

"In every free and deliberating society, there must, from the nature of man, be opposite parties, and violent dissensions and discords; and one of these, for the most part, must prevail over the other for a longer or shorter time." --Thomas Jefferson to John Taylor, 1798. ME 10:45

"In an absolute government there can be no... equiponderant parties. The despot is the government. His power suppressing all opposition, maintains his ministers firm in their places. What he has contracted, therefore, through them, he has the power to observe with good faith; and he identifies his own honor and faith with that of his nation." --Thomas Jefferson to John Langdon, 1810. ME 12:377

"Warring against [the principles] of the people,... there is no length to which [the delusion of the people] may not be pushed by a party in possession of the revenues and the legal authorities of the United States, for a short time indeed, but yet long enough to admit much particular mischief. There is no event, therefore, however atrocious which may not be expected." --Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Smith, 1798. (*) ME 10:56

"It is the steady abuse of power in other governments which renders that of opposition always the popular party." --Thomas Jefferson to Albert Gallatin, 1818. FE 10:106

The Basic Differences Between Parties

"Men by their constitutions are naturally divided into two parties: 1. Those who fear and distrust the people, and wish to draw all powers from them into the hands of the higher classes. 2. Those who identify themselves with the people, have confidence in them, cherish and consider them as the most honest and safe, although not the most wise depository of the public interests. In every country these two parties exist, and in every one where they are free to think, speak, and write, they will declare themselves. Call them, therefore, Liberals and Serviles, Jacobins and Utras, Whigs and Tories, Republicans and Federalists, Aristocrats and Democrats, or by whatever name you please, they are the same parties still and pursue the same object. The last one of Aristocrats and Democrats is the true one expressing the essence of all." --Thomas Jefferson to Henry Lee, 1824. ME 16:73

"Both of our political parties, at least the honest portion of them, agree conscientiously in the same object: the public good; but they differ essentially in what they deem the means of promoting that good. One side believes it best done by one composition of the governing powers, the other by a different one. One fears most the ignorance of the people; the other the selfishness of rulers

independent of them. Which is right, time and experience will prove. We think that one side of this experiment has been long enough tried and proved not to promote the good of the many, and that the other has not been fairly and sufficiently tried. Our opponents think the reverse. With whichever opinion the body of the nation concurs, that must prevail." --Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, 1804. ME 11:52

"Men have differed in opinion and been divided into parties by these opinions from the first origin of societies, and in all governments where they have been permitted freely to think and to speak. The same political parties which now agitate the U.S. have existed through all time. Whether the power of the people or that of the [aristocracy] should prevail were questions which kept the states of Greece and Rome in eternal convulsions, as they now schismatize every people whose minds and mouths are not shut up by the gag of a despot. And in fact the terms of Whig and Tory belong to natural as well as to civil history. They denote the temper and constitution of mind of different individuals." --Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 1813. ME 13:279

"The division into Whig and Tory is founded in the nature of man; the weakly and nerveless, the rich and the corrupt, seeing more safety and accessibility in a strong executive; the healthy, firm, and virtuous, feeling confidence in their physical and moral resources, and willing to part with only so much power as is necessary for their good government; and, therefore, to retain the rest in the hands of the many, the division will substantially be into Whig and Tory." -- Thomas Jefferson to Joel Barlow, 1802. ME 10:310

"The parties of Whig and Tory are those of nature. They exist in all countries, whether called by these names or by those of Aristocrats and Democrats, Cote Droite and Cote Gauche, Ultras and Radicals, Serviles and Liberals. The sickly, weakly, timid man fears the people, and is a Tory by nature. The healthy, strong and bold cherishes them, and is formed a Whig by nature." --Thomas Jefferson to Lafayette, 1823. ME 15:492

"Nature has made some men monarchists and Tories by their constitution, and some, of course, there always will be." --Thomas Jefferson to Albert Gallatin, 1817. ME 15:135

"The common division of Whig and Tory... is the most salutary of all divisions and ought, therefore, to be fostered instead of being amalgamated; for take away this, and some more dangerous principle of division will take its place." -- Thomas Jefferson to William Short, 1825. ME 16:96

"I consider the party division of Whig and Tory the most wholesome which can exist in any government, and well worthy of being nourished, to keep out those of a more dangerous character." --Thomas Jefferson to William T. Barry, 1822. ME 15:388

"To me... it appears that there have been differences of opinion and party differences, from the first establishment of government to the present day, and on the same question which now divides our own country; that these will continue

through all future time; that every one takes his side in favor of the many, or of the few, according to his constitution, and the circumstances in which he is placed.. that as we judge between the Claudii and the Gracchi, the Wentworths and the Hampdens of past ages, so of those among us whose names may happen to be remembered for awhile, the next generations will judge favorably or unfavorably according to the complexion of individual minds and the side they shall themselves have taken; that nothing new can be added to what has been said by others and will be said in every age in support of the conflicting opinions on government; and that wisdom and duty dictate an humble resignation to the verdict of our future peers;" --Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 1813. ME 13:283

"Wherever there are men, there will be parties; and wherever there are free men they will make themselves heard. Those of firm health and spirits are unwilling to cede more of their liberty than is necessary to preserve order; those of feeble constitutions will wish to see one strong arm able to protect them from the many. These are the Whigs and Tories of nature. These mutual jealousies produce mutual security; and while the laws shall be obeyed, all will be safe. He alone is your enemy who disobeys them." --Thomas Jefferson: Misc. Notes, 1801? FE 8:1

"The Tories are for strengthening the Executive and General Government; the Whigs cherish the representative branch and the rights reserved by the States as the bulwark against consolidation, which must immediately generate monarchy." --Thomas Jefferson to Lafayette, 1823. ME 15:493

"I had always expected that when the republicans should have put down all things under their feet, they would schismatize among themselves. I always expected, too, that whatever names the parties might bear, the real division would be into moderate and ardent republicanism. In this division there is no great evil - not even if the minority obtain the ascendancy by the accession of federal votes to their candidate; because this gives us one shade only, instead of another, of republicanism. It is to be considered as apostasy only when they purchase the votes of federalists, with a participation in honor and power." --Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Cooper, 1807. ME 11:265

"The duty of an upright administration is to pursue its course steadily, to know nothing of these family dissensions, and to cherish the good principles of both parties." --Thomas Jefferson to George Logan, 1805. ME 11:71

The Utility of Party Divisions

"I am no believer in the amalgamation of parties, nor do I consider it as either desirable or useful for the public; but only that, like religious differences, a difference in politics should never be permitted to enter into social intercourse or to disturb its friendships, its charities or justice. In that form, they are censors of the conduct of each other and useful watchmen for the public." --Thomas Jefferson to Henry Lee, 1824. ME 16:73

"It would not be for the public good to have [a majority in Congress of one party] greater [than] two to one." --Thomas Jefferson Joel Barlow, 1802. (*) ME 10:319

"A respectable minority [in Congress] is useful as censors." --Thomas Jefferson to Joel Barlow, 1802. ME 10:319

"[Those] States in which local discontents might engender a commencement of fermentation would be paralyzed and self-checked by that very division into parties into which we have fallen, into which all States must fall wherein men are at liberty to think, speak and act freely according to the diversities of their individual conformations, and which are, perhaps, essential to preserve the purity of the government by the censorship which these parties habitually exercise over each other." --Thomas Jefferson to A. L. C. Destutt de Tracy, 1811. ME 13:21

Maintaining Union Amid Party Differences

"Perhaps this party division is necessary to induce each to watch and delate to the people the proceedings of the other. But if on a temporary superiority of the one party the other is to resort to a scission of the Union, no federal government can ever exist." --Thomas Jefferson to John Taylor, 1798. ME 10:45

"I can scarcely contemplate a more incalculable evil than the breaking of the Union into two or more parts." --Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 1792. ME 8:346

"If we keep together we shall be safe, and when error is so apparent as to become visible to the majority, they will correct it." --Thomas Jefferson to Thomas W. Maury, 1816. ME 18:291

"Who can say what would be the evils of a scission, and when and where they would end? Better keep together as we are, haul off from Europe as soon as we can and from all attachments to any portions of it; and if they show their power just sufficiently to hoop us together, it will be the happiest situation in which we can exist." --Thomas Jefferson to John Taylor, 1798. ME 10:46

Substantial Differences of Principle

"Where the principle of difference [between political parties] is as substantial and as strongly pronounced as between the republicans and the monarchs of our country, I hold it as honorable to take a firm and decided part and as immoral to pursue a middle line, as between the parties of honest men and rogues, into which every country is divided." --Thomas Jefferson to William Branch Giles, 1795. ME 9:317

"That each party endeavors to get into the administration of the government and exclude the other from power is true, and may be stated as a motive of action; but this is only secondary; the primary motive being a real and radical difference of political principle. I sincerely wish our differences were but personally who should govern, and that the principles of our Constitution were those of both parties. Unfortunately, it is otherwise; and the question of preference between monarchy and republicanism, which has so long divided mankind elsewhere, threatens a permanent division here." --Thomas Jefferson to John Melesh, 1813. ME 13:208