

Peter J. Casarella, ed., *Jesus Christ:
The New Face of Social Progress.*
Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2015.
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This volume includes nineteen essays by scholars from a variety of disciplines and by church leaders on Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (CV, 2009), which treats a number of pertinent issues related to the economy and social progress. These essays take various approaches, including historical, biblical, theological, anthropological, social, political, economic, and ecological. The papers were originally presented at a conference at DePaul University on April 20–21, 2010. This review will not discuss in detail the wide-ranging content of the encyclical and the book but only highlight some significant themes.

In his introduction, systematic theologian Peter Casarella says that the encyclical challenges both liberals and conservatives to

focus on fundamental “principles for thinking about politics, society, and the economy.” For Benedict “a reorientation of thought and action begins with the encounter with the person of Jesus Christ . . . [who] is the new face of social progress” (2). Casarella considers this encyclical to be a novel synthesis that brings together the old and the new, the wisdom of the gospel and “the professional expertise of leading social scientists regarding the global economic crisis” (8).

In an overview of the encyclical Archbishop Celestino Migliore explains that “Jesus came on earth . . . to allow us to share in the same culture of love that exists in the Trinity” (12). *Caritas in Veritate* continues the tradition of the church’s social encyclicals. It was intended to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of Blessed Pope Paul VI’s *Populorum Progressio* (1967) but was delayed due to the economic and financial crisis at the time. Benedict addresses the phenomena of globalization, “which makes us neighbours but does not make us brothers” (CV, n. 19). Among other things, he calls for civilizing the market, finances, and economy with virtues such as gratuity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and reciprocity so that they promote an integral development of persons. While enumerating many problems of development, Benedict is “aware that in the world there are at work many . . . agents of truth and love” (18).

Biblical scholar Horacio Vela points out that for Benedict “the Bible is not an archeological relic” but “the living word of God, the soul of theology” (20). He grounds the encyclical in the incarnation and the paschal mystery. Charity, the love of God and neighbor, is the heart of the Church’s social teaching. Love must be grounded in truth and truth must be grounded in love. “Our search for charity and truth . . . is . . . guided by the person of Jesus Christ” (25).

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In discussing the Christological foundations of Catholic social teaching, theologian Roberto Goizueta underlines that Benedict emphasizes the centrality of Jesus Christ and that everything has its origin in God's love and is directed toward it. "Without truth, love is reduced to sentiment and emotion. Without love, truth is reduced to words and concepts. In either case, the result is idolatry since it reduces God to human experience, whether emotions or concepts" (58).

In explaining the anthropological vision of the encyclical, theologian David Schindler explains that the Christian difference involves "inner transformation"—human nature is "destined for fulfillment in the love of Jesus Christ" (72). Truth and love are united "in the person of Jesus Christ as the revelation of the Trinitarian God" (73). Our being and the rest of nature is given, a gift to us. We are called to participate in God's own love, which is first given to us. This love is God-centered and inclusive of the whole of creation. This vision of reality, which includes the metaphysical and theological, exposes the inadequacies of other visions of reality. Benedict holds that the only true common ground for dialogue can be found "by starting from within the reality of each person in the concrete wholeness of his or her search for meaning or love in its ultimate source and end" (75). He affirms that the common good rather than public order is the "proper purpose of political-economic activity" (79). God the Creator has given nature an inbuilt order that expresses a design of love and truth. Nature is destined to be recapitulated in Christ at the end of time. The encyclical calls for "new lifestyles centered around the quest for truth, goodness, beauty and communion with others" (CV, n. 51). The state is called to promote the integrity of the family founded on the marriage between a man and a woman and to

assume responsibility for its economic and fiscal needs. Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* and John Paul II's *Evangelium Vitae* affirm "the strong links between life ethics and social ethics" (CV, n. 15). Technology needs to be integrated into the call "implied in the order of relations" and "creation as something first *given*" to us "as *gift*," not something "*produced*" by us (84).

In discussing families and the social order, Christian ethicist Julie Hanlon Rubio says the radical vision of CV is that there is one ethic for family and society, an ethic of solidarity, participation, and gratuity. Benedict calls alienation one of the deepest forms of poverty and challenges us "to live more of our lives in a relational mode that is truer to our essence" (109). To love someone means "to desire that person's good and to take effective steps to secure it" (CV, n. 7). *Caritas in Veritate* "calls Christians to think more deeply about how economic structures and institutions" can "contribute to the common good and in particular to the good of the neediest among us" (113).

Political scientist Patrick Callahan, addressing the theme of global order, notes that Benedict calls for a "true world political authority. . . . Government must be democratic, protect the freedoms of people, and be consistent with the principle of subsidiarity, that is, that higher-level bodies must not usurp the functions of lower-level ones" (130–1). He values the diversity of cultures, which gives "humanity a resource for dialogue, for collectively searching for a fuller understanding of truth" (132). Any global authority would not be an end in itself but would need to be a means to "attaining morally required ends" (133).

Speaking of challenges of the contemporary economy and culture, Brazilian theologian Paolo Carneiro de Andrade affirms that the expansion of the market reduces human producers to

competitors who produce for humans who, in turn, are reduced to consumers. This weakens social ties, and societies tend to become more fragmented, desegregated, and violent. Reason is being replaced by feeling. We are on the road to a radical relativization of values and ideas and to an extreme form of individualism. The market tends to make religion just one more good for consumption. Religion is reduced to emotion and fundamentalist movements emerge. Continuing in the tradition of the Church's social teaching, Benedict states that the economy needs to be subordinated to morals and justice. "The option for the poor" means not only that things are done for the poor but also that they become protagonists of evangelization and transformation (191).

Benedict notes that within the market economy there already exist diverse forms of economic activity, many of which adhere to ethical norms and "view profit as a means of achieving the goal of a more humane market and society" (CV, n. 46). Among these, he refers to the "Economy of Communion," the primary expression of which is found within the Focolare Movement. Economist Lorna Gold's essay explains this innovative form of economic activity, including its origins and evolution. Since its inception during World War II there has been a "communion of goods" within the Focolare Movement. Members with a surplus, inspired by Christian love, share with others in need. In 1991 the principles of the Focolare spirituality were extended to the realm of businesses, whose profits were partly reinvested in the company, partly distributed to those in need, and partly used to fund the infrastructure necessary to promote the culture of giving.

In an essay on dualist economic thinking, Simona Beretta, a professor of economics and political science, says Benedict challenges certain dualisms in conventional wisdom about economic

development; these include efficiency and justice, and population growth and environmental protection. Among other things, he denounces the separation of human rights from the realm of duties. In Benedict's view the Catholic Church "has a heritage of values that are not things of the past, but a very lively and relevant reality" (253). Michael Naughton, an expert on Catholic social thought, explains that for Benedict not only the family and church but also corporations, states, and volunteer organizations are meant to be "communities of persons . . . rooted in the personalist communitarian anthropology that is grounded in a Trinitarian and incarnational understanding of the world" (274). Related to ecology in CV, theologian Keith Lemna refers to Benedict's explicit recognition of the "inextricable link between the demands of charity and care for the physical environment" and affirms that respect for "human ecology" and "environmental ecology" necessarily go together (CV, n. 51).

An epilogue to the book is written by Cardinal Peter Turkson. Among other things, he notes that while the encyclical may appear to be idealistic to some, in fact it draws our attention to what is essential. Like the prophets of old, the pope invites people to an openness to God and the transcendent. He appeals to the compatibility of faith and reason. Benedict does not demonize economics, the market, technology, globalization, trade, or other economic activities. Rather, he treats them with pastoral sympathy. This encyclical calls all "to the development of a serious moral responsibility for humanity, for its world, for its integrity . . . and for its vocation" (339). Turkson thinks Benedict has enriched the deposit of the social teaching of the Church.

After delving into this book, I decided to reread Benedict's CV. I was struck by its focus on the human person and the integral

development of the person in community. The various authors in this book think, as do I, that *CV* offers a positive contribution and hope to us today. I reread *CV* shortly after reading Pope Francis's new encyclical *Laudato Si* on the environment. There are a number of parallels with Pope Francis's encyclical. This is not surprising, since one of the sources Francis referred to most often is Benedict's *CV*. Both can be seen as offering significant developments to the Church's social teaching. Both challenge all of us to make this world a better place with the help of God. The book of conference papers reviewed here on Benedict's *CV* can help us to better appreciate some of the breadth and depth of that encyclical. Hopefully, someone will soon organize a conference on Pope Francis's new encyclical that will similarly probe its many facets.