



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on July 8, 2009

Pope Calls for “World Political Authority”

Benedict’s encyclical specifically called for “regulation of the financial sector,” and a “worldwide redistribution of energy resources.” Benedict added that “the State’s role seems destined to grow” if his political prescription is followed.

“There is urgent need of a true world political authority,” Benedict wrote in the 30,000-word [encyclical](#), calling for “reform of the United Nations Organization, and likewise of economic institutions and international finance, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth.”



Benedict described what a powerful world government with teeth would look like: “Such an authority would need to be universally recognized and to be vested with the effective power to ensure security for all.” He added: “Obviously it would have to have the authority to ensure compliance with its decisions from all parties” — that is, nations.

At best, Benedict is proposing a global federation that would improve upon the U.S. Constitution’s checks and balances. “Such an authority would need to be regulated by law, to observe consistently the principles of subsidiarity,” Benedict says.

What’s “[subsidiarity](#)”?

It’s a Catholic social principle that says that all events should be handled by the least centralized competent authority. One example of subsidiarity in the U.S. Constitution is the [10th Amendment](#), which says “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

Benedict is calling for a global federalized state using the principle of subsidiarity: “Hence the principle of subsidiarity is particularly well-suited to managing globalization and directing it towards authentic human development. In order not to produce a dangerous universal power of a tyrannical nature, the governance of globalization must be marked by subsidiarity, articulated into several layers and involving different levels that can work together.”

Although he’s correct when he writes “subsidiarity is the most effective antidote against any form of all-encompassing welfare state,” much of the underlying assumptions of the social policies he proposes in the encyclical would mandate a globally-managed welfare state and dump the principle of subsidiarity.

Although he says “the Church does not have technical solutions to offer” in the way of political plans, it’s clear he is calling for the mandatory transfer of wealth from the haves to the have-nots through the brute force of the state. He even offers one suggestion as to how this might be made less objectionable to those whose wealth would be taken:

One possible approach to development aid would be to apply effectively what is known as fiscal subsidiarity, allowing citizens to decide how to allocate a portion of the taxes they pay to the



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State. Provided it does not degenerate into the promotion of special interests, this can help to stimulate forms of welfare solidarity from below, with obvious benefits in the area of solidarity for development as well.

Of course, letting citizens choose their taxation in the form of government “charity” would necessarily lead to special interests, as aid groups and governments compete for aid. It’s part of the fallen nature of man for such competitions. Benedict states in the encyclical that “attitudes of gratuitousness cannot be established by law,” but then proposes that governments attempt to do just that. The Christian principle of charity is that it is voluntary, or it isn’t charity. Governments, Benedict should know, are more often representative of the fallen side of human nature than are the persons who make up the governed.

And that’s the basic problem with Benedict’s encyclical. It’s based primarily upon the assumption that governments are essentially institutions of good, while free markets are not self-regulating (or even self-sustaining) institutions that produce vice and license. “Profit is useful if it serves as a means towards an end that provides a sense both of how to produce it and how to make good use of it. Once profit becomes the exclusive goal, if it is produced by improper means and without the common good as its ultimate end, it risks destroying wealth and creating poverty.” Published in the wake of the current financial scandals, Benedict’s meaning becomes all the more clear. He blames the current global economic crisis on “badly managed and largely speculative financial dealing” among the private sector and says that “the regulation of the financial sector, so as to safeguard weaker parties and discourage scandalous speculation ... should be further explored and encouraged.”

But in fact the current economic crisis was government-made, not private speculator-made. The speculators in the markets only reacted to extremely loose credit policies employed by the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank, a creature of the state.

Benedict argues that there’s an “urgent need of a true world political authority.” But if the world government is a tyranny, we don’t need it; and if men were good enough to be trusted to run that world government, a world government wouldn’t be necessary. As James Madison noted in [The Federalist #51](#): “If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions.”

Benedict says he wants a world government. He shouldn’t. World government should be approached with the same circumspection that one approaches nuclear warfare. Indeed, mere national governments have killed many times more people in peacetime than nuclear weapons have in warfare. A world government powerful enough to “to ensure compliance with its decisions from all parties” is also a world government powerful enough to impose a global tyranny that could result in the murder of countless millions. The history of the world has taught that most people were not allowed to be free by their governments in the past, or even in the present. Most people who have walked this world have done so as slaves to the state. Incautious language about the supposed “urgent need” for a global political authority may convince many Catholics and other Christians to accept whatever world government they can get, and what they’ll likely end up with — if history is any guide — is a brutal tyranny.

Abandonment of Traditional Catholic Social Teaching



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Pope Leo XIII's classic 1891 social encyclical [Rerum Novarum](#) cited the scriptures almost exclusively as its authority for Catholic social teaching, along with a few of the patristic writings of church doctors such as Thomas Aquinas and Augustine. *Rerum Novarum* defended property rights and the commandments not to steal and covet as key to the social order under man's fallen and sinful state. Benedict's encyclical ignores those two commandments entirely, and makes no mention of property rights whatsoever. It mentions *Rerum Novarum* in passing, but ignores both the scriptures as well as Augustine and Aquinas.

Though nearly all the footnotes in Benedict's encyclical refer to post-Vatican II documents, Benedict points in his encyclical to a coherence of past and recent Catholic teachings: "It is not a case of two typologies of social doctrine, one pre-conciliar and one post-conciliar, differing from one another: on the contrary, there is a single teaching, consistent and at the same time ever new. It is one thing to draw attention to the particular characteristics of one Encyclical or another, of the teaching of one Pope or another, but quite another to lose sight of the coherence of the overall doctrinal corpus." If nearly all the documents cited by Benedict were post-conciliar (after Vatican II, which took place in the 1960s), how does that reflect coherence with 2000 years of history? If Benedict's new encyclical represented old teachings of the Catholic Church, the least he could have done was to cite a few examples.

Instead of using time-tested Catholic social justice principles, Benedict employed trendy slogans such as "food security"/"food insecurity" and how the world is "increasingly interconnected" and "interdependent." So it's not surprising that the leftist *New York Times* [trumpeted](#) that "Pope Benedict XVI on July 7 called for a 'world political authority' to manage the global economy and for more government regulation of national economies to pull the world out of the current crisis and avoid a repeat."

Conservative and libertarian Catholics who understand economics can expect to be pilloried as being anti-Catholic if they hold to the economic and political realities of the modern world in the wake of Benedict's encyclical. But Catholics who disagree with the pope's understanding of social justice do have a defense: the encyclical was not issued "ex cathedra," and is therefore not binding on Catholics. The Catholic Church teaches that the pope has the power to bind the faithful only when speaking "ex cathedra." The "ex cathedra" pronouncements are so infrequent that most popes do not make any. An "ex cathedra" pronouncement can happen only when a certain set of formalized criteria are met: 1. the pope claims to be speaking on behalf of the worldwide church from the seat of the Apostle Peter; 2. he specifically states that he is binding the faithful for all time on the doctrine; 3. the doctrine is about faith and morals; and 4. he can't contradict past church doctrines.

In the case of "Charity in Truth," Benedict XVI has issued an ordinary encyclical letter, and none of the criteria for "ex cathedra" were satisfied. But the question for the rank-and-file Catholics around the world is this: will this distinction matter, or will they unthinkingly follow the extremely dangerous new social doctrine of the Vatican?

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