

INSIGHTS ON FAITH & GIVING

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Mission

The Lake Institute on Faith & Giving exists to serve the public good by exploring the multiple connections between philanthropy and faith within the major religious traditions.

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God and Money

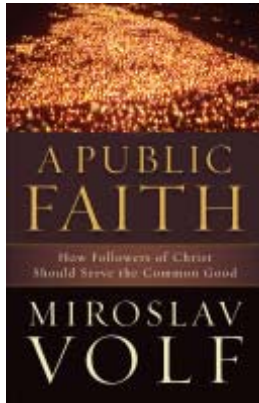
Recently I stumbled across an essay written in 1999 by Harvey Cox, retired Professor of Divinity at Harvard, on "*The Market as God*.[1] Cox reminded me that "at the apex of any theological system is its doctrine of God." So we use words like *Allah, God, Yahweh* to denote divinity; Adam Smith, I would 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

[1]Cox, H. (1999) *The Market as God*. *The Atlantic*, Iss. 3 p.18-24.



[A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good](#)

by Miroslav Volf

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2011.

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Hear more from Dr. William Enright at the upcoming 22nd Annual International Greenleaf Leadership Pre-Conference. The conference will include [*workshops*](#), [*featured speakers*](#), *networking opportunities*, *dinner*, and *more!*

"Servant Leadership in Philanthropy"

Wednesday, June 20, 2012 at 1:30 p.m., Marriott Downtown Indianapolis.

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