

Doing the truth in love: an evangelical call for response to *Caritas in Veritate*

Recent global events awaken us to the importance of sustained Christian reflection on the nature and goal of economic life, both within our own societies and in other parts of the world. Accordingly, as evangelical Protestants we applaud the release of *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth) by Pope Benedict XVI. We call on Christians everywhere, but especially our fellow evangelicals in the global North, to read, wrestle with, and respond to *Caritas in Veritate* and its identification of the twin call of love and truth upon our lives as citizens, entrepreneurs, workers and, most fundamentally, as followers of Christ.

In Christ's death and resurrection, God removes all that stands in the way of right relationships between God and the world, among humans, and between humanity and the rest of creation. Human development is included in this restoration of all things to right relationship.

We commend the way in which this encyclical considers economic development in terms of the true trajectory for human flourishing. *Caritas in Veritate*, following in the tradition of Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, argues that development is about the transformation of both persons and institutions and of relations among and between them. We echo its call for a new vision of development that recognizes the dignity of human life in its fullness, and that includes a concern for life from conception to natural death, for religious liberty, for the alleviation of poverty, and for the care of creation.

Caritas in Veritate proposes an integral model of human development in the context of globalization, "the expansion of worldwide interdependence." We affirm with this encyclical that globalization must become a "person-centred and community-oriented process of integration." The encyclical correctly notes that globalization has indeed lifted millions out of poverty, primarily by the integration of the economies of developing nations into international markets. Yet the unevenness of this integration leaves us deeply concerned about the inequality, poverty, food insecurity, unemployment, social exclusion—including the persistent social exclusion of women in many parts of the world—and materialism that continue to ravage human communities, with destructive consequences for our shared planetary habitat.

In *Caritas in Veritate* we find an analysis of global affairs that rejects the oversimplifying polarization of free market and active government solutions. As the encyclical teaches, "authentically human social relationships of friendship, solidarity and reciprocity can also be conducted within economic activity, and not only outside it or 'after' it." Economic life is not amoral or autonomous. Economic institutions, including markets themselves, must be marked by internal relations of solidarity and trust.

Profit, while a necessary means in economic life, cannot be an overriding end for truly human economic flourishing. We therefore affirm the emphasis in *Caritas in Veritate* on social enterprise, that is, business efforts guided by a mutualist principle that transcends the dichotomy of for-profit and not-for-profit and that

instead pursues social ends while covering costs and providing for investment. More broadly, we urge evangelicals to consider the invitation by Pope Benedict to rethink who must be included among corporate stakeholders and what the moral significance of investment is. We would have wished for an even stronger criticism in the encyclical of the elevation of money to an idolatrous status and the resultant contemporary dominance of financial markets over other elements of the global economy.

We endorse the affirmation that an economy of charity demands space for myriad human communities and institutions, not just for the state and the market, but also families and the many relationships of civil society. It is primarily the internal resources of communities, such as those of neighbourhood associations, municipal councils, trade unions, small business and more, that facilitate the cultivation of local talents and resources. Effective governance and aid which provides support for development but recognizes their own limitations are needed in charting a path towards more integral development. The challenge to "humanize" or "civilize" globalization does not necessarily mean more government. It does demand better government—the rule of law rather than of persons, the development of strong institutions of governance, the restoration of balance between competing interests, the eradication of corruption. Ethical globalization demands fairer and freer trade, assisting the poor of the world to successfully integrate into a flourishing global economy. And ethical globalization demands of evangelical churches everywhere that we attend to the call to do the truth in love, as we continue to respond to the great commission to "disciple the nations."

The encyclical properly recognizes that states are not relinquishing and should not relinquish their duty to pursue justice and the common good in the global economic order. We share the document's concern at the decline of social security systems, the diminishing power of trade unions, and the pressure of socially destructive labour mobility. Yet we also share its fear of the growth of an overweening welfare state, which degrades social and civic pluralism. Thus we agree that subsidiarity and solidarity must be held in tandem, as *Caritas in Veritate* proposes.

We echo the call for better models of global governance, both financial and political, but hesitate to uncritically endorse the current models in the U.N., I.M.F., World Bank and W.T.O. A global common good does indeed call forth political action to secure it, but new models of global governance must secure increased participation, transparency and accountability, and help strengthen the nation state relative to the power of global finance.

With *Caritas in Veritate*, we commit ourselves not to be the "victims" of globalization, but to be its "protagonists"—to work for global solidarity, economic justice, and the common good, as norms that transcend and transform the motives of economic profit and technical progress. We call for serious dialogue among all Christians and with many others to make these goals practical realities.

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