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VS  
1789

A tale of two revolutions  
and America's present crisis

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### *Author*

Dr. Os Guinness, an Anglo-Irishman, is a graduate of Oxford University and an author and social critic. He lives in McLean, Virginia with his wife Jenny, to whom this essay owes as much as to the author himself. It expresses the theme of his forthcoming book, *The Magna Carta for Humanity: The revolutionary faith of Sinai and the future of freedom*, to be published by InterVarsity Press in 2021.

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“It is yet to be decided whether the Revolution must ultimately be considered a blessing or a curse: a blessing or a curse not to the present age alone, for with our fate will the Destiny of unborn millions be involved.”

— George Washington “Circular to the States” 1783

“[We should not comfort ourselves] on the supposition that the barbarians are still far from us, for there are people who allow the light to be snatched from their hands, and there are other people who stifle it under their own feet.”

— Alexis de Tocqueville *Democracy in America* 1833

“The Western world has arrived at a decisive moment. Over the next few years, it will gamble the existence of the civilization that created it. I think that it is not aware of it. Time has eroded your notion of liberty. You have kept the word and devised a different notion of it. You have forgotten the meaning of liberty.”

— Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Warning to the West* 1976



# 1776 versus 1789

## A tale of two revolutions and America's present crisis

IT'S AN UNDERSTANDABLE CONCEIT of politicians that their current election is always the most important since the world began, but just occasionally that may be true. This should certainly rank as one of those times. The choices America will make in the 2020 election when emerging from the global pandemic, the social unrest, and the economic crisis are momentously important, and this is no time for any citizen to remain on the sidelines. I am not a politician. I am not even an American, so cannot vote for either party. But I am a passionate admirer of what George Washington called America's "great experiment" in ordered freedom. The stakes are high, not only for freedom but for humanity itself, not only for this generation but for all who follow, and not only for America but for the entire world – and for a reason deeper than many Americans realize.

2020 has turned out to be the "Year of the black swans." Who on New Year's Day could have imagined the "unknown unknowns" that lay in store for America? The global pandemic from China echoed the Spanish 'flu of 1918, the economic crisis echoed 1929 and the beginning of the Great Depression, and the political and social unrest triggered by the killing of George Floyd echoed 1968, the *annus calamitosus* of

the 1960s. Yet America's real crisis lies even deeper than all that put together, and it will ultimately prove far more consequential.

In 1949, I witnessed the climax of the Chinese revolution as a boy, and lived for two years under the brutal regime of Chairman Mao. Later, over the years, I often travelled to the Soviet Union and many of the countries behind the Iron Curtain in Europe. In every case, the blunt truth was that no Marxist regime anywhere has ever delivered on its utopian promises, and no people living under one has ever flourished. So, with no illusions about Marxism and the dire costs for those who suffer under it, it is little wonder that I stand appalled as an admirer of the American Republic to be witnessing the unfolding of events that reveal the growing political and cultural power of what is called "Western Marxism" (or neo-Marxism, cultural Marxism, and even user-friendly Marxism).

As all the world can see and most Americans are now aware, America is as deeply divided today as at any moment since just before the Civil War. Yet unlike the 1850s, no Abraham Lincoln has stepped forward to address the present crisis in light of the Declaration of Independence, to defend the "better angel" of the American character, and to call for a "new birth of freedom." Astonishingly, the roots of the present division lie in the ideas of *another revolution* that is radically opposed to the ideas and ideals of the American revolution. In one generation, America has been bewitched by an ideology that owes nothing to 1776 and the American revolution, and everything to the French revolution of 1789. America is in danger of abandoning the ideals of the American revolution for ideas that have always been ruinous for a society, and would be disastrous for America, disastrous for liberty, and disastrous for the future of humanity.

### 1776 versus 1789

What has caused the present divisions in America, or the great polarization as it is often called? Contrary to certain critics, the social media are the reinforcement, and not the root. Equally, the division is not sim-

ply the result of the clash between the “coastals” (New York, California, Oregon and Washington) and the “heartlanders” (the mid-West and South), or between the “populists” (the disdained “deplorables”) and the “globalists” (advocates of a borderless “One-world”). The deepest division is between two mutually exclusive views of America: those who view America and freedom from the perspective of the American revolution, and those who view America and freedom from the perspective of the French revolution and its heirs.

Make no mistake. Such culture-shaping movements and ideas as postmodernism, political correctness, tribal and identity politics, the sexual revolution, critical theory and the rage for socialism – along with such controversial consequences as speech codes, cancel culture, and mob violence — all come down from 1789, and have nothing to do with the ideas and ideals of 1776.

America’s great experiment in ordered freedom is under dire threat, and to this point, no American leader has adequately addressed the crisis from the perspective of the American revolution and the Declaration of Independence. That is the startling difference from Lincoln’s time. In the midst of the call to “make America great again,” American leaders need to address what made America great *in the first place* — and to explain and describe how the Republic is menaced by today’s radical ideas. For a nation that is a republic “by intention and by ideas,” that clearer understanding is utterly indispensable. American greatness grew from foundations far deeper than the strength of the economy and the might of the military, important as those are.

Americans still show a strong interest in the individual heroes of their founding generation — as evidenced by the bestselling biographies of George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and others, as well as the Broadway musical “Hamilton.” But there is no equivalent interest in the nature and workings of the American experiment itself, its distinctive understanding of freedom, and the sources from which its vision of freedom came. (Many Americans, for example, are unaware that the U.S. Constitution came from the notion of “covenant” in the Hebrew Scriptures, which pioneered the unique notions of “the



consent of the governed,” the “separation of powers,” and “the reciprocal responsibility of all for all.”) If the great experiment in freedom is to be sustained, the ideas, the sources, and the rationale for them must be recovered. Only so will there be any hope of a renewal of the Republic.

### *The volcano of 1789*

Understanding the global and historical background of America’s crisis is essential. Our modern world has been shaped by five major revolutions – the English (1642), the American (1776), the French (1789), the Russian (1917) and the Chinese (1949). They all share the same term “revolution,” but the differences between them are critical. The first two are obviously distinguishable because one failed and the other succeeded. The English revolution failed and became known as the “lost cause,” whereas the American revolution succeeded and became the “winning cause.” Yet in fact, the two English-speaking revolutions were close to each other. They shared the same ultimate source, the rediscovery of the politics of the Exodus (“Let my people go!”), which came to Europe through the influence of the Reformation and the spread of its ideas through the invention of the printing press. The French, the Russian and the Chinese revolutions, in contrast, are completely different, and they all stand in the tradition of the French revolution.

Understanding the mutually exclusive differences between the American revolution and the French revolution is critical for understanding the modern crisis of freedom. The future of freedom depends on comprehending those differences and choosing between them. The uncomfortable truth for Americans is that the United States may still be the world’s lead society, but the ideas that inspired the American revolution no longer animate much of the world’s pursuit of freedom – even for many of America’s intelligentsia and the next generation. Why is this, and how did it happen?

To answer that question requires an understanding of the force and legacy of the French revolution in history. The French revolution towers over revolutionary thinking and action as the grand revolution of

the modern age. 1789 was a spectacular Vesuvius-like explosion. Erupting in July, 1789, with the storming of the Bastille, it actually lasted only ten years before Napoleon announced, "It is over" in December, 1799. He then installed himself as dictator. We are not, then, talking about France today, but the influence of the French revolution is far from over. What flowed out like red-hot lava from the explosion was the notion of "the revolutionary," and a "revolutionary faith" that have been powerful across the world ever since.

The French revolution launched the first major modern ideological movement. 1789 became the precedent for a host of revolutions and attempted revolutions in its wake. It created the left versus right division in politics, and it fostered the idea of the revolutionary as an activist whose ideology is as passionate as any religion, and whose dream it is to transform humanity and change the world. Some of the later revolutions succeeded, above all the Russian revolution in 1917 and the Chinese in 1949. Many more were a failure — including the failed Paris revolutions of 1830 and 1848 and the many "color revolutions" in our time. The collapse of the 1848 revolution in Paris marked the end of the revolutionary era in Western Europe, but was immortalized by Victor Hugo in his novel *Les Misérables*, and the legendary musical of the same name.

Whether the later revolutions succeeded or failed, behind them all was 1789. When the French revolution was over, the world had changed forever. "On a whole host of political, intellectual and structural planes," historian David Andress wrote, "the French revolution is the fount and origin of our modern world." Literary critic George Steiner summarized the watershed significance even more extravagantly: "The French Revolution is the pivotal historical-social date after that of the foundation of Christianity... Time itself was deemed to have begun a second time."

The eminent historian and the U.S. Librarian of Congress James H. Billington told the story in his magisterial *Fire in the Minds of Men*. Revolutionary faith is "perhaps the faith of our time," and "Modern revolutionaries are believers, no less committed and intense than were the

Christians or Muslims of an earlier era.” The broad aim is the radical reconstitution of human beings and human society along revolutionary lines, and thus to “make the world anew.” Revolution has always been compared to a spark and a flame. When anti-Napoleon conspirators in France were ridiculed for having no Archimedean lever, and only a match, they replied, “With a match one has no need of a lever; one does not lift up the world, one burns it.” (The radical cry, “Burn it down,” is ricocheting down the streets of America’s cities today.) If Marx described traditional religion as the opiate of the people, Billington remarks, “the new revolutionary faith might well be called the amphetamine of the intellectuals.”

What has this to do with America’s present crisis, if the American revolution was so different? The answer is, far, far more than most Americans realize. Almost as if anticipating Fyodor Dostoevsky’s novel *Demons*, France’s “great revolution” and its “revolutionary faith” poured out in three major directions down through history until today. Each one has taken up one of the three tricolor ideals from 1789: *Liberté* (Liberty), *Fraternité* (Brotherhood), and *Egalité* (Equality). “Liberty,” which was the passion of the American Revolution, has always been the weakest of the ideals to be taken forward by the French revolution. The ideal of “*fraternité*,” or brotherhood, became the inspiration and the watchword for revolutionary nationalism in the nineteenth century. It gave rise to the nationalist movements that unified Italy and Greece, contributed to the rise of secular Zionism, and was an inspiration for Hitler’s national socialism. More famously, the ideal of “*égalité*” became the holy grail for revolutionary socialism, or communism, which Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels pioneered in the nineteenth century – though it became decisive in the form of communism with the Russian and Chinese revolutions in the twentieth century.

The French, the Russian and the Chinese revolutions all broke decisively with the precedent and principles of the English and American revolutions, a break that has proved absolutely fateful for freedom. Along with Hitler’s Germany, the Russian and Chinese revolutions were the first regimes in history to produce genuine totali-

tarianism. With the horrendous quartet of their “total ideology, total mobilization, total surveillance, and total repression,” these totalitarian regimes became the epitome of oppressive evil and the complete denial of liberty.

The Russian revolution in Europe and the Chinese revolution in Asia represented the first establishment of secularist regimes in history. In line with the French revolution, these two revolutions were also overtly anti-religious, anti-Jewish, anti-Christian, and in the case of the Chinese, anti-Muslim too. Alexander Solzhenitsyn often made the point that the revolutionaries’ hatred of God lies even deeper than their politics and economics. Regardless of that claim, there is no question that the overall record on freedom of the French, the Russian, and the Chinese revolutions has been catastrophic. Far from delivering their promise of revolutionary freedom and justice, each has led to a reign of terror, and their claims have been left in ruins by the record of their repressive regimes and the slaughter of their own citizens — Stalin killing more than sixty million Russians and Mao more than seventy million of his fellow-Chinese.

### *Long march through the institutions*

What does this grim record have to do with America? It has everything to do with America’s choice today. *Revolutionary nationalism* was discredited in Europe after the terrible world wars of the twentieth century. *Revolutionary socialism* in its Russian form was defeated through the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1989. Nevertheless, it is a dangerous mistake to think that Marxism is dead and gone. Like a hydra-headed monster, Marxism may have had its Soviet head cut off, but other heads are growing in its place. In its Chinese form, Marxism is already the ideology of a global superpower far stronger than the Soviet Union, and it has already unsheathed its claws in its treatment of the citizens of Hong Kong, its repressive “re-education camps” for the Uighurs, its criminal response to the outbreak of the coronavirus in Wuhan, and its draconian repression of its own citizens.

Yet what directly menaces America is neither revolutionary nationalism nor revolutionary socialism in its Chinese form, but the growth of a new Marxist monster that was born in the West and has grown most rapidly in America: *revolutionary liberationism*.

Revolutionary liberationism does not call itself by any single name. It is sometimes called “neo-Marxism,” “cultural Marxism,” or an “updated version of Marxism,” and its proponents themselves use many names — the “progressive left,” “Social Justice Warriors,” “anti-fascists,” “anti-racists,” advocates of “critical race theory,” the “woke movement,” and so on. But whatever the name, the underlying ideas come from the fateful convergence of Marxism and postmodernism. They all serve the cause of a radical reconstitution of society than is nothing less than revolution – a revolution that could not be more different from the ideals of the American revolution.

The revising of Marxism as revolutionary liberationism, or Western Marxism, was the brain-child of Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist imprisoned by Mussolini in the 1920s. He wrestled with the fact that the Russian revolution had not happened as Marx predicted, and that in the advanced modern world no truly Marxist revolution was ever likely to succeed. He therefore revised Marxist theory in key ways: from its theory of economic determinism to a theory of cultural dominance (his term “hegemony” has since become notorious), from its reliance on the working class and a general strike (“Workers of the world unite!”) to a reliance on the elite of the “culture industry” (society’s “gatekeepers”), and from an exploitation of the so-called “economic contradictions” of capitalism to an exploitation of the very real “social antagonisms” (through the inequities and injustices in advanced modern Western society).

Gramsci’s ideas from his *Prison Notebooks* were picked up and developed by Marxist writers in the Frankfurt School from the 1920s to the 1960s. Above all, they were developed by Herbert Marcuse, who was the godfather of much of the New Left in America in the 1960s, and they converged with the ideas of more recent postmodern thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Clumsy nineteenth

century terms such as *bourgeoisie*, *proletariat*, *commodity fetishism*, *false consciousness* were all dropped, or rebranded — to be freed from “false consciousness,” for example, is now to be “woke.” The result was a subtler “cultural Marxism” and Critical Theory that have become pervasive in European and American universities since the 1960s.

It is this subtler form of revolutionary thinking that is our greatest menace now. The year 1968 witnessed the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert F. Kennedy, while more than a hundred American cities were burning, but the radicals realized that the revolution would not win in the streets. They then proposed the “Long march through the institutions,” which was their distinctive variation on the earlier “Grand March.” In the nineteenth century, the dream of revolutionary freedom had been expressed in the vision of the “Grand March,” led by the workers of the world and epitomized by a general industrial strike (“Workers of the world unite!”). Following Mao’s “Long March” in China in 1934, and then Marcuse and Rudi Dutchke’s 1960s call to radicalism, the dominant vision became a call for a “Long march through the institutions.” They realized that dominance, or “hegemony,” must be won slowly through penetrating the schools, the colleges and the universities, the press and the media, and the worlds of Hollywood and entertainment.

Now, just over fifty years after the radicals’ call for the “Long march through the institutions,” it is clear that they have succeeded with their target audiences beyond their wildest dreams, and in the process they have also penetrated many corporations, the world of sports, and certain churches, denominations and other religious communities. Speech codes, the cancel culture, anti-American history textbooks (such as that of Howard Zinn and the “1619 Project”), critical women’s studies, Critical Race Theory, statue toppling, safe places, sensitivity training in “micro-aggression,” “white privilege” and “toxic masculinity” — the list of the consequences goes on and on, and the extent of the inroads is sobering.

Neo-Marxist ideas, though not the labels, have penetrated not only the upper echelons of leading corporations, but influential phil-

anthropic organizations, K-12 schools, the U.S. military academies, and even the Smithsonian Museum with its display on “Whiteness.” (“Hard work,” “rational thinking,” “family structure,” and the “single god religion” were all aspects of “Whiteness” and “White privilege.”) The U.S. now has one-party faculties in many elite universities, one-party newsrooms in many newspapers and television networks, one-party editorial policy in social media giants, one-party management in many corporations, and even a one-party-state in California.

Whatever the party allegiance of those still in the traditional American center, no one who loves freedom can afford to overlook two very troubling things. The radicals on the progressive left have purposely rebranded and undermined America’s foundational political rights — freedom of religion and conscience, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly — and they are deliberately turning Americans against Americans. Instead of the Hebrew covenant’s “reciprocal responsibility of each for all” and the U.S. Constitution’s “We the people,” — groups are now pitted against groups, gender against gender, skin color against skin color, generation against generation, and gay against straight. “All for all” is becoming “all against all.”

According to Critical Theory, the only factor that counts is *power*. Society is analyzed in terms of “discourse” and “pyramids of power” — in order to identify the superior and the subordinates, the majority and the minorities, the oppressor and the oppressed. Such an analysis is applied to all the categories of society in terms of gender, race, class, and age. Once the “victims” are identified, they are “weaponized,” to be used in an assault on the status quo. That is not to say there are not genuine victims, but many genuine victims are often overlooked as the protests mount, and only the victims that are useful to the Left are proclaimed. This is not the place for a full description of critical theory and its weakness and dangers. But suffice to say that neo-Marxism, like all other forms of Marxism, represents the triumph of Might over Right, it prioritizes group identity at the expense of individuals, it appeals to envy, resentment, and grievance, and it ushers in the prospect of a power conflict without end. Unless countered decisively, the result can only be a backlash towards an-

archy that reinforces a trend towards authoritarianism, for the extremes always reinforce each other in the end.

There is all the difference in the world between the slogan “Black lives matter” and the organization by the same name. The first is a claim that is undeniable as an expression of human worth. But the second is equally undeniably a Marxist group and openly opposed to key features of American society – as their original website made clear. In a 2015 interview on the *Real News Network*, Patrisse Cullors, one of the cofounders of Black Lives Matter, stated frankly, “We are trained Marxists. We are super-versed on ideological theories.” To mistake such radicals for liberals, or even moderate socialists, is naive.

Nothing could be further from the ideas and ideals of the American experiment at its best. Occupy Wall Street, Antifa, the BLM organization, and many “social justice warriors” may represent an extreme, but you can trace the line from the “critical studies” departments on many campuses down to the activists and rioters in the streets (where looting is defended, for example, as necessary “economic reparations”). But more surprisingly, you can also trace the line upwards to unlikely levels of American business, philanthropy, churchmanship, politics, social media giants, and even into the U.S. Congress.

### *American guilt?*

There are many reasons for America’s feeble defense of its own revolution. Some are theoretical, for American liberals have tended to undermine the foundations of their own ideals of freedom and equality — through a lack of history, the collapse of civic education, the erosion of the philosophical foundations for freedom and equality, a general disdain for the importance of religion, and so on. Some are practical, such the powerful boost given to the radical left, and especially to the pop-up protest movement, by leftwing billionaire superfunders. But the most important reason of all is what Shelby Steele has called “white guilt.” This is the legacy of the evil of slavery, and thus the contradiction and the hypocrisy that was left at the heart of the founders’ vi-



sion of freedom from the start. What Martin Luther King, Jr. called the “promissory note” that “all men are created equal,” which was at the heart of the Declaration of Independence, was never cashed in for African-American slaves and many native-Americans.

Thus, the high ideals of the American experiment were compromised from the start by slavery and racism. American voices such as John Woolman, Samuel Hopkins and John Leland roundly protested this evil at the time. Europeans, such as Samuel Johnson, pointed to the blatant hypocrisy at the time of the revolution, and reformers such as William Wilberforce pleaded with both Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, and later with President James Monroe to join together in fighting against the slave trade. But all such protests were rebuffed, only for the pent-up evils and the contradictions to explode in the terrible carnage of the Civil War. Since then, the Civil Rights movement has addressed the evils courageously, and to an extraordinary extent dismantled the legal and political structures that perpetuated the gross injustices.

But clearly, for all the striking achievements of the Civil Rights movement, the dark legacy of America’s past is still not resolved — which makes traditional liberalism vulnerable, and gives the radicals an open door to exploit the residual problems of racism as if the Civil Rights movement had achieved nothing. Every inequality and every injustice, even the slightest misuse of a word, mean that genuine liberals are vulnerable to the charge of “hypocrisy” and “oppression” from those on their left — just as those on the left call all to their right, “fascists.” The end result is manipulation, intimidation, accommodation, and in a word, *appeasement* — although, as with Hitler, the revolutionary neo-Marxist monster will never be satisfied. It is waging a zero-sum game, and it will not stop until it has won, and won power, not freedom, and not equality but dominance.

With their twin categories of “hegemony” and “antagonisms” the radicals of the progressive left are able to inflame and exploit American guilt relentlessly. Thus the toxic blend of the ideological onslaught, unhealed wounds, and unaddressed guilt have become the major reason

why so many Americans, and especially young Americans, have turned against their own revolution of 1776. For many of them, American history has become anti-American, racism is said to be in the very DNA of the American character, and the brilliant best of America's ordered freedom is being thrown out along with the foul bath water that contaminated it. Unless this contradiction is remedied decisively, and the best of the founders' ideals renewed vigorously, the entire world may soon be poorer for the loss of the singular American vision of freedom.

There are crucial differences between 1776 and 1789 at many points, and between the American experiment and the critical theory of neo-Marxism. They have entirely different sources, different historical narratives, and very different views of human nature, freedom, equality, justice, law, constitution, stability, and so on. One of the most critical differences between the two is that the American revolution, like the Hebrew revolution from which it came, contains a range of mechanisms for its own self-correction and reform. Quite clearly, the French revolution did not. The rage and violence of 1789 became a driving force with its own logic as it hurtled towards the Reign of Terror, and the murderous outcome that was the inevitable expression of its own principles.

That contrast is important now because the burning issue dividing the radical left from the American revolution is justice, and the way in which injustice is to be addressed. Are the evils to be addressed according to the majestic voices of American reform such as Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Harriet Tubman and Martin Luther King, Jr.? In line with the great Hebrew prophets, and titanic Western reformers such as Bartolomé de las Casas and William Wilberforce? Or are they to be addressed as critical theorists (and Antifa and BLM activists) are now addressing them? Both approaches claim to address the injustice and confront the evils head-on, but their very different responses lead to dramatically different outcomes, with immense consequences for America and freedom. One side understands the profound link between freedom and forgiveness, and calls for repentance, confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation, so that en-

emies can be turned into friends. The other is merciless, and though it talks of justice, its reliance on power and its appeal to grievance and resentment mean that it thrives on conflicts that set Americans against Americans at the expense of solidarity and social peace. The *unum* of the nation's earlier motto is overpowered by the neo-Marxist distortion and weaponizing of *pluribus*. The sole "peace" the radical left can ever achieve is the peace of despotism.

### *This moment in history*

The present crisis is wreaking havoc throughout the Western world, and especially in the world's lead society, America. The outcome also has immense consequences for the entire world. The bookends of human history are *authoritarianism*, or order-without-freedom, and *anarchy*, or freedom-without-order. In the global era, the extreme of authoritarianism is represented by countries such as China and North Korea, with their totalitarian regimes. The ordered freedom of the American experiment was once regarded as the way forward between the two extremes. But under the impact of the progressive left, and its violent rhetoric and anarchy in the streets, America's ordered freedom is being pulled apart and dragged towards one of the two extremes. The poisonous mix of the three I's — Injustice, Inequality, and Ideology — is creating a pull towards anarchy and an equally powerful counter-pull towards what Thomas Hobbes called Leviathan, "the mortal god" of the all-powerful state.

This degeneration is alarming because America once offered the modern world's best vision of wisely ordered freedom — the balance that avoided the extremes of authoritarianism at one end and anarchy at the other. From Karl Marx on, Marxists have claimed that once the revolution succeeded, the state would wither away as harmony between the classes would prevail, but that idea was Marx at his most utopian. The real history of China, North Korea, Cuba and Venezuela, among others, shows us the exact opposite. All that has withered away is the idea that the state would wither away.

It is time for American citizens on both sides of the aisle to recognize that the menace of Marxism and neo-Marxism, whether classical or revisionist, is a clear and present danger. Its revolution is entirely different from the American revolution, and for Americans to squander their own freedom in this way would be an act of historic folly. Warnings about neo-Marxism must not be dismissed as scaremongering, or as conspiracy theories. Through its tactics over the last fifty years, the progressive left is fomenting what Thomas Hobbes called a “war of all against all.” The only winner is Leviathan.

Both postmodernism and critical theory are lethal for freedom. They have helped to poison the cultural environment, so that the social ecosystem nourished by truth, trust and trustworthiness has eroded and collapsed. Fear, suspicion, anger, insecurity, rumor, and conspiracy theories are rife in America, and the breeding ground for violence is fertile. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks warns, “There is no natural end to the cycle of retaliation and revenge...It is a destructive cycle that has devastated whole communities.” The only firm barrier against riots and revenge is the rule of law, but if the rule of law is itself weaponized, it will no longer be trusted, and the legal barriers it represents will be broken down too.

That violent reciprocity in deeds as well as words is reaching a hurricane force level that can only end in mob violence, scapegoating — ambush and even assassination — and eventually the imposition of authoritarian control. The danger, always, is that anarchy and authoritarianism come together at their extremes.

### *The Magna Carta of humanity*

The present crisis lies in the conflict between two revolutions and two views of freedom, and the crucial choice between them is for Americans to make. As a visitor and admirer, I argue unashamedly for the American revolution and for the ordered freedom that came from the Sinai vision of freedom. Indeed, rightly understood, that Sinai vision of revolutionary freedom is nothing less than the Magna Carta for hu-

manity. It is the highest, richest and deepest vision of ordered freedom in all of human history – and the surest way to address and resolve the unhealed contradiction and hypocrisy that was at the heart of 1776. This is not the place to make that longer argument, but some elementary points are plain.

### *American Renewal*

First, America now needs Lincoln-like leaders who will address the choice Americans face, and call their fellow-citizens back to the first principles of the American Republic and its audacious experiment in ordered freedom.

Second, America must make a frank confession of the evils that contradicted its ideals and marred its earlier days, including a firm commitment to include all citizens, without exception, within the full embrace of its ideals and promises. Without confession, there can be no forgiveness; without forgiveness, there can be no release; and without them all, there can be no reconciliation. Only so can coming generations go forward freely, unchained from the burden of the past and ready to rise to the opportunities and challenges of the future.

Third, America needs a solemn national rededication to its foundational ideas and ideals, and to restoring the responsibilities of citizenship. This national renewal must include the restoration of civic education in public schooling. Only so can America's identity and continuity be sustained, and freedom's torch be handed on in an unbroken transmission from generation to generation.

At the very least, this is a moment when not a single American citizen can afford to sit on the fence. Whatever his or her party allegiance, each one must assess the crisis, weigh the stakes, and choose between 1776 and 1789. To paraphrase Lincoln, who echoed Jesus of Nazareth, *A house divided against itself cannot stand. America cannot endure half-1776 and half-1789.*

Americans must choose for America's sake and for the world's sake. Will the watching world witness a "new new birth" of American freedom,

and a genuine resolution of the errors of the past that can truly transform the present and the future? Only God knows. What is sure is that to make America great again, America must embrace the ideas and ideals that made America great in the first place, and it must acknowledge all the ways in which America has fallen short of those ideals. The choice for America is clear. So also are the consequences. What remains to be seen is the response — which is why the coming months, including the election, will be so decisive for America's audacious experiment.



“At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer, if it ever reach us, it must spring up among us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide.”

— Abraham Lincoln, “Address before the  
Young Men’s Lyceum,” 1838

“A house divided against itself cannot stand...It will become all one thing or all the other.”

— Abraham Lincoln “A house divided”  
Springfield, Illinois, June 1858









