30. *On the Louisiana Purchase*

To Josiah Quincy

*Quincy, February 9, 1811*

Should I let loose my imagination into futurity, I could imagine that I foresee changes and revolutions such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard; changes in forms of government, changes in religion, changes in ecclesiastical establishments, changes in armies and navies, changes in alliances and foreign relations, changes in commerce, &c., &c., &c., without end. I cannot see any better principle at present than to make as little innovation as possible; keep things going as well as we can in the present train.

The Union appears to me to be the rock of our salvation, and every reasonable measure for its preservation is expedient. Upon this principle, I own, I was pleased with the purchase of Louisiana, because, without it, we could never have secured and commanded the navigation of the Mississippi. The western country would infallibly have revolted from the Union. Those States would have united with England, or Spain, or France, or set up an independence, or done anything else to obtain the free use of that river. I wish the Constitution had been more explicit, or that the States had been consulted; but it seems Congress have not entertained any doubts of their authority, and I cannot say that they are destitute of plausible arguments to support their opinion. . . .

Prophecies of division have been familiar in my ears for six-and-thirty years. They have been incessant, but have had no other effect than to increase the attachment of the people to the Union. However lightly we may think of the voice of the people sometimes, they not unfrequently see farther than you or I, in many great fundamental questions; and you may depend upon it, they see in a partition of the Union more danger to American liberty than poor Ames's distempered imagination conceived, and a total loss of independence for both fragments, or all the fragments, of the Union. . . .