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Presidents Above Party

The First American Presidency, 1789–1829

Published for the
Institute of Early American History and Culture
Williamsburg, Virginia
by The University of North Carolina Press
Chapel Hill

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The Federalist Presidents

George Washington

George Washington had little taste for political theory, and we do not know that he ever read or made mention of *Idea of a Patriot King* or any other treatise on leadership. He had an early admiration for the heroic patriot of Joseph Addison's *Cato*, though, and as a young man he probably read Plutarch's *Lives*.[1] Furthermore, his exposure to the literature of Robert Walpole's critics, his intimate association with such scholars as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, George Mason, and John Adams, and his deep self-consciousness of his unique role leave little doubt that he knew very well the themes and argument implicit in the debates over the foundations of national polity that agitated his more intellectual colleagues. Indeed, he so completely embodied the patriot king model that had Lord Bolingbroke been able to observe his conduct as general and president he surely would have listed Washington along with Elizabeth and Henry of Navarre as an ideal leader. With minor exceptions, historians ever since have portrayed Washington as attempting, at least, to live up to his own self-conception: the patriot leader above faction, working for national unity, and seeking to reign as well as to rule.

The critically important symbolic acts of Washington's Revolutionary War leadership both expressed his own patriotism and dramatized for the public a sense in him of disinterested commitment to the general welfare: his nomination as commander in chief by a New Englander, his insistence on sharing twelve months of the year with the vicissitudes of his army, his refusal of a salary, and the surrender of his sword to the Continental Congress at the end of the war. Firm Whiggish convictions in the new nation about the dangers of military dictatorship probably would have defeated a coup d'etat even by a general as "un-Cromwellian" as Washington, but his deliberate deference to the civilian authorities also revived the plausibility of the idea of a virtuous national leader. In fact, for more than twenty years Washington played that role very nearly to perfection and thus helped Americans get over the derelictions of George III and the Revolutionary bias against executive authority. Washington's performance from Valley

orge onward seemed to demonstrate that patriot leadership, shorn of its hereditary aspects, not only could exist in but also was vital to the survival and well-being of a republic.

In the years between 1783 and 1789, Washington sought to blend his sense of the need for leadership and "energy" in government with a sober faith in the ability of the people to rule themselves. In 1783 he blamed most of the difficulties of fighting the Revolution on a "want of energy in the Federal Constitution" (meaning the Articles of Confederation), and he warned that "unless the principles of the federal government were properly supported and the powers of the union increased, the honour, dignity, and justice of the nation would be lost forever." He often declared that government must act in accord with the interests of the people, but this view did not mean immediate response to popular will. It was appropriate that state legislatures listen carefully to public opinion, he thought, but members of a national congress had to attend to long-range needs, and thus shun sectional and partial interests. The executive had to be even more above party, keeping his eye on the virtue, honor, and justice of the nation—objectives so important, Washington noted, that "even respectable characters" contemplated monarchy "without horror" if it would rescue the nation from an otherwise inevitable factional strife and anarchy.[2] He also made clear, however, that he repudiated monarchy and that he was glad he was peculiarly disqualified from sustaining its hereditary principle in the United States: "Divine Providence hath not seen fit that my blood should be transmitted or that my name perpetuated by . . . immediate offspring. I have no child . . . no family to build in greatness upon my country's ruins."[3]

It is clear that as Washington assumed the presidency he wanted somehow to provide the executive leadership so often deemphasized in radical Whig, Revolutionary, Antifederalist, and even some Federalist rhetoric. At Mount Vernon, he had busts of Alexander the Great, Charles XII of Sweden, Julius Caesar, Frederick of Prussia, the duke of Marlborough, and Prince Eugene—marks of his military interests but also evidence of his fascination with patriotic leadership. It is not surprising that in 1789 he sought to encourage positive action toward the public good by asking Congress, in an eventually discarded (for tactical reasons) inaugural address, "to take measures for promoting the general welfare. . . . To use your best endeavors to improve the education and manners of a people; to accelerate the progress of arts and Sciences; to patronize works of genius; to confer rewards for inventions of utility; and to cherish institutions favourable to humanity."[4] Among the institutions most to be nourished in Washington's view (and in that of each of the first six presidents) was a national university, where, he told the nation in his last annual message, "a portion of our youth from every quarter" of the nation could assimilate common "principles, opinions, and manners." Such an encouragement to

a "homogeneous" citizenry, Washington argued, would vitally improve the bonds of "permanent union." Furthermore, "a primary object of such a national institution should be the education of our youth in the science of *government*." "In a republic," Washington asked, "what species of knowledge can be equally important and what duty more pressing on its legislature than to patronize a plan for communicating it to those who are to be the future guardians of the liberties of the country?"[5] Thus the first president accepted the ancient connection between the well-being of a nation and the proper education in "principles, opinions, and manners" of its rulers—in a republic, no longer just the leader or prince on whom Erasmus, Bolingbroke, and others had focused attention but also all those who held public office and, ultimately, all participants in the process of self-government.

Washington did not view such a national university or the rest of his ambitious program as either dictatorial or imperial. He warned against standing armies or even much of a navy and cautioned that the country "shou'd not, in imitation of some nations which have been celebrated for a false kind of patriotism, wish to aggrandize our own Republic at the expence of the freedom and happiness of the rest of mankind." For Washington, national patriotism had positive, public-spirited connotations that in the eighteenth-century ideal would lead not to conquest and tyranny but to a time when, in Benjamin Franklin's vision on the eve of the French Revolution, "not only the love of Liberty, but a thorough Knowledge of the Rights of Man may pervade all the Nations of the Earth." Washington wrote similarly to the marquis de Lafayette as he began his presidency: he thought he could "see a *path*, as clear and as direct as a ray of light, which leads to the attainment of . . . permanent felicity to the Commonwealth." "Nothing but harmony, honesty, industry and frugality are necessary to make us a great and happy people," the first president concluded.[6]

Washington's attention, as he took office, to pomp and etiquette, which in retrospect has often seemed ridiculous and misguided in a republic, was in fact another manifestation of his deliberate intention to *lead* the nation not only in a formal, political sense but also in "tone-setting," moral ways. He saw nothing unrepublican about ceremonies, paraphernalia, and even a certain aloofness if such would nourish public respect for the head of the nation and therefore for the nation as a whole—a linkage assumed in monarchies familiar to Washington. Even Madison and others who denied the need for "superb and august titles . . . or splendid tinsel or gorgeous robe" sought not to diminish presidential dignity but rather to find rational and republican ways to enhance and express it.[7] Thus during the first months of government under the new Constitution a remarkable harmony prevailed, and an impressive array of constructive, generally nonpartisan acts issued from Congress and from the president's office. The positive aspira-

tion was the same as Jonathan Swift's: to have "a wise and good Prince" heading an "able Ministry" united with a "Senate freely chosen" in pursuit of "the true Interest of their Country." As was the negative one: to thwart "the little inferior Politicks of any Faction." This compelling model guided all the early presidents who knew Washington, served in office under him, and shared his conception of executive leadership—that is, all presidents through John Quincy Adams.

Washington's determination to be the patriot leader was frustrated in practice, however, by unyielding partisanship around him. In 1792–1793 Alexander Hamilton and Jefferson refused to leave the president any "middle ground" between them,[8] and in 1795–1796 he felt forced to move toward a more Federalist position when it seemed his Republican colleagues had deserted or betrayed him. He had no choice, he thought, but to support the advisers who best coped with the problems facing the nation. Nothing more troubled and upset him, though, than the barrage of charges in the last two years of his presidency that he had himself become the creature of a party and thus was no longer the patriot leader of the whole nation.

The accusations of hypocrisy and Washington's keen sense of the encumbrance imposed on his office by partisanship, which even he could not fully evade, caused him to speak out sharply in his Farewell Address against the growth of "party spirit" in the nation. This condemnation subsumed in a way the better-known warning against entangling alliances, which to Washington were simply international factionalism. Beginning with stress on the inseparable benefits of liberty and union, and the shared, common elements of the national experience, the first president discounted sectional differences. "With slight shades of difference," he told the American people, "you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles." He urged the public to support "consistent and wholesome plans, digested by common counsels and modified by mutual interests," rather than those who sought "to make the public administration the mirror of the ill-concerted and incongruous projects of faction." This "most solemn" admonition, moreover, was not merely against the dangers of particular factions, but against "the baneful effects of the spirit of party generally" as well. That spirit, he admitted, was "inseparable from our nature" and might, especially in monarchies, furnish "useful checks upon the administration of the government, and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty, . . . [but] in governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose; and there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be by force of public opinion to mitigate and assuage it. A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume." When such vigilance was lacking, Washington warned, "the alternate domination of one faction over another . . . has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, [and] is itself a frightful despotism."[9]

The greatest evil of faction and party was not its effect on public policy (though that was bad enough), but rather its narrowing and degradation of political motives, long regarded as the essence of corruption. Parties riveted public attention on partialities and self-interest, and the effect was nothing less than enslavement of the nation to sin and vice. Liberty, for Washington as for John Winthrop, was not doing what one pleased, if that meant satisfying selfish (factional) interests; rather, it was a positive act of rising above such enthrallment to understand and seek the public good. As Washington made quite clear, and as each of the first six presidents would have agreed, the gravest danger republican government faced was its tendency to gratify self-interest to the point of being "consumed" by it. History was filled, these men thought, with evidence of "the most horrid enormities" caused by such a spirit "burst into flames." The last years of the Roman republic, English government under Walpole or Lord North, state government in Massachusetts and Rhode Island during the 1780s, and the party strife of the 1790s were among the monitory examples. That Washington took part in the intrigue of his advisers to manipulate and release the Farewell Address for party purposes is evidence, of course, that partisanship was as "inseparable" from his nature as it was from that of any mortal. But he would never have considered celebrating it; rather, a good politician would "mitigate," "assuage," and guard against it as much as possible. The calculated language of the Farewell Address, its wide acclaim, and Washington's self-conscious conveyance of it as a "Political Testament" to the nation reveal that the posture of patriot leadership was admired and cherished even amid the party warfare of the 1790s.[10]

John Adams

John Adams shared the ideal of disinterested leadership entirely, though his temperament, reputation, and circumstances made it even less achievable during his administration than it had been for his predecessor. In his inaugural address Adams proclaimed his lack of sectional bias, his desire to love "virtuous men of all parties and denominations," and his "wish to patronize every rational effort to encourage schools, colleges, universities academies, and every institution for propagating knowledge, virtue, and religion among all classes of the people . . . as the only means of preserving our Constitution from its natural enemies, the spirit of sophistry, the

spirit of party, the spirit of intrigue, the profligacy of corruption, and the pestilence of foreign influence, which is the angel of destruction to elective governments." Two weeks later he wrote his wife of the "scene of ambition" he faced, horrid "beyond all my former suspicions or imaginations." At the next election he feared that "England will set up Jay or Hamilton, and France, Jefferson, and all the corruption of Poland will be introduced; unless the American spirit should rise and say, we will have neither John Bull nor Louis Baboon." His task, he wrote, was clear: to find "checks and balances" that would be "antidotes" to these "jealousies and rivalries,"[11] to proceed, that is, according to his lifelong political philosophy.

Adams had honed his view of the contradiction between partisanship and patriotism through study of Bolingbroke's *Remarks on the History of England, A Dissertation upon Parties,* and *The Spirit of Patriotism.* In the 1750s he read and commented on them "pretty industriously" and bought his own separate editions before the American Revolution. As early as 1761 a friend in Boston told him, "You have Ld. Bolinbroke by heart," and Adams wrote late in life that he had read Bolingbroke "through . . . more than five times." He pronounced Bolingbroke's letter explaining how the limited, balanced nature of the British constitution preserved English liberty "a jewel; . . . nothing so profound, correct, and perfect on the subject of government" existed in any language, he insisted. He also approved Bolingbroke's judgment that "absolute monarchy is tyranny, but absolute democracy is tyranny and anarchy both." Within the balanced forms, however, the danger was, as Adams paraphrased Bolingbroke, that "the spirit of faction will take advantage of the spirit of liberty." Adams shared Bolingbroke's hopes, though, that the spirit of liberty might prevail, giving "vigor" to a good constitution and laws. "Let one great, brave, disinterested, active man arise, and he will be received, followed, and almost adored." It was important only that "the public may be grown wise enough to judge" between genuine liberty and its bastard offspring, faction. Adams's sarcastic comment in the margin of *Remarks on the History of England* next to Bolingbroke's sketch of the patriot leader—"like Bonaparte, or Hamilton, or Burr"—indicates precisely, of course, the sorts of leadership *not* regarded as genuinely patriotic.[12]

In two ways, however, Adams departed from Bolingbroke to mold his own definition of patriotism. First, Adams insisted that Bolingbroke's skeptical deism caused him to omit "the most essential foundation of the duty of patriotism," which in fact made a mockery of his "whole idea of a patriot king." Such value-laden leadership was to Adams inseparably linked with "a belief in a future state of rewards and punishments" and other aspects of Christian morality, without which widespread virtue was unattainable. In 1767, writing in the newspapers to oppose some high-handed acts of Massachusetts governor Francis Bernard, Adams had cited Bolingbroke's *Remarks on the History of England* and commended his unrivaled understanding of the British constitution but had felt it necessary to apologize for "whatever may be justly said of his religion, and his morals." Secondly, Adams challenged Bolingbroke's fretting that there were not enough "men of superior genius." Perhaps as a consequence of his belief that Christian morality is the necessary foundation of virtue and thus of patriotism, Adams asked: "Is . . . the spirit of patriotism . . . peculiar to them or . . . [is it] their duty any more than of the common people? A laborer may have this spirit as well as a prince or noble, a soldier as well as a general, a sailor as well as an admiral."[13] A widespread morality, undergirded by Christianity, was a possible way, in Adams's view, to overcome faction in a government resting on consent.

Many of Adams's supposed unrepublican opinions are best understood in the light of his consistent view that human society needed every buttress it could find for firm moral leadership. His defense of "the aristocracy of birth and wealth," for example, was offered not to oppose Jefferson's "aristocracy of talent and virtue," as his critics have charged, but rather to add to it. Adams sought to strengthen the Jeffersonian foundations of good government—talent and virtue—with such support as could be derived from "good breeding," religious training, pride in family, opportunities for travel and education, and so on. He thought of these things as advantageous to the prospects for republican government, not as detriments to it.

Even Adams's campaign in 1789 for a majestic title for the president called "superlatively ridiculous" by Jefferson, was in fact part of a design to subordinate rapacious oligarchies. "You are apprehensive of Monarchy; I of Aristocracy," Adams had written Jefferson in 1787 when both were in Europe. As vice-president, presiding over the Senate, Adams supported elegant titles for the executive officers named in the Constitution in order to humble "aristocratical pride." "The common people, if they understand their own cause and interest, will take effectual care to mortify that pride by making the executive magistrate a balance against it which can only be done by distinguishing him clearly and decidedly, far above all others."[14]

Adams had developed this argument during the 1780s as part of his rejection of the view of Anne Robert Turgot, the marquis de Condorcet, and other French reformers that national programs of fundamental change depended on centralizing all power in one legislative assembly. Adams agreed instead with Jean Louis De Lolme's *The Constitution of England* that executive office had to be insulated from both popular and aristocratic interference, and be buttressed with pomp and ceremony, in order to protect virtue and public liberty from tumult and party.[15] Indeed, the argument of Adams's *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America* (3 volumes; London, 1787) was an elaboration on De Lolme

view that the balanced constitution of king, Lords, and Commons in Great Britain was far more likely to result in free and good government than were the unitary schemes of the French radical reformers. Adams's long study of history and his debate with the "prophets of progress" left him keenly aware of the passions and ignorance of the many (represented by popular assemblies) and of the machinations and greed of the few (aristocracies and oligarchies), but somewhat less fearful of the power of a monarch. And because it often seemed to Adams that such a ruler was the lesser of the evils to which all governments are subject, he thought it necessary that the "principal personage" (a term Adams used to evoke kingly connotations to an audience with antimonarchical sentiments) of a republic have a dignified title, home, carriage, and so on, and be armed with an absolute veto of legislation in order to defend his office and the public good from the shortsightedness and rapacity of the other branches. "The great desideratum in a government," Adams wrote in the *Defence*, "is a distinct executive power, of sufficient strength and weight to compel both these parties [gentlemen and simplemen], in turn, to submit to the laws."[16] Titles of deference and authority for the chief executive, far from being unrepublican, then, were for Adams bulwarks against faction and sustainers of the public good against a host of divisive elements. The titles he suggested, in fact, came from republican Holland and in his mind were not associated with monarchy or absolutism. Adams was also echoing the idea of the Tudor monarchs that the people and the crown must unite to resist aristocratic privilege and provincialism, an equation validated by the factious, centrifugal tendencies of the new republic, or so it seemed to its scholarly vice-president.

In Adams's own view of his presidency he had held a steady course, above party and intent on the national interest, alternately enduring and fighting off first Hamiltonian and then Jeffersonian partisans. His continuance of Washington's cabinet, encouragement of a militant patriotism in response to the XYZ affair, and dispatch of the successful peace mission to France were to Adams required by national, as opposed to party, interest. He could not discharge capable officials because they were not his close friends, he could not supinely endure foreign insults, and he could not refuse an honorable peace in order to ensure a party victory at the polls. Adams, furthermore, agreed with a defense of the Alien and Sedition Acts offered by a minority of the Virginia legislature: "Government is instituted . . . for the general happiness and safety; the people therefore are interested in its preservation, and have a right to adopt measures for its security. . . . But government cannot be thus secured, if, by falsehood and malicious slander, it is deprived of the confidence and affection of the people. . . . The calumnies of the factious and discontented may not poison the minds of the majority of the citizens, yet they will infect a very considerable number, and prompt them to deeds destructive of the public peace, and dangerous to the general safety. This the people have a right to prevent."[17]

Yet, to many, including Jefferson, who generally tried very hard during Adams's presidency to maintain the bonds that had made the two men such firm friends since 1775, the measures of 1798 blotted out freedoms for which the American Revolution had been fought. The president who signed the Alien and Sedition Acts had also signed the Declaration of Independence. How could that be? Circumstances, of course, might explain such an apparent incongruity; in 1776 Adams had been an "outsider" resisting a tyrant in power, whereas in 1798 he was himself in power resisting outsiders. Or one might reason that Adams's political views had changed; experience and the jaundice of advancing years had tempered his Revolutionary idealism and left him willing to restrain "seditious" activity.

To John Adams's mind, however, there was neither inconsistency nor declension in his actions. He provided the critical clue to his outlook in a letter written in 1799 when at the height of the crisis over new taxes, diplomatic intrigue, and especially war preparations, he told James McHenry that "all the declamations, as well as demonstrations, of Trenchard and Gordon, Bolingbroke, Barnard and Walpole, Hume, Burgh, and Burke, rush upon my memory and frighten me out of my wits."[18] This rather odd mixture of authorities had in common that each on occasion had warned against standing armies with the attendant debt and taxes that threatened prosperity and constitutional government, but the list also indicates the range and complexity of the problem Adams saw before him. As a good Whig, even a radical one, he was aware of the dangers of civil liberty posed by real or imagined "national emergencies" (thus the recollection of John Trenchard, Thomas Gordon, James Burgh, Sir John Barnard, and in a way, even Walpole himself), but he also believed that a national crisis required leadership above party and a sense of the enduring values of the nation, which provoked the listing of "the Tory historian" David Hume, the apologist of tradition Edmund Burke, and the advocate of the patriot king. In fact, Adams's incessant listing of statesmen and of knaves often revealed the heroic stature he admired and the scheming, partisan traits he scorned in leaders. To his young law clerk in 1774, for example, Adams "warmly recommended" Cicero, Demosthenes, the duc de Sully, Sir Robert Cecil, and the elder William Pitt" as model public servants, and he linked Tiberius, Iago, and Richard III as false and dangerous rulers.[19]

Like Washington, Adams accepted in dead earnest that the role of the leader, standing above party, was critical to the preservation of liberty, which meant in effect the guidance of policy in the public interest. Adams expressed the ideal of leadership he shared with his predecessor (and, substantially, with his first four successors) when in the margin of his copy of

Bolingbroke's *The Spirit of Patriotism* he reflected on the meaning of the word *patriotism*. It comprehended, Adams noted, "piety, or the love and fear of God; general benevolence to mankind; a particular attachment to our own country; a zeal to promote its happiness by reforming its morals, increasing its knowledge, promoting its agriculture, commerce and manufactures, improving its constitution, and securing its liberties: and all this without the prejudices of individuals or parties or factions, without fear, favor, or affection."[20]

In this view, liberty was not the absence of restraint or even the encouragement of diversity, but rather it was *acting* with the uncorruptibility, the disinterested virtue, and the attention to the common good implicit in the Athenian conception of citizenship. Applied to one in a position of power and leadership, liberty meant above all shunning partisanship, that is, avoiding the partial view or the alliance with faction that had defined corruption from the time of Cicero and Tacitus to that of the critics of Walpole whose words Adams had so taken to heart. Yet, this effort to quarantine the presidency from partisanship appears to many modern analysts as an "anachronism," a "vague, idealistic conception," "unsophisticated," and "eccentric."[21] Implicit in this criticism are the assumptions that a president must not only recognize but also engage with the inevitably partisan quality of politics in a free government and that he can be a "strong," "effective" executive only if he grasps the reins of his party to push for its programs—as Andrew Jackson and Franklin Roosevelt were to do. To seek to be "nonpartisan," or "independent," then, is, at the least, naive, probably ineffective, and possibly even irresponsible.

In this view, Adams's presidency might appear to be weak and ineffectual; at best quaint and perverse. He did not before his inauguration prepare a program that his partisans could push through Congress for his signature. He refused to dismiss cabinet members who disagreed with him (such a partisan act would be more harmful to the presidency, he felt, than enduring the strains of discordant counsel). To sustain nonpartisanship, he accepted both war-preparedness legislation and a de facto commander of the army (Alexander Hamilton) he knew might pose grave dangers to constitutional government. Finally, he dispatched a peace mission to France that helped so to fracture the Federalist party (one must resist saying Adams's party) that it lost the next presidential election. Such incongruities and paradoxes can be resolved only if we see the presidency as Adams saw it. He simply could not be partisan either in seeking or conducting office, or even in nourishing a party whose outlook he generally approved, because such were the certain paths to corruption and tyranny. Nor could he cut Gordian knots by becoming a dictator; he was too much the Whig of 1776 for that. Yet, neither could he abdicate leadership on matters of national importance.

In fact, throughout his presidency Adams served effectively according to his own exalted idea of what the office required of him. The critical transfers of power, which historically had almost always so compromised or destroyed nonhereditary rulers that the polity itself endured grievous wounds, first from the revered Washington and then to the (in Adams's opinion) tainted Jefferson, were accomplished safely. In defending the nation, within and without, from the passions and potential tyrannies engendered by the rise of Napoleon, Adams called forth a national strength and resolve probably vital to its independent survival. The acceptance and then the carefully measured enforcement of the Alien and Sedition Acts represented, in the president's view, only a temporary deviation from strict respect for civil liberties. Most important of all, Adams played the role of the patriot leader nearly to perfection in utterly ignoring party needs, in upholding the public interest against popular clamor, and in discerning a long-range wisdom when he insisted on the peace mission to France in 1799. Although quirks of personality and a certain impatience with some aspects of public life sometimes impeded his political effectiveness, by and large he served well under difficult circumstances.[22] Most of the depreciations of Adams's presidency rest either on a political philosophy that does not accept Adams's positive concept of the state and hence the heavy responsibility of officials to preserve and use it or on the assumption that the president *must* serve as a party leader. Adams's understanding of his role, however, was closer to that of George Washington, and even of John Winthrop and Elizabeth I, than to that of either Calvin Coolidge or Franklin Roosevelt—or that of John Kennedy or Ronald Reagan. Adams believed it was incumbent on him to exalt and dignify his office, so that he could arouse the nation in its own defense and guide it toward righteousness and prosperity. It followed from this belief that he had to shun party and stand forth against both popular excitement and vested interests. Reflecting all he had learned from Plutarch, Cicero, Bolingbroke, and a host of others, Adams believed a head of state and government had to lead virtuously and vigorously and to abhor faction and party. Otherwise he would be, quite simply, a bad and irresponsible executive.

6

The First Republican Chief Magistrates

Thomas Jefferson

Jefferson's encounter with *Idea of a Patriot King* and its admonitions for national leaders was at least as complex and revealing as Adams's. Although the third president regarded himself as an ardent Whig, Bolingbroke may possibly have been, as Gilbert Chinard judged while editing Jefferson's commonplace book, the strongest and most continuous single influence on Jefferson's intellectual development. His early friend and mentor, Governor Francis Fauquier, was "known to have been a follower of [the third earl of] Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke." Although most of Jefferson's early reading of Bolingbroke concentrated on his deism and attacks on Christian orthodoxy (the part of Bolingbroke John Adams condemned), Jefferson also admired his style and his spirited attacks on Walpolean politics. He owned early editions not only of Bolingbroke's *Philosophical Works* but also of all of his major historical and political writings and bound volumes of the *Craftsman*. Bolingbroke's writings, Jefferson declared in 1821, were "the finest samples in the English language, of the eloquence proper for the Senate," matching at their best "the lofty, rythmical, full-flowing eloquence of Cicero."[1] On the other side of things, Jefferson had also read Bernard Mandeville and found his ridicule of benevolence and his insistence that self-love was the only spring of human action as repellent as Machiavelli's political cynicism. Finally, Jefferson read and generally accepted Francis Hutcheson's argument that man possessed an innate "moral sense" and that he had a naturally sociable disposition. Hutcheson, in fact, had taken direct aim not only at Mandeville but also at Thomas Hobbes, the "French moralists," and others who saw selfishness as the essential bond of society. Man is "endowed with a sense of right and wrong," Jefferson wrote his nephew in 1787, and his moral principles were formed "relative" to his destiny as a social and political being.[2] Perhaps even more deeply than Adams, Jefferson was prepared to take to heart the critique fashioned by Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift of "the commercialization of values" in early eighteenth-century Britain.

In 1771 Jefferson explained to a young friend that "every thing is useful which contributes to fix us in the principles and practice of virtue" and urged him particularly to read the best sentimentalist novels and other good writing that would "excite in any high degree this sympathetic emotion of virtue." His list of books suited for this purpose included Swift, Pope, Joseph Addison, John Gay, Voltaire in English, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding. (He later recommended the works of Pope and of Swift to a young student as best to "form your style in your own language.") The emphasis on virtue, especially its emotional, "commonsense" quality present in all persons, and its necessary connection with a socially defined disposition toward benevolence, again revealed the basic influence on Jefferson of Hutcheson, Thomas Reid, Adam Smith, and other Scottish Enlightenment philosophers. Their thought, designed to defend Christian morality against not only the direct assaults of Mandeville and the economists but also against the contractual, "possessive individualism" of Hobbes and Locke, complemented the political and social critique of the English anti-Walpoleans.[3] Although Jefferson's admiration for Virgil, Seneca, Cicero, and the Roman moralists, for the Scottish "commonsense" philosophers, and for the anticommercial political economy of the Physiocrats cannot be doubted, the moral and cultural world view of the Augustan writers always remained the foundation of his thinking. One suspects Pope would have enjoyed Monticello, Swift have approved the Embargo, and Bolingbroke have admired the University of Virginia. Their view of the world and the good life furnished the purpose or goal, in fact, for the political career Jefferson always insisted was simply a part of a larger moral and cultural aspiration he had for the new nation.

Given this vision, it is clear that Jefferson, like John Adams, would have important, positive things for leaders to do. He came to feel that the weak governor's office he held for two years in Virginia (1779–1781) did not suit the needs of the commonwealth in war or in peace. Among his proposed reforms was to give the governor a five-year term, without eligibility for reelection, in order to protect him as much as possible from partisan pressures and intrigue. The governor under this plan was denied many powers associated with royal prerogative, but Jefferson also observed that "the application of the [extent of executive power] must be left to reason." In assessing the Federal Constitution of 1787, from Paris, Jefferson wanted the president eligible for only one term (though he favored a relatively long one of six years) to prevent him from being "an officer for life" with all the potential despotism that entailed. Such an office, he wrote to Adams in London, would make "every succession worthy of intrigue, of bribery, of force, and even of foreign interference." In reply, Adams wrote that he too was apprehensive of "foreign Interference, Intrigue, Influence," and all

the corruptions attendant on elections, but his antidote, contrary to Jefferson's, was to have as few "successions" as possible by allowing and even encouraging the incumbent's reelection. More significant, however, than their difference over the point of reeligibility were Adams and Jefferson's common concern that temptations to corruption be diminished and the absence in this correspondence of serious concern about the extent of the powers conferred on the chief executive. Both men, in fact, saw the new Constitution, with its strengthened executive office, as an important advance in the evolution of American government. Adams declared it "conformable to such a system of government as I had ever most esteemed," and Jefferson thought it "unquestionably the wisest ever yet presented to men."[4]

Although some of the courtly trappings of Washington's presidency earned Jefferson's scorn, the first secretary of state actually worked hard to enhance the president's authority. Alexander Hamilton himself later noted that while they "were in the administration together, [Jefferson] was generally for a large construction of the Executive authority, . . . [and] he considered as improper the participation of the Senate in [it]." As differences between Jefferson and the Federalists grew during the 1790s, the Virginian most despised not the idea of an active, independent executive, but what he termed "Hamilton's financial system; . . . a machine for the corruption of the legislature, [designed] . . . to keep [it] in unison with the executive." The secretary of the Treasury allowed congressmen to become rich through his schemes, Jefferson charged, and "men thus enriched by the dexterity of a leader, would follow of course the chief who was leading them to fortune, and become the zealous instruments of all his enterprises."[5] Hamilton sought to govern, that is, in the way Robert Walpole had pioneered and Lord North had practiced, destroying the balance of powers and eventually strangling liberty.

A famous conversation reported by Jefferson captures the crucial distinction: John Adams had declared that the British system, balancing executive and legislative power, when purged "of its corruption, . . . would be the most perfect constitution ever devised by the wit of man." Hamilton retorted that the British system purged of corruption "would become an *impracticable* government"; it was most perfect "as it stands at present." Jefferson's equally famous letter to Philip Mazzei (1796) denounced "the monarchical . . . party" seeking to bring to the United States "the substance, [as well as] . . . the forms, of the British government" and castigated "men who were Samsons in the field and Solomons in the council, but who have had their heads shorn by the harlot England." This unmistakable thrust at Washington, for having allowed himself to be enlisted in the Hamiltonian party (and therefore corrupted), revealed the depth of Jefferson's disappointment, and implicitly, his nonpartisan conception of

executive leadership. That the 1790s echoed for him the issues of the 1720s is also apparent in his plea that Americans "awake and snap the Lilliputian cords."[6] It was not dignity in office or even substantial executive power that Jefferson repudiated, but rather Hamilton's effort to govern by a systematic manipulation of various self-interests. To Jefferson, this kind of politics as much debased and corrupted the idea of republican government (in his view, congressional "approval" in no way cleansed the process, of course) as the similar manipulation by Sejanus, a Borgia prince, Cardinal Richelieu, or the duke of Newcastle corrupted their governments.

The ambiguity within the Jeffersonian party on positive leadership in a republic was revealingly displayed in 1794 in John Taylor of Caroline's *Enquiry into the Principles and Tendency of Certain Public Measures*.[7] Conventionally, it was addressed to the national leader, President Washington, hoping that he would see and oppose the corrupt, unrepublican effects of the national bank and Hamilton's other fiscal measures. Taylor chided Washington for having given his assent to the National Bank Act but charitably ascribed this action to his "republican principles" requiring acquiescence to the legislative will, rather than to the president's "approbation of [the] contents" of the bank law. He pleaded, therefore, that Washington would now see that Hamilton's influence in Congress, achieved, Taylor thought, by enlisting members' private interests in support of his schemes, indirectly but "deeply wounded" republican principles. He hoped that "the same laudable vigilance" that had once led Washington to act against "a direct attempt on the principles of representation" would now be used to thwart Hamilton's insidious measures. Taylor thus followed closely the tradition of petitioning the patriot leader to act in the national interest to root out "political immorality." He then lamented, however, that "a patriot magistracy hardly appears to gladden the historic page, once in a century." Because bad leaders so much outnumbered good ones, only a "blind fanaticism" would rely entirely on "the integrity of the magistracy" for the preservation of liberty and political virtue.

After what to Taylor had been a disappointing "presidential revolution" (the election of 1792), it was now necessary, he thought, to apply the pure republican principle of the vigilance of the people. "A frequent and firm national enquiry into the measures of government, will check political vice, and reward political virtue," Taylor intoned. He thus nodded in the direction of traditional dependence on patriot leadership, then doubted the efficacy of such dependence, and finally boldly appealed to public vigilance and legislative, representative power to thwart corrupt deeds. Throughout, however, the rhetoric, the abominated measures, and the appeal to virtuous principles mirrored Bolingbroke's *Craftsman*, and even reflected its discouragement that patriot leadership might not be able to overcome the moneyed interests. For all this, though, Taylor resembled

Samuel Adams more than Bolingbroke by calling for public intervention in a way that supposed the people, rather than the rulers, might possess the virtue to rescue the nation from "self-interest, chicanery, [and] peculation."

Taylor's other 1794 pamphlet, *A Definition on Parties . . .*,[8] even more directly exemplifies the style and argument of *The Guardian*, the *Craftsman*, and "Junius" in branding the party of the secretary of the Treasury as a "paper money" faction whose corrupt influence over "king, lords, and commons" had subverted all balance, freedom, and virtue in government. Hamilton's incessant party-building had resulted, Taylor noted regretfully, in the growth of "two parties nearly poised as to numbers," which he thought "extremely perilous . . . [to] the public good." Despite his own intense partisanship, Taylor nonetheless drew back from a politics characterized by permanent party rivalry. Because "truth is a thing, not of divisibility into conflicting parts, but of unity," he observed in a profoundly unmodern stance, "both sides cannot be right. Every patriot deprecates a disunion."[9] Paradoxically, despite the growing party activity by both Federalists and Republicans, the theoretical consensus remained opposed to it. "Parties were incapable," in the words of a recent historian, "of realizing the truth; they were totally without regard to principle and they were against the national interest. They were, in addition, capable of corrupting the administration, enervating the principles of republican government, eroding the constitution and the spirit of the American Revolution, and ultimately of causing the dissolution of the republic itself."[10] The Jeffersonian Republicans continued to accept assumptions about the need for a patriotic national unity, and for virtue in the public councils, while they became more ambivalent on whether executive leadership—or the people—might best provide and protect those vital elements.

That ambivalence was heightened in another way by a decade of resistance to Hamilton's use of the executive department to consolidate the powers of the federal government. Hamilton's tactics forced Jefferson to go on record as opposing "loose construction" of the Constitution, institutions such as the national bank that centralized financial power, expansion of federal offices, high taxes, large armed forces, and interference with the prerogatives of the states. "I am not," Jefferson had written in 1799, "for transferring all the powers of the States to the General Government, and all those of that government to the executive branch."[11] Useful as such principles might be in opposing an administration in power, and however much they might recall the hallowed Whig axioms of the American Revolution, they were not likely to be useful to a president with a large agenda for change in mind.

Jefferson entered the presidency committed to what twenty years later he termed "the true principles of the revolution of 1800." This revolution, he said, was as "real" in the "principles of our government as that of 1776 was in its form," accomplished this time, however, not by the sword, but by "the rational and peaceable instrument of reform, the suffrage of the people."[12] Like John Adams, Jefferson believed the real American Revolution was ongoing, begun a generation before 1776 and needful of continuing into the future until habits, values, and attitudes had been republicanized. Jefferson wrote Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours shortly after becoming president that though twelve years of government under "the contracted, English, half-lettered ideas of Hamilton [had] destroyed" the hope for "pure" republicanism in the near future, and that "some things may perhaps be left undone from motives of compromise for a time," he nonetheless intended such a thorough "reformation" as to return the nation to "sound principles." Jefferson further declared that when he took office he "found the country entirely in the enemy's hands," some of whom he would have to "dislodge" from their posts to achieve his "revolution." This done, and with the "artificial panic" (Jefferson's phrase for the party strife of the 1790s) over and factionalism reduced to "the noisy band of royalists inhabiting cities chiefly, and priests both of city and country," Jefferson was sure "the great body of well-meaning citizens" would "consolidate" and political feuding would disappear.[13] For all his reticence, then, Jefferson intended to give a firm if rather low-key direction to events. He was committed to a political and social philosophy for the nation that gave him, as the national leader, vitally important tasks, and he did not believe that that philosophy precluded positive acts by the federal government in the public interest.

At the moment he assumed power Jefferson wrote a close associate of his intention to woo the Federalist rank and file who "did not differ from us in principle, . . . and to urge a reunion on those principles. . . . They will in a little time cement and form one mass with us, and by these means harmony and union be restored to our country, which would be the greatest good we could effect." Outside this "amalgamation" or "orthodoxy" (favorite words in Jefferson's antiparty lexicon) would be only "desperadoes of the quondam faction"—hardly words compatible with acceptance of the notion of a "loyal opposition." He made the same harmonizing points when he told his inaugural audience that though he would "often go wrong through defect of judgment," it was also important to remember that many (partisans?), "whose positions will not command a view of the whole ground," would condemn the president. A year after he retired from the chief executive office Jefferson remained firm on the preeminent role of the president: "In a government like ours, it is the duty of the Chief Magistrate, in order to enable himself to *do all the good* which his station requires, . . . to *unite in himself* the confidence of the *whole people*. This alone, in any case where *the energy of the nation* is required, can produce a *union of the powers of the whole*, and point them in a *single direction*, as

if all constituted but *one body and one mind*" (emphasis added). This would produce "the whole Constitutional vigor" of the Union and, because authority rested squarely on broad popular support, make American government "the strongest on earth."[14] In other words, instead of seeking to make the office of the president less powerful, Jefferson sought to make it *more popular*—the real essence of his disagreement with the Federalist presidents. Jefferson thus was not, in Isaiah Berlin's categories, a "fox" who led by manipulation toward pragmatic, short-term ends (à la Walpole), but rather a "hedgehog," who had a central vision and unifying values and who led actively toward that integrated world view.[15]

Noticing this active intention, politicians at the time and students of his presidency ever since have, either in condemnation or in praise, emphasized his "inconsistency" or "flexibility" in promptly jettisoning his nostrums about "legislative supremacy" and "strict construction" when he attained power. Such a view, however, highlighting the alleged "change" that occurred when Jefferson the opposition rhetorician became Jefferson the president, overlooks the complexity of his out-of-office attitude. In that position he had continued to accept *both* radical Whig scorn for imperial government *and* the ideal of the patriot king, and he sought earnestly to find a mode of republican leadership retaining the values of each.

Although much of Bolingbroke's best work on politics was written in opposition and in that way agrees substantially with the arguments of John Trenchard, Thomas Gordon, and the oppositionist radical Whigs,[16] other facets of the thought of Bolingbroke and his circle were also of crucial importance to Jefferson, and especially so when he had himself achieved executive power. Like Swift and Pope, Jefferson did not *merely oppose* in building his case against Hamiltonian Federalism, although the tactics of out-of-power politics created such an emphasis in the polemics of the 1790s. It is true that the desire to "win" in a diverse electorate led to the inclusion in Jefferson's "party" of elements that agreed on little more than getting the Federalists out of office. New York politician Aaron Burr, Baltimore merchant Samuel Smith, and Georgia hothead James Jackson are examples of the diversity in this coalition. But Jefferson himself, his most influential and thoughtful colleagues (James Madison and Albert Gallatin especially), and scores of journalists and political leaders all over the country had their own "vision" of what they wanted the nation to become, a "vision" that included an ethic, a political economy, and a social philosophy embedded in the moral values of the Augustan critics. The essence of this vision, inherited by the Augustans from antiquity and Renaissance humanism, was the belief that leaders had the responsibility of "making public [their] detachment from the lower motives: economic gain, physical comfort, personal survival at any cost." This political stance "constituted an affirmation of one's imaginative involvement with the well-being of the

State. It was thus a style designed for a ruling class,"[17] which, according to Jeffersonian republicanism, included the people themselves as well as officeholders.

Jefferson and his colleagues had their own idea of a national future, which they sought to substitute for Hamilton's candid "commercialization of values," his stress on industrialization and national wealth, and his acceptance of both the benefits and liabilities of Britain's domination of world trade. To accomplish this reversal of Hamiltonianism the Jeffersonians had not only to get the Federalists out of power but also to enact their own program. This included a process of "dismantling" to allow another life-style to flourish in the benign presence of liberty, and a positive program to encourage development in the proper direction, such as enlarging the nation's fertile land (an opportunity that arose in the case of the Louisiana Purchase) and substituting commercial coercion for war (the Embargo). Such moves, however, to Jefferson and Madison, still had to be undertaken within republican guidelines. In contemplating the danger at New Orleans in 1803, they worried about the constitutionality of a purchase of land and were cautious about any moves that might provoke hostilities, even though they were entirely enthusiastic about the acquisition itself. Hamilton, on the other hand, urged the administration instead of sending envoys to Paris to purchase part of Louisiana to "seize at once on the Floridas and New-Orleans, and then negociate." Likewise, in 1808 when Gallatin reported it would take "a little army" to uphold the Embargo on the Canadian border and "arbitrary powers . . . equally dangerous and odious" to prevent smuggling along the seacoast,[18] Jefferson and Madison decided to repeal the Embargo rather than be either oppressive or impotent to enforce the laws. Again, one can readily imagine Hamilton's likely different reaction in the face of such a dilemma. Indeed, the meaning of the "revolution of 1800" in some ways can best be understood by conjecturing how Hamilton might have differently conducted government had he been in power between 1801 and 1809.

Jefferson also urged, by constitutional amendment if necessary, internal improvements that would cement the union "by new and indissoluable ties" and a national university that would cultivate all the branches of learning that "contribute to the improvement of the country." But these political programs, relatively modest as Jefferson himself recognized and intended, were auxiliaries to the central purpose of his administration. More fundamentally, he had in mind "a great cultural revolution." To him, as to Benjamin Rush, independence from Britain was only "the first act of the great drama" of the American Revolution. Yet needed was "a revolution in our principles, opinions, and manners, so as to accommodate them to the forms of government we have adopted."[19] Jefferson sought to turn the nation from one path of development toward another. He had in mind pro-

found moral and cultural redirections, which often provoked charges that he was "visionary" or "utopian"—or, as Hamilton said, of a "whimsical imagination"—but which nevertheless were a far-reaching agenda requiring active, yet scrupulously republican, leadership.

Though Samuel Adams and a few other Revolutionary leaders had supposed that such a profound change could somehow well up from the people, Jefferson did not rest his hopes on that entirely. For him, active leadership retained an important role, not only in the programs proposed in the national interest but also in the model, the style, the spirit of the executive office. It was *essential* to him, that is, not merely an act of carelessness, that he receive foreign emissaries in slippers or that "pell-mell" be the rule for guests coming to the president's table. It was important, too, for the president to be a scientist, a farmer, a man of reason, a patron of the arts, and so on, in order to indicate clearly what was honored in the country and would thus be cultivated there. Here as elsewhere Jefferson received positive guidance from the Augustan critics and from *Idea of a Patriot King*. Virtually everything that Bolingbroke had proposed the patriot king *do*, and which he argued could be done only by a national leader, Jefferson saw as part of his function as the chief executive in a republic. He had to govern according to natural law and within the constraints of the Constitution, of course, but he also had to set a moral example for the people, articulate national goals, and use the nation's influence in the world to extend freedom, virtue, and prosperity.

In fact, Jefferson's conduct as chief executive followed to a remarkable degree the five-step program Bolingbroke proposed for the patriot king.[20] First, "purge the court" of the partisans and corrupt placemen, and second, replace them with a new class of men Jefferson would himself characterize as "an aristocracy of talent and virtue." The third measure of the patriot king was "to espouse no party, but to govern like the common Father of his people," an ideal to which Jefferson aspired as he sought triumph *over* party, rather than *through* party. Fourth, the patriot king would encourage a balanced economy (including commerce) that would ensure the prosperity of the people, a conception not the least alien to one whose attention to practical improvements, profitable agriculture, and enlarged trade was as unceasing as Jefferson's. Finally, "the bearing of the patriot king constituted the fifth measure of his program." The leader, that is, had to be a moral guide for the people and in his bearing and manners a symbol of the best in the national heritage. One imagines, for example, that Pope would have found in Jefferson as he had in Bolingbroke "the feast of reason, and the flow of soul" necessary for leadership in its fullest sense. Thus, far from seeing Bolingbroke and his friends as merely "oppositionists" who diagnosed the evils of faction without offering an alternative, Jefferson found in the active idealism of the circle of Pope and Swift an admirable world view as well as some political precepts congenial to it.

Jefferson recognized the more practical dilemmas he faced as leader in a republic, however, when in 1806 he responded to a supporter who had pleaded for more visible guidance from the president: "If we recommend measures in a public message, it may be said that members [of Congress] are not sent here . . . to register the edicts of a sovereign. If we express opinions in conversation, we have then our . . . back-door counsellors. If we say nothing, 'we have no opinions, no plans, no cabinet.'" Jefferson solved the problem by what can be described only as a brilliant series of strategies. He began by remaining in close touch with members of Congress who generally agreed with him, providing thereby a kind of party leadership, but he was always careful to avoid imposing what would later be termed party discipline. In asking Barnabas Bidwell to guide administration measures on the floor of the House of Representatives, the president explained himself carefully: "I do not mean that any gentleman relinquishing his own judgment, should implicitly support all the measures of the administration, but that, where he does not disapprove of them he should not suffer them to go off in sleep, but bring them to the attention of the house and give them a fair chance. Where he disapproves, he will of course leave them to be brought forward by those who concur in the sentiment."[21] Jefferson justified the successful pressure to push John Randolph of Roanoke out of leadership positions in Congress on similar grounds: he had begun to oppose most administration measures and thus could not honestly or effectively be their advocate.

In addition to this general gathering of support, Jefferson and his cabinet colleagues funneled a steady stream of proposals, including drafts of legislation, to sympathetic members of Congress, again always asking them to exercise their own judgment. The president also often cautioned the legislators to shield his role in the measures "because you know with what bloody teeth and fangs the federalists will attack any sentiment or principle known to come from me." Jefferson's careful attention to legislation and his influence among members of Congress nonetheless became so well known that friends applauded and foes condemned his role as "*prime mover*."[22] The result was that Jefferson both had greater impact on legislation and acted more effectively as a leader of his "partisans" than either of his predecessors (or than any of his first three successors, too), but he was a "party leader" only in the sense that he was extraordinarily skillful and persuasive in gathering and guiding willing followers.

If one adds to Jefferson's influence in Congress his attention to detail his easy mastery of orderly and efficient methods of administration, and his plans to offer guidance to the state governors, the full dimensions of his

leadership emerge. "Jefferson's review of the departmental business laid before him was never perfunctory," a recent student has observed. "Having instructed his department heads to submit policies to him for approval, he remained conversant with a wide range of problems and responded with informed opinions. Carefully reviewing their recommendations, he made alterations where he thought necessary, and although he often accepted their proposals without qualification, he never resorted to *pro forma* endorsements. The careful attention, the time, and the informed effort that Jefferson applied to . . . the business of government day after day, and year after year, is everywhere in evidence in the records of his administration." His assertion of leadership is evident in a letter he wrote to Governor Monroe of Virginia in 1801 in which he maintained that the national executive was "certainly preordinate" in commanding the militia and in the exercise of other powers granted to the general government. He also considered seriously a plan to send annual messages to all the state governors advising them of measures that, "from a view of the whole ground," were necessary for the public good but were within the powers reserved to the states. To one as intent on plan and harmony as Jefferson, even the useful decentralization of the federal system required guidance lest important public needs be neglected. In this way, Jefferson's genius enabled him at once to lead, to be unimperial, to be in close touch with the people, and to apply reason to national policy. He would not, he said, if he could help it, preside over "a government of chance and not of design,"[23] which is to say that he intended to bring to self-government the same positive guidance and pursuit of the "ideal" that had always characterized the admired eras of human history.

Jefferson's brilliant performance as a leader generally, and especially his effective guidance of like-minded congressmen, has often led to the mistaken conclusion that he represents a classic early instance of the supposed undeniable truth that a president must be an adroit, even manipulative, leader of his party in Congress if new programs are to be undertaken in the nation. Later presidents who did this, such as Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt, are usually listed as among the "best" American presidents, and their mastery of Congress is generally seen as crucial to that stature. Such effectiveness, it is claimed, is closely tied to party leadership because it is often party means—distribution of patronage, endorsement for reelection, party accomplishment in the eyes of the public, and so on—that enable the president to garner support in Congress for his policies. Further, this understanding of the presidency often views the chief executive's role as party leader in the legislature as bringing informally to American government some of the benefits of party discipline and executive guidance characteristic of parliamentary systems. Indeed, the arrangement is sometimes seen as the only way the "checks" in a system of separation of powers can be overcome enough to make active government possible.

Yet, despite the assumed party division of Congress from 1801 to 1809 between Federalists, who opposed the president, and Republicans, who supported him, Jefferson never made party itself the key to his leadership, nor would he have been pleased to have been classed with Andrew Jackson, Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, and other avowed masters of partisan politics.[24] As the quotations above show, Jefferson did not distinguish in his thinking between those in Congress who were fellow party members and thus obliged for the sake of party success to vote with him as Republicans and those who for perfectly good and acceptable Federalist party reasons could be expected to vote against him. Jefferson did not consider it part of his role either to ensure the *organizational* strength of his party or to perpetuate a division in the country between an administration party and a "loyal opposition," although both of these goals are integral to the view that the president's power rests on his skill and authority as leader of his party. There is, in short, very little place in Jefferson's conception of executive leadership for the hallmarks of the post-1829 partisan presidency.

Jefferson's administrations suggest that it might not be necessary under all circumstances for a president to depend on control of, or influence through, a political party in order to be an effective executive. His posture and performance as president indicate that in important ways good leadership can depend on a muted partisanship and that it may not be necessary for the president to be an active party leader while in office in order for the Constitution to "work." Both in Congress and in the country at large Jefferson gathered support precisely because he appealed to Federalists, except for those "desperadoes of the quondam faction," to join him in pursuit of the public good and because he refused to placate dissident Republicans (such as John Randolph of Roanoke) in the interests of *party* unity. Like many great leaders in the past, monarchical and other, and even like many later presidents who enhanced their effectiveness by appeals that transcended party, Jefferson capitalized on the perennial attraction of harmony and cooperation, as opposed to the incessant "generation of conflict" often called for by partisan theories of leadership. Jefferson's presidency, and especially his skillful guidance of Congress, far from demonstrating that an effective president has to exert his will on Congress through the agency of party, proves on the contrary that legislative leadership can be achieved through persuasion, cultivation of supposed party opponents, and articulation of a program in the public interest that truly transcends party. On the model of Plutarch's heroes and the "good kings" of Dryden and Swift, Jefferson saw party and leadership as antithetical and conducted his relationship with Congress generally according to that precept.

Of the many evidences of this "patriot" style in Jefferson's words and

deeds, an especially revealing one reverberates in the phrase "an empire of liberty," which Jefferson used so often to bring the idea of dominion within the moral framework of the Declaration of Independence. In sending George Rogers Clark to secure the Illinois country in 1778, in drafting the Northwest Ordinance in 1784, in purchasing Louisiana and in dispatching the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1803, in supporting the War of 1812, and in favoring the liberation of Spain's Latin American colonies in the 1820s, Jefferson had in view always the enlargement of the "empire of liberty." He had urged Clark in 1779 to respect the religion and customs of the people of the Illinois country so that there might be added "to the empire of liberty an extensive and fertile country, thereby converting dangerous enemies into valuable friends." He hoped that later the world would witness in the continental United States "such an extent of country under a free and moderate government as it has never yet seen," where "range after range" of new, equal, and self-governing states would cover the Mississippi Valley, and that in the whole American hemisphere European tyranny would be expelled and this vast area become filled with free nations.[25] Jefferson was not so naive as to believe that this dream could be realized without active leadership.

Although this idea of empire, associated with the extension of liberty rather than the spread of tyranny, might appear contradictory to readers of Lenin (as it did to those familiar with Roman history), in fact it had an ancient, honorable pedigree of which Jefferson himself was probably aware. In *Agricola*, Tacitus had noted the remarkable happiness of the reign of the Emperor Nerva, who "united things long incompatible, Empire and liberty" (*res olim dissociabiles miscuerit, principatum ac libertatem*). Then, Sir Francis Bacon in *Advancement of Learning* had quoted Tacitus (inaccurately, using the Latin "*imperium et libertatem*") as evidence of "the excellent temper" of Nerva's reign. Finally Bolingbroke, on the last page of *Idea of a Patriot King*, perhaps relying only on Bacon, asked what could be so lovely, so venerable as "a king, in the temper of whose government, like that of Nerva, things so seldom allied as empire and liberty are intimately mixed, co-exist together inseparably, and constitute one real essence?" (Tacitus's phrase finally received its modern connotation, of course, when "empire and liberty" was termed "the rightful aim of British policy" by Benjamin Disraeli, himself a fervent admirer of Bolingbroke.)[26] In so self-consciously using the phrase "empire and liberty," then, Jefferson indicated in yet another way that he saw a need for both the preservation of liberty and a provision for the various connotations of *principatum* and *imperium:* dominion, government, authority, empire, leadership. In fact, in his later linking of Thomas Paine and Bolingbroke as "both advocates of human liberty," he may have had in mind precisely the two "long incompatible" elements in need of reconciliation. That, indeed, is one way to put the thrust of Jefferson's presidency: somehow to republicanize the patriot king.

James Madison

The fourth president, James Madison, in general agreed with Jefferson's conception of executive authority. Madison's acceptance of Swift, Pope, and Addison as the preeminent guides in style and in outlook on life had been strengthened by his studies at the College of New Jersey (later Princeton), where these authors were often recommended by the faculty. President John Witherspoon, who was especially important in Madison's intellectual growth, relied also on the Scots, Lord Kames, Adam Ferguson, and Francis Hutcheson, to combat Mandeville, the third earl of Shaftesbury, Hume, and others, who, in Witherspoon's interpretation, were "infidel" writers. Witherspoon emphasized the "moral sense" and the affective sociability of mankind, as did Hutcheson and his other teachers in reaction to the self-centered individualism of the economic and social contract theorists. Although Witherspoon does not seem to have paid particular attention to the debates of the Augustan literary circles, at Madison's graduation the main address was "The Idea of a Patriot-King."[27] In general, Witherspoon was both deeply respectful of ancient pieties and assumptions (he taught politics straight from Aristotle, laced his lectures to Princeton seniors with anecdotes from Plutarch, and preached orthodox Calvinism in the college chapel) and fervently Whiggish in his insistence that all forms of authority conform to a higher law. The spirit of Princeton under Witherspoon is evident in the 1770 graduation exercises when one student argued in Latin that "Omnes Homines, Jure Naturae, liberi sunt" (all men, in the law of nature, are free) while others debated more particularly whether "subjects are bound and obligated by the law of nature, to resist their king if he treats them cruelly or ignores the law of the state, and to defend their liberty." Thus from his earliest study of philosophy, literature, and politics Madison had absorbed teachings both devoted to natural law and mindful of the uses of virtuous leadership.

As a member of the Governor's Council in Revolutionary Virginia, Madison came to believe (as did Governor Jefferson) that the executive in its first constitution was too weak. Both men also worked to strengthen the executive "departments" under the Articles of Confederation. In 1782 Madison supported Robert Morris's insistence that his subordinates in the Department of Finance be responsible to him, and not to Congress as a

whole, and even defended Morris against charges of what would now be called "conflict of interest." Madison was well aware that Morris mingled private and public business and that he increased his personal fortune while in office, but to Madison the crucial fact was Morris's manifest public usefulness and his "honorable and patriotic" motives. Lacking proof of "misfeasance," Madison argued, "the same fidelity to the public interest which obliges those who are its appointed guardians to pursue with every vigor a perfidious or dishonest servant of the public requires [exposure of] imputations of malice against the good and faithful one."[28] Clearly, Madison took seriously the concept of the public interest, thought devotion to it was the critical mark of the good official, and saw a compelling need for active, honest executives.

Madison's sense of the importance of active government in the public interest was particularly heightened during the 1780s when he witnessed the poor performance of the state legislatures. His own experience in the Virginia legislature (1784–1786) as well as his observation of other states, especially Rhode Island, where a "paper money faction" defaulted flagrantly on state debts and brazenly injured out-of-state interests, led him to an ominous conclusion. The unwise and unjust laws passed by these bodies "brings . . . into question the fundamental principle of republican Government, that the majority who rule in such Governments, are the safest Guardians both of public Good and of private rights." Madison complained of the "multiplicity," the "mutability," and the "impotence" of state laws, calling them "nuisances," impractical, and even "vicious," but his deepest objection was to their poor *quality*: they lacked wisdom and virtue. The dilemma created by this discovery, that the basic principle of republican government (majority rule) could work against the even more fundamental need for just laws, was for Madison compounded by the realization that the source of this malfunction was to be found not only in the tendency toward imprudence and corruption in the representatives but also more fatally "among the people themselves." A host of private interests, real and imagined, divided the people of the states into conflicting groups, and these rival claims, Madison observed, generally overcame whatever virtuous motives might be expected to arise from "a prudent regard to their [the people's] own good as involved in the general and permanent good of the Community." Even "respect for character" and standards of morality derived from religious conviction were overrun by political interests. The states left to themselves, Madison concluded, seemed invariably to trample on both private rights and the public good, and this despite that the states more fully than any other governments in the world embodied the radical Whig principle of legislative supremacy.

To cope with this discouraging development, Madison hypothesized that in "an extended republic," on the continental scale of the United States, "a greater variety of interests, of pursuits, of passions [would] check each other." In consequence, the general government would be less likely than the state governments to act unjustly and should therefore have "a negative" on the laws of the states, a power he advocated throughout the Federal Convention and, privately, even for some months afterward. "The great desideratum," he concluded, was "such a modification of the Sovereignty as will render it sufficiently neutral between the different interests and factions." But neutrality meant for Madison a point of view that was impartial, disinterested, a sovereignty above party such as that of "the prince . . . in absolute Monarchies." The characteristic vice of such a sovereign, that he would sacrifice the happiness of his people "to his ambition or his avarice," might be thwarted by the elimination of monarchy as such in a republic, but the need remained of guarding against the defects of republicanism itself.[29] Thus on the eve of the Federal Convention Madison had espoused a Bolingbrokean view of the inherent evil of factions, of their tendency to be dominant in legislative bodies, and of the possibility that some form of centralized executive power might help prevent these calamities.

At the Convention, however, Madison encountered powerful advocates of more Whiggish views of executive power. Roger Sherman of Connecticut, a ready defender of legislative power, "considered the Executive Magistracy as nothing more than an institution for carrying the will of the Legislature into effect." The legislature, Sherman insisted, "was the depository of the supreme will of the Society" and was therefore "the best judge of the business which ought to be done by the Executive department." Sherman sought definition of executive powers by the legislature, proposed various schemes for a plural executive and for its election by the legislature, and objected to an executive veto. He was insistent, that is, that the national government as much as possible reflect the principle of legislative supremacy as it existed in Connecticut's and in other Whiggish state constitutions. Madison, James Wilson, Gouverneur Morris, and others protested vigorously that such proposals strengthened rather than diminished the power of faction and of provincial interests in government. They admitted that any form of monarchy was out of the question in the United States, but they nonetheless sought somehow to retain the benefit of its ability to check legislative corruption and partisanship. Indeed, it can be argued that "the Presidency was designed in great measure to reproduce the monarchy of George III with the corruption . . . and . . . the hereditary feature . . . left out."[30] The debates in the Convention, as well as the final shape of the presidential office in the Constitution, show that by 1787 Sherman's Whiggish views were in decline as Madison and others sought ways to implant in republican government the benefits of energy and transcendence of party long associated with a patriot king.

Madison revealed his train of thought on June 4, when, defending executive veto, he noted the danger a republic faced from diversity of interests, demagoguery, and the power of a selfish majority. "In this view," Madison concluded, "a negative in the Ex[ecutive] is not only necessary for its own [protection], but for the safety of a minority. . . . The independent condition of the Ex[ecutive] who has the Eyes of all Nations on him will render him a just Judge." Madison even sought some way to combine the judiciary with the executive in the veto power, in order to increase the sense of wisdom and respectability in this vital restraint on the presumed-to-be-factious legislature. Two days later he noted the difficulty in a republic of finding a source of power that, like a "hereditary magistrate," would have a "personal interest agst. betraying the national interest." Remembering the host of philosophers and historians who had argued that a good king would have a personal stake in upholding the national interest, Madison sought earnestly, even desperately, to find a republican equivalent.[31]

When it appeared that the Convention might have the legislature elect the executive (as many delegates favored at some stage), Madison wondered out loud whether executive tenure "during good behavior" might be preferable to a president thus dependent on legislative intrigue. Although Madison later explained away this nod toward an unrepublican life tenure, he was willing to do almost anything to resist the fatal tendency in republics of throwing "all power into the Legislative vortex." Four days later, Madison urged that the executive be given the power to appoint federal judges because he would be "a national officer, acting for and equally sympathising with every part of the U. States."[32] Throughout the debates Madison consistently sought to establish an executive department that would be independent of the legislature, and insofar as that independence was secure, he was willing to grant wide powers to the executive. In his mind, faction, all too dominant in legislatures, posed the greatest threat to free government, and Bolingbroke's model of a king (executive) above party was always an appealing if incomplete antidote.

Madison also sought ways to combine power and virtue in the executive office as he tussled with the crucial question of how the president was to be selected. A good executive would have to be not only "separate" from the other branches but also protected as much as possible from corruption, which meant to Madison not only dishonesty and intrigue but also, more fundamentally, pursuit of private (partial) over public (common) interest. This danger of corruption more and more ruled out election by an "existing authority," that is, by the national or state legislatures, by state governors, by a judicial body, or whatever. Furthermore, the near-universal eighteenth-century assumption that direct popular election would be a circus in public and a bazaar in private made Madison skeptical of that process. He approved of the electoral college scheme, then, as "least objectionable" given the arguments against the other possibilities and as be calculated to prevent intrigue and faction from controlling the electio The need, he wrote Jefferson, was to "unite a proper energy in the Exec tive . . . with the essential characters of Republican Government,"[33] or, t put the matter in terms of the century-long English debate, to retain th manifest moral and positive qualities of the patriot king (that is, to lea with "proper energy") while also being faithful to the republican princ ples of consent and of constitutional restraint.

Even in defending the House of Representatives against charges that i members would always act factiously, as he would do most systematicall in *The Federalist*, Number 57, Madison began with the need for *goo* rulers. "The aim of every political constitution," he wrote, "is or ought t be first to obtain for rulers, men who possess most wisdom to discern, an most virtue to pursue the common good of society; and in the next plac to take the most effectual precautions for keeping them virtuous; whil they continue to hold their public trust." In Madison's mind the startin point was to be sure that those who held political power possessed prop character. In a republic this essential need meant good character in the re resentatives who made the laws as well as in the other officers of gover ment. It is apparent that Madison regarded even the basic republican id of making representatives accountable to the people as a useful rule onl insofar as it kept officeholders on the proper path and counteracted th tendency of hereditary and oligarchic executives to betray the public inte est. To Madison, as to Jefferson, Adams, and Washington, possession c virtue by the ruler was the cardinal ingredient of good government. In deed, the principle of consent itself could be justified only insofar as it su tained that *summum bonum*.

Gouverneur Morris emphasized a slightly different benefit to the poli from the virtuous ruler in noting that "the Executive Magistrate should b the guardian of the people, even of the lower classes, against Legislativ tyranny, against the Great and the wealthy who in the course of things wi necessarily compose the Legislative body." Pointing to what he said "Hi tory proves . . . to be the spirit of the opulent," Morris leveled mo "Country" party charges at the legislature: "Wealth tends to corrupt th mind and to nourish its love of power, and to stimulate it to oppression Morris asserted that if the executive is thus "to be the Guardian of the pe ple let him be appointed by the people." In a country as large as the Unite States, Morris further argued, such a mode of election could resist infl ence "by those little combinations and those momentary lies which ofte decide popular elections within a narrow sphere."[34]

Both Morris and Madison, however, increasingly adopted James Wi son's solution to the problem of how vigorous, impartial executive pow could be squared with the principle of government by consent. Startin

with that principle generally, Wilson accepted as "the great desideratum in politics . . . a government [both] . . . efficient and free. . . . But, I think, it can be done only by forming a popular government. To render government efficient, power must be given liberally; to render it free as well as efficient, those powers must be drawn from the people, as directly and as immediately as possible." In Wilson's oft-used metaphor, a "pyramided government," resting on the broad base of the people, would be the strongest and most stable form. But Wilson moved beyond his more conventionally Whiggish colleagues to argue that the principle of consent could also be applied effectively to the executive. Then, "he who is to execute the laws will be as much the choice, as much the servant and, therefore, as much the friend of the people as he who is to make them." With the executive thus fully responsible, it was proper, in Wilson's view, to unify and enlarge his power to take advantage of the traditional benefits of "efficient" leadership. Such a single executive elected by the people and responsible to them would also "be impartial . . . [and] promote the interests of the whole." With this "chain of connection," Wilson argued, the reputation of the executive would be tied to the public interest, and the nation would be able to have its affairs conducted according to the "very quintessence of impartiality."[35] The plan was to link together popular election, a liberal grant of power, clear responsibility, and impartiality in order to make republican government good government.

Madison worked in yet another way toward the goal of uniting republican principles with strong executive leadership in his now-famous theory of the extended republic, first stated publicly in the tenth *Federalist* essay. Madison argued that protection against tyranny and the effects of "the factious spirit" would be found in the many particular and divided interests that a large republic would inevitably contain. The self-interested parties would cancel out one another, be neutralized and reduced to no effect, allowing "the interest of the entire Society" to gain sway. Madison did not suppose, as twentieth-century "broker-state" political analysis does, that the push and pull of various factions would result in a compromise, which itself becomes the only practical definition of the public interest. In this modern view, factions are seen not only as inevitable, which Madison admitted, but also as positively useful because they bring to the attention of government the private needs of various segments of society, a point of view that Madison would have denied. To him a faction was a group whose interests were "adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." Madison thus hoped that factions would so check one another that a truly "aggregate" view, an uncorrupted policy, a public interest could be asserted.

At Washington's right hand during the early years of government under

the new Constitution, Madison sought to guard the president's dignit and powers as long as the executive department retained the nonpartisan ship that *alone* could legitimize its authority. Madison soon came t believe, however, as Jefferson did, that Hamilton sought to make the presi dential office into something quite different. The "cementing" of the pub lic creditors to the national government, the corruption of members o Congress (meaning not so much bribes as the enlisting of the selfish in terests of their constituents), the cultivation of party, the alignment wit Britain's commercial policies, the enlargement of the public debt, and th chartering of financial institutions all pointed toward exactly the sort o partisan, corrupt, commercial, ministerial government the Augustan critic had scorned under Walpole. Madison asserted that "a government operat ing by corrupt influence; substituting the motive of private interest i place of public duty [was an] . . . impostor" under a republican constitu tion, while others accused Hamilton of being a Walpolean "prime minis ter" leading a "phalanx of stockholders."[36] With the executive thus tainted Madison was forced toward the radical Whig "solution" of emphasis o legislative power and even on states' rights as *means* to resist a corrupte administration. He even joined Jefferson in founding an antiministeria republican party, which each conceived as "a party to end all parties," tha is, an instrument, a temporary *means* to overcome the power of party (in herently malignant) so skillfully mustered by Hamilton.

The aspirations Jefferson expressed in his first inaugural address, that th *partisan* electoral contest just over be the last such one in American histor and that the time had come for all Federalists and all Republicans to "unit in common efforts for the common good," were also Madison's aspira tions. Quaint or naive or forlorn as it may seem after nearly two centurie of unrelenting party battles and, more profoundly, after the enshrinemen of the political party as the benign dynamic of democratic government Madison thought it not only possible but also vital to the survival of goo government that parties should disappear. The Jeffersonian Republica party of the 1790s and the following generation may in some senses b construed as part of the "great democratic party" that runs from Samue Adams, Thomas Paine, and other "radicals" of 1776 through the Anti federalists of 1788 to the party of Jackson, Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt and Hubert Humphrey. It was not, however, a *party* in the post-182 sense, for its leaders did not seek its perpetuation (it would "succeed" i their eyes only if it became unnecessary) and did not see inherent virtue i its organizational strength or in its ability to sharpen partisan issues in th country.[37] Madison was, therefore, in the same paradoxical, perhaps incon sistent, position as Bolingbroke had been in the 1720s and 1730s when h assiduously cultivated an anti-Walpole "party" and sustained a brilliantl

vituperative opposition newspaper—all in the name of putting an end to "government by party," that is, a government of special interests that failed to discern and rule in the public good.

During Madison's sixteen years as secretary of state and president, his objective, negatively, was to purge American government of opportunities for ministerial abuse of power and end the excessive influence of trading interests; positively, he aimed to restore a legitimate leadership that would be above party yet within the republican principle of consent. During Jefferson's first term, Madison took part earnestly in Republican efforts to dismantle and restrain the most high-toned and (in their view) partisan aspects of the federal government; that is, to make it "mild" rather than aggressively commercial. Jefferson's overwhelming reelection in 1804, evidence of wide public support for the "revolution of 1800," was especially pleasing to the administration leaders because "the party spirit" in the country seemed sharply reduced. But the intensification of the worldwide, life-and-death struggle between France and England, signaled by the guns of Austerlitz and Trafalgar in the fall of 1805, imposed a ten-year moratorium on Republican attention to domestic affairs and utterly preoccupied, indeed nearly overwhelmed, Madison's efforts in executive office until halfway through his second term as president.

As he passed through the trials and vicissitudes of the Embargo, the conquest of West Florida, the Macon Acts, and the War of 1812, he again and again discovered that the more Whiggish of republican principles—deference to Congress, protection of civil liberties, opposition to war preparations, support for international law, and so on—were not easily assimilated to the demands of war leadership. Combined with Madison's unimperious personality, these principles often led to vacillating, ineffective policies. One can easily imagine the different and at times more appropriate style of an Andrew Jackson or a Winston Churchill. Yet, Madison did make one surpassing contribution. He saw the nation through the trial in a way that caused French Minister Louis Sérurier to declare, as news of the Treaty of Ghent arrived in Washington, that "three years of warfare have been a trial of the capacity of [American republican] institutions to sustain a state of war, a question . . . now resolved to their advantage." By refusing himself to become a Caesar and by preventing any other leader from assuming that role, Madison had enabled the nation to survive the Napoleonic maelstrom and to "win" the War of 1812 in the most fundamental terms. By fending off partisans (near traitors, some accused) on all sides, by avoiding "perpetual taxation, military establishment, and other corrupting or anti-republican habits or institutions," and thus winning "the second war of independence," Madison offered important if imperfect lessons in how to join Whiggish principles and the demands of crisis leadership.[38]

With the return of peace, Jackson's victory at New Orleans, and the di crediting of the Federalist party in 1815, Madison had an opportunity be the patriot leader on the model of Plutarch and Bolingbroke. He ga top appointments to able and proven colleagues—Monroe, Gallatin, Jol Quincy Adams, Admirals John Rodgers and David Porter, and Gener Jackson and Winfield Scott, for example—in whom the whole nation to pride. He provided leadership to Congress, especially in his annual me sage of December 1815 in which he recommended a broad national pr gram. He proposed a rechartered Bank of the United States, an equitat commercial treaty with Great Britain, a mildly protective tariff, a small b high-quality defense establishment, a national university, and a program internal improvements authorized by a constitutional amendment. Tl program was indeed "crypto-Federalist," as John Randolph of Roano charged, but not in the inconsistent and pejorative sense intended. Ma son deliberately gathered the best ideas of all segments of national opini and took it as his duty to outline and pursue policies for the "public goo regardless of previous party identification with them. Finally, Madis "passed on" the presidency to the republican variety of "heir apparen that is, to a person of long public service, of unquestioned patriotism, restrained partisanship, and of wide public support. Although intrigue a faction boiled below the surface of the Republican party and although t Federalists still managed a feeble opposition, nothing more pleased Ma son and Monroe than the all-encompassing nature of their party, or, other words, its aspiration to transcend the conventional, negative und standing of party.

In Madison's view (shared by Jefferson and Gallatin), the posture of t years 1815–1817 was a fulfillment of the good intentions and high hoj of 1801–1804. With the Hamiltonian engine restrained and in part d mantled, and the nation's republican institutions validated and revived was possible to use government for the public interest. And it was the p ticular responsibility of the president to articulate that interest. Althou ultimate authority came from the people, and although it was the task Congress to legislate, the need for both practical and symbolic leadersl by the chief executive was, in the minds of men nourished on Cicero, Er mus, and Addison, still crucial. In this tradition Madison furnished stea principled guidance during two years of national euphoria. Viewed in t light, Henry Adams's often-repeated criticism, that Madison found hims forced to become a Federalist in order to govern properly, becomes a h truth. Like Jefferson, Madison was a Federalist in that he believed in acti virtuous national leadership; he did not, however, abandon republic precepts or attempt to take over Federalism as a political party. Rather, intended to eliminate party itself from public life. John Pendleton K nedy, a Maryland writer and Whig politician who knew Madison well

his old age, wrote that it was the "glory" of the last years of Madison's administration "that it made peace between parties; that it established the true import of our fundamental law" by having tempered "the extremes of Federalism . . . with an infusion of democratic flavor; [and] the extremes of Democracy had been melted in an amalgam of Federalism." "The calm and philosophic temper of Mr. Madison, the purity of his character, the sincerity of his patriotism, and the sagacity of his intellect had inspired universal trust," Kennedy wrote in his own encapsulation of the qualities of the patriot leader. It had led to "a balmy peace . . . throughout [the] political world" and established a "Madisonian basis of . . . American government . . . by the almost universal consent of the country."[39] Although Kennedy penned these words for his own partisan political purposes, they nonetheless reveal the aura that surrounded Madison's last two years as chief executive and are the praise he would have most welcomed at the end of his public career.

Jefferson himself recorded his great pleasure at the political climate in the country in 1817 when he wrote to Lafayette that the best effect of the War of 1812 had been "the complete suppression of party" and that "the evanition of party dissensions has harmonized intercourse, and sweetened society beyond imagination." Observing the scene from retirement in Quincy, Henry Adams's great-grandfather, John Adams, also agreed with this view when he wrote Jefferson that "notwithstanding a thousand Faults and blunders, [Madison's] Administration has acquired more glory, and established more Union, than all his three Predecessors, Washington[,] Adams[,] and Jefferson, put together."[40] Thus, though Madison was in many ways a most unlikely patriot king figure, in forty years of public life he worked toward an executive office in accord with the ideal of the Augustan critics. His mind could no more make a virtue of partisanship than could the hero of *Cato* or the king of Brobdingnag.

In admiring this model, Madison agreed entirely, at least in principle, with his predecessor. They shared a sense that the ten years of preoccupation with the impositions of the Napoleonic Wars (1805–1815) were an unhappy, near-tragic interruption in the establishment in the United States of a more fully republican nationhood. In both the peaceful and war-dominated years of their administrations, furthermore, Jefferson and Madison struggled with problems from the same perspective and remained in close, congenial agreement on what was required of the president. That Madison was much less successful than Jefferson in guiding Congress, or even in resisting acts that undermined his performance in executive office, is to be explained not by the notion that the two men had different conceptions of leadership but by the very different circumstances surrounding their administrations and by their different personal qualities. The rise of a much more virulent factionalism among Republicans in Congress at the

very moment of Madison's inauguration, and the revival of the Federalist as opponents of resistance to Great Britain, made it impossible for Madison to steer Congress in Jefferson's manner. Despite these serious politica obstacles and his tendency to shun center stage, Madison took forthrigh and sometimes successful steps to lead the nation and guide the branche of government. When his secretary of state proved inept in writing dis patches and negotiating with foreign envoys, Madison wrote drafts him self, corrected impressions conveyed to ambassadors, and eventually fire the incompetent secretary despite the strong, some said irresistible, sup port for the secretary by a faction of the Senate. Also, in close collabora tion with Monroe, who became his closest adviser as the War of 1812 ap proached, Madison appealed to the country through "editorials" plante in a Washington newspaper, sent a stream of proposals for war prepared ness to Congress, and, at least as much as the so-called War Hawks them selves, led in carrying the nation toward the decision to declare hostilitie in June 1812.[41]

In addition to these disparate circumstances, which account for much o the very different evaluations often made of their administrations (an even much of this fades if one compares the more peaceful and less divisiv parts of their tenures, 1801–1805 and 1815–1817), two qualities c Jefferson's allowed him to have a style of leadership denied Madison. Mos important, Jefferson's great personal magnetism gave him a matchless in fluence in private conversations and in small groups that was far more im portant than any formal or "party" mechanisms. The power he wielded a president, his biographer concludes, "was to an exceptional degree per sonal and little institutionalized." Jefferson was able to guide and lead be cause others so easily and so earnestly came under the spell of his charac ter and personality, a sort of response Madison simply failed to evoke a readily or as pervasively. Furthermore, Jefferson's gift for the memorabl phrase gave his words a range and indelibleness that Madison's writing (neither man was an eloquent orator), however cogent and carefully re soned, did not attain. Thus, in gathering, retaining, and spreading the sup port vital to exceptional leadership, Jefferson had critical advantages th weigh heavily in assessing the effectiveness of his presidency, but the di ference between him and Madison is almost entirely in those person qualities rather than in their conception of the executive office. Indee when five months before he died Jefferson wrote Madison of "the ha mony of our political principles and pursuits . . . [for] now half a century and Madison replied extolling the "private friendship and political ha mony" that had suffered not a single "interruption or diminution" ov that period,[42] neither man would have had any thought of excepting the ideas of proper presidential leadership.

7

The Ebb of the Republican Presidency

James Monroe

The harmonious circumstances of James Monroe's election to the presidency and his unique public career conspired to make him, excepting only George Washington, the most nonpartisan chief executive in American history. Winning the office with 183 of 217 electoral votes in 1816 and losing only one electoral vote four years later, Monroe held the presidency without a significant opposition party and with the nominal support, at least, of the various segments of what came to be called the National Republican party. In his first inaugural address he declared that "the American people . . . constitute one great family with a common interest." "Discord does not belong to our system," he affirmed, and he was pleased "to witness the increased harmony of opinion which pervades our Union." In his second inaugural address Monroe repeated his condemnation of party spirit, spoke again of the unique circumstances in the United States that made party struggles unnecessary, praised the workings of the "republican system," and went on to hope that with the demise of party it might "soon attain the highest degree of perfection of which human institutions are capable, and that the movement in all its branches will exhibit such a degree of order and harmony as to command the admiration and respect of the civilized world." Convinced therefore that the "existence of parties is not necessary to free government" and that "the Chief Magistrate of the Country ought not to be the head of a party, but of the nation itself," Monroe seemed, providentially, to have a chance to *achieve* the oft-espoused ideal of a party-free government resting on devotion to the general good.[1] This aspiration by Monroe was the high-water mark of the republican intention shared by the first six presidents to blend the public-spirited, harmony-loving Augustan world view with the self-governing ideals of the New World.

Monroe's fifty-year-long public career began in 1776 when his Virginia regiment reached New York in time to wage a tough delaying action against the British conquest of that city. In the rest of a distinguished military career Monroe played a key role in the Battle of Princeton (receiving a severe wound in the process), fought at Brandywine and Germantown, took part in thwarting the so-called Conway Cabal against Washington, endured the encampment at Valley Forge, and led a scouting party that helped Washington rally his army at the Battle of Monmouth.[2] After studying law with Thomas Jefferson, Monroe served in the Virginia legislature, the Continental Congress, and the Virginia Ratifying Convention before becoming a United States senator in 1790. During the next twenty-five years, he undertook diplomatic missions in France, Spain, and England, served twice as governor of Virginia, and acted as secretary of war and secretary of state under James Madison. In 1817 he was both the most widely experienced public servant ever to be inaugurated president and "the last of the cocked hats," that is, the last major political leader of the new nation to have been a hero of the Revolution.

Embodying the patriot leader in his career, Monroe was also ideally suited to republicanize the chief magistracy. He had been virtually reared by the leading republican theorists in Virginia, especially George Wythe and Jefferson. About 1780 he seems to have read at Jefferson's direction much of the same list of "a few only of the best books" on politics Jefferson had recommended to Robert Skipwith a few years earlier: especially Locke, Montesquieu, Algernon Sidney, and Bolingbroke, of the more modern writers. Monroe surely had a good grasp of the conventional, antiparty ideology, even if he did not have the intellectual power of his two predecessors as president.

During the 1790s, on the other hand, Monroe was a determined Jeffersonian partisan in opposing Alexander Hamilton's increasing domination of the federal government, and his experience as governor of Virginia, as a diplomat, and as a cabinet officer were often partisan in effect. He even took part in a major intraparty dispute that found him willing to oppose Madison for the "party presidential nomination" in 1808. Like Madison and Jefferson, however, he hoped the need for such a stance would pass away, and when he was inaugurated president in 1817, Monroe sensed deeply that he had to be both a faithful republican *and* a national leader.

As Washington had done nearly thirty years before and as patriot kings had done for centuries, Monroe determined to quicken and symbolize national identity by elaborate tours throughout the country. He began in the region of recent disaffection, New England, in the summer of 1817, planning to be in Boston on the Fourth of July. Monroe cherished the scene of thousands cheering as the Federalist and Republican leaders there joined in welcoming the old patriot–newly elected president on the national birthday. After a triumphal procession through Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, Monroe arrived in Boston, where 40,000 people lined his route. Both ex-President John Adams and old arch-Federalist Timothy

Pickering were among the welcoming dignitaries. In a week of celebrations Monroe visited Faneuil Hall and "Old Ironsides," Bunker Hill and the Boston Athenaeum, Harvard College and the Adams home in Quincy—all symbols of New England's devotion to Revolutionary ideals and to republican government. Although pomp, ceremony, and adulation were everywhere, Monroe sought as well to minimize the courtly aura that had surrounded Washington on his tours. In theory at least, Monroe traveled as a private citizen, paying his own expenses and doing without an official escort. He did not insist on formalities, as Washington had done, but mingled easily with everyone and made himself accessible to all parties. Even Abigail Adams, who during the 1790s had heaped scorn on Monroe and other Jeffersonians, was now pleased with Monroe's "agreeable affability . . . unassuming manners . . . [and] his polite attentions to all orders and ranks." A Boston newspaper reported gratefully that Monroe's visit made us "*one people*: for we have the sweet consolation . . . to rest assured that the president will be president, not of a party, but of a great and powerful nation." Monroe noted some years later that "both parties met me, embodied together," and that his purpose in making the tour was "to draw the people more closely together, and to leave the [still-factional] Federal leaders without support." Monroe, in sum, forty years after the Declaration of Independence, continued and in a way brought to a culmination the long, persistent effort to find a republican model for the patriot leader who would be above party and a symbol of national unity, yet unregal, unimperious, and unseparated from the people at large.[3]

Monroe knew, of course, as historians since have displayed in detail, that what a Boston newspaper during his visit had proclaimed as the "Era of Good Feelings" was in fact a time of bitter personal and factional dispute perhaps better characterized as an era of bad feelings. It is also true that Monroe, the assiduous party-builder of the 1790s, had in 1816 refused to welcome all Federalists into the Republican fold. He wrote Andrew Jackson that some Federalist leaders (happily a small minority, Monroe thought) still "entertained principles unfriendly to our system," so it was necessary in appointing officers for his administration to exclude such anti-republicans and instead rely on the "decided friends" of "free government." To do otherwise would by "too hasty an act of liberality to the [Federalist Party]" break "the generous spirit of the republican party" while keeping alive the factious minority of Federalists.[4] Beyond this initial need to protect the government from partisan excesses, however, Monroe generally followed the principle (as Jefferson had done in 1801) of rewarding merit and fidelity to public trust in federal officeholders. He opposed the 1820 Tenure of Office Act that limited federal appointments to four-year terms (thus potentially enlarging patronage opportunities), and after its passage he routinely reappointed officials not palpably corrupt or incompetent. He and John Quincy Adams both correctly saw the Tenure c Office Act as a device to reward party loyalty and increase congressiona political power. In response, Monroe declared that "no person at the hea of government has . . . any claim to the active, partisan exertions of thos in office under him."[5]

Letters written by the three Virginia presidents in 1822, when personal partisanship reached new heights as the election of 1824 approached, re veal both rationalizations for their own party activity and their continuin rejection of a constructive, permanent party ideology. Jefferson bemoane to Albert Gallatin that "the persons most looked to as successors [t Monroe] are of the President's Cabinet; and their partisans in Congres are making a handle of [public policy] to help or hurt those whom they ar for or against." "Do not believe a word," Jefferson added, "that there ar no longer parties among us; that they are all now amalgamated." Despit this furious politicking of which he was well aware, Monroe himself con tinued to consider "the existence [of parties] as the curse of the country and to hope "the restless and disturbed state of the Commonwealth, lik the rolling of the waves after a storm . . . will subside, and leave the ship i perfect security." The causes of party in other countries, and which perhap even made parties beneficial to their public life (Monroe had Great Britai in mind), did not exist in the United States: "We have no distinct orders "We are about to make the experiment," Monroe wrote his predecesso "whether there is sufficient virtue in the people to support our free republ can system of government"; that is, to see whether government witho the corruption of party could work in the new society of the New Work Madison replied that he was not so "sanguine" that forces that at oth times and places "have most engendered and embittered the spirit party" would long be absent in the United States. "The most . . . that ca be counted on," Madison thought, was "that the occasions for party con tests in such a country and government as ours will be either so slight or s transient as not to threaten any permanent or dangerous consequences t the character and prosperity of the Republic."[6]

There were thus, by the end of Monroe's administrations, detectable, a though not necessarily significant differences among the Virginia pres dents on the place of political parties in American government. Jefferso thought, placing characteristic emphasis on ideology, that great divisio over principle, especially over the question of whether mankind was cap ble of self-government, would always exist, although he also, perhaps in consistently, never ceased to hope for the suppression of party, "harm nized intercourse," and "sweetened society" he had rhapsodized about t Lafayette in 1817. Madison accepted much of this belief that enduring di ferences over principle were inescapable and was sure as well that America pluralism would result always in the existence of factions and parties in th

nation. He even thought some good came from "making one party a check on the other," as he had put it as early as 1792, but he quickly added, again perhaps inconsistently, that this was valuable only "so far as the existence of parties cannot be prevented, nor their views accommodated."[7] Monroe's comments as president, on the other hand (thought not his vigorous partisanship of the preceding twenty-five years), seem to overlook more determinedly both the ideological and sociological foundations of party.[8] Despite these qualifications and variations, however, each of the three men continued to believe parties were unwelcome and dangerous, and each conducted his presidency, as far as possible, according to that conviction.

Fundamentally, each remained convinced that *republicanism*, to achieve its full, moral meaning, had to triumph over and exclude the spirit of faction and party. Indeed, some of the paradox of the Era of Good Feelings can be explained if we set aside modern connotations and instead recall Monroe's understanding of party. He had believed in the 1790s that he was forced into party activity by Federalist partisanship—and the Federalists had a parallel conception. Neither "party" supposed that the other was what British politics would later term (beginning, significantly, in the 1820s) "His Majesty's Loyal Opposition," a legitimate, permanently organized group, patriotic and honorable, expressing an honest difference of opinion and prepared to accept the responsibility of forming an alternative government. Although some politicians in the 1790s had begun to act in ways appropriate to a later era, and a few had even begun openly to accept the legitimacy of parties,[9] such was by no means the common view. Generally, each party still supposed the other to be a *faction* (whether a minority or a majority made no difference) and itself to be working for the public good. Hence the Federalists could pass the Alien and Sedition Acts as lawful means to prevent the spread of faction, Jefferson could after 1801 continue to proscribe unregenerate Federalists (monarchists), and Monroe in 1816 could still suppose himself to be acting above parties, to be working for their extinction, in refusing to bless those individuals he saw filled with "the spirit of party and faction." In each case the evil to be exorcised was a selfishness, a partialness, in a word, corruption—as Cicero and Alexander Pope had taught.

Yet, Monroe's presidency, like Madison's, differed sharply from Jefferson's both in its lack of general effectiveness and, more subtly, in its failure to attain a level of authority and power considered essential to positive, above-party leadership. Furthermore, there is some justice in the charge that the demise of the active republican "party" of Jefferson's presidency left the nation with a government "lacking the means either to check burgeoning forces of disintegration within itself or to resolve those conflicts which were bound, sooner or later, to irrupt into . . . Washington . . . from the outside." This decline, in Monroe's case as in Madison's, was due

in part to differences in the personalities of each of these leaders and to special circumstances, but the sixteen years between 1809 and 1825 also revealed further the tensions between the Classical conceptions of party and leadership, clung to by Madison and Monroe, and the dynamics of a society where, as Jefferson put it in 1811, "men are at liberty to think, speak, and act freely, according to the diversities of their individual conformations."[10] The contrast between the rhetoric of the letters exchanged by the "Virginia dynasty" presidents in 1822 and the swirling, partisan disarray all too evident at the time in Washington can be described only as stark. One is forced to ask how Monroe could possibly have supposed that the president would be able to lead a "free republican system of government" without parties toward a condition where restlessness and disturbance would subside as the nation basked in "perfect security." The negative effects of this disjuncture have been brought out by critics of Monroe's presidency: first, that it caused Monroe not to "taste, through the use or misuse of patronage, the delicious fruits of power, [or to] create a machine or consolidate a party," and second, that it led to a "course of action [that] was perhaps politically wise, perhaps politically inevitable, but it abdicated leadership."[11]

Although these assessments do not share the Jeffersonian Republican assumptions about the essential qualities of presidential leadership that we have delineated here, it is nonetheless undeniable that by 1825 the tendency of Madison and Monroe to defer to Congress on legislative matters, to shun the use of patronage to gain political power, and to shrink from direct or even indirect appeals to the public had simply deprived the chief executive of the capacity to lead. Perhaps most important, these presidents' failure to control their cabinets and through their cabinets to influence Congress severely handicapped their exercise of power. In an irony as bitter to Monroe as it would have been to his predecessors, the very demise of open party opposition had surrounded him with a factionalism within his "amalgamated" party perhaps more intense and pathological than Jefferson or Madison ever faced from openly hostile Federalists. Most divisive of all was the contest for succession that found three cabinet officers and two members of Congress mustering supporters and subordinating all measures to that contest in ways reminiscent of the worst party strife ever seen in Rome, or London, or Philadelphia, or wherever free politics had given scope to human greed, chicanery, and ambition. Equally stark was the contrast between, on the one hand, Jefferson's cabinet meetings, where "there never arose . . . an unpleasant thought or word between the members," and "conversing and reasoning . . . scarcely ever failed . . . to produce an unanimous result," and, on the other hand, the grim, acrimonious confrontations in Monroe's cabinet described by John Quincy Adams. Animosity and obstruction became so severe that Monroe once drove his sec-

retary of the Treasury from the White House with fire tongs and thereafter ceased to speak to the offending officer.[12]

What had happened, then, between the effective, almost idyllic leadership of Jefferson's first term and the factious disarray of Monroe's last term? Monroe's continued, earnest insistence on both the ancient antiparty ideology and the model of the patriot leader leave little doubt that his aspiration remained the same as Jefferson's—and, quite self-consciously for Monroe, the same as Washington's. Indeed, the factional warfare, so distasteful to Monroe, served only to heighten his sense of the harm it did to the nation and to reinforce his determination to refuse to indulge or validate it. Yet the disparity between political realities in the country and the president's ideal, and perhaps even the incompatibility between that ideal and the inevitable dynamics of public life in a free and open society, also contributed to the decline in the authority and power of the White House. Far from exalting the potential for leadership in a republic and supplying a needed source of national unity, the traditional model of the patriot king by the 1820s threatened to deny the country any means of leadership at all except that furnished by heads of factions and managers of coalitions inside and outside of the administration. The circumstances were not propitious for any antiparty chief executive who might emerge from the unprecedented campaign of 1824–1825—perhaps especially not for the son of John Adams.

John Quincy Adams: Public Servant

John Quincy Adams was the last president, before the triumph under Jackson of a conception of leadership tied to a positive idea of party, who aspired to embody all the dimensions of the patriot leader. In his boyhood he read, under the guidance of his parents, the ancient authors and the English Augustans. He inherited from his father an early edition of Bolingbroke's works, which still carries the marginal notations of both of them, as well, probably, as those of Charles Francis Adams, who as a nineteen-year-old in the White House in 1826 read *Idea of a Patriot King* under his father's guidance. John Quincy Adams's favorite author and guide, in rhetoric as well as in moral and public philosophy, was Cicero, whose complete works, in Latin, Adams read many times.[13] All his life he was devoted to these books and words—from Aristotle, Virgil, Plutarch, and Cicero to Erasmus, Locke, Pope, Bolingbroke, Lord Kames, and Jefferson—that upheld the belief that there is a moral order in the universe, that the community of man should live within that order, that government was instituted to that end, and that an "aristocracy of talent and virtue"—whether a patriot king, a senate, or an assembly of enlightened citizens—should rule.

In ways that both he and his parents at times regarded as providential, it seemed to John Quincy Adams that in his own life and career he might symbolize and sustain this world view in the public life of the new United States. As he often recalled with a poignant sense of destiny, he had, as a boy of eight holding tightly to his mother's hand, from a hill in Braintree watched the smoke and heard the cannon of the Battle of Bunker Hill. Three years later he accompanied his father to Europe, sharing further the danger of war, and, as an informal clerk and copyist, began his career as a public servant. He learned French so well that, returning home a year later, he taught English to the second French minister to the new nation and to his aide, who twenty-five years later would negotiate for France the sale of Louisiana to the United States. Again in Europe with his father, at age fourteen John Quincy undertook his first formal public employment: he went to St. Petersburg as secretary and French interpreter for Francis Dana to seek Russian support for the American Revolution. He returned to America in 1785 to enter Harvard (his mother and father did not want him exposed to the dissipations of European "higher" education). By then, at age eighteen, he knew three or four modern languages (plus Greek and Latin, of course), had lived in Paris, London, St. Petersburg, and The Hague, had traveled through all the great nations of northern and western Europe, and in the company of Benjamin Franklin, Jefferson, and his father had experienced the diplomacy of the American Revolution. Thus began a public career that ended in the House of Representatives after the Mexican War. In the intervening years John Quincy Adams served as American minister to the Netherlands and to Prussia (1794–1801), Massachusetts senator (1802), United States senator (1803–1808), American minister to Russia (1809–1813), negotiator of the Treaty of Ghent (1814), American minister to Great Britain (1815–1817), secretary of state (1817–1825), president (1825–1829), and member of Congress (1831–1848).

In each of these posts (save the presidency) he was praised exceedingly for his brilliance, independence, and patriotism. President Washington termed him, as a thirty-year-old diplomat, "the most valuable character we have abroad"; his service in the United States Senate earned him a place in John F. Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage*; historians generally regard him as the best secretary of state in American history; and there is not even a faint parallel to his postpresidential career as Old Man Eloquent, the intellectual and moral leader of the House of Representatives. He suffered a fatal stroke at his desk in the House chamber almost seventy years to the day after he had left Boston on his first diplomatic mission with his father. In the House on the day of Adams's stroke sat a new member from Illinois.

Abraham Lincoln, who called out "nay," as Adams had just done in his last vote, to repudiate the militarism and slavery expansion of the Mexican War.[14] No other public career in American history matches that of John Quincy Adams in either length or patriotic devotion, and no other mind felt more excruciatingly the dilemmas of republican leadership.

John Quincy Adams's long experience abroad, his eclectic education, and his attachment almost literally from birth to the *American* Revolution all served to make him one of the least sectional and least party-oriented politicians of his day. As the star-destined heir of the Colossus of Independence and the son of the fervently patriotic Abigail Adams, he wanted, as he later expressed in his diary, to "be the man of my whole country."[15] In his 1787 Harvard baccalaureate oration, "Upon the importance and necessity of public faith to the well being of the community," soon printed in Philadelphia, Boston, and elsewhere, he noted the tendency in Massachusetts and the other states to "an indolent carelessness, a supine inattention to the solemn engagements of the public." He called instead for an end to debt repudiation and paper currency and for the sound establishment of the public credit on principles of national honor. Although in the year after Shays's Rebellion, and during the summer of the Federal Convention of 1787, this call was in some respects politically divisive, Adams himself linked sound public credit to public virtue and believed that fidelity to financial obligations was the only honorable path to national greatness. Under such a policy the new nation would "soon rise superior to every temporary evil; gentle peace and smiling plenty would again appear, and scatter their invaluable blessings round the happy land: the hands of commerce would recover strength and spread the swelling sail: arts and manufacture will flourish, and soon vie with those of Europe, and science here would enrich the world with noble and useful discoveries." A Philadelphia magazine containing Adams's oration also offered a first printing of the new Constitution and a short extract from "Lord Bolingbroke's Idea of Eloquence" calling not only for skill in the techniques of oratory but also for more attention to "enlarging the stream from which it flowed," a view long encouraged in the substantial education of the young graduate.[16]

Four years later, entering the debate between Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine over the French Revolution, John Quincy Adams made explicit his approval of vigorous lawmaking in the public interest. Paine had endorsed the decree of the French National Assembly prohibiting monopolies or game laws in France, obviously responding to the abuse of such laws under the Old Regime and in England. Paine praised this restriction on the lawmaking power of the assembly as a bulwark for the liberty of the people. Adams argued in opposition that the solution to the passage

of bad laws by a government ought not to be the removal of power to pass any laws at all. Rather, as "the preservation of game is an object of public concern, . . . the Legislature of every country ought to have the power of making game laws for the benefit of the public." At another time Adams noted that "where there are [no game laws,] there never is any game"—is the hunter more free in the absence of protective law as he searches in vain for his prey, or in the presence of a law that imposes some restraint but also prevents extinction? Two years later, in 1793 defending President Washington's right to dismiss French Minister Edmond Genet, Adams admitted that "the animated and vivifying spirit of party seems to be essential to the existence of genuine freedom" and even that "the general welfare is perhaps promoted, by placing the jealousy of one patriot as a guard over the ambition of another," but he also asserted that party spirit was "a prolifick source of misery" unless under "severe and continual . . . restraint and regulation." He further made clear his conviction that the paramount need was for the executive to transcend party spirit and to have wide powers to act in the interest of all the people.[17]

This conception of government as an agency for useful action stayed with Adams throughout his life. He frequently lamented the waste and abuse that masqueraded under the banners of individual freedom and commercial competition. In 1828, for example, he sponsored, in the interest of science and conservation, a United States law to protect a superb live-oak forest near Pensacola, Florida. The plan was aborted, he remembered scornfully, by "the stolid ignorance and stupid malignity" of Jackson's colleagues, who defended their action in the name of liberty, enterprise, and expanding settlement.[18] This enlarged and edifying view of the nation's affairs characterized all the landmarks of his prepresidential career: his support of Washington and his father during the 1790s, his votes for the Louisiana Purchase and the Embargo during Jefferson's presidency, his negotiations of the Treaty of Ghent and the transcontinental treaty with Spain of 1819, and his role in promulgating the Monroe Doctrine. In these actions Adams saw himself as living up to deeds of heroes and models he had read about in Plutarch, Joseph Addison, and Bolingbroke.

Yet, it seems paradoxical if not hypocritical that although Adams thus posed as the disinterested secretary of state, he was a participant in bitter political strife and as assiduously as the other leading aspirants gathered support for his own election to the presidency. His diary is, in fact, a remarkable record of the partisan battles of Monroe's presidency, full of sharp, often hostile, remarks about the character and intrigues of his principal opponents. In November 1819, for example, as Adams and Monroe discussed delicate relations with Spain over the impending American occupation of Florida, both men observed "with pain," as Adams put it,

"that upon all subjects of eminent importance, [Secretary of the Treasury William H.] Crawford's opinion is becoming whatever is not mine." This tended "to weaken and distract the public councils," Adams thought, undermining "the happiest effects" produced by the "unanimity . . . throughout the country" that had previously surrounded the potentially explosive Florida situation.[19] The cause of this unwelcome divisiveness was Adams's rising fame, which made him a dangerous rival to Crawford for accession to the presidency on Monroe's retirement in 1825.

A further effect of this "continual and furious electioneering for the succession," Adams noticed, was that "in all important questions of public policy [where] it is difficult to choose the best and safest part, and where two [courses of action] present themselves with nearly an equal advantage, and nearly equal objectionable points, the mind in suspense upon their respective merits is easily determined by extraneous circumstances." Instead of careful, statesmanlike reflection deciding public policy, the quest for partisan political advantage infested the councils of government. Pondering the question further, Adams found that "the seeds of this discord are sown in the practice [of] the Virginia Presidents, . . . making it a principle that no President can be more than twice elected."[20] He probably remembered his own conclusion and that of his father in 1790–1791 that limited terms and regular turnovers in office vitiated executive power to act above party and that the Constitution ought to encourage long, perhaps even indefinite presidential tenure. Adams was willing to do almost anything to protect the presidency from partisanship—except let it go by his own inaction to its most zealously partisan aspirant.

In 1822 he wrote of the incessant exertions of congressmen and cabinet colleagues to "exclude me from the field of competition" in the 1824 presidential election. This intense partisan opposition, based, in Adams's opinion, on all the worst factional and selfish motives, served to rationalize his own "partisanship" in response, as had happened with Jefferson and Madison in the 1790s. Also, in acting to further his own candidacy (although never openly or publicly), Adams felt, as his father had, that the presidency was his due, considering the length and earnestness of his service to the public. Adams supposed that should he "perform to the satisfaction of the country" his duties as secretary of state, he would then, like his predecessors, be thought "a suitable candidate to succeed the President upon his retirement from office." As for personal motives, Adams pronounced it his duty "to serve the public to the best of my abilities . . . and not to intrigue for further advancement," although he knew as well that "the selfish and the social passions are intermingled in the conduct of every man acting in a public capacity. . . . It is no just cause of reproach to any man that in promoting to the utmost of his power the public good, he is desirous at the same time of promoting his own."[21] Thus, there can be no doubt that John Quincy Adams was aware of the mingling of personal ambition and public-spiritedness in his own breast and in the politics of the new nation. But he also believed that recognition of such mixed motives would help him maintain the dominance of the more honorable one and that recognition of the political realities in the nation at large would enable him also to resist the pathological aspects of public life. He never supposed, conversely, that because selfish ambitions existed, public officials had no choice but to ground their actions on self-interest, or that because parties and factions existed, the political arena had to be wholly at their mercy.

Although Adams acknowledged in his inaugural address (1825) that he was "less possessed of [public] confidence in advance than any of my predecessors," he nonetheless proclaimed triumphantly that since 1815 the "baneful weed of party strife" had been uprooted in the United States and that "ten years of peace, at home and abroad, have assuaged the animosities of political contention and blended into harmony the most discordant elements of public opinion."[22] Thus, he viewed the feuds of the Monroe presidency as merely personal or at most sectional and as evidencing none of the profound disagreements in political theory or foreign policy that from 1790 to 1815 had divided the Federalists and the Republicans. Adams, indeed, sensed no deep difference in principle from any of his rivals. All the leading politicians of the "Era of Good Feelings," whatever their personal rivalries, were, on the whole, "national republicans," that is, Jeffersonians who were willing to make wide use of the powers of the general government. Adams, for example, as secretary of state had been a defender of Jackson's conduct in Florida and hoped the general would be vice-president or secretary of war in his administration. He also refused to remove federal officials against whom no complaint of malfeasance could be made and declined in any way to use executive power to build a party. He intended, if he could, to banish partisanship—just as Washington had intended.

The new president expressed his broad, positive conception of national leadership in perhaps the most remarkable State of the Union Message ever made by an American chief executive, delivered to Congress in December 1825. Ignoring the objections of cabinet members that he was proposing much more than Congress would be willing to do, Adams went ahead, self-consciously blending the most far-reaching proposals of each of his predecessors. Liberty had been won and the Union assured, Adams thought, so now it was time to use them in the public interest. He proposed a series of activist measures: recognition of the South American republics, participation in an inter-American congress, a uniform bankruptcy law, the building and support of canals and other internal improve-

ments, surveys of natural resources, improvements in military preparedness (especially the navy), scientific explorations of the West, a better system of weights and measures, and establishment of a national university and a national observatory.

Adams forthrightly justified this bold program. "The great object of the institution of civil government," he asserted, "is the improvement of the condition of those who are parties to the social compact." "Moral, political, [and] intellectual improvement" are as legitimately an object of government support as are better communications and transportation. "In assuming her station among the civilized nations of the earth," the president observed, "it would seem that our country had contracted the engagement to contribute her share of mind, of labor, and of expense to the improvement of those parts of knowledge which lie beyond the reach of individual acquisition." Adams hoped the United States would join Britain, France, and other nations in "the common improvement of the species" by outfitting voyages of discovery, by supporting scientific research, and by building a great national observatory—"a lighthouse of the skies." The powers given to Congress by the Constitution, Adams insisted, were sufficient to authorize laws to promote "the improvement of agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, the cultivation and encouragement of the mechanic and of the elegant arts, the advancement of literature, and the progress of the sciences, ornamental and profound." Possessing these powers, "to refrain from exercising them for the benefit of the people themselves would be to hide in the earth the talent committed to our charge."

The president proclaimed that "liberty is power" and that "the tenure of power by man is, in the moral purposes of his Creator, upon condition that it shall be exercised to ends of beneficence, to improve the condition of himself and his fellow-men." "While foreign nations less blessed with that freedom which is power than ourselves are advancing with gigantic strides in the career of public improvement," could the United States, Adams asked, "fold up our arms and proclaim to the world that we are palsied by the will of our constituents?" Americans must ask themselves, Adams was saying in effect, What is liberty for? Noting that the state of Virginia had just founded a new university and the state of New York had just built a canal where "the waters of our Western lakes mingle with those of the ocean," the president asked further whether "the whole Union [could] fall behind our fellow-servants" and fail to accomplish the "works important to the whole and to which neither the authority nor the resources of any one State can be adequate?" It "would be treachery to the most sacred of trusts," Adams concluded, echoing John Winthrop, if the representatives of the people failed "to give efficacy to the means committed to you for the common good."[23]

The Paradoxical President

It is one of the great ironies of American history that even before Adams delivered this message, in fact from before his minority election by the House of Representatives, his presidency was embroiled in partisan strife of unparalleled bitterness. Jackson and his friends charged after the election that there had been a "corrupt bargain" wherein Henry Clay threw his electoral influence to Adams in exchange for being appointed secretary of state in the new administration. Jackson wrote a friend that "the *Judas* of the West [i.e., Clay] has closed the contract and will receive the thirty pieces of silver. His end will be the same." Although Jackson had always considered Adams "a virtuous, able and honest man" and had thought him much less partisan than other leaders during Monroe's administration, when "the redemption of the pledge" occurred (Adams's appointment of Clay), Jackson "withdrew all intercourse with [Adams]." Furthermore, two days after the election a John C. Calhoun supporter (still protesting friendship for the president) informed Adams that Calhoun, the new vice-president, was determined to go into opposition unless his friends were given major cabinet posts.[24]

Even before Adams's inauguration, the supporters of three of his defeated opponents, Calhoun, W. H. Crawford, and Jackson, guided by Martin Van Buren and other regionally powerful politicians, were already forming a party, under Jackson's banner, to wreak vengeance on Adams and Clay. John Randolph of Roanoke charged venomously in the Senate that Adams and Clay were a "coalition of Blifil and Black George, . . . the combination . . . of the puritan with the black-leg" as infamous as the union between the "sanctimonious, puritanical Lord Mansfield . . . [and the] corrupt and profligate Lord Sandwich" that had disgraced British politics in the previous century. The images of Henry Fielding's Blifill, the pious, hypocritical parson, and Black George, the treacherous gamekeeper, were too much for Clay, who at once challenged Randolph to a duel, fought nine days after the offending speech. "There has never been a time," wrote Theodore Roosevelt in 1886, "when there was more rabid, objectless, and unscrupulous display of partisanship."[25]

Inescapably, the president himself was made to carry the onus of being the corrupt instrument of party. He probably did have an understanding with Clay before the election in the House of Representatives, although in Adams's mind the understanding was not corrupt, for he conceived of himself as the most able of the contenders for the presidency and believed that Clay was exceptionally well qualified to be secretary of state, as indeed

he was. Yet, the circumstances made Randolph's allusions all too catching in the public mind and tarnished Adams's every word and deed as chief executive. Furthermore, Adams's political base was narrow, confined to New England and the seaboard Middle Atlantic states; he retained officeholders who in some cases were remnants from Washington's administration; he had close associations with unpopular commercial and financial interests; and rising industrialists eagerly supported his generally protectionist views. Altogether, these facts conspired to mark him as the leader of an aristocratic status quo, fighting off the democratic spirit of the burgeoning West, the prospering South, and the new politics of New York and Pennsylvania. When Clay and others organized meetings aimed at building support for the president's program and party, styled the "American Party," most people looked on the coalition as a revival of Federalism.[26] Despite the public-spiritedness of his own intentions, in short, the public perceived Adams as a minority president who led a sectional faction and was elected by means of a political bargain. Burdened with the ignominy of corruption and partisanship, his grand-sounding messages were dismissed as hypocrisy.

Furthermore, even though ex-Presidents Monroe and Madison sympathized with Adams and supported most of his program, the ailing Jefferson at Monticello resisted in principle the public philosophy of Adams's message of December 1825. Together with John Marshall's recent Supreme Court decisions and even some acts of Congress, Adams's address revealed, Jefferson charged, that the federal government intended "the consolidation in itself of all powers, foreign and domestic; . . . by constructions which, if legitimate, leave no limits to their power." If, under the interstate commerce clause, agriculture and manufactures could be regulated, and if "under the authority to establish post roads, they claim that of cutting down mountains, [and] of digging canals," Jefferson asked, "what is our resource for the preservation of the Constitution?" To him, such doctrine and such interpretation meant unlimited government, which was tyranny. There was, he felt, "a tendency to degeneracy," and among the self-styled nationalists who had "nothing in them of the feelings or principles of '76," a movement toward "a single and splendid government of an aristocracy, founded on banking institutions, and moneyed incorporations under the guise and cloak of their favored branches of manufactures, commerce and navigation, riding and ruling over the plundered ploughman and beggared yeomanry."[27] Jefferson regretfully heard in John Quincy Adams's proposals not the beneficent voice of the general welfare but the biased (and therefore corrupt) urging of special interests. Yet, Jefferson was opposing not the *intent* of Adams's view, the search for a national program above partisanship, but rather what the third president supposed was a flawed understanding of the specific role of the federal government. He

as much regarded Jackson as unfit to be president and as much resisted the new partisan politics as did Adams, who in 1808 had resigned as senator from Massachusetts rather than obey instructions that he oppose the grand, national idealism of Jefferson's Embargo.

Indeed, Adams's ties both to the four ex-presidents who lived to see his inauguration as chief executive and to the rising politicians of the new Whig party of which he became a part reveal again the profound cultural changes surrounding his parodoxical effort at national leadership. Like his predecessors, his own values and public philosophy remained deeply Ciceronian (or what was to them much the same thing, Addisonian), but, as an active politician in the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s, he lived in a world of political parties. Like the Whig party, he "took part" in order to win. Even that party itself, however, was rooted in the "Anglo-American 'country-party' tradition" of the preceding century. The Whigs sensed a widespread, enduring affinity to the precepts of that tradition and found also that the oppositionist part of the old radical rhetoric was peculiarly useful in resisting what it saw as corruption, demagoguery, and executive tyranny under Jackson—much as the Jeffersonians had done against their "Walpolean" foes in the 1790s.

Yet Adams, like his Whig allies, "had bade farewell to the distrust of wealth and commerce that had so long characterized the 'country party.'"[28] Although he never had anything like Daniel Webster's unalloyed enthusiasm for Massachusetts industrialists and financiers, Adams at least made his peace with them and amalgamated their economic interests with his conception of the public good. Furthermore, it was in part the intentions of his presidency, supported by Clay, Webster, and others who became Whig stalwarts, that attached the party to an active, positive idea of the purpose of government. Yet, the expansion and diversification of the economy and the spread of settlement across the Mississippi River (both of which Adams celebrated and had helped make possible as a congressman and diplomat) released energies and nourished political attitudes that moved the nation away from Adams's world view and led within a generation to the demise of the Whig party.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of John Quincy Adams's presidency, then, is its subsequent perception as "unreal," or "lurid," or "futile," or "archaic." To students aware of the later history of American politics, the Adams presidency has seemed perverse at best: the president proclaiming the most high-minded ideas of public service amid the most outraged cries against his own corruption; the president repudiating party as an intensified party system took shape before his eyes; the president urging a strongly nationalistic program as sectional feelings burgeoned, and so on. If one believed the new directions were the irresistible wave of the future, the conscience-bound chief executive could seem only blind or antiquated.

He offered grand plans that bore no relationship to either the mood of the nation or the possibility of support in Congress. He kept ardently Jacksonian partisans in office, even at the cabinet level. He acted as though party organization did not exist, and he refused to use his high office to aid in his reelection. Meanwhile, Adams's opponents articulated programs attuned to popular sentiment, built party organization, electioneered assiduously, fused coalitions, and made clear their intent to use patronage to punish foes and reward friends, with the expected result: the Jacksonian movement acquired a force that swept the self-righteous president from office in 1829. Beginning in that year, "the rising spirit of democracy . . . simply took possession of the system through the instrumentality of the political party,"[29] thus virtually requiring a president to be a leader of party in order to be effective.

8

The Jacksonians and Leadership through Party

Martin Van Buren and the New Political Party

More than anything else, a revised attitude toward party changed the nature and style of leadership when J. Q. Adams yielded the chief magistracy to Andrew Jackson. The man who most clearly perceived the significance of this difference and who most eagerly desired, cultivated, and used it was Martin Van Buren of New York.[1] He had begun his political career before the War of 1812 as a Jeffersonian, but opposed to the power of De Witt Clinton and the incongruous personal factions allied with him. New York politics at this time was akin to the eighteenth-century British model of rival politicians trading support and patronage in order to govern and remain in power. For a century "shifting alliances" within "a dense tangle of Livingstonians and DeLanceyites, of Lewisites, Burrites, and Clintonians" had shaped political groupings.[2] In confronting Clinton, Van Buren made good use of the centuries-old rhetoric of antipartyism that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson had accepted, directing it effectively at a political style so Machiavellian that Henry Adams would call Clinton's 1812 campaign for the presidency "the least creditable" in American history.[3]

But Van Buren and his cohorts also began to formulate a new, positive definition of party and of proper party behavior resting on one simple proposition: "Parties should be democratic associations, run by the majority of the membership."[4] Responding to the actual and impending enlargements of the franchise and the increasing spread of political information, Van Buren saw that a revised idea of party, based on *internal* majority rule, could be built into an attractive and doctrinally pure model of democratic government. As early as 1817, one of Van Buren's associates, William L. Marcy, declared himself proud to be regarded as one who had "more devotion to the cause [of his party] than to an Individual." Three years later Van Buren's party newspaper, the *Albany Argus*, scorned Clintonian politics as "characterized by personal attachments, . . . highly prejudicial to the interests of the people, and . . . [tending] to subvert our re-

publican form of government."[5] Needed instead was acceptance of the new ideal of a literally democratic party and of a mode of leadership that embraced the new ideal.

In the course of the next ten years, as New York adopted a new constitution and played an increasingly pivotal role in national politics, Van Buren and his friends, known as the "Albany Regency," took infinite pains to organize, to propagandize, and to electioneer on behalf of their party. In so doing they laid aside the ancient distaste for competitiveness in politics (they intended to compete successfully) but at the same time took over for themselves the hallowed idea of "selfless" behavior in public life. To the Regency, the noble and disinterested citizen (qualities they extolled as much as did John Winthrop and Bolingbroke) was one who could sacrifice his own personal ambitions and advancement not to something as vague as "the public interest" but to the strength and well-being of a principled party. "Differences merely personal," said the *Argus*, "may be entertained to a reasonable extent . . . yet [must] by no means interrupt the harmony which ought always to prevail among those who feel and act from higher than personal considerations and attachments, for the common cause of the republican party." By putting the party itself, an organization inherently democratic and worthy of principled cultivation, at the center of the public life of the nation, Van Buren had both adjusted to what he viewed as the legitimate pressures of the people and transformed the connotations of the word *party*. Albany Republicans, having in mind Van Buren's services to the party, could thus take pride in him "because without the influence of fortune, or the factitious aid of a family name, he has by his entire devotion to the republican cause, raised himself to the first grade as a statesman and patriot."[6]

Before Andrew Jackson entered the White House, then, the New York State Republican (soon-to-be Democratic) party had, under Van Buren's guidance, repudiated nonpartisanship as an ideal and in its place fashioned a positive conception of party defended on five grounds.[7] First, it held that the antiparty rhetoric of even such an august figure as President Monroe was, whatever his good intentions, a mask for the continuance in power of the same aristocratic elite that had long managed the nation's affairs. Regency publicists noticed, as have a multitude of other opposers of the status quo, that an appeal to the public to close ranks, to abjure opposition, and so on, far from being nonpartisan was often actually a device to keep power in the hands of a ruling elite. Monroe's design "to destroy the old landmarks of party," the *Argus* declared, was both impossible and devious, because men could not be drawn "into a political union who were never united before, and who, from the utter dissimilarity of their views and notions, never could act cordially together."[8] The *Argus*'s position also

scorned Monroe's style of leadership and forthrightly offered another model for politicians to emulate: the loyal pilot of the party.

Second, Van Buren and his friends came increasingly to view the political party as not only a device for achieving a principled goal but also an organization worthy in its own right and therefore to be nourished generation on generation. Party functionaries were to be valued as shepherds of the flock ensuring that parties would "TAKE DEEPER ROOT [and] outlive the causes of their commencement." "The alliance [of party] is cemented by time and strengthened by the strongest affections and antipathies," said the *Argus*, and parties should remain long unaltered as permanent parts of the body politic. Third, and following from this, the new party leaders took for themselves the mantle of principle, consistency, and morality that hitherto had been the garb of the nonpartisan. The "affected denial" of the existence of parties, the *Argus* intoned, "or an assumed independence of them springs rather from a propensity to trim, and a hankering after official rewards, than from any elevated or patriotic feeling." Furthermore, those who switched parties, or who paid little heed to party labels (like J. Q. Adams), were "inconsistent," even "apostates." "*Political consistency*," wrote one of Van Buren's close associates, meaning party loyalty, is "as indispensable as any other *moral qualification*."[9] (Van Buren's professed mentor, Jefferson, had expressed an opposite view: "I never submitted the whole system of my opinions to the creed of any party of men whatever in religion, in philosophy, in politics, or in any thing else where I was capable of thinking for myself. Such an addiction is the last degradation of a free and moral agent. If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all.")[10]

Fourth, the Regency politicians increasingly argued that the existence of parties, and of vigorous competition among them, was a vital characteristic of a free society. Parties were "necessary to the just exercise of the powers of free governments," and the absence of parties, or the lack of open competition among them, was seen as a sign of a dangerous oppressiveness in society. "When party distinctions are no longer known and recognized," a New York newspaper insisted, "our freedom will be in jeopardy, as the 'calm of despotism' will then be visible." With free government and party vigor thus linked, it was but a short step to the fifth justification for political parties: they were, in fact, the life blood of a democratic nation. In a series of articles, the Regency press asserted that "the spirit of party" was "the vigilant watchman over the conduct of those in power," "necessary to keep alive the vigilance of the people, and to compel their servants to act up to principle." "The solicitude and interest of political rivalship, will sufficiently expose the crimes, and even the failings, of competitors for the people's confidence." Van Buren himself stated that party differences

"rouse the sluggish to exertion, give increased energy to the most active intellect, excite a salutary vigilance over our public functionaries, and prevent that apathy which has proved the ruin of Republics." If parties contended with "candor, fairness, and moderation," he argued in another place, "the very discord which is thus produced, may in a government like ours, be conducive to the public good."[11] In sum, apathy rather than self-interest became the poison of self-government and competition rather than harmony the measure of the healthy state. Such inversions would "have been unacceptable to Jefferson and Madison, incomprehensible to Monroe, and little short of satanic to Washington and the two Adamses," as Richard Hofstadter rightly observed.[12]

Although the validation of the new political system arose in large part from such new circumstances in Jacksonian America as an enlarged electorate, a diversified economy, a more pluralistic society, and the spread of literacy and political information in the new nation, it is also significant that Van Buren and his cohorts unapologetically and proudly celebrated the introduction of the competitive ethic into the councils of government. Although the passing generation, including the four ex-presidents still alive in 1826, had been well aware that, in Madison's famous dictum of *The Federalist*, Number 10, "the causes of faction are sown in the nature of man" and that difference of opinion would always characterize a free politics, they never ceased to regard this fact as a problem to be overcome or controlled rather than as a dynamic essential to good government. The new party leaders like Van Buren would have denied that their parties were equivalent to Madison's "factions," but from the older point of view, the similarities—divisiveness, self-justification, unashamed electioneering, coalition politics, and so on—were obvious and ominous, for the legitimization of the new party politics depended on the acceptance of a new ethic as well as on new circumstances. The Jacksonian political leaders and their followers were abandoning the world view of Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, and Joseph Addison that enthralled the early presidents and were moving to that of Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, and other philosophers of self-interest whose thought increasingly guided nineteenth-century Anglo-American politics and culture.

When Van Buren went to Washington as a United States senator in 1821, he was horrified at what he and his friends termed "the Monroe heresy . . . of amalgamation" of the parties, and he frankly avowed his intention to "revive the old contest between federals and anti-federals." He proclaimed his party the true successor to the Antifederalist-Jeffersonian tradition of resistance to aristocracy, commercial privilege, and centralization of power and branded his opponents as Federalists defensive of vested interests. Although there was some ideological continuity, Van Buren in fact understood little of the party attitudes of the era of Jefferson and Hamilton—or perhaps he deliberately chose to misinterpret. During the 1820s Van Buren carefully measured the political scene in Washington and sought to establish ties with other state leaders whose party ideas and organizational skills were parallel to his own. At first he had little use for Jackson, who had often expressed the traditional contempt for "party spirit," but Van Buren soon came to see increasingly how valuable to the new notion of party competition the general's popularity might be. By 1827 the picture came into focus: under Jackson's banner, Van Buren and other "party professionals" perceived how they might weld a political instrument that could at once gain power, restore "Jeffersonian" principles, make the president the spokesman of the party, and enlarge the democratic spirit of the country.[13]

As Van Buren organized support to gain victory for Jackson in 1828, he explained his strategy to the influential Virginia editor-politician Thomas Ritchie. "The amalgamating policy of Mr. Monroe," Van Buren thought, had been a great mistake because it "weakened, if not destroyed," the nationwide sense of principled political difference that had existed between the Federalists and the Jeffersonian Republicans. These "party attachments . . . furnished a complete antidote for sectional prejudices by producing counteracting feelings" that transcended and subsumed divisive local sentiments. Van Buren proposed to Ritchie that a national nominating convention be held that would unite Jacksonians all over the country and sharpen the cleavage with what another Jacksonian organizer at the same time called "the purposes of the aristocracy." Van Buren hoped Ritchie could help him revive the coalition between "the planters of the South and the plain Republicans of the North," which, added to Jackson's personal popularity, would make an invincible political party. "We will always have party distinctions," the New Yorker averred, so the goal of the responsible and effective leader should be to organize "a combined and concerted . . . political party, holding in the main, to certain tenets and opposed to certain prevailing principles."[14]

President Adams saw Van Buren's party organizing less as innovation and more as the perpetuation of the old corruption, as is evident in his diary account of a visit from Van Buren in May 1827, after the latter had visited Ritchie in Richmond and seen other politicians on a tour of the South. Van Buren was "generally understood," Adams noted, to have become "the great electioneering manager for General Jackson." Van Buren "is now acting over the part in the affairs of the Union which Aaron Burr performed in 1799 and 1800," Adams mused, thinking of his father's defeat at the hands of an earlier New York politician thirty years before. The president noticed "much resemblance of character, manners, and even person, between the two men" and gloomily predicted that "Van Buren has now every prospect of success in his movements." He even foresaw that

Van Buren would "avoid the rock" that had ruined Burr, by adhering faithfully to Jackson and remaining content to succeed him as president, rather than succumbing, as Burr had done, to the ambition to displace his chief.[15]

Many years later, Congressman J. Q. Adams continued to see a profound division between his politics and that of the Jacksonians when he examined Van Buren's December 1837 State of the Union Message and compared it implicitly with his own. "[Van Buren's] message," the ex-president wrote, "gave me a fit of melancholy for the future fortunes of the country. Cunning and duplicity pervade every line of it. The sacrifice of the rights of Northern freedom to slavery and the South, and the purchase of the West by the plunder of the public lands, is the combined system which it discloses. It is the system of Jackson's message of December, 1832, covered with a new coat of varnish." The characters of the two presidents, Adams added, one "dashing and daring" and the other "insinuating and plausible . . . are comprised in the names of Shakespeare's two catchpolls—Fang and Snare."[16] Van Buren had been the clever politician balancing sectional interests and responding to them to gain political power, a skill in which he took pride and which would evoke praise subsequently from many students of political behavior. But to Adams, Van Buren's skill rested, as it would also have seemed to Washington and Jefferson, on an insidious misconception: a preoccupation with partial as opposed to common interests.

A similar disdain pervaded J. Q. Adams's observations of the new modes of campaigning of the 1830s and 1840s. He scorned the "fashion of peddling for popularity by travelling round the country gathering crowds together, hawking for public dinners, and spouting empty speeches." "This practice of itinerant speech-making," Adams noted with horror in 1840, had "spread its contagion to the President himself," as well as to ex-presidents, cabinet members, senators, representatives, and any aspirant to public office. The tendency, Adams said, "is to the corruption of the popular elections, both by violence and fraud," and the result was that "the Presidency has fallen into a joint-stock company."[17]

Indeed, as J. Q. Adams reflected on the political leaders he had known, he saw increasing declension from his own Plutarchian conceptions. His admiration for Washington was unqualified: the first president scorned partisanship and faction, and his political program included public-interest measures such as a national university, planned use of public lands, and a federal system of internal improvements. Adams had almost as exalted a view of Madison, but Jefferson he thought flawed by his excessive faith in "the people" and his sacrifice of principle to popularity. Adams admired the Calhoun of Monroe's cabinet as "a man of fair and candid mind, of honorable principles, of clear and quick understanding, of cool self-possession, of enlarged philosophical views, and of ardent patriotism," but for the ambitious politician, the defender of sectionalism, and the apologist for slavery, he had only contempt. De Witt Clinton also earned a mixed evaluation. Thinking of Clinton's advocacy of the Erie Canal, Adams praised his "great talents, . . . magnificent purposes of public service, . . . comprehensive views and great designs," but he was disgraced by "ambition . . . of a baser sort—the charlatanery of popular enticement." Consistently, Adams admired public men who "demonstrated intellect, patriotism, coolness, a talent for devising thoughtful programs, and a broad nationalism," while he scorned those who "appealed to the mass electorate via a party organization and personal demogogy."[18] It was not just that Adams was out of step with the new politics or that he belittled or envied the skills of the new politicians who replaced him; he took the most profound exception to their public philosophy, which placed competitive pluralism at the heart of the political system. The new ideology of party seemed to him to betray all he had learned from Cicero and Bolingbroke, and all he thought the new nation had stood for.

Adams could have had only contempt, then, for the articulation of the new theory of party by Enos Throop, who became governor of New York when Van Buren entered Jackson's cabinet as secretary of state in March 1829. In his first address to the state legislature, Throop raised the question he knew was perhaps most on the minds of those who had seen the Albany Regency leaders transform New York politics and who now seemed on the way to doing the same thing on a national scale: "whether political parties are or are not desirable or beneficial in a government like ours." He answered, as political theorists generally had done for a century or two, that "political parties . . . will prevail where there is the least degree of liberty of action on the part of public agents, or their constituents." Instead, however, of proceeding to deplore this result and to seek ways to ameliorate assumed harmful effects, as a David Hume or a Madison would have done, Throop predicted only public benefit from the existence of parties. "The spirit of emulation and proselytism," he noted, would tend always "to reduce many shades of opinion into two opposing parties." Then, within each party a "mutual concession of opinion" would soften "acerbity of spirit," while "ample discussion of public measures," persuading the people that "the prevailing measures are the results of enlightened reason, . . . would . . . restrain acts of violence" between parties. Far from being a source of tumult and disorder, strong political parties were essential to a conciliatory and reasoned public life.

Throop did not deny that "party spirit is but the passion with which opposing opinions are urged in the strife for possession of power," but he did insist, departing sharply from the argument of Washington's Farewell Address, that more than fifty years of republican experience had proven

that this spirit had not in the least threatened "the integrity of the Union." Rather, the machinery of American government was "so nicely adjusted" that it had "tamed the spirit of party, and stationed it, as the vigilant watchman, over the conduct of those in power."

Throop proudly proclaimed his party, just beginning to be called the Democratic party, the legitimate successor to "the whiggism of the revolution" and the Jeffersonian triumph of 1801, and thus "vindicated . . . [in] its claims to supremacy." He also accepted, however, the idea of a loyal opposition in admitting that even when his party lost power the cause was "healthful fluctuations of the will of the people." "Our institutions have suffered but little, if anything," he concluded, "from the spirit of party, fiery and excited as at times it has been." For although "personal parties" might pursue vengeance or contemplate civil disorders, "a well regulated party spirit [that is, divided into two large organizations competing for public favor] . . . that employs the passions actively in a milder mood . . . shuts the door against faction." To Throop, such parties were a better antidote to the evils of Federalism than was the "amalgating" intention of Monroe and J. Q. Adams. After a long litany of the sufferings caused in many societies by various fanaticisms and persecutions, Throop congratulated his listeners that in the United States "knowledge abounds, to moderate the passions; just laws, enacted by the people themselves, and faithfully administered, afford protection against outrage; and opinion, exercising its moral power over the conduct of partizans, applies correctives, through regular party discipline."[19] Throop thus carefully distinguished harmful faction from benign party (in a way Madison would not have understood) and pictured a "disciplined party" not as a ruthless machine for making ciphers of its members, but rather as a highly useful, consensus-achieving device that could organize and gain power for good purposes.

Under this doctrine, Van Buren and others succeeded in forming, with Jackson at the head, the first modern political party. Organized openly and applauded as such, it was designed not to "amalgamate," or dissolve, or eventually extinguish partisanship, but to heighten and crystallize it in the pursuit of "certain tenets and . . . principles." With the vote-marshaling skill of party leaders such as James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, Caleb Atwater of Ohio, and Amos Kendall of Kentucky, as well as Van Buren, "the age of the professional politician had arrived. . . . To win those votes [of the newly enfranchised common people] and organize them into solid blocs became the special task of the trained politician."[20] Nominating conventions, rewards for party organizers, open electioneering, partisan platforms, and all the other now-familiar means of political party controversy became not signs of corruption and faction but the essence of the democratic political process. Jefferson and Hamilton and their allies had used some of these measures in the earlier party battles, especially the sharpening of issues and the gathering of support, but there were critically important differences. First, there was an indirect, stealthy, perhaps even hypocritical quality to the Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian parties; the leaders refused to proclaim themselves as party leaders (indeed, they vigorously denied such), they organized incompletely, and they electioneered largely through others. Second, at least to Jefferson, the political party was a temporary, unwelcome necessity, which explains why he, as well as Madison, Monroe, and the Adamses, so welcomed and applauded the dissolution of open party spirit under Monroe.[21] What Van Buren's party-building and Jackson's victory marked was the demise of this older view that there could ever be a triumph over party itself and the rise of a new conception to be championed by Robert Peel, Abraham Lincoln, William Gladstone, Benjamin Disraeli, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, and most of the political leaders of the great democracies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The development of the new idea of party in Great Britain paralleled the shift in American republican-democratic ideology. For example, the author of a history of Great Britain that was translated into English in 1818 could declare that "there is not less loyalty among the members of the opposition, . . . though they style themselves whigs, than among their opponents though they are called tories." Then, in 1826 John Hobhouse (later Lord Broughton) first used the revealing designation "His Majesty's Opposition" in Parliament, and a colleague at once observed that Hobhouse could not "have invented a better phrase, for we [the opposition] are certainly to all intents and purposes a branch of his Majesty's Government." Yet, older conceptions retained force; the duke of Wellington said in 1830 (as Washington might have forty years earlier) that he "could not bear the idea of being in opposition: he did not know how to set about it." In 1846, however, Disraeli advanced party ideology a crucial further step: "It is utterly impossible to carry on your Parliamentary Constitution except by political parties. . . . There must be distinct principles as lines of conduct adopted by public men. . . . It is only by maintaining the *independence of party* that you can maintain the integrity of public men, and the power and influence of Parliament itself" (emphasis added). Like Van Buren, the great English politician treated appeals to principle and to independence of judgment as values wholly consistent with party. Moreover, like their American counterparts, the British leaders knew full well that they were not inventing factional differences, electoral politics, or pursuit of office, but they were validating and celebrating these phenomena as the essence of a new and constructive political dynamic. Finally, in the twentieth century, after the great Liberal-Conservative party battles in and out of Parliament had been enshrined at the center of British public life, Lord Balfour could remark, in celebration rather than disdain, that the whole English constitution was

arranged so that men might quarrel.[22] Yet no American president before Van Buren, or certainly Jackson, could have taken pride, or even found consolation, in such a statement. They had remained fearful of "the primal Augustan nightmare, discord—which is, institutionalized, faction."[23]

Jacksonian Partisanship

The underlying changes in the character of party and leadership that had begun during the preceding decade became more evident in Jackson's presidency. Although the president thought of himself as an "Old Republican" true to the tradition of Jefferson, and although "the Jacksonian persuasion" had its Classical aspects, the effect of Jackson's two administrations was to launch the nation on a new dynamic. Jackson's most notable battle, for example, waged to destroy the Bank of the United States, was a liberating effort, however mixed the consequences. The demise of the Bank did indeed remove a form of monopoly and privilege in the economy of the nation, and politically the veto of the Bank restrained an ominously powerful vested interest. The veto also "unshackled" the business and financial energies of the country, allowing an unimpeded decentralization and expansion of banks, credit, and commercial rivalry and facilitating the rapid movement of the frontier and the exploitation of the nation's resources. For a century (or at least until the creation of the Federal Reserve System in 1913), and in contrast to what had prevailed from 1791 to 1829, the United States had an exceptionally open, unregulated "system" of trade and finance.

Guided by a philosophy that advocated leaving "individuals and states as much as possible to themselves," Jackson proceeded to gather around him "a group of successful bankers, railroad builders, land speculators, and general promoters." One of them, Amos Kendall, explained that "things will take their course in the moral as well as in the natural world" and warned Congress to "be content to let currency and private business alone."[24] Instead of using the Bank of the United States to guide the national economy in "the aggregate interest," as John Quincy Adams and his predecessors had sought to do (not always successfully), Jackson and his colleagues simply abandoned that aspiration and instead assumed that the public good required of government no more than the removal of impediments to private enterprise—"combinations in restraint of trade," as the Sherman Anti-Trust Act would put it a half-century later. Men as varied as Jonathan Edwards, the Adamses, Washington, and Madison "were concerned to control the principles of possessive and competitive individualism by using the counterbalancing idea and ideal of the whole man obligated to other men within the framework of a true community. . . . Their rhetoric, their policies, and their actions converged in an effort to build an equitable and ethical community within the limits of capitalist economics."[25] Those men, that is, retained much of the "premodern" world view of Pope and Swift, whereas the Jacksonians candidly and enthusiastically accepted the ethic of self-interest and the politics of pluralism. The transition from old to new was not instantaneous. The spirit of commerce and competition was widespread before 1829, and the ideal of a harmonious public interest did not die when J. Q. Adams left the White House, but the Jacksonians did, as they often proclaimed, alter basic assumptions of American politics.

The Maysville veto, signaling the end of federal initiative in and direct support of internal improvements, further encouraged the era of laissez-faire and decentralization. Jackson's message that the Maysville Road bill was unconstitutional clearly argued as well that the country needed less, not more, national guidance of the economy. It should be left to individuals and corporations, or at best to state legislatures, to decide the paths of growth and development. In confronting the panic of 1837, President Van Buren reaffirmed the Jacksonian axioms. It was wrong, he said, to expect the government "to relieve embarrassments arising from losses by revulsions in commerce and credit. . . . [Government] was not intended to confer special favors on individuals or on any classes of them, [or] to create systems of agriculture, manufactures, or trade. . . . All communities are apt to look to government for too much." Any attempt by government to "interfere in the proper concerns of individuals," Van Buren warned, led "unavoidably . . . to neglect, partiality, injustice, and oppression." Instead, he asked the nation to have faith, despite the depression then underway, that "a system founded on private interest, enterprise, and competition, without the aid of legislative grants or regulations by law, would rapidly prosper."[26] The intention was always to diminish restraint and to shun plans and systems (and leadership) that might stifle individual energies or limit the opportunities of enterprising groups. Indeed, this repudiation of system seemed uniquely suited to an era when millions of immigrants would arrive and a continent was to be settled. Its combination of laissez-faire economics, democratic spirit, frontier individualism, immigrant opportunity, and business entrepreneurship became embedded in such phrases as "the American character," or "way of life," or "liberal tradition"—all of which received their essential, unashamed validation in the Age of Jackson.

Even the abandonment of the "first civil service system," wherein, generally, employees of the federal government had kept their jobs during good performance of their duties, had its liberating aspects. As Jackson expressed in famous, or infamous, sentences in his first annual message to

Congress, men who held office "for any great length of time . . . are apt to acquire a habit of looking with indifference upon the public interests. . . . Office is considered a species of property, and government . . . a means of promoting individual interests. . . . Corruption . . . and a perversion of correct feelings and principles divert government from its legitimate ends and make it the engine for the support of the few at the expense of the many." To overcome this elitist system, Jackson offered a startlingly new conception of government employment: "The duties of all public officers are, or at least admit of being made, so plain and simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance; and I can not but believe that more is lost by the long continuance of men in office than is generally gained by their experience." As the experience of officeholding was deemed of little value, and as no one had an "intrinsic right" to be supported "at the public expense," the Jacksonians concluded that there was neither disadvantage to the public nor injustice to individuals in the removal of any civil servant from office. "To destroy the idea of property so generally connected with official station" by promoting a frequent rotation in office would vitalize, Jackson said, "a leading principle in the republican creed, [and] give healthful action to the system."[27]

Jackson's supporters in Congress soon justified the president's doctrine. Senator Ether Shepley of Maine asserted that "it is just, and proper, and useful . . . to change public officers. It is in accordance with our system of Government, which holds out equal rights and equal privileges to all." Senator William L. Marcy of New York stated, perhaps more candidly, the "principle" on which he expected officeholders and their aspiring successors to act: "When they are contending for victory [in elections], they avow their intention of enjoying the fruits of it. If they are defeated, they expect to retire from office. If they are successful, they claim, as a matter of right, the advantages of success. They see nothing wrong in the rule, that to the victor belong the spoils of the enemy."[28] Defenders of the principle of rotation thus saw it as part of the great democratic reforms that exalted the power of the common man and drew his government closer to him. And Marcy's idea of the usefulness of rewards was constructive if one accepted, as Van Buren argued, that the political party had a positive, indispensable role to play in democratic government. In any case, the Jacksonians had opened the political system, like the nation's economy, to a wider participation and to a competitive vitality (venality, Swift would have said). After a century, it seemed, Bernard Mandeville and Daniel Defoe had triumphed over Pope and Bolingbroke.

The Jacksonians had not, of course, invented patronage, but they reconceived it. The traditional use of political patronage, brought to a high art in eighteenth-century Britain, was to cement a personal following and thus to strengthen the power of a "parliamentary notable." Sir Lewis Namier offers the classic description of the English parties: "Whoever in the eighteenth century had the 'attractive power' of office, received an accession of followers, and whoever retained it for some time, was able to form a party." Although these parties, or factions, did not disappear at once on losing patronage and office, "every single group in opposition," Namier concluded, "was bound to melt, even if Opposition as a whole was on the increase: for the basis of the various groups ["parties"] was eminently personal." For Van Buren and the new American party leaders, however, patronage was not so much "centered on clients and family," the customary form in Anglo-American politics of the previous century, as on "interest-groups and constituents."[29] Although personal motives were by no means absent in the new system, Jackson's words in so candidly defending "rotation in office" are revealing. He had repudiated the old system in which a political office was considered "a species of property" or "a means of promoting individual interests" and recommended instead "healthful action to the system," that is, of bringing ordinary citizens into the process of government, both through direct officeholding and by cementing their loyalty to a permanent political party. Thus, although the word *party* was used in both cases, and although patronage was as important to the duke of Newcastle as to Van Buren, the structure and dynamic had been shifted fundamentally. Similarly, Jackson's phrase, "public interests," meaning various projects of public usefulness, carried very little of the Classical connotation of disinterested understanding larger than any summation of parts.

The Jacksonian system, like Mandeville's, embodied its own conception of executive leadership and pursuit of the public good. Jackson once declared to the Senate that "the President is the direct representative of the American people" and therefore had to manage his branch of government in their interest without interference from Congress.[30] As the "direct representative of the American people," Jackson also insisted he had the authority to act as their guardian against any and all hostile interests. When, as under the Bank of the United States, "the rich and powerful . . . bend the acts of government to their selfish interests," Jackson proclaimed, "the humble members of society—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers—. . . have a right to complain of the injustice of their government." Because many of the rich men of America "have not been content with equal protection and equal benefits" of the laws but instead had sought and secured "monopolies and exclusive privileges," it was the duty of the "direct representative of the people" to strike down the injustices. There are, Jackson admonished, "no necessary evils in government. Its evils exist only in its abuses. If it would confine itself to equal protection, and, as Heaven does its rains, shower its favors alike on the high and the low, the rich and the poor, it would be an unqualified blessing." And this, to the president,

meant for the federal government to leave "individuals and the States as much as possible to themselves."[31]

In striking down the Bank, in halting federal road building, and in rotating the offices of government, Jackson conceived of himself as the tribune of the people, freeing their energies from the limitations and inequities imposed by government itself. Executive leadership meant primarily restraining evil forces so that the people could be free—to do as they pleased. The Democratic party, furthermore, was the proper instrument of the president in exercising his power, and thus was the legitimate object of his nourishment and support. Although Jackson used the same rhetoric of "public interest" as his predecessors and fashioned his own highly effective means of executive power, the assumptions and means of leadership had in fact been transformed. As the Bank veto message stated so clearly, there were a multitude of forces at work in society, many of them selfish and evil, so it was necessary for "the humble members of society" to organize and to support the advocate of *their* interests, that is, to enlist in the Democratic party in order to achieve the power to strike down their enemies. And it was the president's role both to crystallize the sentiments of the common people and to guide and sustain a political party as the instrument of their protection against intrusion, monopoly, and oppression. The purpose of defeating oligarchic monopolies, and even of forming a political party to accomplish that, was not un-Jeffersonian (as Jackson himself perceived), but the differences in emphasis and connotation were profound: for Jefferson the party had to be temporary, not permanent; merely destroying the monopolies to let laissez-faire flourish would to him have been simplistic if not irresponsible, and setting aside the "humanizing" ideal in public life would to him have been a form of corruption. This polarizing conception of politics, which presents the central issue as that of either defeating or succumbing to the evil of special privilege, after 1829 became the reigning one in American public life and in many respects has been dominant ever since.

The Adamses and the "Degradation of the Democratic Dogma"

Against this essentially negative conception of the executive's role, the above-party, positive ideas of executive leadership so deeply embedded in Jackson's vanquished foe of 1828 (and in all of his predecessors) seem so quaint and unrealistic as to belong to another age—as indeed they did. In 1904 Henry Adams, recalling the venerable figure of his grandfather sitting in front of him in the church at Quincy, reflected on the "education" he had received at home and at Harvard. The industrial America of his adult life seemed to him more distant from the world of his statesmen forebears than they were from the age of Greece and Rome encased in the books of the family library. He had, he wrote, been reared to live in a world that had died.[32]

When asked nine years after his crushing defeat in 1828 for information about his presidency, John Quincy Adams wrote that "the great effort of my administration was to mature into a permanent and regular system the application of all the superfluous revenue of the Union." Such a system "would have afforded high wages and constant employment to hundreds of thousands of laborers" and would have caused "the surface of the whole Union [to be] checkered over with railroads and canals." "I fell and with me fell, I fear never to rise again," the old statesman complained, "the system of internal improvement by means of national energies." Instead of adopting this grand design, which Adams as the patriot leader had so boldly presented in 1825, national development had been consigned to "the limping gait of State legislature and private adventure, [and] the American Union . . . is to live from hand to mouth, and to cast away instead of using for the improvement of its own condition, the bounties of Providence."[33] Only five days after Jackson's inauguration, in fact, John Quincy Adams had predicted that "the day will be the day of small things. There will be neither lofty meditations nor comprehensive foresight, nor magnanimous purpose." The son to whom Adams made this prophecy would have understood the rich public philosophy from which it derived; during the early months of 1829 Charles Francis Adams had been reading Pope, Cicero, Adam Smith, Blackstone, Addison, Clarendon, and Burke. Theodore Roosevelt, just beginning in 1886 to develop his philosophy of positive government in the public interest, made the same point when he referred to the Jacksonian administrations as "the millennium of the minnows."[34]

Behind the halt of the orderly mobilization of the nation's energies and resources for the public good, for which Adams blamed the partisan, irresponsible, Jacksonian spoilsmen, the ex-president saw deeper causes than conventional political differences. "The Sable Genius of the South," he intoned, in its fear and envy of the rising tide of northern prosperity, had "raised the standard of free trade, nullification, and state rights" as masks for a wicked, self-interested defense of slavery.[35] To him there could be no clearer example of the curse of faction and partisanship, no more unmistakable corruption, than the virtual capture by the slavocracy of the government of the Union born in 1776. Adams's steadfast defense of the right to petition Congress for the abolition of slavery, a campaign that made him the first national champion of that cause, was not *just* a moral

crusade. Adams's abolitionism derived not only from his conviction, held since the age of sixteen, that a people cannot "be happy who are subjected to personal slavery"[36] but also from his understanding of the ideals of the American Revolution. The slave power had to be destroyed in order to restore the very character of the nation, to rescue it from that worst of public crimes, the subordination of the general good to private greed.

The increasing insolence and self-assertion of the slave power was to Adams part and parcel of the Jacksonians' abandonment of the nation's public interest to the vicissitudes of party warfare. Under that banner, Adams foresaw, the slave interest was as legitimate as any other, as qualified to be voted up, to expand, and to resist being voted down as any other. In fact, the amoral doctrine of "popular sovereignty" defended by Stephen A. Douglas in the 1850s was one plausible fruit of the conception of party Martin Van Buren had devised in the 1820s to push John Quincy Adams from the presidency. Douglas's doctrine was also a repudiation of the long tradition that valued a polity attuned not to vox populi as such but rather to a higher law that might with good leadership enlist the support of the whole people.

As John Quincy Adams pondered the meaning of his public career, he sometimes interpreted his crushing defeat in 1828 and the consequent triumph of Jacksonian party politics as somber signs of the betrayal, or perhaps even the nonexistence, of Providence itself. He had always believed, he wrote in 1837, "that the ultimate extinguishment of slavery throughout the earth was the great transcendent earthly object of the mission of the Redeemer. . . . That the Declaration of Independence was a leading event in the progress of the gospel dispensation. . . . That its principles lead directly to the abolition of slavery and of war, and that it is the duty of every free American to contribute to the utmost extent of his power to the practical establishment of those principles." Under this belief, Brooks Adams noted, his grandfather had entered the presidency, supposing that "an honest executive . . . supported by an intelligent and educated civil service, who should hold their places permanently, . . . [might] devote their whole time, energy, and thought" to the providential task. John Quincy Adams had hoped for the "continual progressive improvement, physical, moral, political, in the condition of the whole people of this Union . . . by establishing the practical, self-evident truth of the natural equality and brotherhood of all mankind, . . . and by banishing slavery and war from the earth."[37] The biographer of John Quincy's son and Brooks's father, Charles Francis Adams, summarized the moral universe of the Puritan-Christian tradition accepted by the Adams family: "As true New Englanders, they believed firmly in a positive life, in the full exercise of their mental powers, and the full control of their 'appetites.' . . . Idleness was a sin and self-satisfaction corruption. . . . Duty, determination, integrity, self-examination—these were their guides to conduct."[38]

Instead of this grand design working out in the United States, public lands were, under Jackson, given away "to private land jobbers," spoilsmen took over the public administration, and slaveowners came to dominate the Union. Summarizing his grandfather's view, Brooks Adams concluded that Jackson was "the materialization of the principle of evil . . . [because he] embodied the principle of public plunder." Convinced that if "each man [strove] to better himself at the cost of his neighbor," this striving would coincide with the common good, Jackson and his followers sought to enshrine "the instincts of greed and avarice which are the essence of competition." Thus, instead of the continuing improvement of society under Providence and in accordance with a noble design John Quincy Adams thought he had inherited from John Winthrop and George Washington (as well as from Cicero and Saint Paul), the nation experienced what Brooks and Henry Adams termed a "Degradation of the Democratic Dogma" leading straight from Jackson and Van Buren to the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant.[39]

Adams's deep disdain for sectional politics and individual aggrandizement also found expression during the Jacksonian era in a general "antipartyism" among an odd mixture of Whigs, anti-Masons, evangelical reformers, and latter-day Puritans who scorned the ethos and character of the Democratic party as defined and defended by Van Buren and his allies. Deriving in part from a Winthropian sense of an organic society knit together in brotherly affection for the good of the whole,[40] and imbued with an Edwardsian vision of a worldwide "pious union" of Christian love, the "antiparty" forces thought of government as beginning with society, not with individuals, and believed that harmony, not conflict or competition, should characterize human affairs. As late as 1848 a Whig orator could still aver that a voter "does not exercise his franchise for himself, but for the whole body politic . . . [in order to] place the administration habitually in the hands of the most worthy." In this speaker's eyes, "Leaders, Lawgivers and Instructors of the people" on the models of Moses and Joshua were still needed. An evangelical spokesman, Horace Bushnell, called political parties "the worst form of Papacy ever invented" because their demand for total loyalty masked seething factional disputes. Another, Charles G. Finney, declared that "no man can be an honest man, that is committed to a political party." Hostility to the Masons as a secret, divisive group, furthermore, had its roots in a similar suspicion of any force that set one part of the community against another. "Party men" were viewed as grasping, newly rich, unprincipled, alienated types who lacked a sense of community responsibility, were devoid of Christian charity, and corrupted morals.[41] It

is not surprising that John Quincy Adams, a son of New England Puritanism, was deeply anti-Masonic and often, especially in his later career, found support from and made alliances with elements of this "general antipartyism" that remained an important force in American politics, at least rhetorically, through the first half of the nineteenth century. It would be a mistake to conclude, obviously, that everything changed abruptly in 1829 with Adams's defeat, or that the new Democratic party was totally unconcerned for "the whole body politic," or even that it was far more partisan than the groups that opposed it. Clay, Calhoun, and Webster, for example, conceded nothing to Jackson, Van Buren, and Thomas Hart Benton as inveterate partisans. But the second quarter of the nineteenth century did witness a growing party activity and validation of that activity on all sides even as party leaders continued to draw on a large reservoir of antiparty sentiment still strong in public opinion.

Defoe, Tocqueville, and J. S. Mill

The parallel of this antipartyism with the critique made by Pope and Bolingbroke of Robert Walpole's government is striking. Jackson and his followers, and the political system they espoused, accepted as benign the same enterprising, candidly partisan, openly competitive dynamic that Walpole had welcomed in England a century earlier. Although the Whig merchants and oligarchs who supported Walpole were vastly different from the mixture of farmers, workers, slaveowners, and entrepreneurs who sustained Jackson, nonetheless in each case the character of the nation was allowed to rest simply on the energies and enterprise of the individuals and groups within it. W. E. H. Lecky's praise of Walpole and his government, that under it Britain experienced a "long peace, . . . immense material development, . . . [and] the firm establishment of parliamentary government," has its American counterpart in Richard Hofstadter's characterization of Jacksonian democracy. It demanded "the classic bourgeois ideal, equality before the law [and] the restriction of government to equal protection of its citizens. . . . Its aim [was] not to throttle but to liberate business, to open every possible pathway for the creative enterprise of the people."[42] Each historian, that is, discerned a specific time in the history of the respective nations when key elements of "the liberal tradition"—freedom from restraint, enterprise, prosperity, and party government—experienced growth and validation.

Classic accounts of each era, Daniel Defoe's *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724–1727) and Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835), also emphasize again and again the centrality of the commercial spirit and the transformation it was effecting on the land and its people. Defoe's work celebrated the growth of trade and the consequent rapid increase of wealth experienced by Great Britain during the rule of Walpole. Although the author on his tour noticed interesting "antiquities" and paid some attention to churches, country houses, farming, and other traditional aspects of English life, he became ecstatic over bustling marketplaces, improved transportation, new industries, ingenious inventions, and growing towns. Defoe saw England with a tradesman's eye, always aware of what was important to his prosperity, and utterly confident that the future greatness of the nation depended not only on its manufactures and commerce as such but also on its cherishing the habits and values of the tradesman: enterprise, diligence, autonomy, and pursuit of profit. Defoe found the West Riding of Yorkshire "a noble Scene of Industry and Application" where thronged marketplaces in "infinitely populous" towns made it clear that a welcome revolution was under way in English life. He was especially impressed with Hull, where there was "more business done . . . than in any other town of its bigness in Europe." Its greatest asset, moreover, was its merchants. There were none in Britain, Defoe asserted, with "a fairer Credit, or fairer Character . . . as well for the Justice of their Dealings as the Greatness of their Substance or Funds for Trade."[43] As Defoe was well aware of the misery and poverty still widespread in Britain, he also proposed countless "projects" showing how the expansive, energetic spirit permeating commerce could soon solve social problems—precisely the optimism and ingenuity that had so impressed the youthful Benjamin Franklin when he had read Defoe's *Essay upon Projects* (London, 1695). Quite simply, Defoe exulted at an ethic, an openness, a way of life, and a public philosophy attuned to the new world of commerce coming to England in the age of Walpole.

A century later Tocqueville found the same qualities in an America whose reigning folk hero was Franklin. Tocqueville was convinced that the commercial, enterprising style was the irresistible wave of the future and that this bourgeois culture was advancing in its most undiluted form in America. With a background different from Defoe's and with one hundred more years of bourgeois "progress" on record, however, Tocqueville saw the result as a mixed blessing. At the end of his travels in America he admitted, "I find my vision hazy and my judgment hesitant." That impressive, restless, vigorous, egalitarian nation, destined to fill a continent and dominate half the world, nonetheless "saddens and chills me," he wrote, because it also seemed "blunted," "less brilliant," "more average," and tinged with a "universal uniformity." He was therefore "tempted to regret that state of society which has ceased to be"—the same anxieties and forebodings Walpole's critics had felt. Yet, the French aristocrat accepted as in-

evitable what the Augustan writers had sought to hold back. "It would be . . . unreasonable to expect of men nowadays," he wrote, "the particular virtues which depended on the social conditions of their ancestors, since that state of society has collapsed, bringing down in the confusion of its ruin all that it had of good and bad."[44] It was John Quincy Adams's torment—and opportunity—as it had been Jefferson's, to lead the nation in seeking to blend the virtues of the collapsing aristocratic world with the coming age of autonomy, democracy, and equality heralded by Jackson and his followers.

John Stuart Mill expressed a similar ambiguity when in 1840 he reviewed volume 2 of *Democracy in America*. He accepted most of Tocqueville's generalizations about American character and society, but he disagreed about their root cause. Tocqueville had mistakenly blamed the leveling, grasping, ignoble aspects of life in the United States on the "abstract ideas" of democracy and equality. These deficiencies, Mill insisted, instead arose from "the tendencies of modern commercial society." He thought the contrast between the equality of condition among the people of lower (French) Canada, who had none of "that go-ahead spirit" of the Americans, and the American-like enterprise of the English middle class, in the midst of an aristocratic society, revealed Tocqueville's mistake. Mill asked Englishmen whether "the American people, both in their good qualities and in their defects, resemble anything so much as an exaggeration of our own middle class." He found "the spirit of commerce and industry is one of the greatest instruments . . . of improvement and culture in the widest sense; to it, or to its consequences, we owe nearly all that advantageously distinguishes the present period from the middle ages." That spirit was dangerous, Mill thought, only when it "becomes preponderant in a community, . . . [imposing itself] upon all the rest of society; [and] . . . forcing all to either submit to it or to imitate it." The United States in 1840, Mill implied, was not so much a unique land of democracy and equality as a nation excessively dominated by a commercialization of values long in development in England.

The need, therefore, was not to be "hazy" or "hesitant" about the spread of democracy and equality, but rather to be sure that the "commercial spirit" did not become utterly dominant—as seemed to be the case in the United States. In this respect Mill thought Great Britain was fortunate because it still possessed a genuine "agricultural class" attached to the land and devoted to farming as "itself an interesting occupation." American farmers, on the other hand, who "range from place to place, [were] to all intents and purposes a commercial class." Britain was also lucky that it had, as America did not, "a leisured and a learned class" that were able to "control the excess of the commercial spirit by a contrary spirit." Although Mill regarded "the ascendency of the commercial class in modern society as inevitable," it did not need "to be regarded as evil" as long as "counterbalancing" classes existed. Mill meant that society had to cultivate a higher morality "than either the calculations of self-interest, or the emotions of self-flattery" (all too prevalent in Jacksonian America, if Tocqueville was right). Furthermore, public life needed to be guided by "that order of virtues in which a commercial society is apt to be deficient: . . . with less benevolence but more patriotism; less sentiment, but more self-control; if a lower average of virtue, more striking individual examples of it; fewer small goodnesses, but more greatness, and appreciation of greatness." Without denigrating democracy, enterprise, or equality, Mill saw the need for other values in society—and for standards and modes of government akin to those lauded in the Roman Senate, especially "freedom from any class-interest" and the exercise of rational deliberation in pursuit of the public good. And he also agreed with John Quincy Adams that active, virtuous leadership was indispensable to the preservation of this counterbalancing element in a nation.[45]

Increasingly dominant in both Walpolean Britain and in Jacksonian America, however, was a world view congenial to a prospering, open society, requiring not so much guidance as free rein. One consequence of this dominance was observed years later by Herbert Croly: "When orators of the Jacksonian Democratic tradition begin to glorify the superlative individuals developed by the freedom of American life, what they mean by individuality is an unusual amount of individual energy successfully spent in popular and remunerative occupations. Of the individuality which may reside in the gallant and exclusive devotion to some disinterested, and perhaps unpopular moral, intellectual, or technical purpose, they have not the remotest conception."[46] This latter sort of "individuality" (before mid-nineteenth century, the term, if used at all, had generally negative connotations), however, is precisely what Washington and John Quincy Adams (to say nothing of Pericles, Plutarch, Swift's king of Brobdingnag, and a host of others) admired.