

9, 1854, 2. Lyman lists other examples of negative views of spiritualism including *Deseret News* editorials (207).

10. For the context, see Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 21.

11. Lyman's discussion of the Atonement in LDS thought (chap. 8 and an appendix, pp. 505–7) is cautious and reasonable. Nevertheless, a full historical exploration of LDS Christology is still needed.

12. An excellent treatment is Ronald W. Walker, *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* (1998; rpt., Provo, Utah: *BYU Studies*/Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2009).

Loving Truthfully

Benedict XVI. *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth). July 7, 2009. (Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2009). http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html (accessed November 1, 2009).

Reviewed by Jeremiah John

Caritas in Veritate, Pope Benedict XVI's third encyclical letter, is a striking beginning for his papal contribution to Catholic social teaching. In a sense, the encyclical confirms one piece of conventional wisdom about his papacy—that it is a work of consolidating the monumental legacy of John Paul II and, less directly, the ecclesiastical and theological developments of the whole post-Vatican II period. References to the teaching of Paul VI and John Paul II appear throughout *Caritas in Veritate*, and the letter should result in a renewed interest in their social encyclicals. But *Caritas in Veritate* also puts Benedict's powerful and unique stamp on Catholic social thought. The letter draws together the varied strands of the past four decades of papal thought on the problems of the modern world and applies their core principles to contemporary issues. But it also grounds those principles in fundamental concepts of the Christian religion: charity and truth. Like no other authoritative, modern Catholic document of which I am aware,

Benedict's *Caritas in Veritate* is a painstakingly *theological* exploration of the basic tenets of Catholic social teaching.

Mormons who have recently been pondering the political implications of our own official social teaching (specifically on the family) should take an interest in *Caritas in Veritate*, not only as the institutional statement of an influential Christian church, but also as an expression of one of the most important theological figures in contemporary Christianity.

Charity, Benedict writes, is the “heart of the Church’s social doctrine. Every responsibility and every commitment spelt out by that doctrine is derived from charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the entire Law” (§2). We should notice that against those thinkers who have rejected a politics of love (for example, Hannah Arendt, who argues that compassion is politically irrelevant¹), Benedict proclaims that charity is “the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, family, or within small groups), but also of macro-relationships (social, economic, and political ones).” Quoting his own *Deus Caritas Est* (God Is Love), Benedict asserts that “everything has its origin in God’s love, everything is shaped by it, everything is directed towards it” (§2).

So much of Catholic social teaching since Leo XIII’s monumental 1891 *Rerum Novarum* (New Things) has had the centrist feel of a project that has always tried to steer a faithful middle course between Marxist socialism and unrestrained capitalism. Its principles have provided much of the basic framework for European center-right Christian Democratic parties and some inspiration for the continental idea of the social market economy. But in *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict traces that teaching to its radical theological roots in the concept of charity. Christian social ethics is not merely a bringing together of opposed parties, a reconciling of the rights of property and commerce with rights of workers and the “preferential option for the poor.” Charity “never lacks justice,” for it also “transcends” and “completes” justice, in “the logic of giving and forgiving” (§6). Charity fulfills the minimum measure of justice and then moves to embrace even richer relationships of “mercy and communion” (§6). Against the interpretation of Catholic social teaching as a warm mush of European

centrism, Benedict reminds us of the distinctive underpinnings of Christian ethics.

As forcefully as Benedict argues for a politics of love, he is no less careful, however, to warn against love which “degenerates into sentimentality” and which therefore remains limited by subjective emotions and opinions, because it neglects *truth*—because it fails to comprehend charity in its full meaning in the light of gospel teaching (§4). This danger is especially acute in a culture where the need for social concern and human solidarity is recognized, but in which truth itself—and the truth of the Christian gospel in particular—are under attack from relativism. In steering us away from charity without truth, Benedict is continuing a theme that can be traced through his whole theological career, in his critiques of a concept of the communion which emphasizes the unity of believers at the expense of communion in Christ. It can also be seen in the long history of Catholic critiques of Marxist (and other secular) views of solidarity and human fellowship. For the Christian tradition, Benedict argues, there is no true and authentic “horizontal” fellowship and fraternity among human beings without a “vertical” communion with God in Christ.² A true humanism which aims for the good of the whole human race is established only in connection with what transcends the merely human.

There are, as I read the text, two specific ways in which Benedict understands the call to “charity *in truth*.” The first has been at the heart of all modern Catholic social teaching, the claim that the social concern of the Church is not limited to its private charitable activities but must affect the whole range of human relationships and institutions: political, social, familial, economic, and international. Far from abandoning the civil or political realm, charity must address the whole scope of political and economic issues comprehended by the common good and human fellowship. Charity in truth—charity in its richest, truest, Christian sense—extends to all the “joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age.”³ It is concerned with the precarious status of workers in a globalized economy, with environmental degradation, with selfishness and materialism, with war and political violence, and with the failure to protect vulnerable life at all its stages (§28). Moreover, charity in truth moves beyond mere anxiety for

the welfare of the human race, but provides solutions as well, endorsing “democratic regimes capable of ensuring freedom and peace” (§21); denouncing profit as the “exclusive goal” of commerce and calling for a “profoundly new way of understanding business enterprise” (40); and calling us to a “social sensitivity towards the acceptance of new life” (§28).

Second, charity in truth is charity understood in the light of the Christian gospel, i.e., of the relationship between God and humankind. Human beings are “objects of God’s love” and “subjects of charity . . . called to make themselves instruments of grace” (§5). This spiritual, godly way of seeing things presents life and human experience as an “astonishing experience” full of gifts and gratuitousness (§36). The perspectives of consumerism and materialism view economic life as mere exchange, without any moral or spiritual dimension, and cause gifts and grace to go unnoticed. But in truth human beings are not self-sufficient, and their ultimate purpose extends beyond this world. Human flourishing relies on the grace of God, and by grace people are “called . . . to pour God’s charity and to weave networks of charity” (§5).

Charity in truth also reveals the correct understanding of human fellowship and solidarity. Contrary to secular ideologies which promise a type of human fellowship that has liberated itself from God, charity in truth understands that it is the hope of eternal life that gives human beings “the courage to be at the service of higher goods” (§34). Human progress is primarily a calling, a “vocation” that requires God, since without God we fail to recognize the “divine image in the other” (§11). Many secular views of the human condition deprive human history of Christian hope, since they teach that people must establish cooperation and fellowship with their own weak resources and cannot anticipate outside help (§34). It is only with God—with His grace and in the light of His truth—that charity shines forth in all its depth and strength.

One of the most ambitious goals of modern Catholic social teaching has been to take a critical but constructive view of the most important moral concepts of the contemporary world, attacking their false aspects while attempting to preserve and re-fashion, indeed to “Christianize,” them.⁴ Perhaps the most notable example is with solidarity, a concept with socialist connotations and a clear Marxist pedigree, but which has over time been

connected with the Christian doctrine of human fraternity and was eventually established as a central concept of the social doctrine of the modern Church—most importantly through John Paul II's 1987 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (On Social Concern). In *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict claims “progress” and “human development” on behalf of charity in truth, against secular and materialistic development, understood as mere technological progress or economic growth. This elaboration of the true Christian meaning of human development emerges from a renewed examination of Paul VI's 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (On Human Development), which comprises the whole first chapter of *Caritas in Veritate*.

Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* has an interesting place in modern Catholic social teaching. It came out just over a year after Vatican II, which included the eloquent, far-reaching, pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world, *Gaudium et Spes* (Joy and Hope). *Gaudium et Spes* is a gracefully composed, theologically rigorous, and politically astute statement of Catholic social ethics that places the social teaching in the context of a proper understanding of the individual person, human fellowship, and the Church.

In contrast, *Populorum Progressio* has received poorer reviews; some readers have called it stylistically weak, overly soft in its critique of Marxism, and undeveloped or even ill-considered in its recommendations.⁵ The encyclical—explicitly addressing the question of human development in all its dimensions—decries the deprivation and misery found in the developing world and makes reference to the inadequacies of economic liberalism and free trade, offering up economic planning and development aid as principal solutions to the problems of underdevelopment. “The superfluous good of wealthier nations,” writes Pope Paul, “ought to be placed at the disposal of poorer nations. . . . Studies must be made, goals must be defined, methods and means must be chosen, and the work of select men must be coordinated” on behalf of the project of development (§49, 50). While American theologian John Courtney Murray called *Populorum Progressio* the “definitive answer to Marxism,”⁶ some conservative reviewers complained that it echoed standard left-wing slogans about the exploitation of the developing world. More recently, Catholic philosopher James V. Schall

remarked that he had long viewed *Populorum Progressio* as the “most nearly ideological of all papal social encyclicals.”⁷

Benedict XVI cuts sharply against this negative grain, proclaiming in Chapter 1 of *Caritas in Veritate* that *Populorum Progressio* is the “*Rerum Novarum* of the present age”—the founding document of Catholic social teaching for the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, just as *Rerum Novarum* was the founding of the Church’s social teaching for the early and mid-twentieth century. If the nearly eighty years from the publication of Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* and Paul VI’s *Populorum Progressio* were dominated by the “social question” (the conflict between capital and labor, the rights of property versus the rights of workers), the forty-plus years since Paul VI’s letter have been dominated by the question of human development and progress: the relationship between the developed and developing world, and the perennial question of the proper goals of progress and prosperity. Benedict points out that it was *Populorum Progressio* that took up the question of progress as an occasion to articulate a “vision of development” that comprehended an integral understanding of human development and a sound basis for fellowship between poor and rich nations.

The Church’s efforts to promote true human development are nothing new, Benedict argues, inasmuch as it has always taught that human beings are destined for an end that transcends mere earthly existence, that people are “constitutionally oriented toward ‘being more’” (§14). It is the teaching of the Church which defends true progress against those advocates of progress who understand progress in narrowly technological terms and against those pessimistic enemies of development (for example, in radical environmentalism) who see development only as radically dehumanizing and tyrannical.

Reflecting upon charity in truth reveals a model of human development and progress which calls attention to the continuing underdevelopment among the poor of the world, no less than it decries the distorted “superdevelopment” among the prosperous, where materialism and frivolous consumerism go hand in hand with spiritual poverty (§22). The true Christian view of the fraternity of the human race, moreover, can lay the groundwork for a defensible model for globalization, where people are not merely

brought into contact by economic and technological forces, but are also led toward unity in the recognition that “*the human race is a single family* working together in true communion” (§53; emphasis Benedict’s). This way of looking at fraternity and development helps dispel the despair felt by those who see globalization and technological change as a fated movement toward disaster. Furthermore, it also provides a “new vision and . . . new energy in the service of a truly integral humanism” (§78).

For Mormons, political and social reflection will likely take different forms than Catholic social teaching, and there is no reason to believe that faithful LDS people will necessarily arrive at all of the same conclusions as the Catholic tradition, although we may learn much from it. But the call to a kind of social and political engagement that practices charity in truth is compelling to all faithful Christians, for whom the practice of charity holds a central place in a disciple’s life. It is certainly true that this kind of reflection is not appropriate or useful in all contexts—much of our political participation consists of more secular discussions with non-Mormons about questions of effectiveness, strategic action, legal validity, and procedural justice. Moreover, it may not be clear how we can fruitfully strike up some kinds of theological conversation with fellow citizens who do not grasp, let alone accept, the basis of our arguments. The paradox is that our eager participation in good faith in the public sphere may lead us away from a serious reflection on the proper means and ultimate ends of that participation. And yet each of us remains an undivided moral agent, answerable to God and to our fellow human beings for all our actions, whether they take place in the secular public sphere or not. Religious seriousness demands some kind of reflection upon practice, especially on those social and political questions where the best course for the Saints is anything but settled.

What, then, does Benedict XVI’s *Caritas in Veritate* teach us about this reflection? For one thing it can serve as an example of a faithful theological reflection that sacrifices nothing in thoughtfulness or broad-minded social engagement. We have our own examples, to be sure—Elder Dallin H. Oaks’s October 2009 address on religious freedom stands out as a recent one.⁸ But *Caritas in Veritate* is an exceptional moment in a continuous practice and a

tradition of applying diligent, faithful study to questions of the deep moral importance, an example showing that the vital message of love found in the New Testament is the seed of more answers to these questions than we realize.

Notes

1. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (1963; rpt., London: Penguin Books, 1990), 66–88, esp. 86.

2. John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne, eds., “At the Root of the Crisis” (a 1985 interview with Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger), *The Essential Pope Benedict XVI* (New York: Harper Collins 2007): 63–68; and “Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity” (a lecture at the Eucharistic Congress of the Archdiocese of the Benevento, Italy, June 2, 2002), *ibid.*, 73–76. See also Avery Cardinal Dulles, “From Ratzinger to Benedict,” *First Things*, February 2006, <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2008/08/from-ratzinger-to-benedict-17> (accessed November 1, 2009).

3. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), §1.

4. Joseph Ratzinger, “Eucharist, Communion, and Solidarity,” 75: “The understanding of the concept of solidarity . . . has been slowly transformed and Christianized, so that now we can justly place it next to the two key Christian words *Eucharist* and *Communion*. Solidarity in this context signifies people who feel responsible for one another, the healthy for the sick, the rich for the poor, the countries of the North for those of the South.”

5. See, for example, Robert Royal’s criticism of *Populorum Progressio* on stylistic, moral, and economic grounds in *A Century of Catholic Social Thought* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1991): 115–30. Mary E. Hobgood, *Catholic Social Teaching and Economic Theory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991): 147–54, takes a more sympathetic view but sees Paul VI backing away, in later writings, from some of the more leftist claims of *Populorum Progressio*.

6. John Courtney Murray quoted in Royal, *A Century of Catholic Social Thought*, 116.

7. Michael Novak, Father James V. Schall, S.J., and Robert Royal, “Caritas in Veritate: A Symposium,” *The Catholic Thing*, July 8, 2009, <http://www.thecatholicthing.org/content/view/1871/2/> (accessed November 1, 2009).

8. Dallin H. Oaks, “Religious Freedom,” speech delivered at BYU-Idaho, October 13, 2009, <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/news-releases-stories/religious-freedom> (accessed November 1, 2009).