God and Money

Recently I stumbled across an essay written in 1999 by Harvey Cox, retired Professor of Divinity at Harvard, on "The Market as God." Cox reminded me that "at the apex of any theological system is its doctrine of God." So we use words like *Allah, God, Yahweh* to denote divinity; Adam Smith, I would argue, used the term "Invisible Hand" to reflect his understanding of God. Today *The Wall Street Journal* and the business section of our newspapers all seem to suggest that a new grand narrative now governs human history, *The Market*.

In the monotheistic faiths God is sometimes characterized as *omnipotent* - all powerful and capable of defining what is real. As *omniscient* - all knowing, reflecting a kind of photographic wisdom that is all-inclusive and comprehensive. As *omnipresent* - or existing everywhere and shaping or influencing everything. Until recently, Cox reminds us, the Market was never God as it existed amidst the restraint of other institutions and centers of value...or gods.

What sets the market god apart from the God of traditional religious faiths? Traditional religions stress the finite character of human beings and the limits that characterize any earthly enterprise. So, as you think about your financial situation both individually and as a faith-based institution don't base your economic decisions solely on the market. Take time to bend your knees and bow your heads to the God behind and beyond the market as a potential source of wisdom, hope and generosity.

-Insights of Dr. William Enright

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