Champion of Freedom in the Modern World

France

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The contributions of France to the rise of freedom in the modern world have elicited fewer comments from Latter-day Saint leaders than have those of Britain and the United States. These contributions have not passed completely unnoticed, however. President John Taylor, for example, after declaring that the "inspiration of the Almighty" had been upon the founders of the American government when they declared the eternal truth "that all men are born free and equal and have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," then noted that "the founders of the French Republic, about the same time, made a declaration almost verbatim."[1]

This is a reference, no doubt, to the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, one of the initial acts of the French Revolution and one of the major landmarks—along with the 1776 American Declaration of Independence—in the rise of freedom to a higher level in the modern world. A consideration of pertinent historical facts reveals that France's contributions to modern freedom, while quite different from those of England and the United States, were also vital. The hand of the Lord may be discerned (1) in France's contributions through the eighteenth-century Enlightenment to the intellectual underpinnings of individual and political freedoms, (2) in the great French Revolution, which demonstrated to Europe and the world that freedoms may be achieved rapidly by a people determined to make a radical change in their government and social structure, and (3) in France's contributions at the outset of the nineteenth century to a number of modern ideologies featuring freedom and human rights.

The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment centered in eighteenth-century France. The French philosophes, particularly Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau, were

widely read by educated people throughout Europe and beyond. Certainly one of their most direct contributions to the rise of political freedom was the influence of Montesquieu on the American Constitution. This French aristocrat and judge believed that some kind of separation and balance of governmental powers, whether between the major elements in a central government (for example, the executive and the legislative branches), or between the central government and regional governments, would be the best guarantee against governmental infringement on individual freedoms.

Montesquieu greatly admired the English system of government. He believed it had achieved a workable balance of power between the king, the aristocrats in the House of Lords, and middle-class elements in the House of Commons. However, at the time Montesquieu published his great work, *The Spirit of Laws*, in 1748, the English Commons had so far established its preeminence that this supposed balance in the British government was somewhat illusory.[2] It was actually the American Constitution, created in the next generation, that best implemented the separation of powers and the checks and balances that Montesquieu advocated. This was achieved both through the division of power between federal and state governments and through the establishment of three semi-independent branches within the federal government. As a recent Montesquieu biography notes, in the American constitutional debates "those who supported the new constitution . . . relied heavily on Montesquieu for their arguments."[3] Jefferson, Adams, and Madison all consciously sought to apply his principles and quoted him more frequently in their defense of the Constitution than any other source except the Bible. Although Montesquieu believed he was basing his ideas on observation and reason, those seeking to discern God's influence on the rise of freedom in the modern world may see in his work an excellent example of far-reaching heavenly inspiration.

Other leading French philosophes also expounded on concepts later incorporated in the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution. Rousseau advocated the sovereignty of the people and other key constitutional principles. In his *Social Contract* he declared that "men are born equal" and that "the general will alone can guide the forces of the State in accordance with the purpose of that institution which is the common good."[4] Voltaire philosophized on the meaning of liberty. In his words, "Liberty is being free to do something when one is able to do it."[5] Among the other principles championed by the philosophes were the primacy of natural rights and the concept of happiness as a natural and worthy goal of man. These and other Enlightenment concepts found a close echo in the American Declaration of Independence. This declared that "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God" (a favorite Enlightenment phrase) endowed man with "certain unalienable Rights, . . . among [which] are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness," and that "to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."[6]

In general, the Enlightenment may be described as an extension into the new field of the social sciences of the empiricism and rationalism that had proven so productive in the seventeenth century in the physical sciences. Carried over also was the concept of a mechanistic universe created by a God who established certain natural laws and then left man largely to his own devices to gain an understanding of these laws and to use this knowledge to improve his life. But whereas the Scientific Revolution had been mainly concerned with the physical environment, the Enlightenment was mainly concerned with enhancing the freedom and well-being of man by using careful observation and reason to understand and improve the social environment. Perhaps the poet of the Enlightenment, the Englishman Alexander Pope, best expressed the focus of the movement in one of his oft-quoted

couplets: "Presume not God to scan; the proper study of mankind is man."[7]

Obviously, the typical philosophe's deistic concept of God as merely the great watchmaker or the first mover, who leaves man to his own devices and does not interfere in the operations of the physical universe He created, is contrary to the thesis of this book, which posits that God has significantly intervened in the affairs of men to accomplish His purposes. But those holding this theistic concept of God as the concerned and involved Father of man may still discern in the Enlightenment movement (with all its deism) the furtherance of some of the purposes of God.

In a number of respects, the Enlightenment succeeded in lessening the social evils that the predominant religions and churches of the time had done little or nothing to combat. Usually church leaders were allied with the ruling classes—in fact, almost all of the upper clergy in the Catholic Church came from noble-class families. So the church generally opposed fundamental reform of society and taught commoners to be content with the status that God had allotted them. Even some branches of the early Protestant reform movement, while opening the way to later social reforms by weakening the hold of the universal Christian church, in their early years did not support social or political reforms in behalf of the common classes of society. Prior to the advent of a purer Christianity, it seems quite conceivable that God may have exercised His influence at times through the Enlightenment's "philosophies of men." As Elder Harold B. Lee declared in 1951, "All truths, whether called science or religion or philosophy come from a divine source."[8]

The French philosophes did not organize reform movements. But their popular books and essays often challenged the very bases of the "establishment." These works were widely read by educated members of the middle and upper classes. It became difficult for many nobles and churchmen, let alone educated commoners, to retain their implicit faith in the tradition of God-ordained powers and privileges of church, king, and nobility. The philosophes also skillfully employed satires, essays, novels, and other literary forms to spread concepts of personal freedoms, humane laws, and equitable government. Voltaire, for example, published a particularly vivid portrayal of the unjust trial, torture, and public execution of a Protestant father, Jean Calas, who was falsely accused by his Catholic neighbors of having murdered his son. This became a *cause célèbre* throughout France and beyond and was a most effective blow in Voltaire's crusade against the bigotry and intolerance often displayed by the church and state (both of which were involved in the Calas case). The substantial advances of personal freedoms and of humanitarianism in eighteenth-century continental Europe may be credited more to the inspired writers of the Enlightenment, deistic as many of them were, than to the churches or governments of the time.[9]

The French Revolution

Near the end of the eighteenth century, most educated Europeans were fairly familiar with the distinctive characteristics of the constitutional, representative governments that had been achieved in Britain and America. They knew that the British government was the culmination of several centuries of small steps. They were also aware that the promising American government and Constitution had been built on British foundations. While this was fascinating to consider, few Europeans were confident that either the British or the American political model could practically be duplicated in the countries of the European continent. Here, the more successful states were those that had stable, strong monarchies. Citizens in these states lacked many of the freedoms of Englishmen and Americans, but it seemed that developing these freedoms would mean challenging the power and stability of

existing governments—a lengthy and perilous process.

Europeans' reluctance to seek major political changes diminished greatly after the French Revolution showed that it was possible for a people to move rapidly from an absolute monarchy to a representative, constitutional government. The fact that this demonstration took place in the leading country of Europe made it all the more provocative. So too did the fact that the leaders of each major phase of the Revolution prior to Napoleon were predominantly members of the respectable and growing bourgeois middle class—not ambitious generals or hungry peasants. The French Revolution created a great divide, and afterward reformers saw many forms of government, from constitutional monarchy to democratic republic, to be realistically, though not easily, attainable.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Europeans were accustomed to seeing France as a cultural and political model. France was not only the cultural center of Europe; it also possessed the strongest army, the most productive economy, and the most admired government. Absolute monarchy had reached its zenith with the reign of the Sun King, Louis XIV (1643–1715). Two generations later, in 1789, France was still the leading nation, but the ineptness of Louis XV and Louis XVI had contributed to the loss of much of the French Empire in the wars with England, a country less than a third the size and population of France. Moreover, mismanagement of government finances, along with the continuing tax exemptions of the nobles and clergy, had left the government woefully unable to cope with a major food shortage brought on in 1789 by two years of disastrous harvests.

Perhaps as crucial to the coming of the Revolution as the government's failures, however, was the fact that France had by this time acquired a substantial enterprising middle class, the bourgeoisie. It seems that the existence of strong, independent-minded middle classes has been a virtual necessity for the success of a constitutional, representative system of government. A recent study of the origins of successful liberal democracies concludes: "The bourgeoisie, the industrious property-owning class, . . . was the vanguard of political liberalization in Europe. Since its members benefited greatly from capitalism, the rule of law, free markets, and the rise of professionalism and meritocracy, they supported . . . reforms that furthered these trends. In a now-legendary work of social science, the Harvard scholar Barrington Moore Jr. studied the pathways to democracy and dictatorship around the world and presented his central conclusion in four words: 'No bourgeoisie, no democracy.'"[10] Among such middle classes were the country squires and town burghers who combined to dominate the House of Commons in England, and the businessmen, lawyers, and newspaper editors who, together with some wealthy planters, led the freedom movement in the American colonies. In late eighteenth-century France, bankers and businessmen had become the main creditors of a monarchy that shrank from requiring the nobility and clergy to financially sustain the government that preserved their privileged status. The government had exhausted its credit by 1789 and had no option but to make political concessions to the bourgeoisie in order to get their financial help.

The Enlightenment also helped prepare the French for the Revolution. The Enlightenment had bred skepticism of the tradition of "divine right monarchy" and had thereby undermined the willingness of the middle classes and even many nobles to leave an inept hereditary monarch in charge of governmental policy. Also undermined was the assurance of many nobles and clergymen that God had ordained their own traditional prerogatives. It was a corollary of the Enlightenment concept of deism that all such traditions were man-made, not God-ordained. Thus, it would seem that social, economic, and intellectual transformations may have been the Lord's

way of preparing France and much of the rest of western Europe for revolution to replace absolute monarchies and privileged classes with institutions more conducive to individual freedoms.

Contrary to a common impression of our own time, the French Revolution was not started or dominated by the peasant (small farmer) masses. These wanted relief, but as yet hardly aspired to participation in government. They played a direct role in only a few limited phases of the Revolution. It was a combination of the bourgeoisie and the more liberal (or realistic) nobles and churchmen who in 1789 forced the monarch to sponsor the election of an Estates General (a kind of embryonic constitutional convention) as a precondition for saving the government from bankruptcy. Peasants were allowed to vote for delegates but commonly supported a lawyer or businessman as a representative of the local commoners (the "third estate"). Not a single peasant was elected as a delegate.

Contrary to the stereotypes popularized by such sources as Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities*, many nobles who were politically active at this time were sufficiently influenced by Enlightenment philosophies and current economic exigencies that they were actually willing, under certain conditions, to give up their tax exemptions and to accept a constitutional monarchy with guarantees of universal personal freedoms such as freedom of speech and rights of due process.

At the convening of the Estates General, however, the brief alliance of bourgeoisie and nobility quickly broke down. It became evident that the majority of the nobles and their church allies (the second and first estates, respectively), representing together only about 2 percent of the population, hoped to secure for the old privileged classes a permanent and dominant role in a future French parliament in which each estate would meet separately and have one collective vote. But the determined bourgeois delegates, representing the other 98 percent of the population (the third estate), repulsed the idea of a three-house legislature and declared their own group to be the national assembly, qualified to formulate a constitution by themselves if the aristocrats refused to join them and accept a more equalitarian role. The indecisive king was inclined to support the aristocrats but shrank from using armed force to put down the bourgeois insurgency. Following a popular uprising in Paris and the fall of the Bastille, a symbol of the old regime, he yielded by directing the first two estates to merge in the assembly with the third. Hence in the initial phase of the Revolution, and in all the subsequent phases prior to the assumption of dictatorial power by Napoleon, the leadership of the government (first a constitutional monarchy, then a series of republics) was exercised by some element of the bourgeoisie.[11]

The initial phase was the most idealistic. Led by moderate bourgeois representatives, now joined by a number of the more liberal nobles and churchmen, the assembly created a written constitution for a constitutional monarchy somewhat like that of Britain. This constitution also owed much to the American constitution drawn up a few years earlier. Considering the ideals that the constitution embodied, one could conclude in addition that inspiration from God played a role in its creation. Many of these ideals were declared in a remarkable document that prefaced the constitution. It was this Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen that President John Taylor compared to the inspired American Declaration of Independence. This French Declaration was destined to become a beacon of freedom for the French and many other peoples. Printed in hundreds of thousands of books and pamphlets in many languages, it inspired not a few subsequent constitutions, even though many of its principles were not fully realized even in France until the late 1800s.

In its tone and substance, the Declaration was preeminently a product of the Enlightenment, which had often talked of the rights of man. The document affirmed that "men are born

and remain free and equal." Their natural rights included "liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression." Also specified were the right to freedom of thought and freedom of religion. Laws should rest equally on all and should be implemented by due process. In principle all persons should be free to do anything not injurious to others, and in practice the limits of freedom would be determined by just and consistent laws established by the people's representatives. As a further guarantee of freedom, the powers of government would be divided among separate branches, and public officials would be accountable to all the citizens.[12]

As might have been expected, even with the best intentions these elevated ideals proved difficult to implement fully in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of France's centuries-old absolute monarchy. A few years earlier strong American leaders who were experienced in colonial government and inspired by the Lord had succeeded in forming a constitution that was both idealistic and practical. Then the same leaders (by and large) succeeded in launching a stable government based on this constitution. However, no moderate leaders of comparable wisdom and experience emerged to shepherd the new French government. The original Assembly held together long enough (two years) to create a constitutional monarchy in 1791. But after the first elections, the inexperienced government soon broke up into squabbling factions under the weight of intractable problems. Many nobles and churchmen still wanted to recover their privileges, and the king refused to accept the role of a limited, constitutional monarch. Moreover, neighboring monarchs soon invaded France to restore the French king to his legitimate role and to squelch this French freedom movement before it could infect their own people. Faced with the threat of military disaster, strong radicals in the newly elected Convention seized control, terminated the constitutional monarchy, and established a republic in its place. They executed Louis XVI as a traitor to the nation, suspended most personal freedoms for the period of crisis, and ruled as a dictatorial emergency government pledged to save the nation from the invaders.[13]

Revolutionary tribunals were set up to weed out foes of the Revolution within France and sometimes operated by means of drumhead trials and summary executions. The embattled regime also forcefully suppressed regional revolts against its authority by some southern French cities and by Catholic peasants in the Vendée (aroused by their lords against the "godless" new government in Paris). Overall, these government actions (often called "the Terror") took the lives of about forty thousand persons, mostly peasants in the areas at open war with Paris. Thus, the French Revolution gained the reputation of being violent and bloody. By standards of the twentieth century, when governments sometimes exterminated millions of members of certain classes or races, it was relatively mild. About 8 percent of the Terror's victims were nobles, but "nobles as a class were not molested unless suspected of political agitation."[14]

For a time most of the French people approved. They enthusiastically rallied to the defense of their infant republic, feeling that they were now truly citizens of a nation and not just subjects of a monarch. Thus began the first great demonstration of the strength of a new force in modern history—a "nation in arms" animated by a tremendous tide of nationalism. In following generations this force of nationalism would spread to motivate many people in many situations. Sometimes it would be a force that could be used by the Lord to help free some group from foreign rule. At other times (as in Nazi Germany), it could be a force of evil, motivating one people to suppress the freedom of others.

A foretaste of this later history of nationalism played out in France and Europe in the years following the Revolution. Faced with invasion from several neighboring monarchies, and mistrusting the professional armed forces of their

own deposed monarch, the desperate French leaders called for a rally of all able-bodied Frenchmen to defend their infant republic. The result was the first modern mass army. Soon added to sheer numbers and great enthusiasm was superior military leadership as junior officers who showed talent were advanced rapidly through the ranks to become generals. Napoleon Bonaparte was only the most famous of some dozens of young French generals who soon outshone the generals of the invading armies, who were drawn exclusively from the titled nobility in the neighboring monarchies.

The Wars of the Revolution and Napoleon

After the invading armies were driven out of France, however, French nationalism proved a force which Napoleon could utilize to further his ambition to rule all of Europe. Under Napoleon, who proved to be as shrewd a ruler as he was a general, the French empire after 1799 was extended over much of the European continent. The loss of lives in the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon far exceeded the loss of lives in the Revolution within France itself—or the losses in previous European wars. The new mass warfare introduced by the Revolution involved much larger armies (eight hundred thousand under French arms by 1794, for example) and much greater loss of life than had the relatively small-scale European wars of the eighteenth century. The wars of the French Revolution had begun with the campaigns in which France defended herself against invasion by neighboring monarchs (1792–95) and had continued with the offensives by which the French Republic sought to improve its position and liberate surrounding peoples, especially in Belgium and northern Italy (1795–97). These phases were followed by the broader and more aggressive campaigns under Napoleon's leadership (1799–1815). The total loss of life in these wars exceeded one million. By far the greatest loss in a single campaign occurred in the invasion of Russia in 1812. Napoleon had intended this campaign to be short and losses limited, as in most of his previous campaigns. But of the 611,000 men in the Grand Army which Napoleon led into Russia (including about 200,000 French, 200,000 Germans, and 90,000 Poles), about 400,000 died during military action or of exposure or starvation, and 100,000 were taken captive. On the other side the Russians lost about 50,000 in the battle at Borodino.

The losses in the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon (1792–1815), though large in comparison with losses in prior wars (waged with relatively small professional armies), pale in comparison with the many millions of deaths in World War I or World War II. So far as the moral responsibility of Napoleon and other aggressors are concerned, the sheer numbers of the slain may not be too meaningful. The gospel teaches that persons who are deliberately responsible for the unjustified death of even one human being will normally receive a severe judgment from the Lord. It is probably safe to assume that there will be very stern judgments on someone who, like Napoleon, was responsible for so many deaths. But it does not seem profitable, in a chapter focusing on the expansion of freedom in the world, to dwell unduly on the issue of Napoleon's culpability. The fact that deserves our attention is that for many Europeans who survived these wars, the major cultural changes that accompanied the spread of the Napoleonic regime included some of the new forms of political and individual freedoms fostered in the French Revolution.

Napoleon's French empire was generally opposed by the other four great powers of Europe. But of these, Britain alone, on its island, protected by its fleet, survived throughout the Napoleonic era as a fully independent state. Austria, Prussia, and Russia, the other three powers, at times formed shifting coalitions against Napoleon. But at other times each or all became

subordinate allies of Napoleon. After years of unyielding military and economic warfare against Napoleon, Britain (truly Napoleon's nemesis) finally succeeded in 1813–15 in organizing a coalition that included all four of his major foes. This coalition overwhelmed the emperor's forces following his disastrous campaign in Russia. They forced his surrender in 1814 and his final abdication (after a brief return to power) in 1815. By that time more than a decade of Napoleonic rule had produced a lasting influence on the institutions and attitudes of Frenchmen and many other Europeans.

Lasting Impact of the Wars

The impact of the Napoleonic regime varied from country to country. In Spain and in Russia, nationalism welled up against the French invaders and contributed both to Napoleon's eventual defeat and to an increased national consciousness and strength. In some countries—most notably Prussia—native leaders deliberately imitated some of the French liberal reforms in order to build their own nationalism and win the wholehearted support of their people in the struggle against French dominion. On the other hand, some of the peoples conquered by Napoleon liked many of the reforms he introduced and, when possible, retained them even after his defeat. Thus, the Napoleonic era contributed to the permanency and dispersion of some of the major aspirations of the French Revolution.

Though Napoleon was a dictator, he considered himself a man of the Enlightenment and the Revolution. And some features of his regime were in fact enlightened and lasting. To be sure, the universal male suffrage he allowed in France was largely a sham, as he permitted his legislative body to do very little. (It was said of Napoleon that he "delighted in affirming the sovereignty of the people; but to his mind the people was a sovereign, like Voltaire's God, who somehow created the world but never thereafter interfered in it."[15]) On the other hand, he was a true believer in the rule of law, and the relatively enlightened law codes he commissioned French jurists to compile and implement were perhaps his most beneficial gift to France and Europe. In addition, he instituted in France, and then in many of the countries he conquered, an egalitarianism that dealt a lasting blow to many class privileges and opened offices in the government and army to all citizens. ("Every soldier carries a marshal's baton in his knapsack," was one of his sayings.)

In most of the lands Napoleon controlled, he also established religious toleration and equal rights for persons of all religions and even nonbelievers. He abolished compulsory church tithes and the power of church courts (including the Inquisition in Spain) and generally applied reason and order (key components of what he called "constitutionalism") to all departments of government. Strange as it may seem to modern believers in democracy, the increases in government efficiency and in individual security and equal rights seemed to more than offset the absence of any real democratic participation in government. Napoleon's government was admired by most French citizens, and he won substantial support for his reforms even in conquered lands—except in those countries where a strong nationalistic hostility to French dominance arose. Thus it may be claimed that in some respects Napoleon, despite his bloody wars and his authoritarian rule, may have served the Lord's program of extension of freedom and justice.[16]

Perpetuation of the Revolutionary Legacy in France

After Napoleon's defeat, the victor nations restored a monarchy to France headed by the brother of the former king who was executed early in the Revolution. But it was universally recognized that royal absolutism would never again be peacefully accepted by the people of France; the Great Revolution was simply too big

a divide to be obliterated. Because the new king wanted to avoid renewed revolution, he granted a constitutional charter that conceded limited functions to an elected parliament. Most of the French people were also in the mood for compromise. After the military losses of the last Napoleonic years, accompanied by economic privations resulting from a British blockade of French ports, a chastened French populace seemed fairly content to settle down under a restored French monarchy.

This monarchy was a good deal less liberal than most of the short-lived French governments of the Revolution era or the English monarchy at the time. But it included many of the features which the French people had appreciated in the Napoleonic government. This included equality under the law and the eligibility of all classes for public office. Of course it also preserved the comprehensive Napoleonic law codes and substantial freedom of religion. Though it gave the vote only to a small number of landowners, it also afforded a generation of peace to a war-weary people.[17]

Now that revolution had been shown to be feasible, the French people continued for most of the nineteenth century to periodically replace governments that had proven unacceptable. These exchanges of government are commonly termed revolutions, but they were not major upheavals—a few days of barricades in Paris sometimes sufficed to bring down a regime during this period. The monarchy of 1815 was first replaced by a more liberal monarchy in 1830. That in turn was replaced by a democratic republic (called the Second Republic) in 1848. Within four years this fledgling republic was subverted by its first elected president, who bore the potent name of Napoleon. This nephew of the great Napoleon parlayed a nostalgic revival of the Napoleonic legend into popular acceptance of a Second Empire, which lasted from 1852 until it was defeated by Bismarck's Prussia in 1870. At that time, with the consent of Bismarck (who believed a republic would be the form of French government least likely to seek revenge for his appropriation of Alsace-Lorraine) the French people were allowed to elect by universal male suffrage a National Assembly to draft yet another constitution.

The Third Republic, as this government was designated, endured for seventy years—an unusual lifespan for a modern European government. During this period it practiced many of the principles of freedom which the French had specified in their idealistic Declaration of 1789. But after the reign of the second Napoleon, the French had become wary of a powerful leader and so allowed only very limited powers to the executive in the Third Republic. In the harsh environment of twentieth-century Europe, the Third Republic survived the First World War (in weakened condition) but not the Second. After that war a Fourth Republic was formed in 1946 (which also suffered from the weakness of the executive) and then a Fifth Republic in 1958.

At last, with a constitution astutely crafted by Charles de Gaulle, France had achieved a combination of a democratic legislature and an effective executive. This is the government that France has carried into the twenty-first century. It is doubtless one of "the great democracies of the earth which [God has] overseen in creating their governments, where peace and liberty and democratic processes obtain" for which President Gordon B. Hinckley prayed at the October 2001 general conference.[18] It is a government that displays most of the features specified in 1789 in the great Declaration of the Rights of Man. And it is a government achieved by the route of repeated experimentation through abrupt exchanges of governments, rather than the route of incremental alterations as pioneered by England.

The dream opened for the French and many other peoples by the Great Revolution of 1789 did not come to full fruition for over a century. But that revolution did demonstrate to the French people and others that transformation of an unpopular authoritarian government did not need to be achieved through centuries of small

improvements—the "English way." A government could be remade in a matter of weeks or months by a determined people. Thus, the French Revolution opened the Age of the Democratic Revolutions in Europe. Without the French Revolution, constitutional government and democracy might have been a good deal slower in coming to many nations.

For several generations France continued to inspire revolutions in other European countries. When the French deposed their king in 1830, revolutions against established monarchs broke out immediately in several other states. The year 1848 was a year of revolutions in many European countries, touched off by the French deposition of another king. (This force of French example was expressed in a common saying: "When Paris sneezes, Europe catches cold.") Though citizens of established democracies of our own time usually look askance at revolutions and revolutionaries, it must be recognized that in the Europe of the nineteenth century there were still numerous regimes much more oppressive (and more resistant to reform) than that against which the Americans—or even the French—revolted in the late eighteenth century. It could well be concluded that while many revolutions have evidently not been helpful to God's purposes, others may have been utilized by the Lord. It may also be observed that, unlike the Americans or Canadians, most people who today enjoy constitutional, representative democracies were not so fortunate as to receive this form of government as a birthright from the "mother of parliaments." While the Americans separated from a parliamentary regime by means of a War of Independence that bore only limited resemblance to a true revolution, many peoples have achieved democracy only after one or more genuine revolutions against authoritarian governments and elitist social structures.[19]

The Modern Ideologies

The French Revolution, even more than the Enlightenment, unleashed a torrent of ideas concerning governments and societies. During the post-Revolution generation (1815–48), some of these ideas tended to coalesce into theoretical systems or doctrines often referred to as "ideologies" or "isms." These became the rallying programs or causes for various groups or classes throughout the modern world. In fact, most of the ideologies that have been influential in Europe and the world in the twentieth century were born in this post–French Revolution generation.

Certainly not all the ideas incorporated into these ideologies were new. Men had dreamed of liberty long before they systematized a program called liberalism. Similar comments might be made regarding conservatism or socialism. But as one historian has written: "To the 'philosophy' of the Enlightenment were now added an intense activism and a partisanship generated during the French Revolution. . . . Without the 'isms' created in the thirty-odd years after the peace of Vienna [1815] it is impossible to understand or even talk about the history of the world since that event."[20]

These ideologies were not developed exclusively in France nor practiced exclusively within France, but France continued to be a prime source for ideas of social and political reform in the early 1800s, as it had been in the Enlightenment and the Revolution. Hence it is appropriate to include France's significant contributions to the ideologies as a part of France's contribution to the modern world. And to the extent that some of the ideologies were major factors in the further spread of freedom in the world, they may also be considered a part of the Lord's contribution to His children. Four of them—liberalism, radicalism, humanitarianism, and imperialism—are worthy of special note in a discussion of the expansion of freedom.

The liberalism of the early nineteenth century, also called classical liberalism, should not be confused with liberalism as advocated by lib-

erals of the twentieth or twenty-first centuries. Of course there are significant resemblances, but until late in the nineteenth century, European liberals did not believe in democratic government nor in big government. They were predominantly men of business or the professional classes, along with some enterprising landowners. They believed that they could provide the people with a just and enlightened government through a constitutional monarchy with a legislature elected by men of property and education. They mistrusted the political judgment of the uneducated masses and, in contrast to Americans, tended to associate a republican form of government (one with an elected chief executive) with disorder and instability. But they did strongly believe in individual freedoms for the masses, as stated in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. This included freedom of religion and freedom of speech. In economics, they supported a laissez-faire domestic policy and free trade among nations.

Though the liberals were not advocates of revolution, they did their best to seize the opportunities afforded by the widespread revolutions of 1830 and 1848. When these opportunities proved illusory or short-lived, they continued to work within existing governments in western Europe to further advance their goals. By the end of the nineteenth century, many of the human rights they supported had been achieved in such leading nations as Britain and France, as we have seen. Also achieved was a degree of democracy that liberals had reluctantly come to accept as inevitable. This broad suffrage was made more palatable to liberals by a general expansion of education to the masses in these countries, with strong liberal support. Both individual freedoms and democracy then went out from Europe and America to much of the world. Thus, classical (nineteenth-century) liberalism was by and large a force consistent with the purposes of the Lord, and France may be considered an instrument of the Lord in its formulation and propagation.

By the 1830s Americans had advanced from a system of voting largely restricted to property owners to a mass (Jacksonian) democracy. Meanwhile, the chief advocates of democracy in Europe, encouraged by the French Revolution, were commonly called radicals. In Britain, radicals demanded universal suffrage, government relief for the poor, disestablishment of the Church of England, and a thoroughgoing reform of prisons and laws. Their first major success was the Great Reform Bill of 1832. This was the first significant change in Parliament since the Glorious Revolution of 1688–89. It approximately doubled the electorate (to about one adult male in five), eliminated many rotten boroughs, and extended representation in Parliament to the new industrial cities. During the remainder of the century, the vote was extended by degrees to the bulk of the working class. The government's connection with the Church of England became more a matter of form than of substance, and factory laws and legal reforms were passed for the benefit of the workers. Thereafter English radicalism, having achieved most of its objectives, tended to wane as a distinctive ideology. Socialism and communism, though never very strong in England, persisted as significant working-class ideologies.

In France and in other European countries influenced by the French model, radicals usually demanded a republican form of government, along with universal suffrage and abolition of a state church. Politically active radicals were relatively few in number but did achieve brief prominence during the abortive revolutions of 1830 and 1848. After that, working class activists tended to turn more to various forms of socialism. But some of the principal goals for which radicals had unsuccessfully agitated early in the century—notably universal male suffrage—did become realities in the late nineteenth century. In that period many liberals and even conservatives were converted to this ideal and became supporters of the broader political freedom it entailed.

Perhaps more pervasive and more generally successful in the nineteenth century than any of the other isms was humanitarianism. The reduction of socially sanctioned cruelty was remarkable. In this respect, a major emphasis of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment was largely realized in the course of the nineteenth century. Legal torture was virtually eliminated in Europe by 1900. Conditions improved greatly in hospitals, prisons, and insane asylums. Europeans as a whole disapproved of cruelty to the vulnerable members of society such as orphans, women and children in mines and factories, black slaves in America, and serfs in Russia. Christians as a whole tended to revive the original Christian concern for the often-neglected weaker elements in society.

Certainly this remarkable growth of humanitarianism in Europe and its spread to much of the world was consistent with the program and wishes of the Lord. On the other hand, one of the great disappointments of the twentieth century for mankind and presumably for the Lord has been the regression of humanitarianism experienced in some areas of Europe and elsewhere. Brutal dictatorships, militarized regimes, wars, and terrorism can only be seen as regressive blots on modern history. Some of these blots have been largely removed, particularly by actions of the great democracies praised by President Hinckley. Hopefully, with the help of God, further progress will be possible in the twenty-first century.

Another influential ideology of the nineteenth century was the theory that advocated and justified European imperialism. Like nationalism and some of the other isms, imperialism produced both desirable and undesirable results. Because British imperialism made exceptional long-range contributions to the spread of freedom, it received substantial attention in the preceding chapter. While perhaps not a prime example of the positive aspects of imperialism, French imperialism also deserves mention. In France, a strong *parti colonial*, a colonial lobby, provided much of the impetus for imperial expansion in the Third Republic.[21] Much of French expansion in West Africa was due to the wildcat activities of French military leaders in adjacent areas.[22] But many of the French involved in building or governing the nineteenth-century French empire in Africa and Southeast Asia were sincere Christians concerned for the welfare of the subjects. Similar to the concept of the "white man's burden" extolled in Britain by Kipling was the French concept of the "civilizing mission" of France. In pursuit of this ideal, many French administrators taught and practiced ideals of justice and individual rights.

It was perhaps natural that in the period of the dissolution of European empires following World War II, French imperial subjects in such areas as Indochina and Algeria were embittered by the all-too-real inequities of empire, and waged fierce wars for freedom. But from the perspective of a later generation, it may also be recognized that there were some lasting benefits from association with one of the leading freedom-loving cultures of the Western world. Believers in a Heavenly Father who loves all His children may thus perceive His hand in some aspects of this great movement (European imperialism) that tested and afflicted—but also in some ways enriched—large numbers of those children.

France and American Independence

During the American colonial era, works of the French philosophes were read by educated English colonists, even though Americans were generally more familiar with English government and literature than with the French. Then in the intensely active period of the American Revolution and constitution making, there was an important two-way exchange of political and social thought between France and the United States. Americans such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, as well as several Frenchmen who made extended visits to America, were important conduits of this two-way movement of

concepts of democracy and constitutionalism between the two countries.[23]

In the American War for Independence, France became the Americans' principal ally. France gave important military and financial aid, as well as moral and intellectual support to the colonists. This aid was no doubt motivated in part by France's continuing antagonism towards Britain, which had recently expelled France from the latter's own colonies on the North American continent. But it is clear that most of the French officers who fought alongside the American forces were sincerely enthused for the American cause. Most modern Americans are familiar with the zeal of Lafayette but may not be so familiar with the loyal and expert assistance provided to General Washington by other French officers such as the Count de Rochambeau. He was the commander of the French forces that collaborated closely with Washington to defeat the British at Yorktown. In this final battle, the French forces outnumbered their American allies three to one (31,000 French to 9,000 Americans) when one counts the sailors in the French fleet that played a vital role in the defeat of Cornwallis. Moreover, France made loans to the United States totaling 26 million dollars between 1777 and 1782, of which only $4,533,333 was repaid. (For perspective, note that Jefferson paid Napoleon only $11,250,000 for all of Louisiana in 1803.) The cost of the French military and financial aid to the American independence effort became a major cause of the French government's own financial crisis, which helped bring on the French Revolution a decade later. Thus, France, in its contributions to the birth of the United States, may be seen as one of the instruments used by the Lord to advance freedom both in the New World and the Old.[24]

A final comment should be made on yet another contribution of France, as well as of Britain, to the establishment and maintenance of freedom in the modern world. Both of these countries were champions of freedom in the twentieth century through their participation in the two World Wars and in the Cold War against Communist power. While it would be an oversimplification to view any of these wars as simple conflicts between good and evil, both Britain and France, along with the United States, were fighting major threats to free peoples in far-flung parts of the world. In World War I, Britain and France chiefly represented the more advanced democracies of Europe and for most of the war carried the burden for their defense.

In World War II, France was in a weakened condition at the outset, and its early surrender left the island nation of Britain to stand almost alone in defending freedom against a continent under dictatorial oppression. Later the USSR, a communist dictatorship, was brought into the war on the side of Britain by an attack from Nazi Germany. When the United States was brought into the war through Japanese and German aggression and France reentered the war to fight alongside the United States and Britain in the last stages of the defeat of Germany, it seemed that the prodemocracy coalition of World War I had been partially revived. Then during the Cold War and in the post–Cold War era, France further supported the United States and Britain in the defense of freedom and democracy against the Soviet Union and other threats.

Conclusion

The rise and spread of freedom in the world has been one of the truly remarkable developments of the last three centuries. In the course of that development, the roles of Britain, France, and the United States (discussed in the next chapter), have been particularly noteworthy. To be sure, the record of each of these states reflects in some instances the weaknesses and frailties of humankind. Greed, thoughtlessness, and inhumanity have all played a role. It is evident that among nations as among individuals, God has no perfect instruments for the accomplishment of His purposes. Yet across the centuries, the prevailing

trend in each of these three nations has been the development of a freer society for its own people. And each has done much to spread its freedoms to other peoples of the world. Thus, there is ample evidence to sustain the prophetic judgment that these great democracies have been special instruments of the Lord in bringing the blessings of liberty and justice to many of His children.

NOTES

1. John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom: Writings and Discourses of John Taylor*, comp. C. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990), 308–9.

2. Britain has an effective democracy but one that does not feature separation of powers. Regional governmental units (such as the counties) act under the authority of the central government—not by authority designated in a constitution. The chief executive (the prime minister) is determined by the majority in the House of Commons (not elected directly by the people) and can be replaced by the majority in the House of Commons. He has no power to take any definitive action that is specifically opposed by the majority in the Commons. There is no supreme court that can hold an act of Parliament unconstitutional. The House of Lords can delay the implementation of an act of the House of Commons under certain circumstances but not block it indefinitely.

3. Judith Shklar, *Montesquieu* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 121.

4. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, quoted in Jacques-Donat Casanova, *America's French Heritage* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1976), 98.

5. Voltaire, quoted in Casanova, *America's French Heritage*, 98.

6. Wesley M. Gewehr and others, eds., *The United States: A History of a Democracy*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), Appendix 1, 642.

7. Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, epistle 2, line 1.

8. Harold B. Lee, "Life under Control," Brigham Young University Commencement Speech, June 4, 1951, 19.

9. See R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World*, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), 314–26.

10. Fareed Zakaria, *Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 47; the quotation is from Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 418.

11. See Palmer and Colton, *Modern World*, 361–69.

12. Palmer and Colton, *Modern World*, 371. For varying interpretations of the French Revolution, see Alfred Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Francois Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Lynn Avery Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); William Doyle, *The Origins of the French Revolution*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); and William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

13. Palmer and Colton, *Modern World*, 371–91.

14. Palmer and Colton, *Modern World*, 388.

15. Palmer and Colton, *Modern World*, 399.

16. See John P. McKay, Bennett D. Hill, and John Buckler, *A History of World Societies*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 759–66. For various interpretations of Napoleon's effects on France and Europe, see Louis Bergeron, *France Under Napoleon*, trans. R. R. Palmer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981); Pieter Gehl, *Napoleon, For and Against*, trans. Olive Renier (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1949); R. Ben Jones, *Napoleon: Man and Myth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977); Jean Tulard, *Napoléon: le mythe d'un Sauveur* (Paris: Fayard, 1987); Alexander I. Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

17. See Palmer and Colton, *Modern World*, 444.

18. Gordon B. Hinckley, "'Till We Meet Again,'" *Ensign*, November 2001, 90.

19. In addition to European examples, consider

examples from Latin America, Africa, or other areas.

20. Palmer and Colton, *Modern World*, 464.

21. See Christopher M. Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas: The Great War and the Climax of French Imperial Expansion* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981).

22. See A. S. Kanya-Forstner, "The Régime du sabre—West African Style: The French Marines in the Western Sudan, 1890–99," in *Armies of Occupation*, ed. Roy A. Prete and A. Hamish Ion (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), 55–75.

23. See Casanova, *America's French Heritage*, 102–12.

24. See Casanova, *America's French Heritage*, 77–84; Gewehr and others, *United States*, 77–78.