

## Pastor's Column

### Man—A Lost Atom in a Random Universe?

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Here is a bit of the recent Encyclical, “*Caritas in Veritate*” (Charity in Truth), written by Pope Benedict XVI. I would encourage you to get a copy and read his words. The Encyclical Letter can be purchased in bookstores or you can print a copy off the internet from the Vatican website—[www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) (then select English, then Latest Updates).

There is another aspect of modern life that is very closely connected to development: the denial of the right to religious freedom. I am not referring simply to the struggles and conflicts that continue to be fought in the world for religious motives, even if at times the religious motive is merely a cover for other reasons, such as the desire for domination and wealth.

Today, in fact, people frequently kill in the holy name of God, as both my predecessor John Paul II and I myself have often publicly acknowledged and lamented. Violence puts the brakes on authentic development and impedes the evolution of peoples towards greater socio-economic and spiritual well-being. This applies especially to terrorism motivated by fundamentalism, which generates grief, destruction and death, obstructs dialogue between nations and diverts extensive resources from their peaceful and civil uses.

Yet it should be added that, as well as religious fanaticism that in some contexts impedes the exercise of the right to religious freedom, so too the deliberate promotion of religious indifference or practical atheism on the part of many countries obstructs the requirements for the development of peoples, depriving them of spiritual and human resources. **God is the**

**guarantor of man's true development**, inasmuch as, having created him in his image, he also established the transcendent dignity of men and women and feeds their innate yearning to “be more.”

**Man is not a lost atom in a random universe:** he is God's creature, whom God chose to endow with an immortal soul and whom he has always loved. If man were merely the fruit of either chance or necessity, or if he had to lower his aspirations to the limited horizon of the world in which he lives, if all reality were merely history and culture, and man did not possess a nature destined to transcend itself in a supernatural life, then one could speak of growth, or evolution, but not development.

When the State promotes, teaches, or actually imposes forms of practical atheism, it deprives its citizens of the moral and spiritual strength that is indispensable for attaining integral human development and it impedes them from moving forward with renewed dynamism as they strive to offer a more generous human response to divine

love.

In the context of cultural, commercial or political relations, it also sometimes happens that economically developed or emerging countries export this reductive vision of the person and his destiny to poor countries. This is the damage that “superdevelopment” causes to authentic development when it is accompanied by “moral underdevelopment.”

