

## A Tale of Two Cities

Each moment of our lives we make decisions that lead us to either misery or happiness, liberty or tyranny, God or His evil foe. These decisions determine the state of our cities and nation. It is not a special interest group, political party or union that shapes our future. They are simply groups that carry out the choices we, each one of us, have made to follow one of two very different roads.

America's 26th president, Teddy Roosevelt, was intently aware of these choices, both for himself and his nation. A century ago he said, "I believe that the next half century will determine if we will advance the cause of Christian civilization or revert to the horrors of brutal paganism. The thought of modern industry in the hands of Christian charity is a dream worth dreaming. The thought of industry in the hands of paganism is a nightmare beyond imagining." The choice that Roosevelt foresaw is upon us now as we face our nation's greatest challenges.

The following "tale of two cities" gives insight into the current crossroads we are facing in America. Each of these cities and their nations chose a different path, just as the choices we are making now will determine our future.

For hundreds of years France was the richest and largest nation in Europe. Paris had begun the first university in Europe and France's cathedrals and art were second to none. But by the 18th century, France as a nation had taken another road. They had imbibed deeply of the "free thinking" of the

Enlightenment and humanists such as Rousseau and the atheist Voltaire.

Paris soon became the center of vice in Europe. For the first time since the Roman Empire, pornography emerged from the shadows and was emblazoned on the pages of the newspapers. Scandal and gossip about royalty, celebrities, and the church began to fill the papers. This propaganda enraged

the masses into hysteria of class envy. The propaganda created scapegoats and people to hate and eliminate, including royalty, the productive merchants, and the Christians. All forms of paganism and witchcraft were encouraged, but Christianity was despised. The people turned against the Catholic Church, killing thousands of priests and flaunting their infidelity by enthroning a dancing girl

to be the Queen of France on the altar of Notre Dame Cathedral.

By 1793, however, the Revolution that was supposed to free the people turned into the blood bath of the Reign of Terror under Robespierre. He and his Gestapo-like "Committee of Public Safety" sent 40,000 Parisians to the guillotine. Hundreds of thousands of dissenters were slaughtered in the countryside. Soon after, a young corporal named Napoleon Bonaparte rose to power and led an entire generation of the nation's men off to war and death for 18 years. This resulted in the devastation of France and much of Europe for decades.

Another city, with a much shorter history, was just beginning to thrive in the early 18th century.



*Freedom Tower (NYC) and Eiffel Tower (Paris)*

New York City, founded by Dutch Protestants in 1624, had grown into a major trading center of the British Colonies. Although founded upon a strong biblical faith and populated by people of various Protestant denominations, New York, like most of the colonies, had lost its passion and love for Christ by the beginning of the 18th century.

Professor Marvin Olasky documents that New York City was on the path to destruction by 1700, as were most of the colonies. He records that scores of taverns kept the men of the city "well juiced" and people even threw raw sewage into the streets. He says, "not trusting to conciliators or courts, men fought duels and women scuffled with various weapons." The New York Legislative Assembly recognized that "prophaneness and licentiousness have of late overspread the province."

Then in 1701, New Yorkers petitioned the King for a Christian governor to come to help restore moral order. The British had lost their faith dramatically since the great days of the Reformation. They sent Lord Cornbury, who took almost dictatorial power in the City and ruled New York for 20 years. He robbed the people at will, persecuted, and imprisoned pastors who disagreed with him, and was also an open transvestite.

By the 1720's New York and all the colonies faced a great depression that swept in from the London stock market crash, caused by real estate speculation. Their day of decision was at hand. Which road would they choose?

Suddenly, a Great Awakening spread throughout the colonies led by ministers including Jonathan Edwards and Gilbert Tennett. George Whitfield, the English evangelist, fanned the flames of

revival in 1740 as tens of thousands would gather on hillsides to hear him preach up to seven times a day. This awakening of repentant hearts toward God was not an escape from the world. These new believers did not separate from their civil duties, but now dedicated themselves to reforming first themselves and then their society to the liberating purpose of God. Professor Olasky says that the revived Americans "emphasized God's sovereignty over all, including kings; they strove for holiness in government as well as in their own lives."

This remarkable transformation set the course for America for the next 200 years. Benjamin Franklin said during the Great Awakening, "...it seemed as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk thro' the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street."

The voices of the American Revolution, like those of Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry were trained by the awakened generation in their love of liberty under God. In fact John Adams, our second President, explained what happened. "What do we mean by the American 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 ... a change of religious sentiments [convictions]." The choice of the colonists to bow to the King of the Nations in the 1740's led to their lasting liberty in the founding of America in the 1770's.

Which road will we take? It only takes a small minority who stand for His truth to change a nation. Joshua says, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15)

- Marshall Foster