New papal encyclical
Truth illuminates
by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

"The splendor of truth shines forth in all the works of the Creator and in a special way in man, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gn. 1:26). Truth enlightens man's intelligence and shapes his freedom, leading him to know and love the Lord. Hence the psalmist says: 'Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord' (Ps. 4:6)." These words, which open the preface of the encyclical, are the leitmotiv and quintessence of the entire work.

The spirit in which Pope John Paul's II new encyclical is written is very close to that of Nicolaus of Cusa. This can be seen not only from its title, *The Splendor of Truth*—Nicolaus speaks of "the sweetness of truth"—but also in the idea that universal and eternally valid Natural Law provides us with a useful instrumentarium for judging Good and Evil. Particularly Cusan is the specific method of *manductio*, leading the seeker step by step toward the truth. The parable of Jesus' conversation with the rich youth in Matthew 19 is taken up again and again, in order to provide increasingly deeper understanding.

With this reformulation of Catholic moral doctrine, Pope John Paul II argues against what is, as he puts it, "certainly a genuine crisis." This crisis, both outside and within the Christian community, is the result of an "overall and systematic calling into question of traditional moral doctrine on the basis of certain anthropological and ethical presuppositions. At the roots of these presuppositions is the more or less obvious influence of currents of thought which end by detaching human freedom from its essential and constitutive relationship to truth" (¶4).

The pope reports that the traditional doctrine of natural law and the universality and eternal validity of God's commandments are now being rejected, and that parts of the church's moral teachings are considered completely unacceptable, while the tasks of the teacher have been reduced to admonitions to act according to one's otherwise independent conscience. There is also widespread doubt about the inseparability of faith and morality; people would prefer to tolerate a pluralism of behavioral modes which can depend on the choice of one's individual conscience, or on differences in social and cultural matrices.

While the recently published new Catechism contains a complete and systematic exposition of Christian moral doctrine, the encyclical addresses certain fundamental questions...
pertaining to the church’s moral doctrine, in order to achieve
clarify on questions which are in dispute among ethicists and
moral theologians.

Know thyself, O man!

Acknowledging the Lord as God, Who is the absolute
Good, is the fundamental root from which all the individual
commandments derive. Man, created in the image of his
Creator, through being redeemed through Christ and through
the presence of the Holy Spirit, will strive to have all his
actions be a reflection of God’s glory. The pope quotes St.
Ambrose, “Know, then, O beautiful soul, that you are the
image of God” (¶10).

"Know that you are the glory of God (1 Cor. 11:7). Hear
how you are his glory. The prophet says: Your knowledge
has become too wonderful for me (Ps. 139:6, Vulgate). That
is to say, in my work your majesty has become more wonder­
ful; in the counsels of men your wisdom is exalted. When I
consider myself, such as I am known to you in my secret
thoughts and deepest emotions, the mysteries of your knowl­
edge are disclosed to me. Know then, O man, your greatness,
and be vigilant.” (¶10).

Here the pope touches upon the central point of departure
taken by Lyndon LaRouche in his monograph on the ontolog­
ical proof of the existence of God. The question initially
is less one of whether man is capable of making positive
statements concerning God, but is much rather the following:
By means of what faculty is man capable of knowing any­	hing concerning God?

Man, by virtue of his reason, is the image and reflection
of the invisible God; “in the counsels of man your wisdom is
exalted,” and by “consider[ing] myself, the mysteries of your
knowledge are disclosed to me.” Thus there exists some­
thing within my own mental activity which renders me able to
know something about God. Through the incarnation of
Christ, man becomes capax Dei, capable of having his “share
in the divine goodness”—provided that man lives up to the
requirement which Jesus enunciated to the rich youth, who
asked, “Teacher, what good must I do to have eternal life?”
to which Jesus replied, “come, follow me!”

The pope speaks of the Sermon on the Mount as a verita­
ble Magna Carta of the Gospel on morality, and cites Jesus:
“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the
Prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them.”
However, “The moral prescriptions which God imparted in
the old covenant and which attained their perfection in the
new and eternal covenant in the very person of the Son of
God made man must be faithfully kept and continually put
into practice in the various different cultures throughout the
course of history” (¶25).

Nature and freedom

The burning questions of human existence have always
been the same: “What is man? What is the meaning and
purpose of our life? What is good and what is sin? What
origin and purpose do sufferings have? What is the way
to attaining true happiness? What are death, judgment and
retribution after death? Last, what is that final, unutterable
mystery which embraces our lives and from which we take
our origin and toward which we tend?” (¶30).

But while the question of the meaning of life remains
the same—as does the answer to it—in the modern era an
ostensible antinomy has become inserted between moral law
and individual conscience, between nature and freedom. The
idea of an uncompromising, knowable truth has been lost,
and consequently “some have come to adopt a radically sub­
extivistic conception of moral judgment” (¶32). Freedom is
often degraded into the ostensible right “to do anything they
please, even evil” (¶34, citing the Second Vatican Council).

But true freedom is not the rejection of universal law;
rather, it is the coming into agreement with that law. For, the
law is called “natural law” “not because it refers to the nature
of irrational beings, but because the reason which promul­
gates it is proper to human nature.” “Natural law,” the pope
cites his predecessor Leo XIII, “is itself the eternal law,
implanted in beings endowed with reason, and inclining them
toward their right action and end; it is none other than the
total reason of the Creator and Ruler of the universe” (¶44).

But God’s eternal law, which Thomas Aquinas equates
with the “type of the divine wisdom as moving all things to
their due end,” is not received by man “from without,” since
God cares for men differently than he does for other creatures
who are not persons; rather, it is received “from within,”
through reason, which recognizes God’s eternal law and can
therefore indicate the correct direction of man’s actions: “In
this way God calls man to participate in his own providence,
since he desires to guide the world—not only the world of
nature but also the world of human persons—through man
himself, through man’s reasonable and responsible care”
(¶43). Thus, it is man’s acceptance of the divine plan, and
his agreement to take an active role in its realization, that
makes him free.

The pope further emphasizes the unity of body and soul,
thus assailing the modern versions of the old heresies which
had accepted a separation between the spiritual and the mate­
rial world: “The spiritual and immortal soul is the principle
of unity of the human being, whereby it exists as a whole—
corpore et anima unus—as a person” (¶48).

Not ‘the prisoners of one’s culture’

Finally, the pope adds the consideration that people’s great sensitivity today for historical validity and culture leads many into mistakenly doubting the immutability of natural law, and thus into doubting the existence of “objective norms of morality” which are valid for all people, present and future, just as they have been so for those in the past.

“Is it ever possible,” he asks, “to consider as universally valid and always binding certain rational determinations established in the past, when no one knew the progress humanity would make in the future?” And furthermore, “It must certainly be admitted that man always exists in a particular culture, but it must also be admitted that man is not exhaustively defined by that same culture. Moreover, the very progress of cultures demonstrates that there is something in man which transcends those cultures. This ‘something’ is precisely human nature: This nature is itself the measure of culture and the condition ensuring that man does not become the prisoner of any of his cultures, but asserts his personal dignity by living in accordance with the profound truth of his being” (¶53, emphasis added).

This “something,” this deeper truth of his being, lies not in the specific assumptions of a momentary, concrete structure of knowledge built out of one culture’s underlying hypotheses. The development of culture itself is proof of that which in all human beings transcends all specific cultures: All human history up to the present day, and our own existence as repositories of all previous generations, is proof of that unique human conceptual faculty which Plato calls the “hypothesis of the higher hypothesis.”

Lyndon LaRouche’s specific contribution in the field of economics is his proof of the necessarily negentropic development of relative potential population density, thus supplying a demonstration that the Book of Genesis in fact defines natural law, and that modern critics notwithstanding, it is still completely adequate for present-day conditions.

If the pope today is placing emphasis in this way on the unity of body and soul, or mind and matter, then this is all the more important because it not only has implications for the inviolability of human life, but has great epistemological significance as well. For, that which is produced by creative Reason in the domain of pure intellect—the adequate hypothesis as it expresses itself in scientific and technological progress to a higher level of mastery over nature, and thus to creating the preconditions for continued human existence—results thereby in efficient change in the material universe.

Concerning this, Nicolaus of Cusa said that the soul is the place where the sciences are invented—so much so, that mathematics, geography, music, etc. would not have existed had the soul not invented them.

Hence man’s individual conscience is not an autonomous and exclusive higher authority, but rather it expresses “moral obligation in the light of natural law.” Therefore one must not be “prisoners of one’s culture,” but instead the higher authority within man’s intellect, which represents his similarity to God the Creator, is bound by duty. If the individual follows his conscience in this way, he will fulfill himself in his actions and his person.

The pope quotes St. Gregory of Nyssa: “All things subject to change and to becoming never remain constant, but continually pass from one state to another, for better or worse. . . . Now, human life is always subject to change; it needs to be born ever anew. . . . But here birth does not come about by a foreign intervention as is the case with bodily beings. . . ; it is the result of a free choice. Thus we are in a certain way our own parents, creating ourselves as we will, by our decisions” (¶71). Thus, we ourselves are responsible for what sort of human being we become.

John Paul criticizes those who claim that “one no longer need acknowledge the enduring absoluteness of any moral value.” Adherence to this belief results in an often horrifying degeneration of the human individual in situations of progressive self-destruction.

Conversely, when man is prepared never to denigrate the personal dignity of his fellow man who has been created in the image and likeness of God, and indeed is ready to treat this identity as moral truth for which he is even prepared under certain circumstances to sacrifice his own life, only then is he truly free. “The truth sets one free and gives the strength to endure martyrdom” (¶87).

“Only by obedience to universal moral norms does man find full confirmation of his personal uniqueness and the possibility of authentic moral growth” (¶96). Here the pope is speaking not only about a measure for sacredness, but at the same time he is defining the preconditions for genius, which is free to the extent that it extends, in a lawful way, the law of which its own creativity is a part.

The task, continues the pope, is therefore to assert oneself against the “prevailing and all-intrusive culture” (¶88).
rediscover Christian faith and one’s own faculty of judgment.

In conclusion, he warns that following the collapse of Marxism, we are threatened by an equally serious danger, namely the “risk of an alliance between democracy and ethical relativism, which would remove any sure reference point from political and social life, and on a deeper level make the acknowledgment of truth impossible” (¶101).

Conversion

The encyclical Veritatis Splendor radiates an intense inner strength. It is a magnificent refutation of all relativist conceptions of morality, including that of John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Karl von Savigny, and Carl Schmitt. And in its own way, it also confirms St. Augustine’s recognition that a government which has rejected natural law and has devoted itself to liberalism and democracy, necessarily will tend toward violence.

There can also be no doubt that with this epistle, the pope is making a dramatic attempt to convert civilization—at a time when its continued apostasy from natural law has already brought it to the brink of its own destruction.

Reading the text of this encyclical is bound to make all those happy who are not slaves of the Zeitgeist, but rather who think seriously about the meaning of life. Those who seek to grasp the more profound truths of human existence will gain a sense of inner peace upon reading it, and will be strengthened in their optimism.

Free Lebanon to assure lasting Mideast peace

by General Michel Aoun

Translated from Italian and reprinted by permission from the Milan newspaper Avvenire, of Oct. 14, 1993:

The developments of the situation in the Middle East and the great dangers which derive from them for Lebanon, impel me to insist again on the necessity of a rapid and concerted action for the purpose of helping Lebanon to recover its freedom of decision, as the necessary prelude to the reclaiming of self-determination by its people, and as the condition for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

From the outset of the hostilities in Lebanon, the international community never stopped denouncing the cycle of violence and stressing its attachment to the territorial integrity of Lebanon and its sovereignty. Yet events went against these principled positions. Never were the declared intentions accompanied by appropriate actions, and even less by the necessary means for their enforcement. This flagrant contradiction between what is said and what is done not only indicates the defeat of international law and the institutions which derive from it, but it attacks the spirit of the Lebanese people, mocked and betrayed, who continue to suffer the bitter reality of occupation, aggravated by an unprecedented economic and social crisis.

In the present international system, and in the face of the general incapacity to enforce the law, the silence of nations, especially the major ones, acts as a cover for others who multiply their aggression and give free rein to their hegemonic impulses. The law, thus diverted from its principle aim, becomes a back-up for crime. This is how, on Oct. 13, 1990, while the liberation of Kuwait was being readied, Lebanon was consigned, land and people, to Syrian occupation under the Taif diktat, which was called an accord and backed up by the concert of nations. This text never mentioned Syrian withdrawal, and legalized the occupation of Lebanon.

If some believed then that the Taif compromise could be a step toward peace, today no one doubts that it was biased in favor of the Syrian occupation of Lebanon. In fact, the “accord” begat a series of measures and “accords” with the aim of preparing the institutional framework for integrating Lebanon into Syria. By designating the officials of the three...