

THE SANE ECONOMY PROJECT OF THE G.K. CHESTERTON INSTITUTE FOR FAITH & CULTURE

The Church's social doctrine concerns the overcoming of the split between the Gospel and culture identified by Paul VI as a "tragedy of our time." While the Church's magisterium is careful not to offer any model economic system, it asks members of the Church, especially the lay faithful who are most fully engaged in economic society, to develop such models by applying the principles of her social teaching to their own concrete historical and personal circumstances. This is one area where more work is urgently needed, not least to prevent Catholics from being swept away by the ideologies which still dominate in this field, and which may lead us to fail to recognize the cultural and moral logic of the economic system itself.

The Chesterton Institute's office in Oxford has been developing a research project intended to address this need. Though chronically underfunded, the project is led on a voluntary basis by Russell Sparkes, one of the UK's leading authorities on the practical interface of ethics and economics. Senior Fund Manager for the British Methodist Church working in the field of ethical investment and Secretary on the Ethics of Investment for the same organization, Russell is a former Chairman of the Chesterton Institute in the UK and author of books on Chesterton, ethical investment, and other subjects. Professor David L. Schindler, Dean of the John Paul II Institute for Studies in Marriage and the Family, acts as Theological Adviser to the project, while other advisers include Andrew V. Abela and Maria Sophia Aguirre (both of CUA), Helen Alford, OP (Dean of Social Sciences at the Angelicum), Charles M. A. Clark (St John's University), Edward Hadas (author of a forthcoming book on alternative economics), Frances Hutchinson (University of Bradford, UK and editor of *The Social Crediter*), Race Mathews (author of *Jobs of Our Own*), Thomas R. Rourke (author of *A Conscience as Large as the World* and the forthcoming *A Theory of Personalism*), and Garrick Small (University of Technology, Sydney, Australia).

Partly inspired by the Distributist movement in pre-WWII England, which was led by G.K. Chesterton, the Project ranges much more widely and is not tied to any particular ideology. Its premise is simply that every economy is a "cultural economy", and fundamentally an "ethical economy"; that is, the expression of an ethos. Morality, in

turn, is rooted in anthropology, meaning a vision of what we are as human beings: our goal and calling. Christianity claims that our nature fulfils itself only in self-giving love. If this is true, it affects the goals and methods of economics. What kind of “sane economics” might emerge from such a transformation is the question that the project seeks to ask, if not to answer.

The Project is intended to lead to publications and an eventual international conference. Articles appear both in the journals of the Institute (*The Chesterton Review*, now in its 30th year, and *Second Spring*), as well as on the Project web site (www.secondspring.co.uk/economy). For more information, contact Stratford Caldecott, Chesterton Institute, 6a King St, Oxford OX2 6DF, UK (s_caldecott@yahoo.co.uk).