CHAPTER 7

DEMOCRACY IN DISTRESS:
THE VIOLENCE OF PARTY POLITICS, 1788-1800

SUMMARY
A debate in the first United States Senate in 1789 over what title to use when addressing George Washington as president revealed the range of political questions to be considered by early politicians, and perhaps foreshadowed later attitudes adopted by rival groups over the proper roles and powers of the new government.

Force of Public Opinion
The Constitution reduced the power granted to states under the Articles of the Confederation yet it increased the power of citizens. As ordinary American voters became keenly interested in political issues and debates, elected officials learned that public opinion, not just the leadership of a social elite, would play a major role in guiding the country's future. This ideology was widely followed by a population that was very interested in the outcome of this debate.

Principle and Pragmatism: Establishing a New Government
In 1789, George Washington began his career as president, an office he managed successfully and with popular approval. Washington established lasting precedents. Congress refined the machinery of government with the creation of executive departments and a federal court system and provided revenue with passage of a tariff act.

Conflicting Visions: Jefferson and Hamilton
In spite of Washington's disdain for political squabbling, Americans began to divide into two camps: the Federalists, led by Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, and the Republicans, led by Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson. These factions developed and advocated diverse, dynamic, and differing ideas and visions about the role and nature of government, society, economic policy, foreign affiliations, diplomacy, and interpretation of the Constitution.

Hamilton's Plan for Prosperity and Security
Hamilton argued for a strong national government and central economic planning in the hands of the wealthy to ensure order in political and economic affairs. Jefferson feared such a government would become oppressive, threatening states' rights and infringing upon individual liberty. Hamilton wished to transform the United States into a self-sufficient industrial power, while Jefferson hoped the nation would remain one of small, independent farmers.
Funding and Assumption
To signal national solvency and to attract investment capital, Hamilton argued that the national government must fund (repay) the national debt as well as assume any outstanding state debts. Critics argued that the scheme enriched current money speculators at the expense of original investors.

Interpreting the Constitution: The Bank Controversy
Hamilton urged creation of a national bank, owned primarily by private stockholders, to administer the country's finances and supervise its currency. While opponents complained that such a bank was unconstitutional, Hamilton argued that the Constitution should be loosely interpreted to expand the powers of the national government whenever “necessary and proper.”

Setback for Hamilton
Congress passed Hamilton's early financial plans, Madison and Jefferson, however, rallied opponents with a variety of political and moral objections to defeat Hamilton's plan of governmental manufacturing promotion.

Charges of Treason: The Battle Over Foreign Affairs
Jefferson admired the French and hoped that the outbreak of their revolution in 1789 indicated a worldwide republican assault on absolute monarchy and aristocratic privilege. Hamilton cautioned against the anarchic results of excessive democracy and urged closer American ties to Britain.

The Peril of Neutrality
Warfare between Britain and France in 1793 complicated American politics. Britain continued to maintain forts in the United States’ Northwest Territory, began seizing American ships trading in the French West Indies, and impressed suspected British citizens on American ships while on the high seas. The efforts of French minister Edmond Genet to solicit private American aid for the French cause spurred an official Proclamation of Neutrality from President Washington.

Jay's Treaty Sparks Domestic Unrest
To calm diplomatic tension with the British, Washington sent Chief Justice John Jay to London to negotiate a settlement of America's numerous grievances. Hamilton forewarned the British that the U.S. would compromise on most issues, therefore the British remained firm on most of their policies. The resultant Jay's Treaty maintained peace, Republican critics, however, denounced it as a “sellout” of American rights.

Pushing the Native Americans Aside
The Federalists regained some popularity with other treaties that extracted major concessions in the West. Indian resistance in the Northwest Territory was crushed and Spain, fearing an American-British alliance, agreed to favorable American terms in the Treaty of San Lorenzo, also called Pinckney's Treaty.
Popular Political Culture
The ratification of Jay’s Treaty sparked and encouraged factionalism in the American political spectrum. Neither the Federalists or the Republicans saw it in their best interest to compromise, and each saw the demise of any opposition as the only solution.

Informing the Public: News and Politics
Newspapers and political clubs emerged to champion either the Republican or Federalist cause. The journals were fiercely partisan, presenting rumor or opinion as fact, while the purpose of the clubs was clearly political indoctrination. Political debates were bitter as each faction became convinced of its choices and increasingly suspicious of the other's wisdom and motives. The Whiskey Rebellion ignited civil unrest and heated political exchanges as Federalists blamed Republicans for unnecessary agitation and violence. Jefferson blamed the Federalists for exploiting the episode to create an army for the purpose of intimidating Republicans.

Washington's Farewell
Washington's “Farewell Address” of 1796 warned Americans to avoid political factions and entangling foreign alliances. Written largely by Hamilton, the address mostly served the Federalist cause in the forthcoming election.

The Adams Presidency
Hamilton's attempt to manipulate the election of 1796 backfired, angering newly elected president John Adams and heightening tensions within the Federalist party.

The XYZ Affair and Domestic Politics
During the first years of Adams's presidency, the relations between the United States and France steadily deteriorated. This period of increasing hostility became known as the Quasi-War. An American commission sent by Adams to pursue a peaceful settlement was met by French officials who arrogantly demanded a bribe as the price for negotiations. This so-called XYZ Affair humiliated and infuriated Americans.

Crushing Political Dissent
The Federalists used the outpouring of anti-French sentiment in America as an excuse to increase the nation's military defenses, a move intended to stifle internal political opposition, as well as thwart French aggression.

Silencing Political Opposition: The Alien and Sedition Acts
Purportedly measures to protect American security, the Alien and Sedition Acts were, in reality, Federalist measures designed to harass Republican spokespersons by disallowing criticism of the government. These blatantly political attempts to silence opposition ultimately proved counterproductive.
Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions
Jefferson and Madison drafted separate protests known as the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions asserting that the individual states had the right to interpret federal law, while labeling the Alien and Sedition Acts as unconstitutional.

Adams’s Finest Hour
Having refused to ask Congress for a formal declaration of war against France, Adams pursued peaceful negotiations. The Convention of Mortefontaine ended the Quasi-War and restored good relations between France and the United States, and, moreover, paving the way for the purchase of the Louisiana Territory.

The Peaceful Revolution: The Election of 1800
The Federalists lost office in 1800 partly as a result of internal party disputes, but more importantly, as a result of losing touch with public opinion.

Conclusion: Danger of Political Extremism
The election of 1800 is perhaps most noteworthy for the peaceful transition of government leadership from one political party to that of the opposition, demonstrating that such a process could be accomplished without widespread confusion, villainy, or violence. As Americans would often learn, political extremists are often more interested in private rather than public interests.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
After mastering this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Discuss the impact of public opinion on national leaders in setting the agenda from 1788 to 1800.

2. Evaluate George Washington's strengths and weaknesses as president.

3. Compare and contrast the political and economic philosophies advocated by Alexander Hamilton with those of Thomas Jefferson.

4. Explain how foreign affairs acted as a catalyst in the development of American political parties.

5. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of John Adams as president.

6. Describe the XYZ Affair and its impact on domestic politics, specifically explaining the intent and results of the Alien and Sedition Acts, as well as the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions.
7. Discuss the terms and results of the Convention of Mortefontaine.

8. Summarize the accomplishments of the Federalists while they were in power.

9. Explain the factors that contributed to the downfall and demise of the Federalist party.

10. Explain the description of the election of 1800 as a “peaceful revolution.”

GLOSSARY

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms:

1. **dialectic** the art of arriving at the truth by revealing the contradictions in an opponent's argument and overcoming them. “This dialectic had almost spun out of control. . .”

2. **partisan** strongly supportive of one side, party, or person, often unreasonably so. “The ‘public’ followed the great debates in hundreds of highly partisan newspapers and magazines.”

3. **monarchist** one who favors government by an absolute ruler. “Hamilton was publicly accused of being a secret monarchist . . .”

4. **anarchy** a condition of lawlessness and disorder due to a lack of governmental authority. Hamilton “assumed that in a republican society, the gravest threat to political stability was anarchy . . .”

5. **funding** a plan for repayment of the principle and interest of a debt. “Madison . . . attacked the funding scheme . . .”

6. **assumption** taking over the debt(s) of another. “Hamilton’s assumption proposal threatened to destroy . . . the supply of cut-rate securities.”

7. **loose construction** a broad interpretation of the Constitution expanding the implied powers of Congress. “Hamilton's loose construction carried the day . . .”

8. **reciprocity** a mutual exchange of privileges between countries. “Great Britain . . . refused to grant the United States full commercial reciprocity . . .”

9. **ideologue** one who strongly advocates certain ideas. “militant republicans, ideologues eager to liberate all Europe. . .”
10. **asylum** shelter against arrest and extradition granted to political refugees by a nation. “Genet . . . requested asylum, . . . and spent the remainder of his life residing in New York.”

11. **contraband** materials whose trade is forbidden. “The Royal Navy would continue to search American vessels on the high seas for contraband . . .”

12. **credo** a statement or set of fundamental beliefs. Washington's Farewell Address “ . . . became the credo of later American isolationists . . .”


14. **debacle** a sudden, disastrous turn of events. “Following the XYZ debacle . . . Talleyrand had changed his tune.”

15. **lame duck** an elected officeholder or assembly continuing in office from the period of an election to the inauguration of a successor. “. . . the House of Representatives, a 'lame duck' body still controlled by members of the Federalist party.”

**IDENTIFICATION**

Briefly identify the meaning and significance of the following terms:

1. Judiciary Act of 1789

2. Hamilton's *Report on Public Credit*

3. *Report on Manufacturers*

4. Jay's Treaty

5. Whiskey Rebellion
6. XYZ Affair

7. Quasi-War


9. Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions

10. Election of 1800

MATCHING

A. Match the following treaties with the appropriate result:

_____ 1. Proclamation of Neutrality a. avoidance of war between the United States and Britain

_____ 2. Jay's Treaty b. concessions by Spain to the United States in hopes of preventing an Anglo-American alliance

_____ 3. Treaty of Greenville c. avoidance of active U.S. entanglement in the British-French war of 1793

_____ 4. Treaty of San Lorenzo d. agreement between France and the United (Pinckney's Treaty) States nullifying the alliance of 1778

_____ 5. Convention of Mortefontaine e. cession of lands to the United States by Native Americans of the Northwest Territory

f. removal of all trade restrictions against the United States by Britain
B. Match the following public figures with the appropriate description:

_____1. James Madison  a. Republican Congressman convicted of sedition for his criticism of President Adams

_____2. John Marshall  b. “midnight judge” appointed as chief justice by President Adams

_____3. Charles C. Pinckney  c. editor of the Republican newspaper, *National Gazette*

_____4. Matthew Lyon  d. Hamilton's collaborator on *The Federalist*, but opponent of his financial schemes

_____5. Philip Freneau  e. U.S. representative to France outraged by the XYZ Affair; Federalist candidate for vice president in 1800

   f. secretary of war during Washington's administration

COMPLETION

Answer the question or complete the statement by filling in the blanks with the correct word or words.

1. In 1789, Congress created the Departments of ____________, ____________, and ____________.

2. The first chief justice of the Supreme Court and a leading figure in New York politics was ____________.

3. Alexander Hamilton defended the constitutionality of the national bank on the basis of the ____________ powers of Congress.

4. The minister who precipitated a major diplomatic crisis by seeking American aid for France in its war against Britain was ____________.
5. The United States had little chance of securing a successful negotiation of its problems with Britain because a secret message relaying America's willingness to compromise was sent to British officials by _____________.

6. General Anthony Wayne led an American army to victory over Indians in the Northwest Territory at the Battle of _____________.

7. John Fenno established a newspaper strongly supporting Federalist philosophy and policies, the _____________.

8. In 1794, farmers in western Pennsylvania rebelled against the levy of a federal excise tax on _____________.

9. “Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute” was the reaction of Federalist John Marshall to the _____________.

10. A recurrence of the tie that resulted in the election of 1800 was prevented by the ratification of the _____________. Amendment.

TRUE/FALSE

Mark the following statements either T (True) or F (False).

____ 1. Politics in the United States from 1788 to 1800 was marked by a high degree of consensus, that is, agreement among Americans on public policy.

____ 2. George Washington is the only president to have received a unanimous vote of the Electoral College.

____ 3. Southern planters urged adoption of high protective tariffs to discourage European imports.

____ 4. Hamilton perceived little or no conflict between private greed and public good.

____ 5. As president, George Washington felt he should defer to Congress in the shaping of foreign policy.

____ 6. Spain offered favorable terms to the United States in Pinckney’s Treaty because she feared a potential Anglo-American alliance aimed at her possessions in North America.
7. The Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 in western Pennsylvania, resulting in significant property damage and loss of life, necessitated the dispatch of a large federal army to put down the disturbance.

8. In the election of 1796, Hamilton urged Federalist electors to “throw away” their votes for John Adams, a candidate he deemed too independent.

9. The tie that resulted from the election of 1800 was resolved when Aaron Burr agreed to withdraw and allow the election of Thomas Jefferson.

10. The Kentucky and Virginia resolutions demanded southern secession as a protest against the Alien and Sedition Acts.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the one alternative that best completes the statement or answers the questions.

1. American newspapers in the 1790s
   a. offered a powerful tool for popular political mobilization.
   b. catered to a provincial culture that prized politeness.
   c. rarely criticized public figures.
   d. had difficulty remaining solvent.

2. In its first session, Congress
   a. levied a strongly protective tariff of 30 percent on imports.
   b. provided for the establishment of a federal court system.
   c. established the Department of Navy.
   d. prohibited the president from dismissing cabinet level appointees without Senate approval.

3. Jefferson maintained that the economic well-being of the United States required a(n)
   a. dependence on the monied classes.
   b. development of manufacturing.
   c. emphasis on agricultural productivity.
   d. reduced reliance on the international market.
4. Alexander Hamilton's financial plans for the United States included  
a. funding of the national debt.  
b. repudiation of the states' debts.  
c. establishment of state banks.  
d. all of the above.  

5. Hamilton argued that his credit system would  
a. reduce the influence of individual states in shaping national economic policy.  
b. signal to investors around the world that U.S. bonds represented a good risk.  
c. encourage American investment capital to remain in this country.  
d. all of the above.  

6. Hamilton overcame opposition to his credit system by promising to  
a. reward those states that had already paid their debts.  
b. grant partial payment to original, as well as current, bondholders.  
c. grant huge tracts of vacant western lands to state bondholders.  
d. support the location of the new federal capital on the Potomac River.  

7. Britain threatened American neutrality during Washington's administration by refusing to  
a. vacate military forts in the Northwest Territory.  
b. allow the sale of British goods in America.  
c. negotiate a settlement of differences.  
d. accept American currency in payment of past debts.  

8. In Pinckney's Treaty, the United States gained from Spain  
a. an opening of the Mississippi River to American commerce.  
b. a secure southern boundary on the thirty-first parallel.  
c. a promise to stay out of Indian affairs.  
d. all of the above.  

9. The Republicans tended to favor  
a. strict interpretation of the Constitution to defend states' rights.  
b. central economic planning, particularly the establishment of a national bank.  
c. an affiliation with the British in foreign affairs.  
d. maintenance of the public order, even if that meant calling out federal troops.  

10. According to George Washington, the Whiskey Rebellion represented a(n)  
a. minor protest by a few disgruntled farmers.  
b. Republican effort to undermine the authority of the federal government.  
c. Federalist attempt to intimidate Republicans.  
d. predictable reaction to excessive state taxes.
11. In his Farewell Address, George Washington warned Americans to avoid
   a. one-party domestic politics.
   b. Hamilton's financial schemes.
   c. entangling alliances with foreign nations.
   d. all of the above.

12. As president, John Adams
   a. received consistent support from Alexander Hamilton and the High Federalists.
   b. consulted often with Vice President Thomas Jefferson on all major issues.
   c. dismissed members of Washington's old cabinet whom he felt were unqualified or disloyal.
   d. refused to ask Congress for a formal declaration of war against France in response to the diplomatic humiliation of the XYZ Affair.

13. The Alien and Sedition Acts were designed to
   a. promote freedom of speech and of the press.
   b. encourage foreign immigration.
   c. harass and suppress Republican spokespersons.
   d. promote friendship between the United States and France.

14. The Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1798
   a. called for rigid enforcement of the Alien and Sedition Acts.
   b. labeled Jefferson and Madison as traitors.
   c. argued for the states' right of resisting “unconstitutional” national laws.
   d. urged unqualified support for President Adams.

15. In the election of 1800,
   a. the House of Representatives elected Thomas Jefferson.
   b. the Supreme Court decided the disputed election.
   c. John Adams received enthusiastic support from Alexander Hamilton.
   d. Aaron Burr withdrew any claims to the presidency.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

To check your understanding of the key issues of this period, answer the following questions:

1. Washington is often touted by historians as one of our best presidents. Explain why. What qualities and policies make for a “good” or a “bad” president? Who would you characterize as America's greatest presidents?

2. What precedents established by Washington influenced later American politics and politicians? Which of these precedents do we, or should we, still follow?
3. Who had the better plan for the nation's future, Alexander Hamilton or Thomas Jefferson? Explain.

4. Washington argued that the president could withhold information from the public in the interest of national security. Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

5. An obvious restriction of free speech, the Sedition Act outlawed criticism of the government. Is such a restriction ever a wise policy?

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

Read Chapter 7 of the text and the following selections: Benjamin Banneker’s letter to Thomas Jefferson, Molly Wallace’s “Valedictory Oration,” and Samuel Cornish’s “An Independent Press.” Answer the questions following the reading selections.

Benjamin Banneker, Letter to Thomas Jefferson (1791)

Sir, I am fully sensible of the greatness of that freedom which I take with you on the present occasion; a liberty which
Seemed to me Scarcely allowable, when I reflected on that distibguished, and dignifying station in which you Stand;
and the almost general prejudice and prepossession which is so prevalent in the world against those of my
complexion. . . .

   Sir I freely and Chearfully acknoweldge, that I am of the African race, and, in that colour which is natural to
them of the deepest dye:† and it is under a Sense of the most profound gratitude to the Supreme Ruler of the universe,
that I do now confess to you, that I am not under that State of tyrannical thralldom, and inhuman capivity, to which too
many of my bretheren are doomed; but that I have abundantly tasted of the fruition of those bessings which proceed
from that free and unequalled liberty with which you are favoured and which I hope you will willingly allow you have
received from the immediate Hand of that Being from whom proceedeth every good and perfect gift.

   Sir, Suffer me to recall to your mind that time in which the Arms and tyranny of the British Crown were
exerted with powerful effort, in order to reduce you to a State of Servitude; look back I entreat you on the variety of
dangers to which you were exposed, reflect on that time in which every human aid appeared unavailable, and in which
even hope and fortitude wore the greatful Sense of your miraculous and providential preservation; You cannot but
acknowledge, that the present freedom and tranquility
which you enjoy you have mercifully received, and that it is the peculiar blessing of Heaven.

   This, Sir, was a time in whch you clearly saw into the injustice of a State of Slavery, and in which you have
Just apprehension of the horrors of its condition, it was now Sir, that you abhorrence thereof was so excited, that you
publickly held forth this true and invaluable doctrine, which is worthy to be recorded and remembered in all
Succeeding ages. "We hold these truths to be Self evident, that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by
their creator with certain inalienable rights, that amongst them are life, liberty, and the persuit of happiness." . . .

   Sir, I suppose that your knowledge of the situation of my bretheren is too extensive to need a recital here;
neither shall I presume to prescribe methods by which they may be relieved, otherwise than by recommending to you,
and all others, to wean yourselves from those narrow prejudices which you have imbibed with respect to them, and as
Job proposed to his friends, "Put your Souls in their Souls' stead," thus shall your hearts be enlarged with kindness and
benevolence towards them, and thus shall you need neither the direction of myself or others in what manner to proceed
herein.

   And now, Sir, altho my Sympathy and affection for my brethern hath caused my enlargement thus far, I
ardently hope that your candour and generosity will plead with you in my behalf, when I make known to you, that it
was not originally my design; but that having taken up my pen in order to direct to you as a present, a copy of an
Almanack which I have calculated for the Succeeding year, I was unexpectedly and unavoidably led thereto. . . .
Molly Wallace, Valedictory Oration (1792)

The silent and solemn attention of a respectable audience, has often, at the beginning of discourses intimidated, even veterans, in the art of public elocution. What then must my situation be, when my sex, my youth and inexperience all conspire to make me tremble at the talk which I have undertaken? . . . With some, however, it has been made a question, whether we ought ever to appear in so public a manner. Our natural timidity, the domestic situation to which by nature and custom we seem destined, are, urged as arguments against what I have now undertaken:-Many sarcastical observations have been handed out against female oratory: But to what do they amount? Do they not plainly inform us, that, because we are females, we ought therefore to be deprived of what is perhaps the most effectual means of acquiring a just, natural and graceful delivery? No one will pretend to deny, that we should be taught to read in the best manner. And if to read, why not to speak? . . . But yet it might be asked, what, has a female character to do with declamation? That she should harangue at the head of an Army, in the Senate, or before a popular Assembly, is not pretended, neither is it requested that she ought to be an adept in the stormy and contentious eloquence of the bar, or in the abstract and subtle reasoning of the Senate; -we look not for female Pitt, Cicero, or Demosthenes.

There are more humble and milder scenes than those which I have mentioned, in which a woman may display her elocution. There are numerous topics, on which she may discourse without impropriety, in the discussion of which, she may instruct and please others, and in which she may exercise and improve her own understanding. After all, we do not expect women should become perfect orators. Why then should they be taught to speak in public? This question may possibly be answered by asking several others.

Why is a boy diligently and carefully taught the Latin, the Greek, or the Hebrew language, in which he will seldom have occasion, either to write or to converse? Why is he taught to demonstrate the propositions of Euclid, when during his whole life, he will not perhaps make use of one of them? Are we taught to dance merely for the sake of becoming dancers? No, certainly. These things are commonly studied, more on account of the habits, which the learning of them establishes, than on account of any important advantages which the mere knowledge of them can afford. So a young lady, from the exercise of speaking before a properly selected audience, may acquire some valuable habits, which, otherwise she can obtain from no examples, and that no precept can give. But, this exercise can with propriety be performed only before a select audience: a promiscuous and indiscriminate one, for obvious reasons.

Samuel Cornish, An Independent Press

The noble objects which we have in view by the publication of this Journal . . . encourage us to come boldly before an enlightened publick. . . . We should advertise to the world our motives by which we are actuated, and the objects which we contemplate.

We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the publick been deceived by misrepresentations, in things which concern us dearly, though in the estimation of some mere trifles; for though there are many in society who exercise towards us benevolent feelings; still (with sorrow we confess it) there are those who make it their business to enlarge upon the least trifle, which tends to the discredit of any person of colour; and pronounce anathemas and denounce our whole body for the misconduct of this guilty one. We are aware that there are many instances of vice among us, but we avow that it is because no one has taught its subjects to be virtuous; many instances of poverty, because no sufficient efforts accommodated to minds contracted by slavery, and deprived of early education have been made, to teach them how to husband their hard earnings, and to secure to themselves comfort.

Education being an object of the highest importance to the welfare of society, we shall endeavour to present just and adequate views of it, and to urge upon our brethren the necessity and expediency of training their children, while young, to habits of industry, and thus forming them for becoming useful members of society. It is surely time that we should awake from this lethargy of years, and make a concentrated effort for the education of our youth. We form a spoke in the human wheel and it is necessary that we should understand our [de]pendence on the different parts, and theirs on us, in order to perform our part with propriety.

Though not desiring of dictating, we shall feel it our incumbent duty to dwell occasionally upon the general principles and rules of economy. The world has grown too enlightened, to estimate any man’s character by his personal appearance. Though all men acknowledge the excellency of Franklin’s maxims, yet comparatively few practise upon them. We may deplore when it is too late, the neglect of these self-evidents truths, but it avails little to mourn. Ours will be the task of admonishing our brethren on these points.

The civil rights of a people being of the greatest value, it shall ever be our duty to vindicate our brethren, when oppressed; and to lay the case before the publick. We shall also urge upon our brethren (who are qualified by the laws of the various states), the expediency of using their elective franchise; and of making independent use of the same. We wish them not to become the tools of party.
And as much time is frequently lost, and wrong principles instilled, by the perusal of works of trivial importance, we shall consider it a part of our duty to recommend to our young readers, such authors as will not only enlarge their stock of useful knowledge, but such as will also serve to stimulate them to higher attainments in science.

We trust also, that through the columns of the FREEDOM’S JOURNAL, many practical pieces, having for their bases, the improvement of our brethren, will be presented to them, from the pens of many of our respected friends, who have kindly promised their assistance.

It is our earnest wish to make our Journal a medium of intercourse between our brethren in the different states of this great confederacy: that through its columns an expression of our sentiments, on many interesting subjects which concern us, may be offered to the publick: that plans which apparently are beneficial may be candidly discussed and properly weighed; if worthy, receive our cordial approbation; if not, our marked disapprobation.

Useful knowledge of every kind, and everything that relates to Africa, shall find a ready admission in our columns; and as that vast continent becomes daily more known, we trust that many things will come to light, proving that the natives of it are neither so ignorant nor stupid as they have generally supposed to be.

And while these important subjects shall occupy the columns of the FREEDOM’S JOURNAL, we would not be unmindful of our brethren who are still in the iron fetters of bondage. They are our kindred by all the times of nature; and though but little can be effected by us, still let our sympathies be poured forth, and our prayers in their behalf, ascend to Him who is able to succour them.

From the press and the pulpit we have suffered much by being incorrectly represented. Men whom we equally love and admire have not hesitated to represent us disadvantageously, without becoming personally acquainted with the true state of things, nor discerning between virtue and vice among us. The virtuous part of our people feel themselves sorely aggrieved under the existing state of things—they are not appreciated.

Our vices and our degradation are ever arrayed against us, but our virtues are passed by unnoticed. And what is still more lamentable, our friends, to whom we concede all the principles of humanity and religion, from these very causes seem to have fallen into the current of popular feeling and are imperceptibly floating on the stream—actually living in the practice of prejudice, while they abjure it in theory, and feel it not in their hearts. Is it not very desirable that such should know more of our actual condition; and of our efforts and feelings, that in forming or advocating plans for our amelioration, they may do it more understandingly? In the spirit of candor and humility we intend by a simple representation of facts to lay our case before the publick, with a view to arrest the progress of prejudice, and to shield ourselves against the consequent evils. We wish to conciliate all and to irritate none, yet we must be firm and unwavering in our principles, and persevering in our efforts.

1. The text author contends that “accelerated changes in information technology often spark fierce public debate.” Why is this so?

2. Is there ever justification for censorship of news or information? Using the text, how would critics of American newspapers in the 1790s have answered that question? How are their arguments similar to or different from the arguments of critics today who say that access to the Internet/World Wide Web in schools and colleges should be restricted or monitored?

3. Would Benjamin Banneker’s letter to Thomas Jefferson and Molly Wallace’s “Valedictory Oration” have been printed by American newspapers in the 1790s? Explain why or why not for each.

4. What were the purposes and objectives of Samuel Cornish’s newspaper, Freedom’s Journal? Who might have wished restriction of this newspaper and for what reasons?

5. What does the text author mean when he says that modern Americans must constantly relearn the lessons from political extremism? What acts of political extremism are discussed in Chapter 7 and what “lessons” do they offer us? Does the news media ever go “too far” in its coverage of people and events? Explain.