

to money, in the service of his country he had always refused it. These things considered, together with his acknowledged modesty and disinterestedness, we can hardly doubt the correctness of the declaration he made, when he said, that, "the call to the magistracy was the most unwelcome he had ever heard."

However, as soon as it was officially notified to him, in the spring of 1789, that he was unanimously elected president of the United States, and that congress, then sitting in New-York, was impatient to see him in the chair, he set out for that city. Then all along the roads where he passed, were seen the most charming proofs of that enthusiasm with which the hearts of all delighted to honour him. If it was only said, "General Washington is coming," it was enough. The inhabitants all hastened from their houses to the highways, to get a sight of their great countryman.

ESSAYS

It is difficult for us today to understand how fragile a republic the United States was in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Political divisions and economic weaknesses plagued the new nation, and many European powers doubted whether the United States as a nation would survive. As American leaders grappled with the weaknesses that beset their nation, they differed on its most serious flaws. The following essays illustrate the leaders' differing perceptions of the dangers that the United States faced and their prescriptions for addressing these dangers. They focus less on the debates of modern historians than on the differences between those people in the early nineteenth century who created the first political party system. Linda Kerber, professor of history at the University of Iowa, describes the quandaries of the Federalists, a political party whose members feared that popular democracy might spin out of control. While they fostered economic development they were well aware that an urban proletariat would result. As a result, they sought a stability that would temper these developments. Drew McCoy, a historian who teaches at Clark University, explores the dilemmas of the Jeffersonian Republicans. Focusing on the ideas of Jefferson, McCoy illustrates how the Republicans, like their Federalist antagonists, perceived challenges for the future of the United States. Fearful of creating a dependent class, Jefferson set his sights westward, where he envisioned vast tracts of land being farmed by virtuous citizens of the young republic.

The Fears of the Federalists

LINDA K. KERBER

"Little whirlwinds of dry leaves and dirt portend a hurricane," warned Fisher Ames. The Federalist saw these little whirlwinds everywhere in America: in the ineffectuality of Jeffersonian foreign policy, in the willingness to embark on projects as unpredictable as the acquisition of Louisiana, in Jeffersonian expressions of confidence in the political amateur. As the Federalist read his current events, one after another of the sources of cultural stability was being undermined by Jeffersonian enthusiasms:

Linda K. Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), 173–174, 177–179, 181–195, 199–203, 206–208, 211–213. Copyright © 1970 Cornell University Press. Used by permission of the publisher. Cornell University Press.

by the shift in the grounds and goals of scientific inquiry, by the rejection of the classical curriculum, and by what was believed to be a hostility to the institutions of social order, manifested by the revision of the judiciary system and the subsequent impeachment of judges.

The Jeffersonian approach to politics struck the articulate Federalists as dangerously naive. The optimism, the ready professions of faith in popular democracy, seemed to mask a failure to comprehend the ambivalence of the American social order. To these Federalists, American society, for all its surface stability and prosperity, was torn by internal contradiction. A population which had proved its capacity for revolutionary violence would not necessarily remain tranquil in the future. Moreover, even the early stages of industrialization and urban growth were providing the ingredients of a proletariat; there already existed a volatile class of permanently poor who, it was feared, might well be available for mob action. Finally, the expectation that the republic might deteriorate into demagogery and anarchy was given intellectual support by the widely accepted contemporary definitions of what popular democracy was and the conditions necessary to its stability. "I assure you," Jonathan Jackson told John Lowell, Jr., "that I feel quite satisfied in having had to pass through one Revolution. One is full enough for mortal man." It was a common Federalist fear that the Jeffersonians were insufficiently conscious of the precariousness of revolutionary accomplishments, and that this laxity might well prove disastrous. . . .

The expectation of violence and disintegration permeated Federalist political conversation in the opening years of the nineteenth century. "The power of the people, if uncontrolled, is . . . mobbish," remarked Fisher Ames in 1802. "It is a gov't by force without discipline." When Thomas Boylston Adams undertook to follow his brother John Quincy's advice and reread Xenophon, he expected no surprises: "The Athenians doubtless afford an excellent example of the *violence* to which a Democratic government necessarily leads a people." Josiah Quincy's *Slaveslap Kidnap* proclaimed his vision of "the tempestuous sea of liberty":

now tossing its proud waves to the skies, and hurling defiance toward the throne of the almighty: now sinking into its native abyss, and opening to view its unhallowed caverns, the dark abodes of filth and falsehood, and rapine and wretchedness. . . . From the top of Monticello, by the side of the great Jefferson, I have watched its wild uproar, while we philosophised together on its sublime horrors. There, safe from the surge . . . I have quaffed the high crowned cup to this exhilarating toast—TO YON TEMPESTUOUS SEA OF LIBERTY . . . MAY IT NEVER BE CALM.

H. L. Mencken once distinguished two varieties of democrats—those who see liberty primarily as the right of self-government, and those who see it primarily as the right to rebel against governors. American political theory usually denies the necessity to choose between the two options, but in the early years of the republic it was widely assumed that a choice had to be made. The former concept, of "positive" liberty, or the freedom to follow a "higher" pattern of behavior, has its analogues in Puritan thought, and is comparable to the elitist definition of the social order which many Americans, perhaps the majority, held in the half-century following 1770. The widespread assumption among Federalists that their opponents espoused the alternate concept of "negative" liberty, or individual immunity from restraint, was derived in part from some of the better-known Jeffersonian aphorisms, but it was also

based on the Federalists' own experience. Primarily, it reflects their sense of the precariousness of the American social order. . . . All around them, the Federalists of the Old Republic saw familiar social habits decaying. The most obvious sign of changing social balances was the decline of deferential behavior. After the social dislocations of the 1770's and 1780's fewer people had a pedigree of gentility and fewer still were willing to recognize such pedigrees where they existed. Surely there had always been in America egalitarians who refused to defer to their social superiors: the Quakers, for example, or the unchurched men and women who had accompanied John Winthrop to Boston and had made it so difficult for him and his associates to establish the tightly structured community of which they had dreamed. The egalitarian current of the Revolutionary era turned exceptions to the rule into harbingers of a trend; by the first decade of the nineteenth century, gentlefolk all over the nation, except perhaps in the South, were complaining that they were treated with far less respect and awe than they were accustomed to. Men who saw sullen or, at best, bland countenances where formerly they had received broad smiles and a bow, took the sullenness as a personal affront. Their insistence that America possessed the social ingredients for a "mobocracy" may have been something of a rhetorical overstatement, but it was not mere fulmination: people who would not defer to anyone seemed unpredictable and capable of "mobbishness." . . .

The republic itself had been born in turbulence; that their nation had been created by rebellion and secession was never far from the Federalist mind. Eighteenth-century America had been a society in which violence was endemic; as Howard Mumford Jones has recently reminded us, mob action was common during the revolutionary era. "American mobs were amenable to cunning leadership, sometimes disguised, sometimes demagogic; they pillaged, robbed, destroyed property, defied law, interfered with the normal course of justice, legislation, and administration, occasionally inflicted physical injuries." After the Revolution, similar violence was experienced in Boston, New Haven, Philadelphia, Charleston. It may well be that Shays' Rebellion was, in contemporary context, an anomaly; as one of the few episodes in which mob violence was forcibly resisted by a state legislature, Shays' Rebellion is merely better remembered than the numerous other occasions on which legislatures were more easily intimidated. Americans were not necessarily more temperate than their French contemporaries; since they met less resistance from constituted authority, they may simply have felt less need for extreme action.

The national government, only a dozen years old when Jefferson took office, was daily insulted, at home and abroad, by men who acted as though the republic were merely a temporary expedient. The Articles of Confederation, after all, had been in force for a dozen years before they had been abandoned; there was no guarantee in 1800 that the document which replaced the Articles would have a longer life. The federal government was insulted by the British, who had refused to honor all the terms of the Peace of 1783 until required to by the Jay Treaty; by the French, whose regular seizure of American shipping resulted in a "Quasi-War," and even by the Dey of Algiers, whose Barbary pirates exacted regular tribute. It was insulted at home by men who similarly refused to regard the new government as permanently established. Critics of national policies habitually spoke as though the Union did not deserve to survive; a threat of secession was a standard response of the frustrated politician. When William Blount thought he was being permitted to wield too little

power in North Carolina, he attempted to arrange for the secession of the Western Territory; when Virginia objected to the Alien and Sedition Acts, she made sure her protests would be listened to by including a veiled threat of secession. Secession was the response of a group of New England Federalists to the prediction of Jefferson's re-election in 1804, of Aaron Burr to his isolated position after the Hamilton duel. And all through the early national period, the nation was insulted by men who seemed to cherish democracy primarily as a guarantee of their right of rebellion. The best known of these insults had been the violent demonstrations headed by the "whiskey rebels" and by John Fries, but there were many other occasions of riot in the early years of the republic. These riotous demonstrations generally accomplished little, but they are not unimportant; Federalists worried about them because they provided evidence that Americans had not lost the capacity for violence which they had demonstrated during the Revolution. "If there is no country possessed of more liberty than our own," the *Palladium* remarked, "there is probably none where there are more formidable indications of the error, prejudice and turbulence that will render it insecure." The nation had malcontents enough for Gouverneur Morris to conclude: "There is a moral tendency, and in some cases even a physical disposition, among the people of this country to overturn the Government. . . . The habits of monarchic government are not yet worn away among our native citizens, and therefore the opposition to lawful authority is frequently considered as a generous effort of patriotic virtue." The Whiskey Boys, Fries, the men who successively raised and tore down liberty poles in New England as late as 1798, made it impossible for Federalists to relax in Arcadia. They could not assume that the New World would escape the disastrous cycle of European history; they could not assume that the pastoral landscape of the Old Republic, settled by contented yeomen, would not be replaced by the congested landscape of the Old World, occupied by malcontented *canaille*.

There was reason to fear that the capacity of the American people for mobbishness was increasing. One analysis of the American scene which Federalists found almost disarmingly appropriate had been provided, ironically enough, by Thomas Jefferson as early as 1787. The passage appears in *Notes on Virginia*, and follows Jefferson's famous remark that "Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people." Jefferson goes on to explain the contrast he had in mind and the reasons for his preference for the husbandman:

Dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition. . . . The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body. It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigour. A degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the heart of its laws and constitution.

Jefferson could easily have found Federalists to agree with his statement, point by point. They would have changed the application from prediction to statement of fact, and they would not have limited their fear to "the mobs of great cities"; rather, mobbishness was a quality of which the Federalist feared all were capable. But they would have agreed that the urban poor were particularly restless, and they would have added that there seemed to be increasing numbers of poor people in America. Boston had slums by 1810; New York's seventh ward was swampy, stagnant and an unhealthy slum as early as the 1790's. Poor people were, by eighteenth-century

definition, dependent on those who had jobs to offer and salaries to pay; the “manners and spirit” of the economically dependent, it was feared, could not possibly be as stalwart as those of the independent and self-sufficient yeoman. “You would never look at men and boys in workshops,” said the Maryland Federalist Philip Barton Key, “for that virtue and spirit in defense [of the nation against an aggressor] that you would justly expect from the yeomanry of the country.”

Now it is true enough that early America was an agricultural country; nine out of ten of her citizens still worked the land. But . . . [t]he noble husbandman [writes historian Leo Marx] is a mythical image, not a description of sociological reality: “He is the good shepherd of the old pastoral dressed in American homespun.” Both shepherd and yeoman are models of beings who live in a [world] from which economic pressures are absent. The self-sufficient yeoman on the family-sized farm seeks not prosperity and wealth, but stability, “a virtual stasis that is a counterpart of the desired psychic balance or peace.” Only in a world like his, free of economic tension, can the omission of a class structure seem believable. The image is mythical because it ignores economic fact; it draws life from the assumption that Americans could live independent of the international marketplace. Suppose one should deny the possibility; what then becomes of the image? “Let our workshops remain in Europe,” Jefferson had counseled. “It is better to carry provisions and materials to workmen there, than bring them to the provisions and materials, and with them their manners and principles. The loss by the transportation of commodities across the Atlantic will be made up in happiness and permanence of government.” But America’s workshops were not to remain in Europe. The men who counseled agricultural self-sufficiency, Fisher Ames sneered, were themselves “clad in English broadcloth and Irish linen, . . . import their conveniences from England, and their politics from France. It is solemnly pronounced as the only wise policy for a country, where the children multiply faster than the sheep.” Although the major boom in American industrialization is generally dated 1830–1865, it was rapidly becoming apparent in the early years of the nineteenth century—and to men like Tench Coxe and Alexander Hamilton and Oliver Wolcott much earlier—that the nation’s destiny lay with the machine. It was inescapably obvious that with the machine would come further changes in the quality of American social life, changes in “manners and spirit.”

Consciousness of the nation’s industrial destiny may be said to have begun with Alexander Hamilton’s great “Report on Manufactures” of 1791, the same year in which Samuel Slater began the operation of his spinning mill in Pawtucket. But American manufactures did not start with Slater; Hamilton’s correspondence as he requested information for the Report reveals that manufacturing operations were already extensive. The social structure of the United States, however, seemed ill-suited to the development of an industrial society; available land, prosperous commerce, the heavy demand for handcrafted items meant that few men would be content to remain day laborers. How to industrialize without workers? To this question Hamilton offered three comments: first, the increased efficiency of machinery would enable it eventually to *replace* human hands, thus cutting the need for labor to a great extent; second, new hands could be encouraged to emigrate to America; and finally, more extensive use could be made of an as yet barely tapped source of labor. In England, Hamilton explained, “all the different processes for spinning cotton, are performed by . . . machines, which are put in motion by water, and attended chiefly by women and children.”

Hamilton was not the progenitor of child labor in America; he was endorsing a trend, not initiating one. To get the information on which the Report was based, he had instructed Treasury agents throughout the country to report to him on the state of manufactures in their area; they, in turn, polled local businessmen and sent their letters on to the Secretary of the Treasury. The information thus collected showed that child labor was already extensive in certain segments of the economy: in yarn manufacture, in cotton and woolcarding, and in the making of nails. By 1803, Oliver Wolcott was finding it difficult to recruit boys to work in his cousin’s nail factory, not because children were not working, but the contrary: “Children who have health and are not utterly depraved in their morals,” he explained, “are worth money and can easily find employment.” Samuel Slater’s factory opened with nine workers—seven boys and two girls, none older than twelve years; the youngest was seven. When, in 1801, Josiah Quincy visited one of Slater’s mills, he found that the machinery was tended by over a hundred children from four to ten years old, under a single supervisor, who were paid from 12 to 25 cents a day. “Our attendant was very eloquent,” Quincy remarked in his diary, “on the usefulness of the manufacture, and the employment it supplied for so many poor children. But an eloquence was exerted on the other side of the question more commanding than his, which called us to pity these little creatures, plying in a contracted room, among flyers and cogs, at an age when nature requires for them air, space, and sports. There was a dull dejection in the countenances of all of them.” The children who worked in the mills did not have air, space, and sports as an option; if they were not in the textile factories they joined the “abundance of poor children” which Noah Webster reported to be wandering about the streets, “clothed in dirty rags, illy educated in every respect.” By 1809, the nation’s cotton mills employed four thousand workers, of whom thirty-five hundred were women and children under age sixteen. Labor statistics, and especially statistics of child labor for the years before 1820, are very scattered, vague, and impressionistic. But they do indicate that child labor, especially in the textile regions, continued and increased. Typically whole families worked in the mills; the men were paid something less than a living wage, and families made ends meet by adding the labor of wives and children, much as Hamilton had predicted.

The prevalence of woman and child labor in early American industry is generally assessed in the context in which Hamilton had placed it. It is taken as an indication of scarcity of labor, as evidence of an expanding economy which offered most men something better to do than to work as factory operatives. Treated in this manner, child labor is seen almost as an index of American prosperity. All this may be true. But we should not ignore the other social conditions of which child labor may be an index; we should not ignore what it tells us about the men who *were* common laborers, and whose dollar a day salary, which made them the best paid common laborers in the West, did not provide for a family working class was being formed in the early national period, and while class lines were far more flexible, and living conditions were far better than those prevalent in Europe, they were severe enough. The number of people in the early republic who might be labeled members of a proletariat was relatively small, but the conditions of their lives were grim, for all the open-endedness and social mobility of American life. Men do not live by comparisons, but by the conditions of their own lives.

"The time is not distant when this Country will abound with mechanics & manufacturers who will receive their bread from their employers," Gouverneur Morris had predicted in the Constitutional Convention. Two decades later Morris was sounding like Montesquieu: "The strongest aristocratic Feature in our political organization is that which Democrats are more attached to, the Right of universal Suffrage." Montesquieu had suggested that universal suffrage worked to strengthen the power of the rich because the employer or landowner could command the votes of those who were economically dependent on him; Thomas Jefferson himself had warned that "Dependence begets subservience and venality." Would America be transformed when her working population became a salaried one? Would there be an American proletariat? And if there were, would it behave any differently from the European? The pastoral idea was predicated on the continued *absence* of certain things: factories, urban concentrations of population, the presence of the extremely poor. If these things were not absent, pastoral America could not exist; and wherever the northern Federalist leader looked, it seemed more and more apparent that these conditions would not be absent much longer.

The Federalist anticipated violence, in short, because his countrymen had demonstrated their capacity for it during the Revolution, and because he saw developing a class of poor and unskilled laborers who might easily be encouraged to indulge what the Federalist knew to be a general human capacity for turmoil. Over and over, Federalist spokesmen identified their greatest fear: the experimental republic would be destroyed, as the French republic had been, by the "turbulence" and "mobbishness" of which the public was capable. To curb this tendency to "mobbishness," then, was to save the republic, and an act of patriotism. "Every friend of liberty," explained one editorial writer, "would be shocked if the people were deprived of all political power. . . . But . . . if the people will not erect any barriers against their own intemperance and giddiness, or will not respect and sustain them after they are erected, their power will be soon snatched out of their hands, and their own heads broken with it—as in *France*." . . .

A republican democracy was assumed to be a contradiction in terms; Democratic-Republican as a party label a non sequitur. It was Federalism and Republicanism, they insisted, which went together; both defined a version of popular government characterized by the built-in, self-limiting features which popular government required if it was to endure. In categorizing Americans as "all Federalists, all Republicans" Jefferson was seen either to be making an unexpected and complete capitulation or, what was more likely, deliberately befogging the issues. The former alternative did not seem inconceivable to Federalists, who still regarded the two-party arrangement as novel. The first party to be in power had the firmly established habit of identifying itself with the government, its personnel with the national administration, and its members with the heroes of the American Revolution. Opposition to party was easily equated with a near-treasonable opposition to the government, and the development of an opposition party was often viewed as the cause, rather than the reflection, of "political rancour & malevolence." . . .

. . . Americans of both parties were aware that theirs was the only republic of the time, and that it was an extremely perilous experiment. In his examination of the causes of the War of 1812, Roger H. Brown has pointed to the American's fear that there may have been "some fatal weakness inherent in the republican form of

government that accounted for its rare and fleeting occurrence." Both parties were intensely concerned for the continuation and security of their holy experiment, but their jealous protectiveness of that experiment was displayed in varying fashion. The early years of the republic were years of great accomplishment and also of tremendous frustration. It seems to have been habitual among Republicans to place the blame for that frustration on foreign nations and the conduct of foreign affairs, a way of thinking which, Brown suggests, eventually led them to justify the War of 1812. But one may also speculate that one of the sources of Federalist resistance to that war was a well-established habit of thought which tended to place blame for political failure, even in foreign affairs, on the nation's own internal weaknesses.

Repeatedly the Federalists insisted that Americans interpret the French Revolution as a cautionary tale. Democracy was never static; constant vigilance was required to keep popular government stable. And many Federalists had come to fear that Americans lacked that vigilance. . . .

Americans of both parties were fond of the notion that the virtue of the citizen and the stability of the republic were linked. "Virtue . . . is the foundation of Republics," explained a contributor to the *Gazette of the United States* who signed himself "Serranus." "In these, all Power emanating from the people, when they become corrupt, it is in vain to look for purity or disinterestedness, in the administration of their affairs. A polluted fountain must necessarily pour forth a foul and turbid stream. Hence, Morals [,] of great importance in every scheme of government, are of indispensable necessity in a free Commonwealth." Sustenance for this point of view might be found by reading Montesquieu, who taught that whereas what makes the laws effective in a despotism was fear, a republic must depend on the virtue of its citizens. "There is no great share of probity necessary to support a monarchical or despotic government; the force of the laws in one, and the Prince's arm in the other, are sufficient to direct and maintain the whole. But in a popular state one spring more is necessary, namely, virtue." The debaters in the Constitutional Convention had cited Montesquieu more often than Locke, and he continued to be quoted—and misquoted—in the popular press. During the Convention, his arguments in favor of the separation and balance of powers had proved most useful; after the form of government was settled, emphasis shifted to his insight that only a virtuous and moral citizenry could make a republic viable.

If one is willing to assume that men are naturally virtuous, then the foundations of a healthy republic were already present in American society and could be counted on to persist. But few Federalists were able to share this cheerful Jeffersonian assumption. Their attitude stemmed partly from the old Puritan awareness of man's natural depravity, but even more it stemmed from an understanding of the extreme fragility of their experiment in democracy and an awareness of the substantial demands for self-restraint and individual responsibility that republican government places on its citizens. Theirs was a style of consciousness that had been characteristic of the members of the Constitutional Convention, who had been frank in their acknowledgement—even insistence—that the sort of government they had devised depended for its continued existence on a public superior in its political sophistication to any other public, anywhere on the globe. There were to be checks and balances to restrain the corrupting influence of power, but in the last analysis it was citizens, not devices, who would have to guard the republic. The Founders were equally frank in

their acknowledgement that the average American might not be able to sustain the burdens placed on him. Because the American public was better educated, more endowed with landed property than any other, the risk seemed worth taking. Americans had shown in their state governments that they were capable of self-rule, but they were also capable of riot. He had taken democracy, Gouverneur Morris said, "not only . . . as a Man does his Wife for better or worse, but what few Men do with their Wives, . . . knowing all its bad Qualities." . . .

Only a virtuous citizenry would sustain a republic and, in a sinful world, a virtuous citizenry was made, not born. Could the Jeffersonians, who seemed so ready to ignore the issue altogether, be trusted to educate the people to virtue and enlightenment? Federalists had their doubts; for their part, the press and the pulpit seemed the most promising means of reinforcing what tendency to virtue and morality already existed. It was through the press, Thomas Green Fessenden thought, that the French had been persuaded to endorse the Revolution and the English persuaded to eschew it. "LITERATURE, well or ill-conducted . . . is the great engine, by which . . . all civilized States must ultimately be supported or overthrown," he asserted. Federalists treated the triumph of Thomas Jefferson, David H. Fischer has remarked, as "an object lesson in the power of the printed word," and bent their energies to establishing newspapers and increasing their circulation in an attempt to ensure that as many printed words as possible were of Federalist origin. In this they perhaps overestimated the Word, a tendency not unusual among men who believed that "words are things," who measured the success of a republic by the excellence of its literature and oratory, and who defined their opponents as anti-intellectuals. But the effort also suggested the variant of democracy that was Federalism. Federalists insisted that they would have retained their office had the American people not been deceived. The fault lay not with republican government, but with the capacity of the opposition for deceptive techniques, and with the understandable human propensity to listen to those who spoke of happiness rather than of stern duty or of rectitude.

"I am willing you should call this the Age of Frivolity as you do; and would not object if you had named it the Age of Folly, Vice, Frenzy, Fury, Brutality, Daemons, Buonaparte, Tom Paine, or the Age of the burning Brand from the bottomless Pitt: or any thing but the Age of Reason," John Adams told a friend. In an age of unreason, something more than newspapers was required to sustain the virtue that alone could sustain the republic; something more than a liberal education was required to counteract the disorderly passions that threatened to disrupt the state. William Crafts typically warned that a nation "subject to its passions" could not possibly be virtuous; "Passion, so far as it prevails, destroys reason," counseled Tapping Reeve, "and when it gains an entire ascendancy over men, it renders them bedlamites."

In this context, Faith had a political as well as a supernatural function; the God of the Federalists often appears to behave like a fourth branch of Government. "Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice?" George Washington had asked in the Farewell Address. "Give religion to the winds," wrote Abigail Adams, "and what tye is found strong enough to bind man to his duty, to restrain his inordinate passions? Honour is phantom. Moral principal [*sic*] feeble and unstable—nothing but a firm belief and well grounded

assurance that man is an accountable being, and that he is to render that account to a Being who will not be mocked, and cannot be deceived, will prove a sufficient Barrier, or stem the torrent of unruly passions and appetites."

Religious obligation would reinforce moral obligation; moral obligation would make popular government orderly and stable. This paradoxical insistence that religious faith was a necessary ingredient in a social order which forbade the establishment of religion was both widespread and persistent. . . .

The Jeffersonians were dangerous, Simeon Baldwin explained, because their influence was used to break down the "barrier of habitual morality . . . both as it respects our civil & our religious institutions . . . if the restraints of Law, of education, of habit & [of what the opposition was pleased to call] superstitions and prejudice [i.e., religion] shall be entirely removed, I am confident we shall have more *positive* vice, than is even now exhibited at the South. The human propensities when released from those restraints will like the pendulum vibrate & when urged by precept & allowed by Example they will vibrate to an extreme." They were vibrating, even then, in the camp meetings of the Great Revival. Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in the summer of 1801 set the pattern for subsequent revivals, at which salvation was demonstrated by ranting, twitching, fainting and other behavior closely resembling the cataleptic fit. The revivalists were not only saving themselves, they explained, they were redeeming the entire nation. But some people could not be comfortable in a nation so redeemed. The revival encouraged the free play of passions quite as much as militant deism did; like so many other disturbing trends in American life, it came out of a western wilderness which had voted for Jefferson and which the purchase of Louisiana had done much to enlarge. Religious liberty should mean that men were free to choose the institutional form of their faith, Federalists thought, but they feared if it were also construed to encourage the growth of deism on the one hand or of non-institutional evangelicalism on the other, then not only the churches, but the entire national establishment would be threatened.

In the years after the Revolution, the American walked a strange tightrope between optimism and pessimism. The Revolution had been both a radical break with the past and a conservative affirmation of it; that ambivalence persisted through the early years of the national experience. The Federalist characteristically searched the American social order to find the stability that would justify the Revolution; for the same purpose the Democrat searched it to find flexibility. The Jeffersonian, at least in theory, endorsed flexibility, unpredictability, open-endedness; he led the Federalist to wonder how a society so characterized could endure. The Virginia democrat lived in one of the least flexible of American social arrangements; when the Federalist found him endorsing unpredictability he logically concluded that the Virginian was a hypocrite. Men long for what they do not have; the Federalist's glorification of social stability—his castigation of the decline of deferential behavior, his objection to the annexation of the "howling wilderness" of Louisiana, his jealous maintenance of an extensive federal judiciary, his concern for the advancement of intellectuality, virtue, and traditional religious observance—may well have come out of his appreciation of the forces that were operating to increase the anxieties of American life.