



## Leftward leaning

Pastor Reb Bradley says we're all born liberal—sort of. And we need help to outgrow it.

by Matt Kaufman

Maybe you've heard of Reb Bradley, the retired pastor who a few years back wrote a best-seller called *Child Training Tips*. But even if you haven't, you might be intrigued by his theory about parenting and politics. Let him sum it up:

I propose that liberalism is, in fact, the natural condition of the human heart. For us to grow into conservatives, we must be trained against our nature.

That's the premise of *Born Liberal, Raised Right: How to Rescue America from Moral Decline—One Family at a Time* (WND Books, 2008, 172 pages), a short book that's long on straight talk and common sense. Bradley doesn't

begin by talking about politics. He begins at the beginning—the *very* beginning.

"From birth, we are all driven by *passion*," he writes. "We want what we want, when we want it, and we refuse to do things we do not want."

That's exactly why good parents work so hard to instill discipline. These days, though, many parents cater to their children's desires, cave in to their pouting or tantrums, clean up their messes, and spare them the consequences of their actions. In short, they spoil them rotten.

Thus, the child grows up with "an over-exalted sense of his own importance," Bradley says—"a grand sense of entitlement, little gratefulness, and minimal ability to delay gratification." Worse, his friends and classmates get the same treatment—so they all grow

**FIRST FAMILY** President Barack Obama's daughter Sasha looked back as the family departed from the South Lawn of the White House in February on their way to Chicago.

up sharing "a consensus that pursuit of personal pleasure without consequences is their supreme right."

Naturally, these attitudes have distorted our politics along with every other aspect of our society. Bradley says he first noticed the connection in 1998, when he heard a talk-show host describing common liberal traits—the same ones he had seen in indulged children and indulgent parents.

The more I thought about it, the more it became clear that liberals may be shaped by liberal influences in schools, the media, and entertainment, but they are not *created* by them. Liberalism

is inherent to the passionate bent of human nature. Liberals are merely inadequately trained children who grew up and now lead using principles they gleaned from their upbringing.

As Bradley sees it, the Left consists of both “children” and “parents.” “Liberals in the *child role* are people in the general populace who want to be taken care of or demand the freedom to pursue their passions,” he suggests. “They depend on liberals in the *parent role* to look after them and protect their chosen lifestyles.”

Want examples? Bradley has plenty. We have space for just a few.

Consider abortion. “Liberals don’t want to know the truth” about abortion, Bradley writes. “They can’t afford to—there is too much at stake.” Their god is “choice,” and while at times they try to bolster their position with selective facts or statistics, the real reason for their position is much more basic. “People are committed to abortion mostly because it is good for their lifestyle—they do not want to live with the consequences of their sexual actions and want the same for others.”

Consider sexual conduct. “Since they typically do not like to say ‘no’ to themselves ... they assume that everyone is just like them,” Bradley notes. “They remember as teens not having the power of self-restraint, so they resist efforts to teach abstinence in schools. They argue that that is expecting too much.”

Consider political correctness. “At the root of political correctness is the assumption that some people are emotionally and socially weak, and, therefore, uniquely vulnerable to getting their feelings hurt,” Bradley observes. “Just as liberals view children’s feelings as vulnerable, they also relate with

adults in the *child role* as weak and in need of protection as well.” The result: A hyper-sensitive society that is “comprised of those easily offended and those trying not to offend.”

On the surface, it might seem that the “parents” are acting from the best intentions, even if they’re misguided. Bradley, though, thinks other motives may be at work—just as they may be in families that spoil their *real* children.

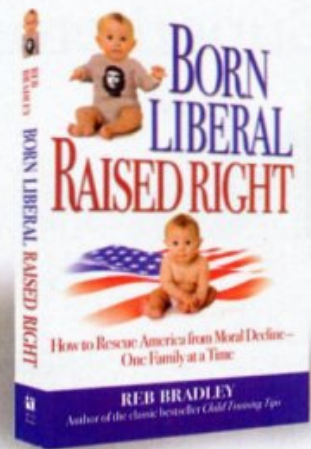
“Those in the parent role crave the high self-worth they receive from feeling so caring for the ‘children.’ They enable each other—a classic case of co-dependency,” he contends. “They feel noble, even superior for the devotion and care they have for their ‘children.’”

You can see evidence for that in the way liberals are forever patting themselves on the back for their “compassion,” Bradley points out. You can also see it in their defensiveness toward conservatives, whom they accuse of “hate” at the drop of a hat.

Like indulgent parents, liberals are both wimps and tigers. With those in the *child role* they are wimps, protecting their right to pursue their passions, but with those who oppose the “children’s” freedom to express themselves, they rise up and attack like tigers.

When people invest themselves emotionally in such a mindset, they rarely break away from it. But not everybody who’s influenced by liberalism is so strongly invested in it. And that’s a good thing, because Americans who don’t consider themselves liberals need to look to their own attitudes.

Bradley cautions conservatives against patting *themselves* on the back. “Many younger conservatives do not truly understand con-



servatism,” he says. “In fact, more and more, their lifestyles reveal that they embrace the moral values of liberals.”

What’s to be done? Bradley’s answer: Problems that start at home must be addressed at home. Parents don’t have absolute power over how their children turn out, he says—but more often than not they have more power than anyone else does.

“We have wasted millions of dollars and countless years trying to fix our moral problems through education, legislation, and self-esteem affirmation,” he writes. But “parents have had the power to make the changes all along. We must grasp this—*parents have the power to shape our nation!*”

It’s so true—so seemingly obvious—yet we can’t be reminded too often. The job of restoring our nation’s character really *does* have to be done one family at a time. ●

*Matt Kaufman is a contributing editor to Citizen.*

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