

Democracy in America, 1815—1840

57. The Monroe Doctrine (1823)

Source: James D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents (10 vols.: Washington, D.C., 1896-1899), vol. 2, pp. 778, 786-88.

Between 1810 and 1822, Spain's Latin American colonies rose in rebellion and established a series of independent nations, including Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Peru. By 1825, Spain's once vast American empire had been reduced to the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico. The uprisings inspired a wave of sympathy in the United States. In 1822, the Monroe administration became the first government to extend diplomatic recognition to the new Latin American republics. The following year, President James Monroe included in his annual message a passage, written by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, that became known as the Monroe Doctrine. It outlined principles that would help to govern the country's relations with the rest of the world for nearly a century—that the Western Hemisphere was no longer open to European colonization, and that the United States would remain uninvolved in the wars of Europe. In effect, Monroe declared the Americas a sphere of influence of the United States.

AT THE PROPOSAL of the Russian Imperial government, made through the minister of the Emperor residing here, a full power and instructions have been transmitted to the minister of the United States at St. Petersburg to arrange by amicable negotiation the respective rights and interests of the two nations on the northwest coast of this continent. A similar proposal has been made by His Imperial Majesty to the government of Great Britain, which has likewise been acceded to. The government of the United States has been desirous by this friendly proceeding of manifesting the great value which they have invariably attached to the friendship of the Emperor and their solicitude to cultivate the best understanding with his government.

In the discussions to which this interest has given rise and in the arrangements by which they may terminate the occasion has been judged proper for asserting, as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers. . . .

It was stated at the commencement of the last session that a great effort was then making in Spain and Portugal to improve the condition of the people of those countries, and that it appeared to be conducted with extraordinary moderation. It need scarcely be remarked that the results have been so far very different from what was then anticipated. Of events in that quarter of the globe, with which we have so much intercourse and from which we derive our origin, we have always been anxious and interested spectators. The citizens of the United States cherish sentiments the most friendly in favor of the liberty and happiness of their fellow-men on that side of the Atlantic. In the wars of the European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy to do so. It is only when our rights are invaded or seriously menaced that we resent injuries or make preparation for our defense. With the movements in this hemisphere we are of necessity more immediately connected, and by causes which must be obvious to all enlightened

and impartial observers. The political system of the allied powers [of Europe] is essentially different in this respect from that of America. . . .

We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety. With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the Governments who have declared their independence and maintain it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States. . . .

It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of [North or South America] without endangering our peace and happiness; nor can anyone believe that our southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. It is equally impossible, therefore, that we should behold such interposition in any form with indifference. If we look to the comparative strength and resources of Spain and those new governments, and their distance from each other, it must be obvious that she can never subdue them. It is still the true policy of the United States to leave the parties to themselves, in hope that other powers will pursue the same course.

Questions

1. Why does Monroe think that the "systems" of Europe and the Western Hemisphere are fundamentally different?
2. Why does Monroe mention Russia at the beginning of his address?

58. John Quincy Adams on the Role of the National Government (1825)

Source: James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (10 vols.: Washington, D.C., 1896-1899), Vol. 2., pp. 878-82.

Many Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century saw a powerful federal government as a threat to individual liberty. Others, however, believed that by promoting economic development and encouraging the development of the arts and sciences, the government would enhance Americans' freedom. Among the proponents of an activist federal government was John Quincy Adams, who served as president from 1825 to 1829.

In his first annual message to Congress, in December 1825, he set forth a comprehensive program for government action. He called for legislation promoting agriculture, commerce, and manufacturing, and "the mechanical and elegant arts." His plans included government-financed improvements in transportation, scientific expeditions, and the establishment of a national astronomical observatory. Adams astonished many listeners with his bold statement, "liberty is power." The United States, the freest nation on earth, he predicted, would also become the mightiest.

Adams's proposals alarmed all believers in strict construction of the Constitution. Few of his ambitious ideas received support in Congress. Not until the twentieth century would the kind of national economic planning and educational and scientific involvement envisioned by Adams be realized.

IN ASSUMING HER station among the civilized nations of the earth 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, and particularly to geographical and astronomical science. Looking back to the history only of the half century since the declaration of our independence, and observing the generous emulation with which the Governments of France,

Great Britain, and Russia have devoted the genius, the intelligence, the treasures of their respective nations to the common improvement of the species in these branches of science, is it not incumbent upon us to inquire whether we are not bound by obligations of a high and honorable character to contribute our portion of energy and exertion to the common stock? The voyages of discovery prosecuted in the course of that time at the expense of those nations have not only redounded to their glory, but to the improvement of human knowledge. We have been partakers of that improvement and owe for it a sacred debt, not only of gratitude, but of equal or proportional exertion in the same common cause. Of the cost of these undertakings, if the mere expenditures of outfit, equipment, and completion of the expeditions were to be considered the only charges, it would be unworthy of a great and generous nation to take a second thought. One hundred expeditions of circumnavigation . . . would not burden the exchequer of the nation fitting them out so much as the ways and means of defraying a single campaign in war. But if we take into the account the lives of those benefactors of mankind of which their services in the cause of their species were the purchase, how shall the cost of those heroic enterprises be estimated, and what compensation can be made to them or to their countries for them? Is it not by bearing them in affectionate remembrance? Is it not still more by imitating their example by enabling countrymen of our own to pursue the same career and to hazard their lives in the same cause?

. . .

In inviting the attention of Congress to the subject of internal improvements upon a view thus enlarged it is not my design to recommend the equipment of an expedition for circumnavigating the globe for purposes of scientific research and inquiry. We have objects of useful investigation nearer home, and to which our cares may be more beneficially applied. The interior of our own territories has yet been very imperfectly explored. Our coasts along many degrees of latitude upon the shores of the Pacific Ocean, though much frequented by our spirited commercial navigators, have been barely

visited by our public ships. The River of the West, first fully discovered and navigated by a countryman of our own, still bears the name of the ship in which he ascended its waters, and claims the protection of our armed national flag at its mouth. With the establishment of a military post there or at some other point of that coast, recommended by my predecessor and already matured in the deliberations of the last Congress, I would suggest the expediency of connecting the equipment of a public ship for the exploration of the whole north-west coast of this continent . . .

. . .

Connected with the establishment of an university, or separate from it, might be undertaken the erection of an astronomical observatory, with provision for the support of an astronomer, to be in constant attendance of observation upon the phenomena of the heavens, and for the periodical publication of his observations. It is with no feeling of pride as an American that the remark may be made that on the comparatively small territorial surface of Europe there are existing upward of 130 of these light-houses of the skies, while throughout the whole American hemisphere there is not one. If we reflect a moment upon the discoveries which in the last four centuries have been made in the physical constitution of the universe by the means of these buildings and of observers stationed in them, shall we doubt of their usefulness to every nation? And while scarcely a year passes over our heads without bringing some new astronomical discovery to light, which we must fain receive at second hand from Europe, are we not cutting ourselves off from the means of returning light for light while we have neither observatory nor observer upon our half of the globe and the earth revolves in perpetual darkness to our unsearching eyes?

The Constitution under which you are assembled is a charter of limited powers. After full and solemn deliberation upon all or any of the objects which, urged by an irresistible sense of my own duty, I have recommended to your attention should you come to the conclusion that, however desirable in themselves, the enactment of laws for

effecting them would transcend the powers committed to you by that venerable instrument which we are all bound to support, let no consideration induce you to assume the exercise of powers not granted to you by the people. But if the power to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever over the District of Columbia; if the power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States; if the power to regulate commerce with foreign nations and among the several States and with the Indian tribes, to fix the standard of weights and measures, to establish post-offices and post-roads, to declare war, to raise and support armies, to provide and maintain a navy, to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States, and to make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying these powers into execution—if these powers and others enumerated in the Constitution may be effectually brought into action by laws promoting 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, 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—would be treachery to the most sacred of trusts.

The spirit of improvement is abroad upon the earth. It stimulates the hearts and sharpens the faculties not of our fellow-citizens alone, but of the nations of Europe and of their rulers. While dwelling with pleasing satisfaction upon the superior excellence of our political institutions, let us not be unmindful that liberty is power; that the nation blessed with the largest portion of liberty must in proportion to its numbers be the most powerful nation upon earth, 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 fellowmen. While foreign nations less blessed with that freedom which is power than ourselves are advancing with gigantic strides in the career of public

improvement, were we to slumber in indolence or fold up our arms and proclaim to the world that we are palsied by the will of our constituents, would it not be to cast away the bounties of Providence and doom ourselves to perpetual inferiority? In the course of the year now drawing to its close we have beheld, under the auspices and at the expense of one State of this Union, a new university unfolding its portals to the sons of science and holding up the torch of human improvement to eyes that seek the light. We have seen under the persevering and enlightened enterprise of another State the waters of our Western lakes mingle with those of the ocean. If undertakings like these have been accomplished in the compass of a few years by the authority of single members of our Confederation, can we, the representative authorities of the whole Union, fall behind our fellow-servants in the exercise of the trust committed to us for the benefit of our common sovereign by the accomplishment of works important to the whole and to which neither the authority nor the resources of any one State can be adequate?

Questions

1. Why does President Adams believe that the federal government should promote the sciences and arts?
2. What does he mean by the remark, "liberty is power"?

59. John C. Calhoun, the Concurrent Majority (ca. 1845)

Source: "A Disquisition on Government," in Richard K. Crallé, ed., The Works of John C. Calhoun (New York, 1854–1857), Vol. 1, pp. 28–29.

The Nullification Crisis of the early 1830s pitted South Carolina, which claimed the right to nullify a national tariff law of which it disapproved,

against President Andrew Jackson. John C. Calhoun, once a strong nationalist, emerged as the leading theorist of nullification. The national government, he insisted, had been created by an agreement between sovereign states, each of which retained the right to prevent the enforcement within its borders of acts of Congress that exceeded the powers spelled out in the Constitution.

In the aftermath of the crisis, Calhoun began thinking about other constitutional mechanisms that could preserve both the Union and the South's rights wherein a nation who it was becoming a distinct minority. He developed the theory of the "concurrent majority." Rather than relying on a simple numerical majority to ascertain the popular will, Calhoun argued, the only way to ensure the stability of a large, diverse nation was for each major interest (including slaveowners) to have the right to veto all measures that affected it. Calhoun began writing his *Disquisition on Government*, from which the excerpt below is taken, during the 1840s, but it was not published until after his death in 1850.

THERE ARE TWO different modes in which the sense of the community may be taken; one, simply by the right of suffrage, unaided; the other, by the right through a proper organism. Each collects the sense of the majority. But one regards numbers only, and considers the whole community as a unit, having but one common interest throughout; and collects the sense of the greater number of the whole, as that of the community. The other, on the contrary, regards interests as well as numbers;—considering the community as made up of different and conflicting interests, as far as the action of the government is concerned; and takes the sense of each, through its majority or appropriate organ, and the united sense of all, as the sense of the entire community. The former of these I shall call the numerical, or absolute majority; and the latter, the concurrent, or constitutional majority. I call it the constitutional majority, because it is an essential element in every constitutional government,—be its form what it may. So great is the difference, politically speaking, between the two majorities, that they cannot be confounded, without leading to

great and fatal errors; and yet the distinction between them has been so entirely overlooked, that when the term *majority* is used in political discussions, it is applied exclusively to designate the numerical,—as if there were no other. Until this distinction is recognized, the better understood, there will continue to be great liability to error in properly constructing constitutional governments, especially of the popular form, and of preserving them when properly constructed. Until then, the latter will have a strong tendency to slide, first, into the government of the numerical majority, and finally, into absolute government of some other form. To show that such must be the case, and at the same time to mark more strongly the difference between the two, in order to guard against the danger of overlooking it, I propose to consider the subject more at length.

The first and leading error which naturally arises from overlooking the distinction referred to, is, to confound the numerical majority with the people; and this so completely as to regard them as identical. This is a consequence that necessarily results from considering the numerical as the only majority. All admit, that a popular government, or democracy, is the government of the people; for the terms imply this. A perfect government of the kind would be one which would embrace the consent of every citizen or member of the community; but as this is impracticable, in the opinion of those who regard the numerical as the only majority, and who can perceive no other way by which the sense of the people can be taken,—they are compelled to adopt this as the only true basis of popular government, in contradistinction to governments of the aristocratical or monarchical form. Being thus constrained, they are, in the next place, forced to regard the numerical majority, as, in effect, the entire people. . . .

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The necessary consequence of taking the sense of the community by the concurrent majority is, as has been explained, to give to each interest or portion of the community a negative on the others. It is this mutual negative among its various conflicting interests, which invests each with the power of protecting itself;—and places the

rights and safety of each, where only they can be securely placed, under its own guardianship. Without this there can be no systematic, peaceful, or effective resistance to the natural tendency of each to come into conflict with the others: and without this there can be no constitution. It is this negative power,—the power of preventing or arresting the action of the government,—be it called by what term it may,—veto, interposition, nullification, check, or balance of power,—which, in fact, forms the constitution. They are all but different names for the negative power.

Questions

1. How does Calhoun distinguish between the “numerical” and “concurrent” majorities?
2. Which Americans would be most likely to object to Calhoun’s proposed constitutional system?

60. Chief Sharitarish on Changes in Indian Life (1822)

Source: James Buchanan, Sketches of the History, Manners, and Customs of the North American Indians (New York, 1824), pp. 38–42.

In 1821, a large delegation of Indians arrived in Washington to meet with President James Monroe. Among them was Sharitarish, principal chief of the Great Pawnees, a hunting tribe of the Great Plains. In his speech, excerpted here, Sharitarish describes the lives of his people and how they had changed as they came into contact with white traders and hunters. Although relatively few whites lived west of the Mississippi River in 1821, Sharitarish seemed to understand that the days of his people’s traditional way of life were numbered.

MY GREAT FATHER:—I have travelled a great distance to see you—I have seen you and my heart rejoices. I have heard your words—they have entered one ear and shall not escape the other, and I will carry them to my people as pure as they came from your mouth.

My Great Father—... If I am here now and have seen your people, your houses, your vessels on the big lake, and a great many wonderful things far beyond my comprehension, which appear to have been made by the Great Spirit and placed in your hands, I am indebted to my Father [Major Benjamin O’Fallon] here, who invited me from home, under whose wings I have been protected... but there is still another Great Father to whom I am much indebted—it is the Father of us all... The Great Spirit made us all—he made my skin red, and yours white; he placed us on this earth, and intended that we should live differently from each other.

He made the whites to cultivate the earth, and feed on domestic animals; but he made us, red skins, to rove through the uncultivated woods and plains; to feed on wild animals; and to dress with their skins. He also intended that we should go to war—to take scalps—steal horses from and triumph over our enemies—cultivate peace at home, and promote the happiness of each other.

My Great Father:—Some of your good chiefs, as they are called [missionaries], have proposed to send some of their good people among us to change our habits, to make us work and live like the white people... You love your country—you love your people—you love the manner in which they live, and you think your people brave. I am like you, my Great Father, I love my country—I love my people—I love the manner in which we live, and think myself and warriors brave. Spare me then, my Father; let me enjoy my country, and I will trade skins with your people. I have grown up, and lived thus long without work—I am in hopes you will suffer me to die without it. We have plenty of buffalo, beaver, deer, and other wild animals—we have an abundance of horses—we have everything we want—we have plenty of land, if you will keep your people off of it...

There was a time when we did not know the whites—our wants were then fewer than they are now. They were always within our control—we had then seen nothing which we could not get. Before our intercourse with the whites, who have caused such a destruction in our game, we could lie down to sleep, and when we awoke we would find the buffalo feeding around our camp—but now we are killing them for their skins, and feeding the wolves with their flesh, to make our children cry over their bones.

Here, my Great Father, is a pipe which I present you, as I am accustomed to present pipes to all the red skins in peace with us. It is filled with such tobacco as we were accustomed to smoke before we knew the white people. It is pleasant, and the spontaneous growth of the most remote parts of our country. I know that the robes, leggings, moccasins, bear claws, etc., are of little value to you, but we wish you to have them deposited and preserved in some conspicuous part of your lodge, so that when we are gone and the sod turned over our bones, if our children should visit this place, as we do now, they may see and recognize with pleasure the deposits of their fathers; and reflect on the times that are past.

Questions

1. How, according to Sharitarish, has "our intercourse with the whites" affected the Indians' way of life?
2. What is Sharitarish's aspiration for his people?

61. Appeal of the Cherokee Nation (1830)

Source: *E. C. Tracy, Memoir of the Life of Jeremiah Evarts (Boston, 1845), pp. 149–58.*

One of the early laws of Andrew Jackson's administration, the Indian Removal Act of 1830, provided for uprooting the Cherokee and four other tribes, with a total population of around 60,000 living in the Southeast. The Cherokee had made great efforts to become citizens, establishing schools, adopting a constitution modeled on that of the United States, and becoming successful farmers, many of whom owned slaves. But in his messages to Congress, Jackson referred to them as "savages" and supported Georgia's effort to seize Cherokee land and nullify the tribe's laws.

Cherokee leaders petitioned Congress, proclaiming their desire to "remain on the land of our fathers," as guaranteed in treaties with the federal government. They also went to court to protect their rights. Chief Justice John Marshall held that Georgia's action in extending its jurisdiction over the Cherokee violated the tribe's treaties with Washington. But presidents Jackson and Van Buren refused to recognize the ruling's validity. Eventually, nearly all the Cherokee, along with the other "civilized tribes," were forced to leave their homes. Over 4,000 Indians perished during the winter of 1838–1839 on the Trail of Tears, as the removal route to present-day Oklahoma came to be called.

WE ARE AWARE that some persons suppose it will be for our advantage to remove beyond the Mississippi. We think otherwise. Our people universally think otherwise. Thinking that it would be fatal to their interests, they have almost to a man sent their memorial to Congress, deprecating the necessity of a removal. This question was distinctly before their minds when they signed their memorial. Not an adult person can be found, who has not an opinion on the subject; and if the people were to understand distinctly, that they could be protected against the laws of the neighboring States, there is probably not an adult person in the nation, who would think it best to remove; though possibly a few might emigrate individually. There are doubtless many who would flee to an unknown country, however beset with dangers, privations and sufferings, rather than be sentenced to spend six years in a Georgia prison for advising one of

their neighbors not to betray his country. And there are others who could not think of living as outlaws in their native land, exposed to numberless vexations, and excluded from being parties or witnesses in a court of justice. It is incredible that Georgia should ever have enacted the oppressive laws to which reference is here made, unless she had supposed that something extremely terrific in its character was necessary, in order to make the Cherokees willing to remove. We are not willing to remove; and if we could be brought to this extremity, it would be, not by argument; not because our judgment was satisfied; not because our condition will be improved—but only because we cannot endure to be deprived of our national and individual rights, and subjected to a process of intolerable oppression.

We wish to remain on the land of our fathers. We have a perfect and original right to claim this, without interruption or molestation. The treaties with us, and laws of the United States made in pursuance of treaties, guaranty our residence, and our privileges, and secure us against intruders. Our only request is, that these treaties may be fulfilled, and these laws executed.

But if we are compelled to leave our country, we see nothing but ruin before us. The country west of the Arkansas territory is unknown to us. From what we can learn of it, we have no prepossessions in its favor. All the inviting parts of it, as we believe, are preoccupied by various Indian nations, to which it has been assigned. They would regard us as intruders, and look upon us with an evil eye. The far greater part of that region is, beyond all controversy, badly supplied with wood and water; and no Indian tribe can live as agriculturists without these articles. All our neighbors, in case of our removal, though crowded into our near vicinity, would speak a language totally different from ours, and practice different customs. The original possessors of that region are now wandering savages, lurking for prey in the neighborhood. They have always been at war, and would be easily tempted to turn their arms against peaceful emigrants. Were the country to which we are urged much better than it is represented to be, and were it free from the objections which we have made to it, still it is not the land of our birth,

nor of our affections. It contains neither the scenes of our childhood, nor the graves of our fathers.

Questions

1. What reasons do the Cherokee give for rejecting the idea of moving beyond the Mississippi River?
2. How do the Cherokee understand their "national and individual rights"?

62. Andrew Jackson, Veto of the Bank Bill (1832)

Source: James D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents (10 vols.: Washington, D.C., 1896-1899), Vol. 3, pp. 1139-54.

The central political struggle of the Age of Jackson was the president's war on the Bank of the United States. The Second Bank of the United States, a private corporation that conducted the federal government's financial business and regulated currency issued by state banks, had been given a twenty-year charter by Congress in 1816. The issue of the bank's future came to a head in 1832, when the institution's allies persuaded Congress to approve a bill extending it for another twenty years. Jackson vetoed the bill. His veto message is perhaps the central document of what would come to be called "Jacksonian democracy."

The proper role of government, Jackson insisted, was to offer "equal protection" to all citizens. In a democracy, it was unacceptable for Congress to create a source of economic power and privilege unaccountable to the people. Jackson presented himself to "humble" Americans as their defender against entrenched economic interests. Jackson's effective appeal to popular sentiments helped him win reelection in 1832. His victory ensured the death of the Bank of the United States.

THE BILL "to modify and continue" the act [to recharter the Second Bank of the U.S.]... ought not to become a law... The powers and privileges possessed by the existing bank are unauthorized by the Constitution, subversive to the rights of the States, and dangerous to the liberties of the people... The present corporate body... enjoys an exclusive privilege of banking under the authority of the General Government, a monopoly of its favor and support... The powers, privileges, and favors bestowed upon it in the original charter, by increasing the value of the stock far above its par value, operated as a gratuity of many millions to its stockholders... Every monopoly and all exclusive privileges are granted at the expense of the public, which ought to receive a fair equivalent. The many millions which this act proposes to bestow on the stockholders of the existing bank must come directly or indirectly out of the earnings of the American people... It is not conceivable how the present stockholders can have any claim to the special favor of Government. Should [the bank's] influence become concentrated, as it may under the operation of such an act as this, in the hands of a self-elected directory... will there not be cause to tremble for the purity of our elections.

It is maintained by the advocates of the bank that its constitutionality in all its features ought to be considered as settled by precedent and by the decision of the Supreme Court. To this conclusion I can not assent... The Congress, the Executive, and the Court must each for itself be guided by its own opinion of the Constitution. Each public officer who takes an oath to support the Constitution swears that he will support it as he understands it, and not as it is understood by others... The opinion of the judges has no more authority over Congress than the opinion of Congress has over the judges, and on that point the president is independent of both...

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It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes. Distinctions in society will always exist under every just government. Equality of talents,

of education, or of wealth cannot be produced by human institutions. In the full enjoyment of the gifts of Heaven and the fruits of superior industry, economy, and virtue, every man is equally entitled to protection by law; but when the laws undertake to add to these natural and just advantages artificial distinctions, to grant titles, gratuities, and exclusive privileges, to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of our society—the farmers, mechanics and laborers—who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their Government. There are no necessary evils in government. Its evils exist only in its abuses. If [the government] would confine itself to equal protection... it would be an unqualified blessing. In the [Bank Bill]... there seems to be a wide and unnecessary departure from these just principles...

Nor is our Government to be maintained or our Union preserved by invasions of the rights and power of the several States. In thus attempting to make our General Government strong we make it weak. Its true strength consists in leaving individuals and States as much as possible to themselves—in making itself felt, not in its power, but in its beneficence; not in its control, but in its protection; not in binding the States more closely to the center, but leaving each to move unobstructed in its proper orbit.

Experience should teach us wisdom. Most of the difficulties our Government now encounters... have sprung from an abandonment of the legitimate objects of Government... Many of our rich men have not been content with equal protection and equal benefits, but have besought us to make them richer by act of Congress. By attempting to gratify their desires we have... arrayed section against section, interest against interest, and man against man... We [must] at least take a stand against all new grants of monopolies and exclusive privileges, against any prostitution of our Government to the advancement of the few at the expense of the many...

Questions

1. Why does Jackson distinguish between just and unjust "distinctions in society"?
2. What does Jackson see as the legitimate scope of government action?

CHAPTER 11

The Peculiar Institution

63. Frederick Douglass on the Desire for Freedom (1845)

Source: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (Boston, 1845), pp. 39–43.

No American of the nineteenth century spoke more eloquently or effectively against slavery and racial inequality than Frederick Douglass. Born into slavery in 1818, he became a major figure in the crusade for abolition, the drama of emancipation, and the effort during Reconstruction to give meaning to black freedom. He was also active in other reform movements, such as the campaign for women's rights.

Douglass experienced slavery in all its variety, from work as a house servant and as a skilled craftsman in a Baltimore shipyard to labor as a plantation field hand. In 1838, having borrowed the free papers of a black sailor, he escaped to the North. He went on to become perhaps the era's most prominent antislavery orator and editor, and wrote three versions of his autobiography. The first, which appeared in 1845, offered an eloquent brief account of his experiences in slavery and his escape.

I WAS NOW about twelve years old, and the thought of being *a slave for life* began to bear heavily upon my heart. Just about this time, I got hold of a book entitled "The Columbian Orator." Every opportunity I got, I used to read this book. Among much of other interesting