



"[H]umans run governments. Ergo extremely flawed and even damaged people are governing us. Ergo don't give them a big sandbox to play in; keep it as small as possible. That way their depredations will be, by definition, limited."

—Peggy Noonan

25-Sep-09

The World's Need for Atonement

This past week saw a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, before which President Barack Obama gave another "historic" speech, or so the media tell us. That same media breathlessly reported about how significant it was that all these world leaders could come to the same place and speak openly about [the world](#) situation and try to "embrace a new era of engagement based on mutual interest and mutual respect," as Obama put it in his address. From behind the same lectern, not only would Obama address the assembled delegates, but also Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu would also speak.

From all the [faith](#) that the administration and the media seem to have in this policy of engagement—without preconditions, as Obama has promised—we should expect the dawning of world [peace](#) at any moment. Is that not all it takes? All we have to do, according to this formula, is to get world leaders in

one room, and after a few handshakes and a couple of beers—*voila!* World peace! It is so simple: Just let them jabber at each other for a few hours, and they will walk out arm in arm, best friends forever!

If this will work so well for nations with deep-seated enmities and ancient disputes, just think how far it will go in solving our petty personal and domestic problems. Just apply the formula: Gather the fighting parties in one place, tell them that they have mutual interests and need to have mutual respect for one another, and let them talk it out without preconditions or anything. They should be bowling partners before dinnertime!

Seriously, do the administration and media really think we are so naïve? When has this formula worked before? Have we not lived through previous administrations that have tried variations of this policy only to meet with unmitigated failure and reduced international respect? Jimmy Carter tried this with the Iranian revolutionaries when they took Americans hostage at our embassy in Tehran. Did that not embolden terrorists throughout the Muslim world? To them, it was a perfect illustration of the fact that America was weak and easily led about by the nose.

The same could be said for Bill Clinton's disastrous policy in Somalia, where the "Black Hawk Down" scenario played out. The Somali warlords were not appeased in the least by our humanitarian efforts in Mogadishu and elsewhere. American soldiers were sent into that city without the military strength or the standing orders to be effective in anything except as targets for snipers and gangs of militants. Playing nice and being understanding and talking incessantly about peace did nothing but put Americans in harm's way—in Somalia and around the world—because it was clear to Muslim extremists that America was still soft and could not stand to see bloodshed.

So it was just nine months into the George W. Bush presidency that al Qaida hijacked four domestic airliners, flying two of them into the World Trade Center in New York City, crashing one of them into the Pentagon in Washington, DC, and plunging the last into the ground in Pennsylvania. About 3,000 people lost their lives because Islamic fundamentalists believed that, because America had been all talk and little action in the recent past, it

would be a pushover this time too. However, they failed to realize that the Bush administration was made of sterner stuff, and America's retaliation was severe, at least in comparison to its former lackadaisical behavior.

This is the real world, but the Obama administration is looking at it through rose-colored glasses. Tyrants cannot be talked out of power. Millennia-long conflicts cannot be solved by timely concessions and photo-op handshakes. Radical ideologies cannot be disputed with reasonable arguments so that their adherents suddenly say, "Sorry! I was wrong."

That is not how the real world works. Tyrants fight to the death to hold onto their power. Ancient feuds blaze into war. Radical ideologies are stamped out—if that—only by overwhelming force. Human nature guarantees that this is the only way it works because human nature rarely, if ever, thinks that it is wrong. In fact, human nature will often choose death before surrender. This is the simple reason why humanity has never progressed into any kind of "Golden Age" of universal peace, mutual understanding, and prosperity. Our nature will not allow us to.

Obama's policy will fail, just as Bush's did, Clinton's did, Reagan's did, and Carter's did. Mankind cannot find the way to peace because it is not in man to be at peace. Even if peace suddenly broke out all over the world, it would soon pass—very soon—and the people of the world would be back at each other's throats in no time. On this, the prophet Isaiah writes, "Their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they have not known" ([Isaiah 59:6-8](#)).

Yet, the same prophet predicts, "It shall come to pass in the latter days that . . . they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" ([Isaiah 2:2](#), 4). What happens between the utter sinful, violent chaos of this world and that peaceful world to come?

Two things: The first is mentioned in Isaiah 2: "The mountain of the LORD's house shall be established" (verse 2). This is a reference to the [return of Jesus Christ](#) in power to rule all nations with a rod of iron ([Revelation 19:11-15](#)).

Because of mankind's recalcitrant nature, He will be forced to deal with humanity sternly, as a conquering King, because man has rejected Him as the gentle and loving Lamb of [God](#). He will set things right. This intervention in human affairs is foreshadowed in the [Feast of Trumpets](#) ([Leviticus 23:23-25](#)).

Yet, that is not enough; the second event must occur, which is seen in the [Day of Atonement](#) or [Yom Kippur](#), as the Jews call it. The typical ritual of Leviticus 16 illustrates what God does to bring about reconciliation. [Two goats](#) are selected, one to be sacrificed to pay for the sins of the people and one to carry away the guilt of [sin](#) into the wilderness. [Jesus Christ](#) fulfills both of these types. He is the sacrifice to pay for human sin, which He accomplished at Golgotha, and He also bears our guilt, removing our transgressions "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12; see Isaiah 53:4, 6, 11-12). With sin covered, God and man can begin to work together in peace.

Until the minds of human beings are freed from this constant persuasion to live selfishly, there can be no peace. Such is our need—the world's need—for the atonement only God can supply.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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by John W. Ritenbaugh

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