A Tale of Two Revolutions
By Lloyd Phillips

Both the American and the French Revolutions had a significant effect on the history of mankind but in very divergent ways. The American Revolution was the first time in history that men created a government based on the principles that God was sovereign over man and man was sovereign over government. The Declaration of Independence placed before mankind a language so simple that any could comprehend that all mankind was equal in the sight of God and therefore had a right to expect equal treatment from their government. It explained that rights were given by God and not by government, and certain rights were inalienable, including those foundational rights of life, liberty, and property.

The French Revolution was based upon the cry of liberty, equality, and fraternity! Equality in this case meant something very different than in the American context. It did not mean equal in the sight of God or the equal distribution of legal justice; it instead attempted to equally distribute resources and hence became the first socialist revolution. While the American Revolution was brought to a head over the theory of the authority to tax, the French Revolution was brought to a head over the cost of bread—people were hungry. Karl Marx looked to the French Revolution as the example for a Marxist revolution, and in fact, Vladimir Lenin took this view in promoting the Russian Communist Revolution.

The values of these two revolutions are being exposed before our eyes today. Many of the recent uprisings of the Middle East have been compared to the American cry for liberty, but in truth, these events have more in common with the French Revolution’s cry for bread. In our own country, we have two opposing movements—one promoting liberty and freedom, and the other for social “justice” and redistribution of property. We see these each being played out in the public sphere very nicely with the recent activities of the TEA Parties and the Occupy Wall Street gatherings.
The TEA Parties were spawned from a frustration felt by many Americans in regard to perceived abuses of government overspending and unconstitutional moves into the private sector of society to “spread the wealth around.” The Acronym T.E.A. stands for Taxed Enough Already and provided a common vision and foundation for the gathering of ideas and expression of legitimate civil outcry and expression of complaint against a government out of control. The subtle reference is to the Boston Tea Party where the Sons of Liberty, as American Patriots, clearly drew the line as to the limits of the king's authority over their liberties. This reference was more than subtle in the TEA Parties’ continual reference to American history, including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Founding Fathers, and the history of resisting tyranny. It is common to see people dressed as Betsy Ross, George Washington, Thomas Paine, and others of the founding generation at TEA Party gatherings.

Clearly this is a movement to rediscover our American roots, the foundations of our American liberty, and to call the Federal Government back to constitutional limits. It is a broad movement, which has already had a great effect at the polls and in electing representatives who are being asked to turn things back toward the roots of the Republic. While the rallies have been widely criticized in the national press—when they were covered at all—they were usually covered in such a way to give the impression that this was a small group of extremist ideologues. Yet in reality, these TEA Party gatherings have drawn hundreds of thousands of participants to rallies in hundreds of cities and regions across the nation and motivated thousands of people to vote their convictions to rein in the Federal Government.

More recently we have seen the “Occupy Wall Street” protests. There seems to be at least one common grievance that is the same between the two groups. Both groups seem to agree that mixing capitalism and socialism does not work well. However, that may be the extent of the agreement. The TEA Party tends to believe that capitalism should be consistent, and no one is too big to fail when they have made poor business decisions and investments. The Occupy protestors do not have as big a problem with bailouts for the “big guys” as they do with the inconsistency that the social redistribution seems to be primarily one way. The TEA Party prefers capitalism and the free market all the time, and the other leans toward increased socialism. The one repeated rallying cry of the “Occupy” folks is, “We are the 99%.” One of the few discernable points that seems to be consistent with these protests is that “we” are the majority, we have the right to take from a rich minority to enrich ourselves, and the government should do this for the majority. In his 1835 classic Democracy in America, French historian, Alexis de Tocqueville, called this the “Tyranny of the Majority.” Yet the “Occupy” events that now exist, in reality, are a representation of a small group of people—far from a majority. These events, beginning in New York City and spreading to about 20 or more cities, seem to be trying to make up with persistence and news coverage for the much fewer numbers of people participating. Many well-meaning people participate simply to show frustration with the way things currently are, but they are far from representing the majority and represent a confused, and in some cases, violent demonstration of their message. It makes sense that this would be the case, because the Scripture says where there is confusion, there is every evil work (see James 3:16).
While the “Occupy” group is not even a large group at this time, it is interesting—in a historical context—that they call themselves the 99%. This is the same tactic that was used by Vladimir Lenin in the Russian Revolution when he called his movement the “Bolsheviks,” which means “the majority.” His revolution was successful in a similar violent fashion as the French Revolution. I find it interesting that just as the TEA Party demonstrations call upon the ideals of the American Revolution, many “Occupy” protestors continually refer to the French Revolution. Numerous calls for violence have been published from various “Occupy” locations and thousands of arrests have been made across the country. In NYC alone, violent crime, including the murder rate, has soared during the time of the protesting (although this is not being widely covered by the media outlets). In a widely distributed speech, one protestor openly called for violence as with the French Revolution and called Mahatma Gandhi “a tumor” because he preached non-violent civil disobedience, which the speaker said created a nation full of poor people where wealth is distributed unevenly. This of course ignores the fact that India actually has the largest middle class of any nation on earth, and it is rapidly expanding.

It is interesting to make note of some of the groups and nations that have endorsed the “Occupy” protests: Iran and Communist China, the Communist party of the USA, the Nazi party of the USA, David Duke the KKK leader, George Soros, SEIU, CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations), Key Democratic leaders, and our President, to name a few. If one can tell anything from the friends one keeps perhaps this should tell us something important about the “Occupy” protests. Because of the look and dress of many of the “Occupy” protestors, some people have taken to calling them the Flea Party. The acronym for FLEA is “For Lawlessness en’ Anarchy.”

One thing is certain—each of these groups is promoting values and ideals of a different revolution. Ideas have power and influence upon our thoughts and minds, and both groups seek to influence the minds of Americans toward their desired results. To be sure, both cannot win in the end as they are not compatible with one another.

Beliefs bring about change and change can be revolutionary. To be sure, America is in a transition and that transition has not and probably will not be easy. It can lead to a better nation in the end depending upon the decision the real majority takes. It has been the advancement of the socialist agenda that has caused the reawakening of American revolutionary ideals in the past couple of years, and there is no reason to believe that these trends will abate. In fact, it is quite probable that both sets of ideals will be promoted to the American people until one set of values or the other prevails in remaking the nation.

It was the ideals that were espoused in colonial America that led up to the American Revolution and a birth of freedom and personal liberty that the world had never before experienced. It took the intervention of the French fleet to help bring an end to the British aggression at Yorktown, where America won the war. It is possible that the demonstration of the ideals of the French Revolution before the American public will cause more to awaken to the true blessings of the American ideals and the resultant blessings that follow.
John Adams is known as the father of American Independence, and in a letter to Thomas Jefferson in 1815 he wrote, “What do we mean by the Revolution? The war? That was no part of the Revolution; it was only an effect and consequence of it. The revolution was in the minds of the people, and this was effected from 1760 - 1775, in the course of fifteen years, before a drop of blood was shed at Lexington.”

Through the expression of dissatisfaction, people across the nation are entering into discourse over possible solutions like has not happened in generations. This can be healthy and can lead to healthy corrections to the way the Government has been run in the past few generations. It appears that two courses are being offered to the nation with the choice of values and ideals of the American Revolution and those ideals laid down in the French Revolution. While some will say they are the same, or at least similar, they are very different and the result will be quite divergent from one another. One led to smaller government, accountable to the people, and otherwise allowed them to live their lives as they saw fit; the other led to tyrannical centralized government with control over the very lives of the people. Time will tell which will be embraced by this generation of Americans. I believe the dye has been cast for a move to the direction of a new birth of freedom, if we will but awaken and take action.

*It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery (Galatians 5:1).*

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