



"The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground."

—Thomas Jefferson

**07-Nov-08**

## *Back to the Future*

"It's like déjà vu all over again," said legendary Yankees catcher and phrase-mangler, Yogi Berra, many years ago, and how right he was.

Every few presidential administrations, the country experiences a liberal Chief Executive who promises to change America, to restore her reputation in [the world](#), and to help the poor and the downtrodden, who have sunk to such desperate straits through the greed and unconcern of the previous President and his cronies. At first, there is public euphoria and high hopes that, given a fresh face in the White House, America will become a kinder, gentler superpower abroad and fulfill its supposed role of promoting a cradle-to-the-grave general welfare here at home. As time passes, however, a crisis—oftentimes an economic one, sometimes a military one—reveals the grim [truth](#) about liberals in high office: They do not understand basic capitalism, and they lack the stomach for international hardball.

The election of Barack Obama as the nation's forty-fourth President may have set America up for another round of the same. There is no doubt that Obama is a liberal Democrat; by any measure, he was the most liberal Senator during his short tenure in that august body. Under his soaring campaign rhetoric lurked leftist—dare we say socialist, even communist?—principles and policies to the point of Obama, when speaking with Joe the Plumber, saying he wanted to "spread the wealth around." Such a policy is reminiscent of the last half of Karl Marx's famous dictum from his *Communist Manifesto*: "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." Redistributionist economics will lead to national insolvency, just as it did in the Soviet

Union.

In matters international, Obama's stated intention is to meet with world leaders—even such anti-American hotheads as Iran's President Ahmadinejad and Venezuela's President Chavez—"without preconditions." It sounds as if, as President of the world's strongest nation, he would make no demands nor expect the usual *quid pro quo* for either American assistance or conversely, non-involvement in their parts of the world. In other words, he would go into such meetings assuming equality with and goodwill from these tyrants, which is to say that he would engage them from a position of weakness. All good negotiators know that if they have the upper hand, it is usually good policy to use it to leverage the best deal. Yet, Obama wants to come before them, hat in hand, saying, "Why can't we all just get along?"

The question is, will the Obama years be a repeat of the Clinton administration or the Carter administration? Bill Clinton campaigned as a centrist, although it was well-known that his own beliefs fell to the left on the political spectrum. In his first years as President, he tried to ram through Congress various liberal bills, and watched as most of them either failed or were stripped of most of their left-wing items. Hillarycare, his and his wife's atrocious healthcare bill, failed miserably, teaching him an important lesson: The nation was not ready for massive government involvement, especially in one of the nation's largest economic sectors. From then on, he governed from the center-left, especially in economic matters.

His foreign policy successes were few and far between. He embroiled the U.S. in places as diverse as Bosnia and Somalia, where our military was either hogtied and bogged down or slaughtered and humiliated by second- or third-rate armies or even militias. Sudanese minister of state for defense, Major General Elfatih Erwa, insists that in 1996 he offered to hand over Osama bin Laden—who was a financial backer of the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993—but Clinton did nothing. His primary reaction to terrorism was to shoot off a few cruise missiles into the offending nation and consider the matter closed. While he glad-handed heads of state and mesmerized his international fans, he did little or nothing to enhance America's standing in the world. In truth, most of America's foremost enemies thought the U.S. to be weak.

Jimmy Carter, on the other hand, ran as a centrist Christian Democrat and immediately began to govern as a leftist. All too soon, the nation's economy plunged into recession, and the public began to see their savings disappear. Interest rates lurched into the high-teens and low-twenties, and American prosperity ground to a near-halt. He signed into law a heavy increase in the Social Security tax and implemented a windfall-profits tax on oil companies. He also expanded the federal bureaucracy by establishing the

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Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. The years of his Presidency were the worst economically since the Great Depression.

In terms of foreign policy, his administration is perhaps best remembered for the Iranian hostage crisis, when Iranian revolutionaries stormed the American embassy in Tehran and held 52 American diplomats hostage for 444 days. While he could negotiate a [peace](#) treaty between Israel and Egypt—theCamp [David](#) Accords, for which he later received a Nobel Peace Prize—hefailed miserably to negotiate the hostages' release. An attempted rescue operation, on April 24, 1980, was aborted, but only after two aircraft crashed in the desert and eight soldiers died. In addition, in just his first month in office, Carter slashed the defense budget by \$6 billion. He also relinquished control of the Panama Canal, one of the world's strategic sea gates, which the Panamanians have contracted the Chinese to manage. His record speaks for itself.

Which of these former Presidents will Obama resemble? It is hard to say, since so little is known about his governing style due to his lack of executive experience. However, from his rhetoric, he seems to lean toward the Carter mold rather than the Clinton one. With a majority of Democrats in both houses of Congress, he has the potential to move this country farther to the left than either. Only time will tell, of course, but the historical results of his liberal ideas presage a bleak next four years for those of a more conservative bent.

Nevertheless, the apostle Paul admonishes us, "Therefore, I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" ([1 Timothy 2:1-2](#)). In these times, this is advice well worth taking.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## *From the Archives: Featured Sermon*

### [Politics and Christ's Return](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

After exploring the philosophical, economic, and social definitions of liberal, conservative, and moderate, Richard Ritenbaugh concludes that in the church we are none of these—weare "God-ists." The world considers us liberals because we are not bound by its religious orthodoxy. Conversely, we are conservative when following God's constitutional code, His holy standards, living by the spirit of the law rather than just by the letter. Ultimately, religion and politics do not mix at all because in weak men, political

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expediency trumps righteousness every time. Because we are set apart by God, we are not to become involved in the world's political, judicial, or military systems (John 18:36-37). Our term in office has not yet begun.

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## *From the Archives: Featured Article*

### [Rivet Your Eyes on the Destination](#)

by John O. Reid

By recounting a personal experience, John Reid reveals a valuable lesson about keeping our eyes focused on our goal, the Kingdom. Overconcern with the around-and-about tends to distract us, and before we know it we are off course. Our preparation for God's Kingdom depends on our focus!

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