



"Benevolence is allied to few vices; selfishness to fewer virtues."
—Henry Home

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Toward Anarchy

Here in Charlotte, the local school system has descended into another crisis—only the latest one on a very long string of such problems—and this time the turmoil concerns what is being called deconsolidation. Briefly, the wealthy and relatively placid suburban areas wish to secede from Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) and form their own, separate system. In fact, they have suggested that CMS should be broken up into at least three—and perhaps more—smaller, more local, more accountable districts. The backers of this idea believe that local autonomy and a smaller, more efficient administration are the keys to reforming a horribly inept, corrupt, unfair, and ineffective governmental agency.

The public school system is probably the most visible and tangible form of government to most Americans, certainly to those who have children in the system. It is here that the shortcomings of big government are most quickly observed and have their greatest impact on the average citizen. Despite the fact that voters have the "power" to elect school boards, the unified school districts around the nation are not run by these elected officials but by the entrenched bureaucracy created to support the ever-expanding—and soon-bloated—system. With power over billions of dollars and motivated by an agenda to impose their often-liberal values (in CMS's case, it is forced

integration through busing and mandated racial "equality" through disproportionate allocation of funds to the inner city—in effect, a kind of reparations package), these relatively unaccountable managers implement their ideas through successive administrations without missing a beat. In Charlotte, it took thirty years for the frustration with the system to build into outright rebellion.

On the national level, the rumblings against big government are also being heard. For starters, Democrats are widely seen as advocates of higher taxes, expanded services, and increased governmental involvement in every area of life, and their candidates—at least nationally—have done poorly in the last three elections. In addition, fiscal and social conservatives are quite concerned about President Bush's profligate spending. Granted, much of it has gone to military matters, but perhaps even more is being funneled to fund No Child Left Behind, prescription drugs, and other social benefits. Many claim his proposal to "save" Social Security will be another financial boondoggle for the American taxpayer. Whatever the case, more spending means higher taxes means increased government means less freedom for Joe and Jane Citizen—whether the administration is Republican or Democrat.

Even on the radical Left, some are crying for decentralization and local autonomy. Ward Churchill, the embattled Ethnic Studies professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder, has called for "the United States out of North America," meaning that he advocates the breakup of the American government into hundreds or even thousands of local, self-determining districts. Whatever his reasoning, he believes that there can be [peace](#), freedom, and equality only on the "tribal" level—that is, only among those who band together around a set of common beliefs and aims. To him, the larger the entity, the less cohesive and fair it is, so it makes sense to him to strip all large governments of power. He and many who think like him are reacting to the obvious abuses and inequalities engendered by huge, powerful, impersonal, and inevitably corrupt human government.

Since the Second World War, [the world](#) has been advancing and building global structures: the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the International Criminal Court, etc. Only now are many seeing the problems associated with such transnational organizations. For instance, the UN has recently found itself mired in scandals ranging from the Oil-for-Food

Program to sex-trafficking on UN missions. Observers are realizing that the self-interests of often very diverse peoples keep clashing, causing horrible disparities, abuses, and [offenses](#) around the world. For this very reason, the U.S. will not become a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, to name just one example.

The human solution is to move in the opposite direction, toward tribalism. Deconsolidation, decentralization, downsizing, local autonomy, and similar words or phrases are all catchphrases for this movement toward tribalism. At its extreme, tribalism becomes each man for himself—anarchy, literally "without a ruler," an absence of government, resulting in lawlessness.

The Bible describes such conditions: "In those days, there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" ([Judges 17:6](#); [21:25](#); see also [Deuteronomy 12:8](#)). The book of Judges has been called "the bloodiest book of the Bible," as the text shows Israel cycling through the process of freedom, decline, oppression, and revolt time after time. The author pares the cause of the Israelites' instability down to this one statement: There was no government, so it was every man for himself.

Do we really want to go there? On the other hand, do we really want to continue under the present system?

The real problem in all of this swinging back and forth between globalism and tribalism is self-interest—or to put it bluntly, selfishness. No human government, big or small, powerful or weak, centralized or local, will work unless the governed are willing to put aside their self-interests for the good of all. Certainly, this is altruism, but it is a basic message of the Bible: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" ([Acts 20:35](#)). There will be no universal stability, peace, and prosperity until humanity realizes this and chooses to live by it.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

Government (Part One)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Most people have an ambivalent attitude toward government, on one hand fearing it as an evil instrument to deprive rights and on the other hand an instrument for social progress. God intended government to be a positive force of bringing order out of chaos, keeping on a straight course, educating, edifying, and to give laws which ensure an entity (family, organization, or country) does not become extinct. Governmental leaders from governor to judge to head of the family have the awesome responsibility to instill the proper fear of God and His commandments, giving instructions on the process of attaining abundant life (Deuteronomy 30:11-16).

From the Archives: Featured Article

Globalism (Part Six): Tide and Countertide

by Charles Whitaker

Globalism has an equal and opposite counterpart: tribalism. Charles Whitaker explains what tribalism is and how it affects the world and the church.

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