

# ONE INHERENT CONFLICT – OBAMA VS. ME – COLLECTIVISM vs. INDIVIDUALISM!

Stephen L. Bakke  November 4, 2011

*All for One, One for All – Quote from “The Three Musketeers,” published 1844*

## All for One, One for All

---

In my last report on “Chaos and Anarchy .....” I introduced a discussion of the “occupy” movement (OWWch! – Occupy Whatever Whenever) which has dominated news reports in recent weeks. There is very little continuity of philosophy among the OWWch! crowd. And if you took a poll, it seems that almost every traditional institution or practice is opposed by someone in the group. The result is an “enemies list,” about a mile long. If one really tries to reduce this to a common denominator, it seems to be that OWWch! is collectively asking for “EVERYTHING FOR EVERYBODY!” This is a cry for “*collectivism*” in a country with traditions far different from that.

The dictionary definition of collectivism notes this type of system has collective control over production and distribution, and that it emphasizes collective action or identity rather than the importance of the individual. It really is similar to that rallying cry from “The Three Musketeers” – “All for One, One for All!”

## One Inherent Conflict Between Obama and Me

I was brought up in the Midwest, in a middle class family, and was taught traditional relationships between humans and their God, and between citizens and the federal government. In other words, I was taught the traditional Judeo-Christian philosophy of a very personal relationship with God. Salvation, however one defines it, is a personal “transaction” and results from an individual’s relationship with the Creator.

Regarding our form of government, I have always been taught about the **rights of individuals, and about individual liberties**. The United States was founded by and for the people who believed in the individual. A collective/progressive approach relies much less on faith in individuals. Individual identity takes a back seat to group or “collective” identity.

I have always been comfortable with, and committed to, this emphasis on individuals. In recent years, however, I began to realize that a growing number of others had very different views from my own. Obama is a prime example of those holding the new (for me and for many) view that the “community/collective” trumps the individual when it comes to God **and** the government.

*I believe that an individual’s religion-based concept of collectivism vs. individualism defines an overall attitude and that, in a significant way, defines how that individual sees the role of government. A tenuous relationship you say?  
I think not! – S. Bakke, 11/4/11*

## First, a Look at Traditional Judeo-Christian Concepts

First, consider the role of God in our lives and the concept of salvation. Christians have continued, in their own way, the Jewish tradition of “atonement” which is celebrated and religiously observed on

Yom Kippur, “The Day of Atonement.” The Christian message in the Gospels is that God sent his Son Jesus to die for our sins and thereby wiping the slate clean. This reconciles us as humans with God – i.e. it atones. Since I am a Christian, let me expound further on the Christian theology.

This reconciliation occurs through Jesus taking the punishment for all of us individually by being put to death and experiencing damnation and hell. The triumph over that, through the resurrection, is important in that it means **our individual human debt has been paid. But that’s not enough. Salvation only comes after we make claim to salvation. This means personally and individually repenting and accepting the gift through expression of belief and having faith. This only happens by the Grace of God – nothing else.** There is nothing we can individually do to deserve the gift of salvation. Only individually can we have faith and thereby receive salvation.

See the difference? It’s an individual relationship.

### **Why is Obama So Comfortable With a Much Different Collective Approach?**

That question is similar to the last report in which I asked “Why is Obama so comfortable with chaos and anarchy?” Similar question? Yes! A related question? Yes! But it is still a very different question. This analysis takes a look at Obama from a slightly different angle.

During recent years I have heard frequent references to concepts such as *collective salvation*, *social justice*, *liberation theology*, *collective redemption*, *reparation*, *restitution*, and the like. The religion Obama has been exposed to and enthusiastically accepted over the years, is very different from the traditional Christian theology I have been exposed to.

**Liberation theology**, which existed primarily in late 20<sup>th</sup> century Latin America, is a movement which construes the teachings of Jesus in terms of unjust economic, political, or social conditions. Some describe it as “an interpretation of Christian faith through the poor’s suffering, their struggle, and hope.” Sin is defined as the cause of poverty. Therefore fighting the oppressors, often the holders of wealth, is how sin is ideally eliminated and **collective redemption** is achieved. Thus poverty is eliminated through **restitution** (wealth redistribution) and **collective salvation** can be claimed. Saul Alinsky would love this!

Liberation theology includes black liberation theology as found in the U.S. and has James H. Cone as the “father” of the movement. According to Cone, **redemption** can’t happen unless the oppressed or exploited are given back that which was taken in the first place. He doesn’t see salvation as an individual thing, but rather it is societal, or collective.

What does **collective** mean? It means “We are all in this together – no exceptions.” The “collective mindset” doesn’t see individuals as having an important identity, but sees group identities as being most important. Therefore, individuals can and must be sacrificed for the benefit of the group. I think that’s a theme that we see in progressive movements today.

**Social Justice** – Who started that? What’s the big deal? Shouldn’t there be justice in our society and the world? Yes, but the definition of **social justice** is slightly different than we are used to. I understand that progressive/collectivist **social justice** is achieved only through eliminating economic and other oppression, and is a prerequisite to **redemption**. Their goals can never be achieved, thereby continuing the movement. Relating this to my prior report, Saul Alinsky would praise the strategy of developing this “catch 22” as justification for continuing the movement.

**Collective salvation** means that “I can't be saved on my own ..... I have to secure everyone else's salvation and then we're all saved together.” Thus is accomplished **social justice**.

*Wall Street protesters reported that thieves are stealing their cellphones and iPads and laptops and cash as they sit in the park. It was a lesson for the young protesters to learn. They were all for social justice until somebody poorer than them wanted their stuff.* – comedian Argus Hamilton

### **Has Obama Given Us Any Hints About His Religious Beliefs?**

A quote from Obama from the mid 1990s: “...certain portions of the African American community are doing as bad, if not worse, uh, and recognizing that my fate remains tied up with their fates, uh, that *my individual salvation is not going to come about without a collective salvation for the country*. Um, unfortunately I think that recognition requires we make sacrifices and this country has not always been willing to make the sacrifices necessary to bring about a new day and a new age.”

The following is from 2008 (I transcribed this from a video interview): “I’ve got a core set of values that, I think, have to be advanced – and *that my individual salvation depends on our collective salvation.*”

Also from 2008, while standing in for Senator Edward Kennedy and delivering a commencement address at Wesleyan University, *Obama urged the graduates to look past material gains and work for the “collective salvation” of the United States.*

From Obama’s book “The Audacity of Hope”:

*“In the history of these (African people's) struggles, I was able to see faith as more than just a comfort to the weary or a hedge against death; rather, it was an active, palpable agent in the world.”*

Obama explains further that it was the Reverend Wright's (and presumably Cone's) peculiar form of Christianity that he found palatable:

*“It was because of these newfound understandings (at Trinity under Wright) ..... that religious commitment did not require me to suspend critical thinking, disengage from the battle for economic and social justice ..... that I was finally able to walk down the aisle of Trinity ..... and be baptized.”*

It’s pretty clear what Obama believes. And I respect that. But I don’t have to agree.

### **Any Connection to Obama’s Mentor, Saul Alinsky? (Refer to my prior report on “Chaos .....”)**

In my last report I “went on and on” about the influence that Saul Alinsky had on Obama’s philosophy of all things cultural and political. Obama was a community organizer and taught the “Alinsky Method,” taken from “Rules for Radicals,” to other community organizers. If you haven’t read that report yet, I think you will find the similarities between Alinsky’s philosophy and Obama’s conduct absolutely stunning!

Anyway, I “scoured” my notes from reading Alinsky’s book and came up with the following tidbits of Alinsky’s philosophy which closely relate to the subject of this report – i.e. the prominence of collective/community priorities and rights over an individual’s rights:

- Ethics is doing what is best for the most.
- Advancements are never made individually, only collectively.
- There is an inherent presumption that everyone has a reason to rebel and take from the “Haves”. There will be no cessation of efforts until there is universal equality.

That ..... for what it’s worth.

### **Obama’s Religious Beliefs Help Define His Political Goals**

When I did the research for this project and I came to realize Obama views Christianity through the prism of liberation theology which is full of class struggle rather than peace and social order. He assumed away the possibility of being motivated by peace and order in favor of assuming traditional Christians are motivated by their struggles against victimhood. How might this affect his views of the role of government and the collectivist/progressive governing model?

Obama’s committed religious beliefs are soundly and profoundly based in the concept of social justice, collective retribution, collective redemption, and collective salvation. Is it any wonder this carries over into his view of government’s role in our lives and the concept of collective salvation through wealth redistribution (collective retribution)?

It follows very logically that Obama views the community as the focus of government policy, and the concept of the individual ends up playing “second fiddle.” Our Founders’ concept of the importance of the individual is somehow rhetoric to him and he is “soft” on the concept.

### **Collective Salvation vs. Individual Salvation**

**or Collectivism vs. Individualism ..... or [OBAMA VS. ME](#)**

Our inherent conflict (Obama’s and mine) is that he doesn’t understand what I believe and therefore can’t bridge the differences. **And vice-versa!** I don’t think he understands how significantly different his theology of “collective salvation” differs from my traditional concept of “individual atonement.” And I know he doesn’t broadcast how his religious background translates into his personal approach to generating public policy and the government’s role in our lives. On the other hand, I “don’t ‘git’ him” either. Perhaps the “‘twain shall never meet.” But I am beginning to understand him a little better (I think).

---

**Next up:** The Tea Party and the Flea Party – Two Peas in a Pod?

**And soon:** Some Observations on Class Warfare

**And eventually:** More on Jobs, Jobs, Jobs!

**And then what .....?????**