

Back to Basics or Business as Usual?

Responsible Lending, Responsible Borrowing and the Christian Response to the Great Recession

9.30 – 3.30, Saturday 12th December

St Paul's Onslow Square London SW7 3NX

Background

The recession and the precarious nature of our current economic life are provoking a widespread review of our attitude to the power of money in our lives and in the lives of our communities. At the same time, churches, along with other groups from a wide variety of different perspectives, are proposing ways forward beyond a consumer driven, debt dependent economic and social life. Some call into question the system as a whole, for example radical environmental, anti-capitalist and Islamic groups; some propose parallel systems that provide alternatives to the dominance of the financial services industry; some seek to re-establish business as usual and a return to consumer driven, indebted lifestyles; but what is a Christian vision of the way forward? How should Christians respond personally, pastorally and politically to the economic crisis? What concrete proposals for action should Christians initiate, develop or support?

The Faith & Public Policy Forum (King's College London), St Mellitus College and the Centre for Contextual Theology are jointly hosting a study day to reflect theologically on the current economic crisis and ways the church might respond in practice. Amidst the competing visions for the future, it is vital to develop a theological account of ways forward. It is particularly important for churches in London. For the church in London is uniquely placed to respond given that London is not only the most ethnically and religiously diverse city in the world, a major centre of cultural and artistic production, but also a crucial node in the global financial services industry. In addition, it has the only public authority – the Corporation of London – that is specifically focused on lobbying for and representing the interests of that industry both in the UK and globally. In short, the world is in London and London is in the world. Christians in London are immersed in every aspect of this city from the street to the boardroom and have relationships with every level, from the homeless person to the business titan. There is therefore a particular responsibility and opportunity for churches to develop a vision and concrete forms of action and policy proposals for the way ahead, proposals grounded in the realities of the world as it is but also faithful to the revelation of the world as it should be given in Jesus Christ. With the economy in flux, a general election fast approaching, and manifestoes being written, the door is wide open for new ideas. In a time such as this and amidst the resounding silence of our political leaders to articulate alternative visions of the future, Rabbi Hillel's questions come to us with acute force: if not now, then when? If not us, then who?

Key questions the day will address

- What is a theological vision of the place of debt, lending and borrowing in social and political life?
- What might be practical proposals that reflect and adhere to such a vision within the contemporary context?

Programme

9.30-10.00 - Registration & Welcome

10.00 – 12.00 (incl. coffee break) - Keynote speakers:

- **Prof John Milbank**, Nottingham University
- **Andrew Dilnot**, Principal, St Hugh's College, Oxford

12.00-12.30 - Testimony:

- Some personal stories of people affected by debt

12.30 – 1.30 - Lunch

1.30-3.00 - Panel discussion with:

- **Paul Marshall**, Marshall Wace hedge fund/Centre Forum
- **Dr Maurice Glasman**, London Citizens/Faith & Citizenship Programme
- **Piers Le Marchant**, General Counsel, Nomura International
- **Prof John Milbank**, Nottingham University
- **Andrew Dilnot**, Principal, St Hugh's College, Oxford

3.00-3.30 - Closing response:

- **Phillip Blond**, ResPublica

Organisers

The event is jointly organised by the Faith & Public Policy Forum, King's College London; St Mellitus College (the diocese of London and Chelmsford's theological and ordination training institute); and the Centre for Contextual Theology (CTC). King's, St Mellitus and CTC have an established relationship and are already working together in a variety of ways to resource and equip the church in London in its mission and ministry through theological education. This event is designed to initiate a conversation about the way beyond the economic crises, one framed by theological considerations rather than economic ones, and build relationship between bankers, theological educators, church leaders and policy makers within a church rather than a political setting.

Booking etc

- **To book** your place either call 020 7780 1600 or email: justcommunities@theology-centre.org It is important to book beforehand.
- **Cost:** A suggested contribution of £5 for the day is requested but not required. This is payable on the door.
- **Lunch:** Please make arrangements to provide for your own lunch (there are many places to buy sandwiches around the venue)
- **Getting there:** St Paul's Onslow Square is located near **South Kensington** tube (District/Piccadilly). Bus routes: 211 or buses to South Kensington.