

Papal Promotion of Collective Ownership and Theft

by Richard Bennett and Robert J. Nicholson

The present pope, Benedict XVI, and his Vatican system teach that private property is not personal as such, but belongs to all people. His predecessor, Pope John Paul II stated, "Private property, in fact, is under a 'social mortgage,' which means that it has an intrinsically social function, based upon and justified precisely by the principle of the universal destination of goods."¹ The principle of "the universal destination of goods" is clearly observed in what the present pope endorses in the second part of his encyclical entitled "God is Love."² Benedict wholly sanctions the principle of the universal ownership of all goods embalmed in the writings of popes Leo XIII, Pius XI, John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II.³ The phrase, "all goods," includes not only the goods found in nature but manufactured goods as well. As John Paul II stated, "The vast majority of people can have access to those goods which are intended for common use: both the goods of nature and manufactured goods."⁴ Another Vatican Council II document upholds the same principle of the "universal ownership of all goods" and emphatically teaches, "If one is in extreme necessity, he has the right to procure for himself what he needs out of the riches of others."⁵

The more this socialistic principle is legally accepted by various nations, the greater gain there is for the needy, particularly of the one billion Catholics worldwide. This doctrine of a claimed *prior* right to all goods, based on need, is what Benedict XVI proposes as the fundamental norm of the State: a share of the community's goods is to be guaranteed to each person. In the pope's own words, "It is true that the pursuit of justice must be a fundamental norm of the State and that the aim of a just social order is to guarantee to each person, according to the principle of subsidiarity, his share of the community's goods."⁶

Benedict's Economic Principle Applied

When Benedict's principle is applied nation by nation, there are dire consequences. For example, in the U.S. Catholic Bishops' 1995 Pastoral letter, "Economic Justice for All," the same principle is disseminated. It states, "In Catholic teaching, human rights include not only civil and political rights but also economic rights ... 'all people have a right to life, food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, education, and employment.'"⁷

The impact of this policy in the USA alone results in the redistribution of \$2.3 billion of tax payers' money through the auspices of Catholic Charities each year. The *City Journal* states the following,

¹ Encyclical, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis", John Paul II, Sect. 42

² www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html

³ Encyclical, "Deus Caritas Est", Sect. 27

⁴ Encyclical, "Laborem Exercens", 1981, John Paul II, Sect. 19

⁵ "Gaudium et Spes", *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Para. 69. Text is also on the Internet at: http://www.osjspm.org/cst/gs_cos2.htm

⁶ Encyclical, "Deus Caritas Est", Sect. 26

⁷ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, www.osjspm.org/rights_and_duties.aspx 2/7/2007

“You would think that Catholic Charities USA would be a perfect model to emulate, getting the poor into the mainstream by emphasizing moral values and ethical conduct. But no: rather than trying to promote traditional values and God-fearing behavior, Catholic Charities ... has become over the last three decades an arm of the welfare state, with 65 percent of its \$2.3 billion annual budget now flowing from government sources and little that is explicitly religious, or even values-laden, about most of the services its 1,400 member agencies and 46,000 paid employees provide.”⁸

On April 26, 2007, the website for Catholic Charities USA stated the following,

“Washington, DC Catholic Charities USA took its ‘Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America’ directly to Congress today, with a briefing on the struggles of 35 million Americans who experience hunger...Poverty in America is a moral and social crisis. It threatens the health and economic well-being of our families and our nation as a whole. In response to this crisis, Catholic Charities USA has launched the Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America.”⁹

Where some of the money is spent is reported by *The California Catholic Daily*. “San Francisco Archbishop George Niederauer said he is ‘really very happy’ about a compromise plan that makes it possible for Catholic Charities adoption workers in his archdiocese to refer homosexual couples to adopt children. *The California Catholic Daily* made a transcript of the on-air interview Archbishop Niederauer gave to San Francisco’s KCBS available on Feb. 7.”¹⁰ Taxpayers’ money paying for children to be adopted by homosexual couples does **not** spell “health and economic well-being” but rather moral irresponsibility and sin. Nevertheless, “The Campaign to Reduce Poverty” in America continues with the 1,400 agencies of Catholic Charities USA. To rake in additional funds sometimes, graphic images, persuasive words, and intense pseudo-spiritual manipulation are employed to excite a sense of public guilt in governments and individual culpability in private donors. An example is the well-known quotation from Vatican Council II, “Since there are so many people prostrate with hunger in the world, this Sacred Council urges all, both individuals and governments, to remember the aphorism of the Fathers, ‘feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him, you have killed him.’”¹¹ Statements like this are routinely presented in the accusative case.

It is very significant that in 2002, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, likewise, stated publicly that their goal in evangelization is to encounter the modern world with the Catholic Church’s teaching of the “preferential option for the poor.” They assert the following principles that “the ‘preferential option for the poor’ and ‘walking with the poor in mission’ have a particular priority.”¹²

⁸ www.city-journal.org/html/10_1_how_catholic_charities.html Also: www.jewishworldreview.com/cols/will020501.asp

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www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/news/content_displays.cfm?fuseaction=display_document&id=960&location=3
www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/poverty/4/28/2007

¹⁰ www.catholic.org/national_story.php?id=22980 5/9/2007

¹¹ Vatican II Document No. 64, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, Section 69

¹² www.caseresources.org/resources/resources_research.htm 6/6/2007

How such evangelization is put into effect is seen in news reports as, for example, on May 6, 2007, “The head of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, has called for the government to consider an amnesty for illegal immigrants in the UK.”¹³ This type of appeal to come to the aid of presumably poor illegal aliens is similar to the work done by Catholic Charities in the USA, of which *The New Tribune* reports, “Churches in five big U.S. cities plan to protect illegal immigrants from deportation, offering their buildings as sanctuary if need be, as they pressure lawmakers to create a path to citizenship for the nation's estimated 12 million illegal immigrants.”¹⁴ On May 9, 2007, Fox News reported that,

“Beginning Wednesday afternoon, a Catholic church in downtown Los Angeles and a Lutheran church in North Hollywood each intend to shelter one person as part of the ‘New Sanctuary Movement.’ A handful of churches in other U.S. cities plan similar efforts in the months ahead to spotlight the plight of illegal immigrants. ‘We want to put a human face to very complex immigration laws and awaken the consciousness of the human spirit,’ said Father Richard Estrada of Our Lady Queen of Angels Catholic Church in Los Angeles, where one illegal immigrant will live. Organizers don’t believe immigration agents will make arrests inside the churches.”¹⁵

Helping illegal aliens, some of whom are known criminals, and encouraging them to break laws and avoid law enforcement in the UK or in the USA is not only illegal, it is contrary to the Bible.¹⁶ Violating charitable trust by blatant misuse of public funds, particularly by encouraging lawlessness against the civil government from whom the charity is received, is an affront both to governments and their tax-paying citizens. Campaigns of passive, civil law-breaking have their roots in Ghandi’s philosophy and the like, but not Christianity.

A Biblical Critique of the Economic Philosophy of Papal Rome

Catholic evangelization through economics is not the kind of democratic socialism employed by many of the nations of the world. It is something quite unique. The Papacy reasserted its historic views on the nature of private property at Vatican Council II. We must examine this teaching carefully. The Roman Catholic Church’s idea of private property and wealth is that all goods have a universal purpose to help all men. Hence, Rome’s view is that the wealth of rich nations and private economically competent citizens is **not** their legitimate possession by either moral right, legal earning, or inherited possession. The Vatican Council makes much of the wide disparity between rich and poor nations. As its solution, the Vatican teaches the **redistribution of goods to those in extreme need**. Her official words are,

“Whatever the forms of property may be, as adapted to the legitimate institutions of peoples, according to diverse and changeable circumstances, attention must always be paid to this universal destination of earthly goods. In using them, therefore, man should re-

¹³ http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1829121/posts_5/10/2007

¹⁴ www.thenewtribune.com/888/story/58267.html

¹⁵ www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,271009,00.html

¹⁶ I Peter 2:13-14

gard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others. On the other hand, the right of having a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held this opinion, teaching that men are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods. **If one is in extreme necessity, he has the right to procure for himself what he needs out of the riches of others.**¹⁷

However, the Bible states, "*Thou shalt not steal.. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house ...nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.*"¹⁸ The Vatican philosophy is simply a justification for theft—whether on an individual level or governmental level. As for the sin of stealing, even if it were brought on by extreme necessity, such a reason is not permissible before the Lord God. He declares, "*Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; but if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house.*"¹⁹ The Lord Jesus Christ clearly addressed the crux of the issue concerning physical needs, "*For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.*"²⁰ This is God's promise, that He will provide the necessities of food and clothing for His own, who walk uprightly²¹, nor will He contravene His laws in doing so, for this would blemish His holiness, which is not possible. But the Vatican, having apostatized from the Gospel nearly five hundred years ago, cannot teach its followers to depend on God, whom they do not know. Thus they have taken into their hand man-made methods that are anti-biblical and an affront to God Himself.

Hence, the economic principles of the Roman Catholic Church are anti-biblical and sinful. When applied by Catholic Charities they have disastrous effects. Ignoring, belittling, and opposing the biblical-moral teaching given by God while professing to be Christian is the Vatican's favored tactic for secularizing the principles and objectives of Christian charity. This allows it to keep its own hand buried deep in the public purse and, therefore, has been a colossal, hypocritical imposition on modern government, replete with dire consequences for the poor. The same principle is implemented in Latin America, the Philippines, and Zimbabwe as "liberation theology." Such liberation theology has been the root cause of revolutions in many nations in South America. Even with its failure, many persist in trying to implement its fantasies. The revolutionary fervor of the 1970s and '80s has not abolished the grueling poverty in Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Costa Rica; rather, it has been in these and other nations a demoralizing economic and social influence.

Bible Exposes Catholic Idea of Economic Justice

The U.S. Catholic Bishops' 1995 Pastoral letter, "Economic Justice for All," states, "In Catholic teaching, human rights include not only civil and political rights but also economic

¹⁷ Vatican II Documents No. 64, "*Gaudium et Spes*", Para 69 Emphasis not in original.

¹⁸ Exodus 20:15, 17

¹⁹ Proverbs 6:30-31

²⁰ Luke 12:30, 31

²¹ Psalm 84:11

rights ... ‘all people have a right to life, food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, education, and employment.’” The Catholic Church’s conception of what God gives out of His providential grace is skewed because the Bible does not speak in terms of rights. The Bible speaks rather in terms of man’s sin and God’s graciousness both to unregenerate sinners²² and to those who are His own because they trust on the Lord Jesus Christ alone for their salvation.²³ Those who are in Christ Jesus learn to trust His providential care for all that they need. This trust frees them from abject slavery to individuals, governments, and institutions, whether religious or civil.

Nor does the Bible teach that justice means equality of material conditions among all men. The key requirements of justice among men are revealed in the Ten Commandments and the civil and judicial laws governing economic relations that are given throughout Scripture. The Apostle Paul expressed the relationship between faith and God’s moral law, “*Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*”²⁴ For example, Scripture teaches that all men are not due equal wages for their labor regardless of their behavior. The biblical standard is “*The workman is worthy of his meat,*” and “*...the laborer is worthy of his hire.*”²⁵

Further, the Lord is our provider and He expects that we deal justly with our fellow man in all principles of exchange value for goods or labor, “*Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.*”²⁶ The Bible severely condemns all violations of the Commandment, “*Thou shalt not steal,*”²⁷ whether it be on the part of governments, employers, employees, or churches. Any society, civil or religious, that ignores the moral standards of the Bible is heading for strife and difficulties within families and in the lives of individuals. Contrary to the official teaching of Rome, the Bible shows that individuals are under no obligation to give up their private property and inheritance; rather their obligation is to deal with it responsibly according to the commands of the Lord as given in His written Word. The Lord absolutely forbids the invading of any man’s rightful possessions and the taking of that which is not our own by fraudulent acts, “*Thou shalt not remove thy neighbor’s landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.*”²⁸ God, the Holy Spirit, enforces the point of individual responsibility regarding one’s private property by preserving for us His account of the infamous case of deceitful dealing, such as that of Ananias and Sapphira where Peter acknowledged, “*While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control?*”²⁹ Pri-

²² Matthew 5:45b & c

²³ Matthew 6:24-34

²⁴ Romans 3:31

²⁵ Matthew 10:10; Luke 10:7

²⁶ Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 25:15; Proverbs 11:1, 16:11, 20:10; Jeremiah 22:13; Luke 3:13; James 5:4

²⁷ Exodus 20:15

²⁸ Deuteronomy 19:14

²⁹ Acts 2:4

vate property is to be retained, managed, or disposed of by believers as they see fit as responsible stewards under God, according to the principles of justice published in His Word.

Therefore, it is worthy of serious reflection that as one of the wealthiest corporations in the world, the Roman Catholic Church stands solidly in direct contravention of the Bible, which is God's infallible Word. The Roman Church consistently uses its considerable resources to teach that private property has an intrinsically social function with the corollary that one in extreme necessity has the right to procure for himself what he needs out of the riches of others. The Vatican does practice what it preaches regarding procurement of other peoples' resources for its own purposes. It is the outstanding hypocrisy of the Vatican that while it maintains an unbiblical and parasitic attachment to civil governments across the world by sucking up their capital and resources into funding Catholic social action—thereby taking from others what is not its own—it rarely if ever parts with a penny of its own enormous assets to help the poor. David Yallop documented something of the Vatican assets in his book, *In God's Name*.

“To count the wealth of the Vatican...Apart from banks, he [Bernardino Nogara] acquired for the Vatican controlling interests in companies in the fields of insurance, steel, financing, flour and spaghetti, mechanical industry, cement, and real estate. With regard to the last-named his purchase of at least 15 percent of the Italian giant Immobiliare gave the Church a share of an astonishing array of property. Societa General Immobiliare is Italy's oldest construction company. Through its ownership of the building firm, Sogene, Immobiliare and therefore to a significant degree the Vatican after its 15 percent acquisition owned the Rome Hilton, Italo Americana Nuovi Alberghi, Alberghi Ambrosiani (Milan), Compagnia Italiana Alberghi Cavalieri, and Societa Italiani Alberghi Moderni. These are just the major hotels in Italy. The list of major buildings and industrial companies owned by Immobiliare is twice as long. In France it built a huge block of offices and shops at 90 Avenue des Champs Elysees, and other of 61 Rue de Ponthieu, and another at 6 Rue de Berry. In Canada it owned one of the world's tallest skyscrapers (the Stock Exchange Tower, situated in Montreal), the Port Royal Tower, a 224-apartment block, a huge residential area in Greensdale, Montreal...In the United States it had five huge apartment blocks in Washington D.C., including the Watergate Hotel, and in New York, a residential area of 227 acres at Oyster Bay. In Mexico it owned an entire satellite city of Mexico City called Lomas Verdes. This list of properties is by no means exhaustive. Nogara also bought into General Motors, Shell, Gulf Oil, General Electric, Bethlehem Steel, IBM and TWA. If the shares moved, and moved upward, men like Nogara created the movement.”³⁰

With even these few of its many assets in mind, it is clear that the Vatican conveniently ignores its own dictum that “the right of having a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held this opinion, teaching that men are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods.” Clearly the Vatican has **not** included itself in the

³⁰ David Yallop, *In God's Name: An Investigation into the Murder of Pope John Paul I* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984) pp. 92, 93, 97, 98

necessity to “come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods.” Nor has the exorbitantly wealthy Papacy observed its own Vatican Council II dictum that if you do not feed a dying man, you have killed him. Thus comes the Papacy’s necessity to fund its practice of charity by wheedling from others through deception and assignment of guilt—particularly from its own carefully taught, loyal people and from civil governments—what the Vatican itself will not supply from its own vast treasuries.

The Catholic Church further exacerbates the economic problems of the poor by laying on them rituals which deliver nothing but cruel deception and deeper poverty. Instead of looking to the Father in heaven and His Word to learn biblical stewardship of their money and property, the Catholics are taught to look to Holy Mother Church. The official teaching of the Roman Church states, “No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother.”³¹ The same “Mother Church” teaches them to pay money for masses for the dead, who are being purified in Purgatory. Like Limbo, however, Purgatory is nonexistent. Nevertheless, she states, “From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God.”³² Masses said for the dead are one of the biggest money spinners of the Catholic Church. Hence, the money that the poor do manage to scrape together often goes to pay for worthless religious rituals rather than for provisions for their families or for capital to start a small business to provide for their families.³³ Truly through her teaching, the Roman Catholic Church has for centuries promoted and continues to promote grinding poverty, in spite of her centuries-long seeming concern.

Conclusion

The same Lord, who created heaven and earth and all that in them is, requires His own to depend increasingly on Him and not on their own power and resourcefulness. It is from this biblical perspective that one must view the machinations of the Roman Catholic social teaching and practice. Evangelicals ought to think carefully about the economic principles laid out in the Bible and compare those to what the Roman Catholic Church is promoting, with gathering success, as her social policy. It is signal that the Roman Catholic Church’s social policy is one of its primary tools of evangelism, two others being education and medicine. The reason is clear enough. The Catholic Church formally went apostate at the Council of Trent in 1546 when she denied the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation.³⁴ Present day dogma of the Vatican not only upholds the teaching of the Council of Trent but also declares that such Councils are infallible.³⁵ Hence it is clear that the Catholic Church must evangelize by the strength of her own ingenuity and power.

³¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori Publications, 1994) Para. 181

³² *Catechism*, Para. 1032

³³ See John W. Robbins, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church* (The Trinity Foundation, 1999, 2006) ISBN 978-0-940931-75-6

³⁴ Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, Tr. by Roy J. Deferrari from the Thirtieth Ed. of Denzinger’s *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1957) # 822, Canon 12, “If anyone shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ’s sake, or that it is this confidence alone by which we are justified: let him be anathema [cursed].”

³⁵ *Catechism*, Para. 891.

The Lord God of heaven and earth continues His work of drawing men, women, and children to His righteousness and true salvation in the Son of God. As the Apostle Paul proclaimed, *“for He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”*³⁶ The Lord is personally All Holy; yet as the substitute for the believer’s sin, He rendered Himself legally responsible to the wrath of God. The consequence of Christ’s faithfulness in all that He did, culminating in His death on the cross, is that His righteousness is credited to the believer. It was God who legally constituted Christ to be *“sin for us.”* He was *“made sin”* because the sins of all of His people were transferred to Him, and in like manner, the believer is made *“the righteousness of God in Him”* by God’s reckoning to the believer Christ’s faithfulness to the precepts of the law. Quite clearly, therefore, the Gospel is the gracious act of God whereby a believing sinner has legal right standing in Christ.

In face of spiritual death and economic disaster reigning through Vatican teaching and practice, we look to the *“God of all grace.”*³⁷ To withstand and counter the apostasy we have documented, we need to see the Lord’s principle in His Word and pray for its application, *“Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”*³⁸ ♦

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³⁶ II Corinthians 5:21

³⁷ I Peter 5:10.

³⁸ Romans 5:20