Warren Burger writes in the 6-to-1 supermajority opinion, “The history and culture of Western civilization reflect a strong tradition of parental concern for the nurture and upbringing of their children. This primary role of the parents in the upbringing of their children is now established beyond debate as an enduring American tradition.”¹¹

The wonder that is a child’s entrance into a marriage touches off the joint parental work of education. The gift of the child and the results of that parental work to raise, form, and educate the child well together provide

powerful motive and consolation to the parents. John Adams woefully intimates precisely this notion in his letter just after the death of their dear Nabby Adams at the age of 48: “The loss of my Daughter, has deeply and tenderly Affected Us all. But her Life and her Death, in a Stile Superiour [sic] to all terrestrial Prosperity and Adversity is the greatest consolation to Us that Philosophy or Religion can Suggest.”¹²

Educating and Guiding the Young

Beyond the parents’ personal and private way of life, there is a still greater way of life: that of our entire nation of laws. Our Western civilization, to which Chief Justice Burger appealed in the *Yoder* case, views all law, all legislation, as fundamentally concerned with aiding parents in this work of education. In his magisterial *Politics*, Aristotle wrote, “That the legislator must, therefore, make the education of the young his object above all would be disputed by no one.”¹³

This priority of education has been reflected in our laws since the beginning, as when in the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, one of our nation’s organic laws,¹⁴ Congress included Article 3, which reads, “Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.”¹⁵ One aspect of the “happiness of mankind” that the political constitution of the country seeks to secure is good and happy children.

“[T]he nature of desire,” Aristotle also tells us, “is without limit, and it is with a view to satisfying this that the many live.”¹⁶ We might go further and say that not only the many, but all men have infinite desire,¹⁷ and children are a powerful part of the fulfillment of such desires, as John Adams’ mournful letter attests. Consider his words again: “[His daughter Nabby’s] Life and Death, in a Stile Superiour [sic] to *all* terrestrial Prosperity and Adversity is *the greatest consolation* to Us that Philosophy or Religion can Suggest” (emphasis added). Perhaps in his grief, John Adams overstates the case, or perhaps, in an encounter with “Life and Death” of such intensity, where the horizon of this life and the next seem to touch, Adams points out to us from the time of our country’s birth the real truth of his profound paternal affection: the moral fact that children are a kind of infinite good, one with infinite dignity, because rising above all material and animal goods, this other and new human being possesses an immortal soul, reason, free will, and “infinite desire.” Or, as Harvard President John T. Kirkland put it from the pulpit in Adams’ lifetime, “[C]hildren of God, being of divine descent, their affections rise to the place of their nativity.”¹⁸

Little wonder, then, that the entire political community wheels round in service for the education of the next generation. It is the American way of life and our Western civilization's own tradition of limited government that seem to second these sentiments and those of Alexander Hamilton, who in a letter to his friend Richard Meade wrote, "I lose all taste for the pursuits of ambition, I sigh for nothing but the company of my wife and my baby."¹⁹ Such a proper sentiment tempers the glorious ambition of tyrants, checks an overweening desire for war and conquest, and sets the political in the service of the human and the familial in a way that greatly advises our own system of limited constitutional government, separation of powers, federalism, and a focus on the protection of natural rights, principal among them the unmolested, joyful, and yet laborious raising and educating of one's children.

Understanding and Securing Natural Liberty

It seems, then, that the purpose of children is to provide a certain just way of life, one that is full of meaning and consolation both for parents and for the whole of the citizenry in their public service to the common good as they secure a peaceful and happy life that can be perpetuated generation after generation. But it also seems clear that the purpose of children in this process opens up a certain need to understand the natural liberty of human beings and the young's need for guidance toward the proper use of that liberty, which in turn orients or reorients civic life away from totalitarian constitutions and toward social and political arrangements that favor such a measured liberty confirmed in law.

To explain further this important effect children have on our country, far better are the writings of Founder James Wilson. After signing the Declaration of Independence, actively helping to design the Constitution as the second most prolific speaker at the Constitutional Convention, winning election twice to the Congress, and sitting as a justice on the Supreme Court, Wilson reflected in his famous law lectures of 1791, delivered in the College of Philadelphia, that:

Nature has implanted in man the desire of his own happiness; she has inspired him with many tender affections towards others, especially in the near relations of life; she has endowed him with intellectual and with active powers; she has furnished him with a natural impulse to exercise his powers for his own happiness, and the happiness of those, for whom he entertains such tender affections. If all this be true, the undeniable consequence is, that he has a right to exert

those powers for the accomplishment of those purposes, in such a manner, and upon such objects, as his inclination and judgment shall direct; provided he does no injury to others; and provided some publick interests do not demand his labours. This right is natural liberty. Every man has a sense of this right. Every man has a sense of the impropriety of restraining or interrupting it.²⁰

Wilson notes that it is “especially” the “near relations of life” that inspire the “many tender affections toward others” that then move us to use our “natural impulse” “to exercise” the “endowed...intellectual and...active powers” “implanted” by “Nature” “for [our] own happiness, and the happiness of those, for whom” we have “such tender affections.” Of course, Wilson means in no small part the special “tender affections” that parents have for their children, and this affection activates the freely chosen good thoughts and acts of people to secure goods and happiness for their children, using the motive force, so to speak, of affection for the child, which in turn demonstrates the rightness, the fittingness, and indeed the experiential recognition of the existence of the natural faculty of human liberty rightly used for the good of the child. The love of children and the acts to secure their happiness are both objective proofs and subjective experiences of the rightness and fact of human liberty. As Wilson puts it a few lines later, “The right of natural liberty is suggested to us...by our generous affections....”²¹

Once again, those private affections are, in no small part, shared publicly. Children are not only especially dear to their parents, but also dear to all. The elder statesman of the American Founding, Benjamin Franklin, understood this in his grief over the death of his son, Franky, whose headstone engraving Franklin commissioned to read, “The DELIGHT of all who knew him.”²²

The general and popular delight in children and the corresponding desire to share the joy of one’s own and other people’s children have not abated, even in political communities with alarming declines in birth rates.²³ The desire to live a life that serves children clearly provides a great deal of joy and consolation, as we have seen in history and as statistical analysis repeatedly bears out in our day as well.²⁴ But a wider benefit or purpose of children in our constitutional system, our democratic republic, is that their very presence in the community secures the sort of experiential knowledge that allows a citizen to see clearly the fittingness of our limited governmental system. That insight accordingly fosters the citizen’s desire to preserve the genius of natural liberty that lays open the many avenues for good and noble acts of service.

Because they are not fully formed human beings, children also provide a certain practical check against liberty’s devolving into libertinism. Children

cannot be expected to live without clear guidelines and prohibitions for their behavior, and they often require special protections from those who seek to shape their desires and tastes without sufficient concern for their undeveloped or immature state. For this reason, there are many laws and customs to protect minors from all manner of products, behaviors, media, and persons.

Obviously, politics and law have as one crucial goal the production of, as Aristotle puts it, “citizens of a certain sort, namely ones that are good and inclined to perform beautiful actions.”²⁵ But the ignorant and unformed child prevents any radicalized and immoderate attempts at lawless pursuit of our natural liberty. The Italian statesman-poet Dante’s famous justice-loving character from the *Divine Comedy*, Marco Lombardo, explains the phenomenon:

[T]he simple little soul [of a new child] comes forth [into the world], knowing nothing except that, set in motion by a happy Maker, it gladly turns to what amuses it. Of some lesser good it first tastes the flavor; there it is deceived and runs after it, if a guide or rein does not turn away its love. Therefore it was necessary to set the law as a curb....²⁶

The presence of the child in the people’s midst helps, in the words of “America the Beautiful” in its admirable but seldom sung third verse, to strengthen our dual resolve for individual liberty *and* equality under law: “Confirm thy soul in self-control, / Thy liberty in law.”

Children and the Good Life

James Wilson highlights yet another proof of the rightness of natural liberty and the fittingness that it be protected by limited government in law by means of the simple phenomenon of children rising to maturity. First, he cites “Mr. Locke”: “[B]y the law of right reason...a child is born a subject of no country or government. He is under his father’s tuition and authority, till he comes of the age of discretion; and then he is a freeman, at liberty what government he will put himself under; what body politick he will unite himself to.” He then further cements this notion by citing the work of an ancient teacher of natural law and republican liberty, Cicero’s famous oration the *Pro Balbo*:

“O glorious regulations!” says Cicero, “originally established for us by our ancestors of Roman name; that no one of us should be obliged to belong to more

than one society, since a dissimilitude of societies must produce a proportioned variety of laws; that no one, contrary to his inclination, should be deprived of his right of citizenship; and that no one, contrary to his inclinations, should be obliged to continue in that relation. The power of retaining and of renouncing our rights of citizenship, is the most stable foundation of our liberties."²⁷

Totalitarian regimes, such as the now-defunct Soviet Union of yesteryear, very often disallow any natural right to emigrate out of the country. Given the undesirable and immiserating arrangements of such inhumane regimes, which refuse to recognize natural human rights and liberty, the disallowance of the right to emigrate has a certain cruel logic of state control and tyrannical self-preservation, albeit at the cost of the people's happiness. Just so, Wilson notes that the ability to vote with one's feet, so to speak, is a foundational security for our liberty.

The means by which this security can be seen, understood, and thus strengthened in the mind and heart of each citizen is by repeated reflection on the coming of age into citizenship, consent, and freely chosen affirmation of the constitutional and social order of our country, which we see when each new child rises from minority to register to vote and, in the case of able-bodied young men, register for selective service and perhaps the draft. That newness of each child to the political community reaffirms again and again the natural liberty and consent of the governed in a real way; conversely, should young people begin freely to desert the American way of life and its rights and duties, we will find real cause to consider fundamental changes to be long overdue. Children, then, also represent to the governed an assessment of the justice or injustice of the political arrangements in a way that refreshes the eyes to see the freely chosen goods and, very possibly, the tolerated or intolerable evils that a child must judge before entering adulthood's civic life. This process, unfolding as it does before the eyes of all other citizens, provides a mirrored reassessment in those who behold the child's moment of political maturation.

To behold a happy child, to watch that child become an adult who lives a full and virtuous life, through the delighted eyes of a parent, whether natural, adoptive, or merely in citizen-like seniority to the maturing girl or boy—it is this contemplation of the full human good that John Adams referred to in his doleful letter as “the greatest consolation to Us that Philosophy or Religion can Suggest”²⁸ in this life. In the grand scheme, we call this process of both striving and contemplating the beautiful means and the beautiful end of a well-lived life in community with our neighbors unto a good death and a peaceful and heavenly reward—we call this process in our Declaration

of Independence, “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,” but it can be summarized by “the pursuit of Happiness,” which is the last of the three great and “unalienable rights” “endowed” to us by our “Creator” and which presumes and incorporates all of the many natural rights proper to each and every human being.²⁹ “Life” is a part of our “pursuit of Happiness;” so too, “Liberty.”

Again, it is James Wilson who shows us the purpose and importance of children in this all-important pursuit: “Happy in the enjoyment of liberty, and in reaping the fruits of their toils; but still more happy in the joyful prospect of transmitting their liberty and their fortunes to the latest posterity, they inculcated to their children the warmest sentiments of loyalty.”³⁰ We are never happier than when we have the hope of sharing that happiness intimately with another. The good life that this country provides, its liberty and good fortune, is made even better, even happier, by the presence of children with whom we can share and transmit these material goods of fortune and the immaterial goods of liberty: justice, equality, and liberty under law. The motive force of the love of all those dear to us, especially children, leads us to serve both our own needs and the needs of those with whom we are lovingly connected. Children, it is clear, are an indispensable part of this handing on to posterity, this tradition, this constitutionally protected way of life that we name “the pursuit of Happiness.”

A Gift from the Creator

The philosopher Edith Stein commented that every little child “is delivered into the hands of human sculptors.”³¹ She saw in the great Judeo-Christian tradition that every child is a gift from the Creator, a calling to motherhood or fatherhood, and all the other relationships that the appearance of a new child into the hands of his or her parents creates (uncles, aunts, grandparents, teachers, mentors, coaches, etc.). Stein saw much in the words of Eve from Genesis: “God has given me a son.” Eve saw the child and her motherhood as a gift, albeit one fraught with difficulties, for which she could be grateful and thus respond accordingly.³²

Likewise, we can be sure that Founder John Jay had a similar mixture of sorrow and joy upon receiving a delicate and woeful letter from his son, Peter Augustus, reporting the death of his sister, John Jay’s youngest daughter, Sarah Louisa—woe for the loss of his daughter but no small joy in reading the loving and thoughtful words of his son: “Sister Sally’s Troubles are all ended. It has pleased God to take her to himself.... She retained her Senses to the last, knew her Situation & was perfectly composed & tranquil.

Mr Milnor prayed with her a short time before she died. May God comfort you my dear father....”³³ The last words of the letter were no doubt full of a consolation for Jay that only a child can provide: “I am your Affectionate Son, Peter Augustus Jay.”

Conclusion

It seems, then, that the purpose, meaning, and benefits of children in the American republic go far beyond matters of the labor force and the widening of the tax base. While those matters are important, it seems that a focus on them has not led to an increased proliferation of this superlative good of our society and way of life. Perhaps a greater adoption of the above-discussed considerations, together with a longer study of these matters, will foster the conclusion that our “pursuit of Happiness,” with its infinite desire for goods beyond the material realm, may find some richer if only partial satisfaction in our greater regard for the higher purpose and meaning of children. Hopefully then, the words of Edward Rutledge to George Washington might hit us with more profundity than they otherwise could: “I wish that our young People should look up to you as the common Father of the Country, consider your Name as a Protection to them.... I know of nothing so likely to accomplish our desires as giving to our Children good Educations & extensive Knowledge....”³⁴

To accomplish our desires, to pursue happiness as we ought as a people, we might do well to adopt something of the extensive and adoptive paternity of Washington and of the less exalted but all-encompassing desire put forward by Washington’s friend, namely to turn our attention to “giving to our Children good Education & extensive Knowledge.” Doing so may bring more powerfully to our American attention the goodness and purpose of children and thereby magnify their central role in the fulfillment of our American way of “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Matthew T. Mehan is Associate Dean and Assistant Professor at Hillsdale College’s Steve and Amy Van Andel Graduate School of Government in Washington, D.C.

Endnotes

1. “From George Washington to Burwell Bassett, 20 June 1773,” National Archives, *Founders Online*, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-09-02-0185> (accessed December 2, 2024).
2. Cicero, *On Duties*, trans. Walter Miller, Loeb Classical Library No. 30 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), p. 15.
3. *Ibid.*
4. “The provisional total fertility rate for the United States in 2023 was 1,616.5 births per 1,000 women, down 2% from the rate in 2022 (1,656.5).... The total fertility rate in 2023 remained below replacement—the level at which a given generation can exactly replace itself (2,100 births per 1,000 women). The rate has generally been below replacement since 1971 and consistently below replacement since 2007....” Brady E. Hamilton, Joyce A. Martin, and Michelle J.K. Osterman, “Births: Provisional Data for 2023,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, *Vital Statistics Rapid Release Report* No. 35, April 2024, p. 3, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/vsrr035.pdf> (accessed December 2, 2024).
5. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Indianapolis: Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Co., 2002), pp. 81–83.
6. Cicero, *On Duties*, pp. 60–61.
7. Conversely, see scholar Maria Manuel Lisboa, “And Then There Was Nothing: Is the End Ever Really the End?” Chapter 3 in *The End of the World: Apocalypse and Its Aftermath in Western Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2011), p. 77, in which she analyzes the dystopian science fiction of author P. D. James and notes that “the main rationale for autocratic rule in [James’s novel] *The Children of Men* is the fact that, faced with the end of the [human] species, most people no longer have any interest in politics....”
8. “Abigail Adams to Hannah Storer Green, 14 July 1765,” National Archives, *Founders Online*, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-01-02-0041> (accessed December 2, 2024).
9. Plato, *Plato: The Collected Dialogues Including Letters*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Bollingen Series No. LXXI (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961), p. 525.
10. Cf. Cicero’s treatment of property, esp. I.51 and I.92, in Cicero, *On Duties*, pp. 55 and 95.
11. *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205, 232 (1972).
12. “From John Adams to Richard Rush, 6 September 1813,” National Archives, *Founders Online*, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-6145> (accessed December 2, 2024).
13. Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 221–222.
14. John Allan Mallory, *Compiled Statutes of the United States, 1913: Embracing the Statutes of the United States of a General and Permanent Nature in Force December 31, 1913, Incorporating Under the Headings of the Revised Statutes the Subsequent Laws, Together with Explanatory and Historical Notes*, Vol. 1 (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1914), p. xxxix.
15. *Ibid.*, p. xlii.
16. Aristotle, *Politics*, p. 41.
17. Cf. the words of Shakespeare, whom the Founders called “the poet of nature,” in the mouth of Juliet: “My bounty is as boundless as the sea, / My love as deep; the more I give to thee, / The more I have, for both are infinite.” William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2, Scene 2, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library), p. 79, https://folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/romeo-and-juliet/?_ga=2.150309494.1764769327.1727797629-34328283.1727797629 (accessed December 2, 2024).
18. “Two Funeral Sermons Preached at Quincy, 23 July 1826,” National Archives, *Founders Online*, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-03-02-4687> (accessed December 2, 2024).
19. “From Alexander Hamilton to Richard Kidder Meade, March 1782,” National Archives, *Founders Online*, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-03-02-0011> (accessed December 2, 2024).
20. James Wilson, *The Collected Works of James Wilson*, Vol. 1, ed. Kermit L. Hall and Mark David Hall (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2007), p. 638, https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/2072/Wilson_4140.01_LFeBk.pdf (accessed December 2, 2024).
21. *Ibid.*, p. 639.
22. See footnote in Benjamin Franklin, “On the Death of His Son, 30 December 1736,” National Archives, *Founders Online*, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-02-02-0025> (accessed December 2, 2024).
23. “Research Finds 94% of UK Parents Have Posted Photos of Their Kids Online,” *Irish Examiner*, August 27, 2013, <https://www.irishexaminer.com/world/arid-30604911.html> (accessed December 2, 2024).
24. Brad Wilcox and Wendy Wang, “Who Is Happiest? Married Mothers and Fathers, Per the Latest General Social Survey,” Institute for Family Studies Blog, September 12, 2023, <https://ifstudies.org/blog/who-is-happiest-married-mothers-and-fathers-per-the-latest-general-social-survey> (accessed December 2, 2024).

25. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, p. 15.
26. Dante, *Purgatorio: The Divine Comedy of Dante Aligheri*, Vol. 2, trans. Robert Durling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 263.
27. Wilson, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 642.
28. "From John Adams to Richard Rush, 6 September 1813," National Archives, *Founders Online*, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-6145> (accessed December 2 2024).
29. Mallory, *Compiled Statutes of the United States*, p. xxiii.
30. Wilson, *Collected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 24.
31. Edith Stein, *The Collected Works of Edith Stein, Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Discalced Carmelite: Essays on Women*, Vol. 2, ed. L. Gelber and Romaeus Leuven, trans. Freda Mary Oben (Washington: ICS Publications, 1987), p. 117.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
33. "To John Jay from Peter Augustus Jay, 22 April 1818," National Archives, *Founders Online*, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jay/01-07-02-0282> (accessed December 2, 2024).
34. "To George Washington from Edward Rutledge, 24 January 1790," National Archives, *Founders Online*, <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=%22Father%20of%20the%20Country%22&s=1111311111&r=4&sr=> (accessed December 2, 2024).