

intellectuals who are curious about what Catholic theology looks and feels like from the inside, as articulated by someone who has been on the inside of both traditions, will find much to appreciate in Echeverria's work. Such readers may also be pleased to find that Echeverria's ecumenical charity allows him to acknowledge that, on certain points of substantial agreement between the Catholic and neo-Calvinist traditions, the better articulation has been provided by neo-Calvinist theologians; thus, both traditions may profit from dialogue with one another.

—John Bergsma
Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio

Catholic Social Teaching and Economic Globalization: The Quest for Alternatives

John Sniegocki

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In a private letter welcoming Pope Benedict XVI on his 2008 visit to the United States, three hundred staff members mainly of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (the organizations most often associated with globalization) thanked him for putting respect for human life from conception to natural death and for the family based on marriage between one man and one woman at the center of integral human development. The signatories of that letter were referring to essential components of the Catholic teaching on development, as the last encyclical on the subject, *Caritas in Veritate*, would amply confirm. In it, the pope spoke of respect for life and openness to life as central to true development (par. 28), and of disrespect for the right to life, embryo destruction, and artificial insemination as degrading the moral tenor of society, without which other concerns such as environmental ecology lose their meaning (par. 51).

Yet, one would look in vain, in Sniegocki's book, for a spirited defense (or, at least, the discussion they deserve) of the right to life and the rights of the natural family, which are the principal targets of contemporary attacks on true human development. To the contrary, the book contains ambiguous appeals such as "increasing life choices for women, and decreasing population growth" (274). One must ask, "Choice of what, and decreasing population why and how?" Another ambiguity is advocacy of aims such as a "more mutualist vision of shared parenthood" (302). At a time when parenthood itself is being repressed by coercive policies in some countries and disvalued in others, is a more mutualist vision really a priority, and should such a decision not be left to families themselves? As will be shown in the course of this review, these are not isolated ambiguities.

In his introduction (27), Sniegocki identifies the basic thesis of his book: widespread poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation lead, on the one hand, to the need for fundamental changes in global and domestic policies on development and, on the other hand, to the need to discard "neoliberal economic globalization," which according to Sniegocki is part of the problem (actually, its main culprit). The solution, instead, will

come from alternatives that are being worked out “in many inspiring and courageous ways by people at the grassroot level around the world.” In this respect, Catholic social teaching may be a “valuable resource” in the quest for such alternatives.

Starting from this premise, Sniegocki divides his book into seven chapters: chapters 1 and 2 on development theory and practice, and the failures of “modernizationist” policies, are followed by two chapters, one on Catholic social teaching (which excludes such encyclicals as *Humanae Vitae* and *Evangelium Vitae*, despite clear Church teaching that integral human development is the development, not only of the *whole* human being, body and soul, but also of *all* human beings, born and unborn). The other is on neoconservative (mainly Michael Novak) and radical (read: anticapitalist) critiques. After these chapters, and before a final chapter on “re-envisioning” Catholic social teaching (read: envisioning it according to radical critiques), chapters 5 and 6 deal with grassroots critics of development and their policies and actions.

Sniegocki’s treatment of grassroots social activists regrettably neglects lay and religious missionaries giving their lives for people in developing countries; for example, Mother Theresa but also, in her footsteps, the many who, while working day and night in challenging conditions, remain faithful to natural morality and Catholic doctrine. Rather, while the villain is the United States under its conservative administrations, the surprising hero is the Sandinista government in the Nicaragua of the 1980s, which is described on page 94 as “a new source of hope for many of the poor of Latin America” and praised for its alleged “important improvements in the areas of health, education, and land distribution,” and the current reformist government of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. In reality, the contribution (so to speak) of the Sandinistas was so noticeable in the area of land distribution (just to select one example among many) that even the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights denounced the forcible relocation and sheer deprivation of Miskito Indians at the hand of the Sandinistas. (See the Report on the Situation of Human Rights of a Segment of the Nicaraguan Population of Miskito Origin, November 29, 1983.) As to the Chavez regime, perhaps a better contribution to development would be, instead of its despicable attacks on the Church, redressing its lamentable record on human rights (see the Inter-American Commission’s Report on Democracy and Human Rights in Venezuela, December 30, 2009; both reports are available at www.cidh.oas.org) and ensuring that the food purchased abroad to feed the poorest achieves its objective and is not left to expire in its containers, as was reported in the international press.

That Sniegocki’s enthusiasm for the Sandinistas and the Chavez regime is misplaced is fairly easy to see. Meanwhile, the dubious developmental record of such agencies as UNICEF (relied upon almost as an oracle in various passages of the book), Amnesty International, and Oxfam (labeled respectively, by Sniegocki, as one of the “highly respected human rights organizations” [95], and as one of those aid agencies having “very positive reputations,” [281n87]), may not be as readily evident to readers. UNICEF (the United Nations’ Children Fund) has long been a champion of that contraceptive imperialism so forcefully denounced by the Catholic Church, which led the Holy See to withdraw its annual contribution to UNICEF. As for Amnesty International and Oxfam, they have now

established themselves as staunch promoters of abortion, as most recently demonstrated in Amnesty's case, by its shameful campaign against Nicaragua's law protecting the unborn. In other words, the reputation these agencies deserve should not really be high among faithful Catholics and among men and women of good will who uphold natural morality.

Sniegocki's praise of such agencies is not merely unconvincing in itself. It also throws light on the equally unconvincing way in which Sniegocki uses such important categories as systemic injustice, social sin, and structures of sin. As Pope John Paul II clearly indicated in his 1984 apostolic exhortation *Reconciliation and Penance*, the accumulation and concentration of sins finds its ultimate cause in man's free will and in the repetition of individual sinful acts. (See Maurizio Ragazzi, "The Concept of Social Sin in Its Thomistic Roots," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 7 [2004]: 363–408.) If so, would it not be more immediate to look at the record of single agencies, such as UNICEF, Amnesty International, or Oxfam, and assess to what extent their policies and actions amount to social sins that give rise to structures of sins, rather than attach these labels to entire economic systems such as capitalism, or to lending programs for structural adjustment, which require a much more complex examination of the many players involved and their respective degree of responsibility, if any?

Among the technical issues briefly mentioned in Sniegocki's book, some have been attracting considerable interest in the international developmental literature and political debate. Two examples are those of odious debts (87) and tied/untied assistance (282), neither of which is amenable to simplistic solutions. To get a sense of how the very concept of odious debt remains elusive, one only needs to compare two recent papers on this thorny issue, one produced by World Bank officials (Vikram Nehru and Mark Thomas, "The Concept of Odious Debt: Some Considerations," World Bank Economic Policy and Debt Department Discussion Paper, May 22, 2008, at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDEBTDEPT/Resources/468980-1184253591417/OdiousDebtPaper.pdf>) and the other one commissioned by UNCTAD (Robert Howse, "The Concept of Odious Debt in Public International Law," UNCTAD Discussion Paper No. 185, July 2007, at http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/osgdp20074_en.pdf). As to tied/untied assistance, namely whether the recipient of foreign aid should be required to purchase goods or services from the donor country, in the presentation of the 2008 OECD recommendation on untying aid it is acknowledged that this is a "slow and complex process" (see "DAC Recommendation on Untying ODA to the Least Developed Countries and Heavily Indebted Poor Countries," OECD, July 2008, at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/43/41707972.pdf>).

In conclusion, Sniegocki's book is comprehensive as an inventory of radical views on development and globalization. Those seeking an accurate presentation of Catholic social teaching on the themes, and suggestions for the further development of this teaching in conformity with the basic tenets of Catholic doctrine, had better look elsewhere.

—Grazia Mangano Ragazzi (e-mail: invertate@yahoo.com)
Washington, D.C.