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Hell and Capitalism



Posted by [Jordan J. Ballor](#)
on Monday, November 23, 2009

Contrary to the belief of some, the two realities referred to in the title of this post are not identical.

But [the discussion](#) around [a recent Boston Globe article](#) reminds me of [the saying](#) from Jerry Taylor, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, "Capitalism without the threat of bankruptcy is like Christianity without the

threat of hell. It doesn't work very well." It may well be that capitalism without the threat of hell doesn't work very well either.

The Globe piece refers to a bit of research that links belief about punishment in the afterlife with economic development. This is important, since "knowing exactly how and when God influences mammon could lead to smarter forms of economic development in emerging nations, and could add to our understanding of how culture shapes wealth and poverty."

It is promising that there is "a larger movement in economics, in which the field is looking beyond purely material explanations to a broader engagement with human culture, psychology, and even our angels and demons."

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