

POPE BENEDICT ON CAPITALISM, MARXISM, AND GLOBALIZATION

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*This article presents some of Pope Benedict XVI's thoughts on economic matters, drawing from his writings and speeches before and after his election to the Papacy. He has spoken on numerous occasions about Marxism, capitalism, and, more recently, globalization, which can be thought of as an extension of capitalism. While he is harshly critical of Marxism, his criticisms of capitalism are more moderate, though he maintains a number of reservations about it, and draws parallels between the two systems. In both Marxism and capitalism he sees an attempt to construct a social order on reason alone, and he contrasts this with a Catholic vision of the social order in which reason is united to virtue in the service of moral values. He is generally supportive of globalization, though he has expressed concern about its effects on families and on the poor, as well as its effects on inequality and monopoly power. (Ed. Note: It should be noted that this article was completed, and the current volume of the Review in production before Pope Benedict's encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, was released.)*

For some time now the Catholic world has been anticipating a new encyclical on Catholic social teaching from Pope Benedict XVI. Throughout his career, both as pontiff and prior to election, when Joseph Ratzinger was head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Benedict has commented on economics and society. These comments are most often on capitalism, Marxism, and, more recently, on globalization and their relationship to the Catholic vision of the social order. This essay is an attempt to organize these remarks, to identify common themes among them, and to present them as a coherent whole, both to reflect on what Benedict has already said regarding economic issues and to offer a framework for interpreting the encyclical when it eventually is published.

“Capitalism,” as Benedict uses the term, is founded in utilitarianism and classical liberalism. Capitalism can largely be characterized by the following propositions: it is possible to construct an ideal social order on reason alone, where reason takes the form of economic principles; reality is essentially material in nature; freedom means the ability to do as one wants; man's welfare or happiness is understood to be the satisfaction of his wants, which increases the more his wants are satisfied; and businesses satisfy man's wants in the market

in their pursuit of profit. From these propositions flow the following prescriptions: man should pursue his wants, firms should pursue profits, and society should give man and businesses as much freedom as possible in order that man's wants may be satisfied as much as possible and that he may be as happy as possible.

"Marxism" also deserves a careful definition. Marx argued that economic relationships were expressions of the class conflict between the workers (proletariat) and capitalists or owners of capital (bourgeoisie). The capitalists oppress the working class, and private property is the instrument by which they accomplish that oppression. Modern extensions of Marxism understand all social relationships in similar terms, and that social problems are the result of class conflict: the wealthy against the poor, whites against blacks or other minorities, men against women. "Liberation theology," whose errors Benedict has addressed on many occasions, is the translation of the Marxist framework into the language of the Gospel, where the Church is recast as the agent of social transformation that is to work for social justice by opposing the "structures of sin" used by the rich to oppress the poor. In the Marxist framework, social problems are not the consequence of a fallen human nature or personal sin, but the result of socioeconomic conditions, i.e. "social structures." Class conflicts are perpetuated by these unjust social structures or institutions, and "social justice" can only be brought about by dismantling unjust social structures and erecting just ones, usually through some kind of revolution. "Structural change" is essential for social justice. Importantly, causality is not from personal to the social, but from the social to the personal: unjust social structures, e.g. private property in classical Marxism, are the cause of social problems.

The quotes presented in this essay are taken from several sources, many of them from the time prior to Benedict's election. I distinguish "Ratzinger" as the author when referring to statements made prior to his election, and "Benedict" as the author for those made subsequent to it. Most of the sources from which these quotes are drawn do not have economics as their primary subject, and I have tried to situate these quotes in a framework consistent with his other statements and Catholic teaching. Additionally, Benedict's writings and statements, including those from the time prior to his election, are voluminous, so this essay is not an exhaustive catalog of his thoughts on economic matters, but rather an attempt to represent some of the most significant themes.

This essay is divided into three parts: Marxism, capitalism, and globalization. His remarks on Marxism are limited to the first part, but his remarks on capitalism run throughout the essay: capitalism is

compared with Marxism in the first part and discussed in light of globalization in the third.

Marxism

Throughout his public life, Benedict XVI has been a harsh and consistent critic of Marxism, both as a cardinal and now as the pope. He is critical of its materialist worldview and its attempts to divorce reason from moral values. He is also critical of its antagonism towards charity and its disordered conception of justice and liberty, a liberty that paradoxically leads to oppression and even slavery.

Benedict's criticism begins with the recognition of the incredible injustices and oppression suffered by those who lived under Marxist systems. Reflecting on the historical legacy of Communism, Ratzinger writes,

No one can any longer seriously deny that what was supposed to be a movement to bring freedom was, along with National Socialism, the greatest system of slavery in modern history: the extent of the cynical destruction of human beings and of the world is very often passed over in shame and silence, but no one can deny it any longer. (*Truth and Tolerance*, p. 233)

Benedict often uses special language to discuss the suffering of man under communism. He describes the Communist regime as a “sad winter,” speaks of Bulgaria’s “sorrowful period of Communist oppression” and “sad and difficult Communist domination,” of Albania’s suffering from its “long and oppressive Communist dictatorship,” and contemplates the bitter irony that Russia, after having liberated Germany from Nazism, was then subjected to the dictatorship of “Stalin and the Communist system.” (June 23, 2005; Nov 12, 2005; May 24, 2007; Sep 29, 2006; May 28, 2006) It is as if the injustices perpetrated by the Communists are too numerous to describe in detail, and the suffering too immense to contemplate. Benedict, like his predecessors, does not attempt to recommend particular corrections to the communist system, directing attention instead to the fundamental errors of the system.

Benedict points to materialism as one of the fundamental errors of Marxism, an error that it shares with capitalism. When Marxism and capitalism assert that reality consists only of the material world, they simultaneously deny the spiritual nature of man and the reality of God. Addressing the bishops of Latin American and the Caribbean, Benedict asks

What is real? Are only material goods, social, economic and political problems “reality”? This was precisely the great error of the dominant tendencies of the last century, a most destructive error, as we can see from the results of both Marxist and capitalist systems. They falsify the notion of reality by detaching it from the foundational and decisive reality which is God. (May 13, 2007)

Marxism and capitalism are faulted for their denial of God and their disregard for man’s spiritual nature. Man can only be fulfilled in a life with God, and denying this and looking for fulfillment in material things can only end in misery. Later in this same address he describes the destruction to which these systems lead

The Marxist system, where it found its way into government, not only left a sad heritage of economic and ecological destruction, but also a painful oppression of souls. And we can also see the same thing happening in the West, where the distance between rich and poor is growing constantly, and giving rise to a worrying degradation of personal dignity through drugs, alcohol and deceptive illusions of happiness. (May 13, 2007.)

Materialism, whether it is found in either Marxism or capitalism, leads to “a painful oppression of souls.” This oppression presents an ironic contrast to the liberty promised by both Marxism and capitalism, but illuminates the truth that authentic liberty can be found only in God. God is the purpose for which man was created, and man cannot be fulfilled or free apart from Him.

For Benedict, a complete description of man’s welfare must incorporate both his spiritual and his material well-being. Here there are two related points: that a complete description of man’s welfare must include his spiritual welfare; and that his spiritual welfare is connected to his material welfare. The two dimensions of the life of man are not independent but deeply interrelated. The economic life of man affects his spiritual life, and his spiritual life affects his economic life. In order to signify the importance of man’s spiritual welfare, Benedict frequently mentions the two considerations together, linking them. For instance, in a letter addressed to Mary Ann Glendon, President of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, he writes of the “the material and spiritual development and fulfillment of the human family and all its members.”

(April 28, 2007) Addressing the bishops of the Congo, he affirms that the Church is committed “to the material and spiritual well-being of all the Congolese.” (February 6, 2006) Addressing the diplomatic corps, he speaks of “the material and spiritual progress of society.” (Jan 8, 2007) Benedict includes spiritual considerations in these discussions of “progress,” “development,” “well-being,” and “fulfillment” in order to distinguish a Catholic understanding of these terms from their secular meaning.

The materialist errors are closely related to Benedict’s criticisms that both Marxism and capitalism attempt to construct a social order based on science and reason without moral values. Benedict remarks,

Both capitalism and Marxism promised to point out the path for the creation of just structures, and they declared that these, once established, would function by themselves; they declared that not only would they have no need of any prior individual morality, but that they would promote a communal morality. (May 13, 2007.)

In Marxism, human behavior is the result of conditioning by social structures, and change in society begins, not by personal transformation, but by dismantling or destroying the existing social structures and replacing them with new ones. In capitalism, most famously in the Theory of the Invisible Hand, the self-interest of individuals brings about the best for society, so individual liberty is the only essential requirement for the social order. In both Marxism and capitalism, there is no recognition that the social order depends on the good habits and behavior of individuals, nor is there any requirement for men to reform their lives in accord with the laws of God. Addressing the Marxist errors present in liberation theology, Ratzinger comments on this connection between the social and the personal

It is also painful to be confronted with the illusion, so essentially un-Christian, which is present among priests and theologians, that a new man and a new world can be created, not by calling each individual to conversion, but only by changing the social and economic structures. For it is precisely personal sin that is in reality at the root of unjust social structures. Those who really desire a more humane society need to begin with the root, not with the trunk and branches, of the tree of injustice. The issue here is one of fundamental Christian truths, yet they are deprecatingly dismissed as “alienating” and “spiritualistic.” (*The Ratzinger Report*, p.190.)

Here he connects social problems, social injustices, to personal sin. This connection is itself significant, as it rejects modern attempts to separate man's economic and political life from his personal life and to restrict religious beliefs and values from public life. Such a separation cannot persist, for the values of one set will become the values of the other. If man gives one set of values priority in social affairs, then he will inevitably give those values priority in his personal affairs as well. The observation that social problems cannot be addressed by the consideration of structures alone is directed at Marxism: if personal sin is the root of social injustice, then personal virtue is the root of social justice. Just social structures cannot be constructed, nor can they persist, nor can unjust structures be dismantled without virtuous and just men. In the personal and social life of man, reason must be united to virtue in the service of moral values.

Benedict gives specific meaning to the phrase "moral values." Moral values are not arbitrary; there is no hint of the idea that society can be constructed according to any set of values so long as there is a consensus on them. For Benedict, moral values are true values; they are what man should rightly value. They direct man to what is truly good for him, and so arise from the truth about man and human nature. They are ethical in that they direct man in what he should do, but they are knowable by reason, and thus pertain to natural philosophy. Moral values provide an avenue through which progress can be made toward a just social order in a culturally and religiously diverse society, so long as that society recognizes and affirms those values. In particular, moral values are a common ground for cooperation between Jews, Muslims, and Christians. For example, when greeting a Jewish delegation from B'nai B'rith International, Benedict says, "Jews and Christians are called to work together for the healing of the world by promoting the spiritual and moral values grounded in our faith convictions." (Dec 18, 2006) At World Youth Day in Cologne, Benedict, speaking with Muslims, affirms, "There is plenty of scope for us to act together in the service of fundamental moral values." (Aug 20, 2005) At other times Benedict has emphasized the transcendental nature of these values by using the phrases "universal moral values" (Dec 17, 2005; May 10, 2007) and "universal values." (Mar 24, 2007) He has also given many examples of these values. Addressing the Pontifical Academy for Life, Benedict specifies the moral values of "the body, sexuality, human love, procreation, [and] respect for life." (Feb 24, 2007) Speaking to the ambassador of Costa Rica to the Holy See, Benedict mentions the "moral values such as honesty, discipline and responsibility for the common good." (Feb 10, 2007) In his remarks to the ambassador of El

Salvador, Benedict talks of the “moral values such as honesty, rectitude and responsibility for the common good, solidarity, a spirit of sacrifice and the culture of work....” (Dec 1, 2005) His affirmation of moral values is an appeal for a world that esteems chastity, honesty, unity, responsibility for the common good, and a spirit of sacrifice.

The phenomenon of terrorism highlights in part the essential connection between the social order, personal virtue, and moral values. Confronting the threat of terrorism and defending Western society demands taking responsibility for the common good and a willingness to sacrifice for others, and such sacrifices can be made only by men of virtue. Benedict speaks of a “moral force” in men that animates the practice of virtue, and points to the Church as essential to sustaining that moral force and fostering virtue in men. Reflecting on the importance of the Church in the social order, Benedict says,

[I]t is becoming ever clearer that only moral values and strong convictions, and sacrifices, make it possible to live and to build the world. It is impossible to construct it in a mechanical way, as Karl Marx proposed, with the theories concerning capital and ownership, etc.

If there is no moral force in souls, if there is no readiness to suffer for these values, a better world is not built; indeed, on the contrary, the world deteriorates every day, selfishness dominates and destroys all. On perceiving this the question arises anew: but where does the strength come from that enables us to suffer for good too, to suffer for good that hurts me first, which has no immediate usefulness? Where are the resources, the sources? From where does the strength come to preserve these values? (July 25, 2005.)

This passage reiterates many themes about Marxism and capitalism. The Marxist approach of social progress through structural change without reference to moral values is “impossible,” and capitalism is problematic when it values only that which is immediately useful, e.g. “instant gratification,” and encourages selfishness in individuals. Selfishness saps the virtue of men, their willingness to suffer for the good of society, and their ability of men to make sacrifices in service to others. While reason may direct the social order, only virtue can defend it.

Benedict emphasizes that the virtue of charity as essential to a well-ordered society and is harshly critical of Marxism for its hostility to

charity. In fact, the intense antipathy of Marxism towards the practice of charity is one of its most striking characteristics. Benedict writes

The modern age, particularly from the nineteenth century on, has been dominated by various versions of a philosophy of progress whose most radical form is Marxism. Part of Marxist strategy is the theory of impoverishment: in a situation of unjust power, it is claimed, anyone who engages in charitable initiatives is actually serving that unjust system, making it appear at least to some extent tolerable. This in turn slows down a potential revolution and thus blocks the struggle for a better world. Seen in this way, charity is rejected and attacked as a means of preserving the *status quo*. What we have here, though, is really an inhuman philosophy. People of the present are sacrificed to the *moloch* of the future—a future whose effective realization is at best doubtful. One does not make the world more human by refusing to act humanely here and now. (*Deus Caritas Est*, 31b.)

In Marxism, charity is the enemy of progress. Charity is unacceptable, because it impedes social revolution and the establishment of “social justice.” The individual is subordinate to an agenda of social and political transformation, the sufferings of the present are not alleviated but even encouraged. The harsh language of this passage is notable, for it is not applied to capitalism and reserved for Marxism: Marxism is described as an “inhuman philosophy,” and Marxists are depicted as offering sacrifices “to the *moloch* of the future.”

Capitalism

Some of Benedict’s criticisms of Marxism find parallels in capitalism. The quotes provided earlier showed that Benedict criticizes capitalism where it falls into materialism and when, as a consequence of that error, it attempts to separate reason from moral values. He is also concerned with what he sees as a growing sense of alienation and the lack of charity in capitalist societies. He is particularly concerned about the extent to which the role of charity has been replaced by the activity of the State in modern economies. These criticisms can all be connected to the disordered idea of liberty in capitalism.

“Liberty” in capitalist societies means the power to do what one wants, and Benedict sees this notion of liberty as deficient, and even a

potentially destructive force in the lives of individuals. Essential to this sense of liberty is a radical autonomy of the individual will, one that recognizes no authority outside of itself, either in a higher power or in nature. Benedict observes that with such a conception of freedom, man recognizes no duties or obligations to his fellow man. Addressing the Bishops Conference of Saints Cyril and Methodius, he remarks, “An incorrectly understood concept of modernity is tending today to excessively exalt the needs of the individual to the detriment of every person’s duties to God and to the community to which he belongs.” (May 4, 2007) This exaltation of the individual tends to encourage selfishness, as men are concerned exclusively with what they should receive from society and unconcerned with what they can or should contribute to it. In response to this, Benedict often speaks of “social responsibility.” Addressing the bishops of Brazil, he says, “Education in Christian personal and social virtues is also an essential part of catechesis, as is education in social responsibility.” (May 11, 2007) He describes the seventh commandment as “a yes to solidarity, to social responsibility, to justice...” (Jan 8, 2006) He has also discussed social responsibility on other occasions (Feb 12, 2007; Aug 1, 2007; Feb 22, 2007). His comments on “social responsibility” are directed against the erroneous conception of freedom that capitalism takes from classical liberalism, for the duties of man must come from an authority outside himself, and the classical liberalism recognizes no such authority. Benedict also makes the point that man’s will is not necessarily rational, and man, in his fallen nature, often desires what is contrary to his good. Ratzinger writes,

How free in fact is our will? And how rational is it?—And, is an irrational will truly a free will? Is irrational freedom truly freedom? Is it really a good thing? (*Truth and Tolerance*, p. 232.)

In capitalism, man is told that he is free in order to pursue the satisfaction of his wants, and that in doing so he will find happiness. However, these wants are not classified as reasonable or unreasonable, rational or irrational, nor is consideration made as to whether the goods exchanged are truly good, i.e. whether they are the objects of rational desire and ordered to the good of the one who purchases them. In his fallen nature, man often desires the bad. For the sake of his own good, not all of man’s desires should be satisfied, nor should he have the opportunity to satisfy them in the market. This same liberty that permits man to pursue his own destruction permits other men to assist him in that pursuit and to profit from it.

Benedict is concerned with the effects of this disordered conception of liberty on the activities of companies. He is critical of companies that exploit the vulnerability of man in their pursuit of profit, and those whose unconstrained pursuit of profit threatens the common good. Ratzinger's interviewer notes that,

Ratzinger is not afraid, either, to see "a sign of the Satanic in the way in which people exploit the market for pornography and drugs in the West." [Ratzinger remarks,] "There is something diabolical in the cold-blooded perversity with which man is corrupted for the sake of money and profit is drawn from his weakness, his temptability and vulnerability in the face of temptation. Western culture is hellish when it persuades men that the sole aim of life is pleasure and self-interest." (*The Ratzinger Report*, p. 188.)

These comments are directed at both the companies who traffic in sin and at a culture that sees nothing wrong with such activity. Here Ratzinger points out that the markets for evils like drugs and pornography exist because many consumers seek fulfillment in the pursuit of pleasure, and because many businesses are motivated by a pursuit of money and profit that recognizes no moral limitations to its activity. Benedict stresses that companies are morally accountable to their customers and responsible for maintaining the common good. In Catholic teaching, the common good is the set of conditions necessary for prosperity, which includes just laws, natural rights, moral values, and social norms. Speaking to members of the media on World Communications Day, Benedict says,

These are distortions that occur when the media industry becomes self-serving or solely profit-driven, losing the sense of accountability to the common good. (Jan 24, 2006.)

In these comments, he recognizes the tension that can often arise in that industry between the pursuit of profit and the truth and warns against the pursuit of profit at the expense of the common good. Here he echoes the encyclical of John Paul II, who taught,

Profit is a regulator of the life of a business, but it is not the only one; *other human and moral factors* must also be considered which, in the long term, are at least equally important for the life of a business. (*Centesimus Annus*, 4)

Both Benedict and John Paul II are attentive to the tendency to interpret profitability as the only criterion of the performance of a business. This tendency is identified with capitalism, in which the purpose of business is posited as the maximization of profit. In response, the Church points out that any legitimate pursuit of profit must be limited by the moral law. The activity of a company, economic activity, must be ultimately to serve man, and profit should not come at the expense of the common good.

Benedict observes that liberty must be united to reason and therefore cannot be considered apart from the truth. True freedom is rational freedom, and it is the separation of freedom from reason that is the error common to all secular visions of the social order. Ratzinger asks,

Does not the definition of freedom, as being able to decide to do anything and being able to do what we decide, have to be expanded to include the connection with mankind as a whole, in order to avoid becoming tyranny and unreason? And will not seeking for the common reason of all men, and thus the mutual compatibility of freedoms, be a part of the interplay of reason and the will? It is obvious that the question of truth is concealed within the question of the rationality of the will and its relation to reason. (*Truth and Tolerance*, pp. 232-3.)

The meaning of freedom is not the ability to choose what one wants, but the power to choose what is good, and this goodness is connected to the truth about man and ultimately to God. As a consequence of original sin, what a person wants or desires is not the same as what is good for him, nor is what is good for a person the same as what a person thinks is good. Drugs and pornography, for example, are not good for man, and are therefore not the objects of rational desire. Because of their addictive nature, to use these is not to exercise one's freedom, but to risk losing it. The satisfaction of the demand for these goods leads not to a gain in social welfare, but a loss, and when it provides these goods, the market does not contribute to man's welfare, but rather his illfare. In this case, the pursuit of one's wants does not end in fulfillment, but misery. Authentic freedom is rational freedom, in which man sees the good for what it is and has the power to pursue it. Furthermore, the truly free man recognizes the truth about human nature and respects the limits arising from that nature.

Benedict is also concerned with the role of charity in capitalism. Where Marxism was openly hostile towards charity, capitalism tends to be merely indifferent to it. Indifference, however, is

sufficient to extinguish charity, which begins with man's concern for his fellow man. This indifference arises from the self-interested emphasis of capitalism: To the extent that capitalism encourages self-interest, it discourages interest in others. As man becomes more concerned with himself, he becomes less so for others; when man is absorbed with his own well-being and comfort, he is indifferent to the well-being and comfort of others. The loss of charity and indifference towards others is closely related to another concern of Benedict's, which is the growing sense of alienation in modern societies.

Alienation, a widespread sense of loneliness and disconnectedness of individuals from their families and larger communities, is one of the predominant characteristics of the modern world. Benedict points to the prevalence of drugs, alcohol, and "deceptive illusions of happiness", a phrase which is suggestive of the emptiness of casual sexual relationships, as evidence of this alienation. Like indifference, this alienation stems from the self-centered emphasis of capitalism, where individuals act in their own self-interest, understood as selfishness, seeking the satisfaction of their own wants. In the extreme, man is not concerned with his fellow man, except insofar as he may be instrumental in satisfying his wants. Man relates to others not as persons, but as objects, and he is, in turn, treated by others as an object. The alienation that characterizes modern life is attributable, at least in part, to a sense in man that his fellow men are unconcerned for him, seeing him only as a means to their own ends. Thus, alienation and indifference are two sides of the same coin: Concerned only with himself, man neither cares for his fellow man, nor is he cared for by him. Benedict often speaks about loneliness and laments the growing alienation of the youth. He remarks,

But let us also think of those people, especially the young, who have lost their sense of true joy and seek it in vain where it is impossible to find it: in the exasperated race to self-affirmation and success, in false amusements, in consumerism, in moments of drunkenness, in the artificial paradise of drugs and every form of alienation (Dec 17, 2006.)

Benedict often speaks on these themes of consumerism, the pervasive use of drugs and alcohol, and the pursuit of money and worldly success, as well as the pursuit of gratification through sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Here Benedict points to the cause of this widespread alienation: loss of man's true source of joy, who is God. "Without him

who sustains our lives, life itself is empty.” (Sep 9. 2007) The alienation of the culture is the emptiness of a world without God, a world convinced that it can find happiness in the pursuit of worldly pleasure. The error that man can be happy apart from God is the same error that his happiness only depends on his material welfare. The consequences of this error are profound: “A world empty of God, a world that has forgotten God, loses life and relapses into a culture of death” (March 2, 2006).

In response to the indifference and alienation of men in modern society, Benedict calls men to return to charity, for their own good and for that of society. Indeed, his first Encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, is devoted to charity. He advocates a more active role for individuals and private associations voluntarily acting in charity in serving their fellow men, and sees the State as having displaced this practice of charity in the social order. In this he agrees with his predecessor, Pius XI, who writes,

When we speak of the reform of institutions, the State comes chiefly to mind, not as if universal well-being were to be expected from its activity, but because things have come to such a pass through the evil of what we have termed “individualism” that, following upon the overthrow and near extinction of that rich social life which was once highly developed through associations of various kinds, there remain virtually only individuals and the State. This is to the great harm of the State itself; for, with a structure of social governance lost, and with the taking over of all the burdens which the wrecked associations once bore, the State has been overwhelmed and crushed by almost infinite tasks and duties. (*Quadragesimo Anno*, 78.)

This raises the question of whether a small government is compatible with capitalism, as Pius XI attributes the growth of the State to excessive individualism. If, by promoting a philosophy of self-interest, capitalism leads to an increase in indifference, then the needs of the poor that would be met by charity must instead be addressed by social services provided by the State. As charity recedes, the State expands. Benedict deplores this situation, writing,

Love—*caritas*—will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. Whoever wants to

eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such. There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbour is indispensable. The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person—every person—needs: namely, loving personal concern. (*Deus Caritas Est*, 28b.)

This is a harsh criticism of the role of the State in modern life: Benedict argues that the State is attempting to “provide everything, absorbing everything into itself,” and in so doing, he suggests that it is attempting to “eliminate the need for a service of love.” The State is attempting to do what can only be done by charity. Through its various social programs, the State has taken upon itself the alleviation of the suffering of man, a redemptive role that properly belongs to the Church in her work of charity. Ratzinger writes, “Wherever politics tries to be redemptive, it is promising too much.” (*Truth and Tolerance*, p. 116) While the loss of charity may be a consequence of excessive individualism encouraged by capitalism, the idea that the State should replace the role of charity in the social order and that social programs or institutions can bring about the redemption or “liberation” of man can be traced to the disordered idea of liberty in Marxism.

The role of the State in the social order figures prominently in Benedict’s thought. Importantly, while Benedict points to problems with capitalism, he does not see solutions to social problems coming from the State. He emphasizes the importance of subsidiarity in the social order, i.e. that a superordinate authority, such as the state, should perform only those tasks that cannot be performed by subordinate communities. Benedict writes,

We do not need a State which regulates and controls everything, but a State which, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, generously acknowledges and supports initiatives arising from the different social forces and combines spontaneity with closeness to those in need. (*Deus Caritas Est*, 28b.)

In Benedict's thought, social initiatives should primarily come from individual citizens or the Church, not the State. Individuals and communities have better knowledge of the problems they face, and the State should recognize and support their efforts to respond to those problems. Furthermore, the State is limited in what it can do: It does not have the power to address the spiritual needs of man, needs which can only be fulfilled through others or through the Church. Without recognition of these limitations, the State inevitably tries to do too much, taking the role of God in Marxism, and that of charity in capitalism.

Globalization

The common interpretation of the events of 1989 is that the end of the Cold War also brought an end to the conflict between capitalism and Marxism. Reflecting on those events, Ratzinger writes

The collapse of the Marxist-inspired governments of Europe was for this theology of redeeming political practice a kind of twilight of the gods: precisely there where the Marxist ideology of liberation had been consistently applied, a total lack of freedom had developed, whose horrors were now laid bare before the eyes of the entire world. (*Truth and Tolerance*, p. 116.)

With the fall of the U.S.S.R. in 1989, the communist system was discredited and a new era dominated by capitalism began. Since that time the world has experienced a growing interconnectedness of economic, political, and social relationships. This trend towards increasing connectivity and interdependence, which is thought to be a consequence of capitalism, is globalization.

Despite his criticisms of capitalism, Benedict is generally supportive of globalization. This support is evident in Benedict's discussions of the importance of markets and market access at the national and international levels associated with globalization. When discussing of the benefits of market access for small farmers, Benedict observes

It must not be forgotten that the vulnerability of rural areas has significant repercussions on the subsistence of small farmers if they are denied access to the market. (Nov 24, 2005.)

Here, he sees market access as important, even crucial, for the welfare of farmers, and objects to any denial of their access to markets. This idea is extended to countries where he considers access to international markets essential for national welfare. Benedict remarks,

Trade conditions favourable to poor countries, including, above all, broad and unconditional access to markets, should be made available and guaranteed in lasting and reliable ways. (Dec 16, 2006.)

Benedict's approval of market globalization is also evident in his approval of common market policies, which are designed to increase the interconnectedness of markets at the continental levels, e.g. the EU. Addressing the ambassador of Tanzania, he says,

Along these same lines, I am pleased to note that your nation, as a founding member of the East Africa Community, is committed to working with other nations in the area for the creation of a common market. The adoption of a single customs union for the member nations is indeed a positive sign of the progress being made in this important undertaking. Communal solidarity at this level not only assists in the integral development of the region, but also develops a level of rapport and mutual concern which can be most helpful in addressing any differences which may arise. (Dec 1, 2005.)

This suggests a reason why he sees globalization as a good thing: He hopes that the reciprocal relationships established between countries help foster mutual concern and solidarity. Solidarity unites men in bonds of fraternal charity, bonds through which material and spiritual aid may flow, alleviating the suffering of those in need.

While Benedict is generally supportive of the globalization of markets, he has some reservations. He is concerned especially about the effects of globalization on the family, inequality, and monopoly power. First, Benedict is concerned about the implications of globalization on the family. In particular, he is concerned about the consequences of increased mobility of labor and migration that can be attributed to the growing interconnectedness of labor markets. Speaking to the young, he says,

The process of globalization taking place in the world entails a need for mobility that obliges numerous young people to emigrate and live far from their home countries and their families. This brings about an unsettling feeling of insecurity that undoubtedly has repercussions on their ability to not only dream and build up a project for the future, but even to commit themselves to matrimony and start a family. (March 28-31, 2007.)

Benedict frames the global phenomenon from the perspective of the person and asks about the consequences for the family. Emigration takes men away from their families and their countries, confronting them with an unfamiliar culture and a language they don't understand. Linguistic and cultural barriers separate emigrants from the other citizens of their adoptive country, leading to a sense of disconnectedness and loneliness. Insofar as globalization is a consequence of capitalism, this suggests another way in which capitalism may lead to alienation among men in the modern world: Through globalized labor markets, increased immigration separates men from their families and their culture and may discourage them from starting families of their own.

Second, Benedict is concerned that globalization will lead to a greater inequality of wealth, i.e. a greater distance between rich and the poor. The Church has always been concerned for the welfare of the poor under capitalism, and Benedict is apprehensive that globalization will increase the inequality between the rich and the poor. Speaking to the ambassador of Japan, Benedict remarks,

It is indeed essential that the constantly developing bonds of interdependence between peoples be accompanied by an intense commitment to prevent consequences of the disastrous escalation of the marked inequalities that persist between developed and developing countries. (Nov 13, 2006.)

The existence and persistence of this inequality is evidence of a wide and growing division in society. Growing inequality is suggestive of insufficient charity from the rich towards the poor, charity which would mitigate this inequality and draw them together in solidarity. The vast distance between wealth and poverty means that the way of life of the richest has little in common with the poorest, and less every day. This is opposed to solidarity and a threat to the integrity of the social order.

Third, Benedict is concerned with the growth of monopoly power associated with globalization. Addressing the bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, Benedict says,

Today's world experiences the phenomenon of globalization as a network of relationships extending over the whole planet. Although from certain points of view this benefits the great family of humanity, and is a sign of its profound aspiration towards unity, nevertheless it also undoubtedly brings with it the risk of vast monopolies and of treating profit as the supreme value. (May 13, 2007.)

Here, his concern is for the growing inequality in economic power, where power is concentrated into the hands of fewer and fewer companies, and this concern parallels his concern for the growing inequality of wealth and its concentration among fewer and fewer individuals. Catholic teaching envisions a broad participation in the economy and a correspondingly broad distribution of wealth among many individuals throughout society. Benedict is concerned that globalization may encourage monopolies to become more powerful and thereby discourage individuals, especially the poor, from exercising their right to economic initiative and prevent them from receiving the benefits of the increased prosperity.

Conclusion

Benedict argues that Marxism errs in its materialist assumptions and in its attempt to build a social order on scientific principles alone, without reference to moral values. Marxism leads to spiritual oppression and slavery, and its legacy in Europe is one of misery. Furthermore, its hostility towards charity makes it a truly inhuman philosophy. While Benedict speaks less often of Marxism, I would suggest that it is not because it is less oppressive than capitalism—it is more so—but because he believes its importance has diminished in light of the events of 1989, and he recognizes that the world has entered a new era of globalization dominated by capitalism.

Benedict draws parallels between capitalism and Marxism in their materialism and in their efforts to build a social order on reason apart from virtue and moral values. Capitalism also promotes a disordered idea of liberty that is unconnected to the truth and recognizes no authority outside the individual. The emphasis on individualism in

capitalism tends towards selfishness and a loss of charity, which in turn encourages indifference among men and contributes to loneliness and alienation in modern societies. Benedict is concerned that capitalism leads to increasing inequality of wealth and the concentration of power in the hands of the few, and that these tendencies will increase with globalization. He is also concerned with the effects of globalization on the family, especially the increased demand for labor mobility, which can uproot man from his family and his culture. Despite his reservations, however, Benedict is supportive of globalization and hopeful that it will lead to an increase in solidarity through the encouragement of reciprocal ties of friendship and charity.

Benedict's critiques of capitalism and socialism present a challenge to Catholic philosophers, theologians, and economists. Benedict's criticisms suggest that Catholics need to reassert the proper understanding of freedom, distinguishing it from those of Marxism and classical liberalism and relating it to truth. At the same time, they need to find support in the tradition of the Church for the liberal market reforms that Benedict supports, particularly globalization. Furthermore, Benedict's strenuous objection to Marxism, especially in the form of liberation theology, indicates a need for a renewed effort to contest the spread of liberation theology in the life of the Church and to promote the proper theological understanding of social and economic relationships according to Catholic tradition. Benedict's vision of a social order in which reason is united to virtue in the service of moral values is compelling and deserves a broader audience, especially in these times of economic turmoil.

Benedict's remarks about the relationship between the State and charity in the social order also present a challenge to Catholics, at least in the United States and Europe. Historical voting patterns indicate consistent support for a large role of the State in the administration of various social programs, support which is in many cases at odds with the proper role of the State as it is described by Benedict. Charity is not the domain of government, and in the work of charity they are even in some sense opposed: works of charity cannot be accomplished by the government, for when the government attempts them, they cease to be charitable. Benedict, like his predecessors, is concerned with the role of the State in the social order, and advocates a reduction in the scope of the State's activities, accompanied by a growth in charity. Only with a renewed commitment to charity will the role of the State recede and the life of the Church and the culture be invigorated. Benedict put forth charity as the theme of his first encyclical, and if man is to have charity in his personal life, then it must play a role in his social life as well.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for his helpful comments on this article.

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