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March 26, 2009: The Economic Failure of Our Religions

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3/26/2009--In the book Hallowed Secularism, I suggested that one of the reasons that secularism is growing is that religion has failed the tests of modernity, including the acceptance of science, the role of women and the treatment of gays. I still think that is the case, but there is another feature that may be more important, the failure of Our Religions to address the need for a new worldwide economic system. Beset by cultural issues, especially those relating to sex, the religious voice on the current economic downturn has been muted. At the G-20 meeting next week, there will be talk of restructuring the world's economy, but it will be technical and political: the role of the dollar as reserve currency and the place of the United States. The real issue will not be addressed: Has this recession finally put an end to the exclusive capitalist model of development? Since socialism has never succeeded, is some third way possible? The Catholic Church used to talk seriously about that very topic, but now all we hear about is condoms. We can do better as a species than the dogged road of unsustainable consumption. But until Our Religions get serious about economics, there will not be a contrary voice at the world financial table.