

Foreword

JAMES H. COOPER*

Jesus entered the temple and drove out all
who were buying and selling in the temple,
and he overturned the tables of the money changers
and the seats of those who sold doves.
(*Matthew 21:12*)

I tell you the truth: anyone who has faith in me will do
what I have been doing. He will do even greater things
than these, because I am going to the Father.
(*John 14:12–13*)

Trinity Institute is in its forty-first year of convening dialogues that contribute to the health and thriving of the church. The Institute and the *Anglican Theological Review* share a mission of engaging theological issues across geography and polity within the Anglican Communion. Like a copy of this journal recommended from one friend to another, Trinity has found that its conferences have a long life and deepening influence even after the conference itself is over, particularly on the Internet. I am grateful to the editors that this year's conference can have such fine representation within these covers, so that the deep exploration of marketplace ethics that took place there might become known to many more than were able to participate at the time. With its special webcasts and more than eighty partner sites across the Americas and in Europe, as well as an in-person audience, the Institute requires great effort and coordinated partnerships to flourish. I am deeply grateful to the many people whose work, prayer, and planning made the conference successful.

When Jesus made his presence known in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and those who were selling

* The Rev. Dr. James H. Cooper is the 17th rector of Trinity Wall Street, a historic parish in New York City founded in 1697.

animals for the required sacrifices, he was making the point that ordinary people who were seeking a relationship with God should no longer be cheated by the money changers—an economic reality of the day. The story of Jesus in the temple is as much an economics lesson as a Bible lesson, illustrating that the church has been involved in issues of economics for a very long time.

And yet this is not always apparent, either to people involved in the life of the church or to those who are not. For instance, since the economic crisis began, reporters have visited Trinity Wall Street to ask the clergy variations on two basic questions: Have you seen more people coming into church since the crisis began? If so, what do you say when people come to you with worries about losing their jobs, or having bills they can't pay?

These are fine questions that indicate the essential role churches play during this economic downturn, or any crisis for that matter. Yet it is clear that Trinity's location at the head of Wall Street is of interest to reporters for its pastoral proximity, rather than its potential influence of financial policy. It would be a different world, and a different church, if reporters rushed in to ask questions such as these:

- What is the church's role in shaping an ethical economy?
- Are the economic principles by which we structure our daily lives part of our relationship to God's creation?
- Is capitalism a belief system?

Trinity and other churches do in fact play a role in providing both the pastoral and economic support envisioned by the reporters. But in addition to providing employment and pastoral counseling, and grants-funding for job-creation endeavors, Trinity also convened its 2010 Trinity Institute conference on *Building an Ethical Economy: Theology and the Marketplace*. It was a timely and thought-provoking gathering, as the nation (and the world) suffered during what we all hope now was the depth of our economic recession.

Yes, the conference was about money, ethics, and fiscal policy. More fundamentally and taken as a whole, though, beyond the specific positions of presenters, the conference was also an assertion that the church has a duty to influence economic reforms, and an affirmation that the church indeed has a role in the public sphere. People of faith have a contribution to make in creating the new economy, as Jesus did centuries ago.

It must have been a shocking event to see Jesus overturning the marketplace of his day and urging a completely new way of doing business. Some are still shocked today by Jesus' actions in the temple. I find the most shocking thing Jesus did was to say that we—you and I—would be responsible for doing more good than he. And so what may seem utterly grand or audacious, or perfectly beyond the realm of the church's influence, is in fact what we must influence. Jesus saw the people responsible for creating the new economy, and they are us.

We are all in this together—this is the realization we are having with the collapse of the old economy. At the beginning of the new, let us realize that the economic aspects of our lives do in some way define us. The decisions we make about what to buy, whom to buy from, and how much we spend on material goods are indicative of the quality of our relationship to creation. Our personal economics can be a picture of the reality God sees for us, or a picture of phantom reality, in which God is barely a thought. What, then, might the church create?

