

Defining the Contours of a New Capitalism Project – Principles, Values and Mechanisms

Introductory Overview

Contexts – past and present

This project is a multi-disciplinary process originating from and being co-ordinated by the William Temple Foundation. The Foundation is a research institution of 60 years standing based in Manchester and with close links to a wide network of academic institutions and public bodies including the Universities of Manchester and Warwick in the UK and the University of Uppsala in Sweden, the Church Urban Fund, the Board of Mission and Public Affairs for the Church of England and Urban Strategy Group of the Church of England, the Leverhulme Trust and the Northwest Development Agency. Its current research and publications portfolio interact with four highly topical and interconnected agendas:

- Faith-based engagement in civil society
- The religious contribution to the happiness and wellbeing debate
- The postsecular city
- The new capitalism project (see below)

This process of enquiry and strategic discernment being proposed flows from a long engagement in political economy by the William Temple Foundation. William Temple himself, as Archbishop of Canterbury was engaged in dialogue with William Beveridge in the depths of the Second World War concerning the new political economy required to construct the framework and values for a new post war economy (see John Atherton's introduction). Since then, the Foundation that bears his name has produced a number of research papers and publications on the role of religion in economics, most recently via the work of three associate researchers of the Foundation: Dr John Atherton, Dr John Reader and Professor Ian Steedman.

These recent contributions to the political economy field from the William Temple Foundation include; *Faiths and Finance, A place for faith-based economics* (a joint Christian-Islamic document prepared by amongst others John Atherton and Ian Steedman, Manchester Centre for Public Theology, 2006), *Through the Eye of a Needle - Theological Conversations over Political Economy* (edited John Atherton and Hannah Skinner, SCM Press 2006), *Reconstructing Practical Theology – The Impact of Globalisation* (John Reader, Ashgate, 2008), and *Transfiguring Capitalism – An Enquiry into Global Religion and Change*, (John Atherton, SCM Press, 2008).

The discussion papers

The papers that are now being circulated emerge out a dialogue between a number of faith-based practitioners, economists and economic commentators concerning the current global economic recession and its present and future repercussions. A brief introduction from Canon John Atherton lays out the commitment to engage in both ethical and engineering economic debates, and locates this commitment within an historical (cycles) approach to political economy that includes the work of Giovanni Arrighi, Adam Smith and William Temple. There are then four further papers

Paper 1 is a copy of Robert Peston's web-based document from December 2008 which sets the scene for 2009, with its anticipation that, amongst the turmoil and uncertainty of the global economic recession, there will be major shifts within the models of capitalism including; semi- or total nationalisation of banking systems, more transparent regulation and accountability of commercial businesses, (with a far more restrained bonus structure), and more globalised co-ordination of investment at global level, which will challenge current tendencies towards national autonomy or protectionism. The overall term for these trends is in Peston's view 'a more humane capitalism' which is 'kinder, gentler, less divisive, less of a casino in which the winner takes all'. His suggestion of the possibility of a new or 'humane' form of capitalism sets the framework for the subsequent papers (and indeed this whole process) since they clearly suggest a more embedded role for the contributions of ethics and religious bodies/theological disciplines in future evolutions of globalised capital.

Paper 2 is a contribution from Phillip Jones, (Industrial Missioner in the West Midlands and team leader of the 'Faith at Work in Worcestershire' project) who gives a first-hand account of how the economic recession is impacting on a specific region in the UK – namely the Worcestershire/West Midlands region. As an Industrial Missioner (the rich tradition of Industrial Mission goes back nearly as far as William Temple himself; the current Foundation emerged from the William Temple College which was established to train lay people to be industrial chaplains and missioners) he goes on to outline the main questions that need to be resolved when contemplating a reformulated architecture for global economics in the 21st century. He also outlines other church-based initiatives that are making enquiries into this area.

Paper 3 is from John Reader (Rural Officer for the Diocese of Chester and Associate Researcher for the William Temple Foundation) which goes into a

deeper set of questions about the future of capitalism itself, drawing from a range of neo-Keynesian (Hyman Minsky), Marxist, and heterodox economics (Steve Keen) analyses, along with wider philosophical references. He concludes by offering a series of questions concerning the focus of change at local and global levels, suggesting that different types of rhetoric and analysis (i.e. realist *and* utopian) might be appropriate as a way of reflecting a mixed 'economy' of different understandings and strategies necessary to produce a reformed economic structure. Reader is somewhat less optimistic than Peston as to the type of social and economic order that will emerge from the current crisis.

Paper 4 is from John Atherton (former Canon Theologian at Manchester University and Associate Researcher with the William Temple Foundation) and offers, drawing on the work of Arrighi, Fogel and McLoughlin, Clark, Sen, a cyclical analysis of political economy. It then develops the thesis that the world is on the cusp of a new cycle of economic development linked to new technophysio advances and progressive changes associated with a new cycle of religious awakening. He presents an account of the productive energies and systems this new juncture of economic and religious cycles might produce (by way of practical outputs and structures), which will nevertheless be governed by a renewed role for ethical-religious perspectives. John Atherton's paper outlines some of the ways ethics and religion will interact with economics in the future, as well as some of the practical areas of economic restructuring that religion will not only contribute to, but formulate.

The Emerging Capitalism process

These papers will be discussed at an informal colloquium on the 19th May and refined into a further set of questions and propositions. These will then be circulated for wider enquiry and comment from economists and economic/governmental/business/social policy/religious and other commentators, deploying WTF's well-established regional, national and global networks

A further strategic point in this process is envisaged in the form of a multi-disciplinary conference in the summer or early autumn of 2010. The aims and outcomes of this conference will be threefold:

1. To **recreate a process similar to that inaugurated by William Temple at Oxford in 1937 on Life and Work entitled 'Church, Community and State'**. At this conference, he convened a meeting of the top theologians, political thinkers and economists of the day to plan a new global dispensation from the shadow of emerging fascism in Europe

and ongoing economic depression. A major part of the agenda was the formulation of 'an ethic for the economic order' – what one surviving delegate recalls as, '... ideas about property and equality, poverty and unemployment, and the whole challenge to a prevailing view of ... "the almost moral self-sufficiency" of the free-enterprise system'. These documents, which emerged out of this conference built on those produced at an earlier Life and Work conference in Stockholm in 1925, which itself could trace its origins in the Leo XIII's social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* and the American Social Gospel of the late 19th century.

2. This 2010 conference might convene a similar contemporary (and interfaith) gathering which will **seek to update (and where necessary originate new) principles, values and mechanisms of a global economy to those unearthed at the 1937 Oxford conference**. It will also coincide and be partially financed by a conference to mark the end of the WTF's three year Leverhulme Trust research into the nature and contribution of religious and spiritual capital in the UK.
3. **The principles, values and mechanisms from this conference will be published and disseminated globally through a variety of web-based and published platforms and networks**. It is also envisaged that the outcomes of this conference might provide a framework for collaborative research endeavours across disciplines and continents.

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Director of Research
William Temple Foundation
Manchester

March 2009