

# Theology and Enterprise

## Report on a Book Launch

by *Joanna Moriarty*

Edward Carter is Canon Theologian at Chelmsford Cathedral. On Monday 28 November he introduced his book, *God and Enterprise, Towards a Theology of the Entrepreneur*, at the London Stock Exchange, in front of an audience drawn from across the commercial and third sector and the Church; I then chaired a panel discussion with contributions from Lord Griffiths of Fforestfach, who brings a wealth of experience in politics, academia and banking, Lord Glasman, academic and social thinker, and Trevor Willmott, Bishop of Dover. The event was organised by CEME (the Centre for Enterprise, Markets and Ethics), and made possible by the generous support of CCLA.

Edward Carter aims to reclaim the spiritual dimension of enterprise and to see it as carrying a positive value, which challenges the vague sense of distaste around the economic activity that is part of the lives of perhaps most Christians. His thinking is rooted in his own experience, running and working for SMEs, in parish and diocesan life, and in his academic background in theology and economics. He brings a light touch to equipping the reader to handle key concepts from each discipline, and makes the sometimes complex ideas which underpin his thinking fully accessible.

Canon Carter identifies the key characteristics of the entrepreneur – creativity, energy, attentiveness to others – as also characteristic of the Holy Spirit, and suggests that a world-view which takes God seriously resonates with the way entrepreneurs see the world – the sense that there are opportunities out there, and that economic activity is not a zero-sum game. Entrepreneurs form an effective bridge between the worlds of faith




and economics, helping us think more laterally about the reality of economic activity, and that enterprise is part of the process by which the world becomes better aligned with God's kingdom.

Traditional economic thinking is challenged by the sense of generosity and abundance offered by God's promises for the world, and Canon Carter makes this vivid with a fascinating thought-experiment.

Rooting his thinking within the Old and New Testaments, Canon Carter offers a fresh reading of those parables which are generally interrogated for evidence of Jesus' attitude to wealth, including the Parable of the Talents. He offers an analysis which is more thoughtful than the standard read-across to a positive view of risk and investment. He moves beyond the more obvious connection between enterprise and Creation to explore enterprise as bearing the hallmarks of the Resurrection promise.

The panel discussion covered a range of ground – the growing interest in social enterprise and investment, the impact of Catholic Social Teaching in this field, the impact of business structure, the role that scale and rootedness in the community play in creating social justice, and the caveat that enterprise does not *per se* create a fair and just society in which people who work in organisations are treated well and not exploited.

The topic clearly sparked strong interest in its audience, and made a vital contribution to the continuing challenge to place spiritual value on the activity of our working lives. 

Edward Carter, *God and Enterprise: Towards a Theology of the Entrepreneur*

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