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Religion and Philanthropic
Giving and Volunteering:
Building Blocks for Civic Responsibility

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Abstract

This article systematizes the findings of previous studies of religion and philanthropic giving and volunteering, contributes to the theoretical understanding of the role religion plays in philanthropic giving and volunteering, and relates the conjunction of religion and philanthropic giving and volunteering to a polity marked by democratic norms. It does so by reviewing the findings of previously published studies and using existing datasets to examine key questions for which earlier studies have had inconsistent findings or that they have not studied. It examines the social network and religious belief theories for explaining the conjunction between religion and philanthropic giving and volunteering and concludes that both help to explain this conjunction but that social network theory is the stronger explanatory theory. It also documents a positive relationship among religiosity, giving and volunteering, and other marks of civic responsibility and concludes that people who are marked by high levels of religiosity come closer to the democratic norm of civic responsibility than do those with low levels of religiosity.

Civic responsibility plays a huge role in the success of a constitutional democracy such as that of the United States. By civic responsibility, I mean a combination of behaviors, skills, and virtues that are manifested by citizens who are active, involved, contributing members of their community and society. Included in this combination are an ingrained acceptance of a shared or communal accountability for the common, or public, good of one's community and society; giving to and volunteering for organizations that contribute to the welfare of one's community; possessing a sense of social trust; and practicing honesty in one's dealings with others. One key aspect of civic responsibility is responsible citizenship. The responsible citizen votes in elections; is informed about candidates, officeholders, and public issues; and in other ways contributes to the political process.

It is hard to exaggerate the importance of responsible citizenship—as well as the broader concept of civic responsibility—for a healthy, well-functioning democratic society. Many scholars, in many different ways, have made this point (Eberly 1995; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wilson 1985, 1993). Others have made the equally crucial point of the importance of religion in American society: “People gather for many reasons and in many places, but no voluntary or cultural institution in American society gathers more people more regularly than religious congregations.” (Chaves 2004: 1). Given the importance of religion in American life and the importance of the existence of a sense of civic responsibility for a healthy, democratic polity, the conjunction of religion and civic responsibility has been explored by many scholars (e.g., Brooks 2003, 2006; Nemeth and Luidens 2003; Regnerus, Smith, and Sikkink 1998; Wuthnow 1990). Nevertheless, a survey of previous studies in the area illuminates how many issues have not been studied.

This article focuses on the conjunction of religion and giving money and volunteering time to nonprofit, community-building associations. Giving and volunteering intersect with civic responsibility in at least two ways. First, they themselves constitute behavior in keeping with the ideal of civic responsibility. They involve contributing scarce resources (time or money) to help one's community and fellow human beings. Second, individuals who give and volunteer may also fulfill other facets of civic responsibility, including responsible citizenship, since all these facets involve looking beyond one's personal, immediate context and contributing to one's broader community. More specifically, this article has three goals: to systematize the many findings of previous studies of religion and philanthropic giving and volunteering, to contribute to the theoretical understanding of the role religion plays in philanthropic giving and volunteering, and to relate the conjunction of religion and philanthropic giving and volunteering to a polity marked by democratic norms.

FINDINGS AND THEORETICAL INSIGHTS FROM PREVIOUS STUDIES

Anyone who wants to understand the relationship between religion and giving and volunteering faces a buzzing confusion of previously published studies. The first task therefore is to systematize the findings and theoretical insights from the many studies of religion and philanthropic volunteering and giving. Doing so will clarify what we do and do not know and will help us to focus on key remaining questions. I have organized the differing conceptualizations of religion used by researchers in terms of belonging, behavior, and belief. Belonging refers simply to membership in a religious congregation. Behavior consists of any number of religiously oriented activities, such as attending religious services, engaging in prayer, and reading the Bible or other devotional literature. Belief denotes professed religious beliefs.

Convergent Findings

Giving to Charitable Organizations. The most consistently reported finding regarding religion and giving is that individuals who are religious are more likely to give money to charitable organizations and to give more money than those who are not religious. Among the religious, people who are more religious give and give more than those who are less religious. This pattern holds whether one considers financial gifts to all charitable organizations, only to religious organizations, or only to secular organizations. This also holds true whether religion is measured in terms of religious belonging (Hodgkinson, Weitzman, and Kirsch 1990: 103, 107; Nemeth and Luidens 2003) or in terms of religious behavior, particularly church attendance (Brooks 2003; Hodgkinson et al. 1996: 4-91, 4-93; Regnerus, Smith, and Sikkink 1998).

Volunteering for Charitable Organizations. Researchers have also found that giving and volunteering go together: People who give tend to be the same people who volunteer, and those who volunteer tend to be the same people who give (Hodgkinson, Weitzman, and Kirsch 1990: 102ff; Putnam 2000: 118). Therefore in considering volunteering, many of the patterns resemble those of giving to charities. But there are some variations.

Virtually all researchers agree that individuals who are members of religious congregations volunteer their time more frequently to charitable organizations and volunteer more hours than do those who are not members of religious congregations. While Hodgkinson and her associates (1990: 102) found that members of religious congregations volunteer more than nonmembers do, most studies of religion and volunteering look beyond belonging to a religious congregation to note attendance at religious worship services and its relationship

to volunteering. Here too there is near-unanimous agreement; as with giving, the behavior pattern of regular attendance at religious services is related to higher levels of volunteering (e.g., Brooks 2003; Campbell and Yonish 2003; Hodgkinson et al. 1996). Brooks (2003: 43) reports that regular church attendees “volunteer an average of 12 times per year, while secular people volunteer an average of 5.8 times,” a difference that persisted even after controlling for a number of demographic characteristics. Many other studies have produced similar findings (Campbell and Yonish 2003; Park and Smith 2000; Wuthnow 1999: 351; 2004: 103).

In summary, previous studies on the relationship between religion and philanthropic giving and volunteering are in agreement on the following points:

1. Members of religious congregations give and give larger amounts to charities, whether religious or secular, than do nonmembers.
2. Regular attendees at religious worship services give and give larger amounts to charities, whether religious or secular, than do those who rarely, if ever, attend religious worship services.
3. Members of religious congregations volunteer and volunteer more hours to charitable organizations than do nonmembers.
4. Regular attendees at worship services volunteer and volunteer more hours to charitable organizations than do those who rarely, if ever, attend religious services.

Divergent Findings

Despite the consistent confirmation of these four patterns, earlier studies have produced conflicting answers to three other questions: (1) Do more highly religious people volunteer for nonreligious, secular organizations at higher rates than do less religious people? (2) Why do religiously involved people tend to give and to volunteer more than irreligious people do? (3) Do people from certain religious traditions tend to give or volunteer more than do people from other religious traditions? The last two of these questions move us into explanatory issues and thus raise theoretical questions concerning why religious people tend to give and volunteer more than nonreligious people do.

The first area in which studies have obtained different results concerns the relationship between religious involvement and volunteering for secular charitable programs. Some findings are clear. People who are religious volunteer more than do those who are irreligious, and people who are religious—not surprisingly—volunteer more for religious organizations. Ambiguities arise, however, in regard to whether or not people who are religious volunteer more for secular organizations than do the irreligious. Here, things become complex. Brooks (2003: 43) found that 60 percent of highly religious people volunteered for

nonreligious causes, while only 39 percent of irreligious people did so, even when controlling for basic demographic variables. Campbell and Yonish (2003: 102) found that individuals who did not attend church averaged only 2.56 hours of volunteering a month for nonreligious causes, while those who attended church weekly averaged 5.33 hours of volunteering for nonreligious causes.

Park and Smith (2000), however, found that regular church attendance decreased volunteering for non-church-related causes, although they found that other forms of church activity increased volunteering for non-church-related causes. Lam (2002) also found that regular church attendance decreased volunteering for nonreligious causes, albeit to only a small degree. He and others theorized that churches to some degree compete for their members' time. Thus as a member spends time in church activities—as indicated by weekly church attendance—less time is available for that person to volunteer in extra-church causes. Nevertheless, the relationship between religious involvement and volunteering for nonreligious organizations remains murky.

The second question on which previous studies have reached divergent conclusions is crucial: Why do religiously involved people tend to give and to volunteer more than irreligious people do? Previous studies have raised two key theoretical explanations to account for this phenomenon. One explanation is the social network theory (Becker and Dhingra 2001: 316; Wilson and Janoski 1995: 138). It suggests that being deeply religious and the attendant involvement in a religious congregation mean that one is involved in social networks outside of one's immediate family and circle of friends. As one's experience extends into the broader community and as one is drawn into a wider social network—whether rooted in religious or secular involvements—one is stimulated to give and volunteer. These social networks work to increase giving and volunteering in two ways: by exposing individuals to broader needs in their communities and by increasing the likelihood that one will be exposed to efforts to recruit one to give or volunteer.

There is some empirical evidence in support of this theory. Putnam (2000: 120) found that members of religious congregations were more likely to give and to give more than nonmembers, as have others. But he also found that an even higher percentage of members of secular organizations gave to charities than did members of religious organizations and that they tended to give larger amounts. Putnam (2000: 119) also reports that in a comparison of people who attended church at least monthly with those who attended club meetings at least monthly, club attendees volunteered more than did church attendees. Moreover, these two types of involvements reinforced each other: People who attended both church and clubs volunteered the most, and those who attended neither church nor clubs volunteered the least.

Campbell and Yonish (2003: 103–105) compared people who attend church weekly with those who attend secular organizations weekly and found that both attendance patterns were significantly related to volunteering in both religious and nonreligious organizations. As one would expect, church attendance was more strongly related to religious volunteering, and attending secular organizations was more strongly related to nonreligious volunteering. Both types of attendance were significantly related to both. This led the authors to conclude that being part of a church community “does not have appreciably different effects from that found within secular voluntary associations, at least in regards to voluntarism” (Campbell and Yonish 2003: 105).

Some studies have focused on how church-based social networks act as recruitment grounds. Campbell and Yonish (2003: 95), for example, found that people who had volunteered for nonreligious causes most frequently cited church and family settings as the places where they had been recruited to volunteer, rather than in either work or membership organizations. Similarly, Park and Smith (2000: 282) found that respondents who were significantly more likely to volunteer reported having many Christian friends and relatives.

In short, social networks that enmesh religiously active individuals—whether by acting as a recruiting ground or by increasing one’s exposure to community needs—might explain their higher levels of giving and volunteering.

A second theory that seeks to explain increased volunteering and giving by religious people focuses on the content of their religious beliefs. Since Christianity, Judaism, and Islam all teach the responsibility of the believer to help those in need, it may be religious beliefs themselves that lead to increased giving and volunteering. This is the religious belief theory (Wuthnow 1990: 7–9).

There is also some empirical evidence in support of this theory. Hodgkinson and her colleagues found that individuals who had as a personal goal “making a strong commitment to a religious life” gave and volunteered in a much higher proportion than did those who had other types of personal goals (Hodgkinson, Weitzman, and Kirsch 1990: 109). Wuthnow (2004: 103) found that people who reported daily Bible reading, prayer, or meditation also volunteered for charity or social serviced programs to a greater extent than those who did not. For example, he found that 31 percent of people who read the Bible “nearly every day” volunteered, while only 13 percent of those who read the Bible less often had done so (Wuthnow 2004: 103). Another study found that “the devotional dimension of religiosity, measured by frequency of prayer and religious reading, does have a significant positive influence on voluntary association participation (Lam 2002: 420).” These studies suggest that private devotional activities—which do not involve people in social networks—might increase volunteering. Also supporting this view is the finding that respondents who indicated spiritual growth as being extremely or very important to them were more than twice as likely to

volunteer as were those who indicated that spiritual growth was less important (Wuthnow 2004: 103).

In short, there are studies that lend support to the religious belief theory by showing a relationship between religious beliefs and private religious behaviors and philanthropic giving and volunteering. Both the social network and the religious belief theories need to be subjected to further testing.

The third question that has produced inconsistent answers concerns whether or not people in certain religious traditions give and volunteer at higher levels than do those in other traditions. Studies that have examined this question compared giving and volunteering by evangelical Protestants, mainline Protestants, Catholics, and, in some cases, Jews and black Protestants. Resultant findings have been inconsistent—in fact, they have been all over the map. Some studies have found no relationship between denominational allegiance and levels of volunteering and giving. Becker and Dhingra (2001: 326) found “no effect of denomination or religious conservatism on volunteering.” Campbell and Yonish (2003: 98) found that once they took church attendance levels into account, the religious tradition of individuals had no predictive power for volunteering. Lam (2002: 415) concluded that his “study reveals no significant differences among liberal, moderate, and conservative Protestants in voluntary association involvement,” while Wilson and Janoski (1995) report almost no denominational differences in volunteering.

Other studies report differences in giving and volunteering by religious tradition, but their findings do not agree on which religious traditions give and volunteer more than other traditions. Wuthnow (1990: 345), for example, found that “mainline Protestants are more likely than evangelicals to say they are currently involved in charity or social service activities, to have donated time in the past year to a voluntary organization, and to have worked on a community service project.” Similarly, Schwadel (2005) found that members of conservative, or evangelical, Protestant congregations belonged to fewer nonchurch organizations than did members of other, less theologically conservative congregations, though it should be noted that Schwadel considered only membership in secular organizations, not levels of volunteering.

Yet other studies report differences in giving and volunteering by religious tradition but with the more theologically conservative, or evangelical, Protestants giving or volunteering at higher levels than other Christian traditions. In a recent study, Wuthnow (2004: 103) found that 26 percent of evangelical Protestants had volunteered in the previous year, while about 20 percent of mainline Protestants and Catholics had done so. Similarly, Regnerus, Smith, and Sikkink (1998: 9) concluded, “Among Christians, it appears that evangelical Protestants are mildly distinguishable from other Protestants and Catholics in a positive direction” in

their giving to antipoverty agencies. The relationship between philanthropic giving and volunteering and religious traditions remains a puzzle.

Unexplored Questions

Numerous studies of the relationship between religion and giving or volunteering have left several key issues largely unexplored. Here I outline four of them.

First, earlier studies have not made a clear distinction between giving or volunteering for one's local congregation in its core religious activities and rituals and giving or volunteering for one's own congregation or other religiously based organizations in programs that offer services to the broader community. The former includes activities such as giving to the church's budget, singing in a church choir, and ushering at religious services. The latter includes working at a congregation's food bank, tutoring children at a church-sponsored after-school program, and giving to a faith-based shelter for abused spouses. This is a crucial question. Whether or not the patterns earlier studies found in regard to religious giving and volunteering hold up when religious giving and volunteering is limited to religiously based programs and activities involving community service and help needs to be considered.

A second unexplored question deals with the relationship between individual religious beliefs and giving and volunteering. Previously published studies have not explored the impact religious beliefs have on giving and volunteering. Finding answers to this question will throw light on the unresolved question of the competing social network and religious belief theories.

A third largely unexplored question is the relationship between giving and volunteering and religiously motivated behavior that is private and personal (such as devotional Bible reading and private prayer) rather than public and social (such as attendance at worship services). Finding answers to this question will also throw light on the unresolved question of the competing social network and religious belief theories. If private religious behavior is related to increased giving and volunteering, support would be given to the religious belief theory over the social network theory, owing to the private, personal nature of such activities.

A fourth unanswered question asks what the relationship is between philanthropic giving and volunteering and other aspects of civic responsibility. Do people who give and volunteer exhibit more characteristics denoting a sense of civic responsibility? Are they more likely to vote and stay informed on the issues of the day? These questions ask whether giving and volunteering stand largely by themselves as actions we all admire. Or are they expressions of deeper underlying attitudes and values that take expression as other forms of behavior crucial to a democratic polity? Are they indeed building blocks of civic responsibility—and its subset, responsible citizenship?

BREAKING NEW GROUND: EXPLORING INCONSISTENT FINDINGS AND UNASKED QUESTIONS

This section makes use of several existing datasets to explore these questions on which findings either are in disagreement or have not been adequately addressed.

Does Social Network Theory or Religious Belief Theory Better Explain Giving and Volunteering?

As was noted earlier, previous studies have given some support to both the social network and the religious belief theories of why religious individuals are more likely to give and volunteer than less religious individuals are. Christianity clearly teaches the importance of giving to and helping those who are in need. Thus it is appropriate to hypothesize that if religious beliefs are driving increased giving and volunteering, Christians who report that their religious faith plays an important role in their lives, who accept the traditional teachings of Christianity, and who engage in private religious practices—that is, people who are especially religious in a traditionally Christian sense—will be especially prone to give to and volunteer for charitable organizations. According to this hypothesis, church attendance and its resulting social network are not the key factors in giving and volunteering, but church attendance is an indicator of high religiosity. It is the religiosity that drives the giving and volunteering. The alternative hypothesis—one for which we have seen that there is also support—is that religious beliefs are not the motivator for people who are more highly religious to give and volunteer more than the nonreligious. Instead, it is the broader perspectives and wider social networks resulting from one's religious involvements that are the key factors. According to this hypothesis, activity in nonreligious organizations is as likely to lead to giving and volunteering as is religious activity.

To shed light on these competing explanations, I made use of two national survey datasets that measured the variables of giving, volunteering, and religiosity (the 2000 Pew IV study of Religion and American Public Life and the 1998 General Social Survey).¹ Both datasets contain information on the respondents'

¹ I used a total of four national survey datasets in this article: the 1998 General Social Survey (www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/GSS1998.asp, principal investigators: James Allen Davis and Tom W. Smith); the 1996 God and Society in North America survey, using only the U.S. respondents (www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/QUEEN'S.asp, principal investigators: Angus Reid Group at Queen's University and the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals—John Green, James L. Guth, Lyman Kellstedt, and Corwin Smidt); the 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey of the Saguaro Seminar (www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/SCCBS.asp, principal investigator: Robert Putman); and the 2000 Pew IV survey (see Guth et al. 2002, especially footnote 12). The first three of these surveys were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives (www.thearda.com).

giving and volunteering for traditional social service programs for the needy, homeless, or elderly as well as for community recreational or arts and cultural programs. To focus on giving and volunteering that was of a clearly philanthropic nature, I excluded giving and volunteering for political causes and for religious congregations in their core religious practices and rituals. In what I report below, giving to or volunteering for “religious causes” includes only giving to or volunteering for church-sponsored or otherwise faith-based community service programs. The Pew survey on both giving and volunteering and the General Social Survey on giving carefully distinguished between giving or volunteering for religious community service programs and giving or volunteering to one’s church as church. However, in regard to volunteering, the General Social Survey asked only about volunteering for “religious and church-related activities.” Thus among its volunteers, there are some people who volunteered for their churches’ core religious activities. In regard to the Pew survey on both giving and volunteering and the General Social Survey on giving, I am confident that the “religious cause” category does not include giving or volunteering for one’s local congregation in its core religious practices and rituals.

In all of the following analyses, I considered a respondent as having given or volunteered if the person reported giving or volunteering at all. I did not take into account the amount of money given or the amount of time volunteered.

First, I considered the question of whether or not people for whom religion has a high salience in their lives, who hold to traditional Christian beliefs, and who engage in private devotional activities apart from public religious services give and volunteer more than do those with opposite characteristics. I derived the salience measure from one to four items that asked respondents about the importance of religion in their lives and the extent to which they look to religion or God for guidance and help. The measure of traditional beliefs consisted of four to six items that asked respondents about such beliefs as the divinity of Jesus, the inspiration of the Bible, the existence of heaven, and whether all religions are equally good and true. The measure of private devotional activities consisted of two to four items that asked respondents about their activities in praying and Bible reading outside formal religious services.

The basic results appear in Tables 1 and 2. In regard to giving (Table 1), both surveys reveal that a significantly higher percentage of people marked by high levels of religiosity—measured by religious salience, traditional religious beliefs, and private religious practices—were more likely to give to religiously sponsored community causes than were those who exhibited low levels of religiosity. In terms of giving to nonreligious community causes, people who scored high and low in religiosity were giving at roughly the same level. Among the Pew respondents, those who were low in religious salience and private religious practices were actually significantly more likely to give than those who were high

in those religious measures. The General Social Survey respondents produced the opposite result in regard to private religious practices: Those who ranked high were significantly more likely to give to nonreligious causes. Clearly, however, the more religious individuals were giving to nonreligious community service programs at much higher rates than those at which less religious individuals were giving to religious community service programs.

Table 1: Percent of Respondents Giving to Religious and Nonreligious Causes by Religious Salience, Level of Traditional Christian Beliefs, and Level of Private Religious Practices

	<i>Pew IV</i>	<i>GSS 1998</i>
<i>Gave to religious causes:^a</i>		
High religious salience	56% ^b	49% ^b
Low religious salience	12% ^b	17% ^b
<i>Gave to nonreligious causes:</i>		
High religious salience	53% ^c	60%
Low religious salience	59% ^c	57%
<i>Gave to religious causes:^a</i>		
High traditional beliefs	54% ^b	48% ^b
Low traditional beliefs	23% ^b	24% ^b
<i>Gave to nonreligious causes:</i>		
High traditional beliefs	54%	65%
Low traditional beliefs	62%	63%
<i>Gave to religious causes:^a</i>		
High private practices	62% ^b	48% ^b
Low private practices	17% ^b	20% ^b
<i>Gave to nonreligious causes:</i>		
High private practices	52% ^c	63% ^c
Low private practices	58% ^c	54% ^c

Note: The table presents only the findings for those who scored high or low in the three measures of religiosity; those falling into the medium category are not presented here. In almost all cases, they fell in between the high and low categories in giving.

^aFor the Pew IV survey, religious causes consist only of community service programs with a religious nature or sponsorship. For the 1998 General Social Survey, religious causes consist of giving to “religious organizations, programs or causes” other than the respondent’s own congregation.

^bSignificant at the .001 level.

^cSignificant at the .01 level.

In regard to volunteering (Table 2), much the same pattern held. Respondents who scored high in religiosity—whether in terms of religious salience, traditional beliefs, or private religious practices—volunteered in significantly higher proportions for religious programs than did those who scored low in religiosity.

As with giving, the pattern in volunteering for nonreligious causes was mixed. The low-religiosity Pew respondents tended to volunteer for nonreligious causes in higher proportions than did the high-religiosity respondents, significantly so in terms of religious salience and traditional beliefs. But the respondents from the General Social Survey who ranked high in religious salience or private religious practices volunteered at significantly higher levels than did those ranking low. As with giving, the religious are much more likely to volunteer for nonreligious causes, than are the less religious to volunteer for religious causes.

Table 2: Percent of Respondents Volunteering, by Religious Salience, Level of Traditional Christian Beliefs, and Level of Private Religious Practices

	<i>Pew IV</i>	<i>GSS 1998</i>
<i>Volunteered for religious causes:^a</i>		
High religious salience	52% ^b	62% ^b
Low religious salience	13% ^b	13% ^b
<i>Volunteered for nonreligious causes:</i>		
High religious salience	56% ^b	58% ^b
Low religious salience	65% ^b	43% ^b
<i>Volunteered for religious causes:^a</i>		
High traditional beliefs	48% ^b	53% ^b
Low traditional beliefs	20% ^b	18% ^b
<i>Volunteered for nonreligious causes:</i>		
High traditional beliefs	59% ^c	53%
Low traditional beliefs	71% ^c	52%
<i>Volunteered for religious causes:^a</i>		
High private practices	59% ^b	64% ^b
Low private practices	17% ^b	15% ^b
<i>Volunteered for nonreligious causes:</i>		
High private practices	57%	63% ^b
Low private practices	61%	41% ^b

Note: The table presents only the findings for those who scored high or low in the three measures of religiosity; those falling into the medium category are not presented here. In almost all cases, they fell in between the high and low categories in volunteering.

^aFor the Pew IV survey, religious causes consist only of community service programs with a religious nature or sponsorship. For the 1998 General Social Survey, religious causes consist of giving to “religious organizations, programs or causes” other than the respondent’s own congregation.

^bSignificant at the .001 level.

^cSignificant at the .01 level.

In summary, earlier studies found that members of religious congregations and those who attend church regularly are more likely to give and to volunteer than are those who are not members or do not attend regularly, except in regard to volunteering for secular causes, for which the evidence has been mixed. I found

that people for whom religion is highly salient in their lives, who hold more traditional Christian beliefs, and who engage in private religious practices also give and volunteer for religiously sponsored community-serving causes more than do those for whom religion is not salient, hold less traditional beliefs, and tend not to engage in private religious practices. In other words, when one focuses on religious programs of a community-serving nature (as distinct from core religious activities and rituals) and when one goes beyond attendance at religious services to take into account other measures of religiosity, the pattern holds by which the more religious giving and volunteering for religious causes at a much higher rate than do the less religious.

The differences in the case of giving to and volunteering for secularly sponsored community-serving causes were mixed, especially between the two different surveys. Clarifying this relationship will have to await further research.

However, this does not yet deal with the question of whether the social network theory or the religious belief theory better explains the patterns found in Tables 1 and 2. Some insight into this question can be gained by introducing church attendance into the findings of Tables 1 and 2. I divided the respondents in each of the cells into those who attended church at least weekly and those who attended less than monthly. Doing so revealed, first, that church attendance is more strongly related to giving and volunteering than is each of the three measures of religiosity reported in Tables 1 and 2. Respondents who were high in church attendance and low in one of the other three measures of religiosity were more likely to give or volunteer than were those who were low in church attendance and high in one of the other measures of religiosity. There were twenty-four possible combinations: the three measures of religiosity, times two for giving or volunteering, times two for religious or nonreligious causes, times two for the two studies. In five of these twenty-four combinations, the differences between the high and low church attendees were very small: Only one to five percentage points separated them. In the other nineteen combinations, there were differences of over five percentage points in giving or volunteering between the high and low attendees. And in fourteen of these, respondents who were high on church attendance and low on one of the other measures of religiosity were more likely to give or volunteer than were those who were low on church attendance and high in one of the other measures of religiosity. In only five cases did a higher percentage of respondents who were high one of the measures of religiosity and low on church attendance give or volunteer at a higher rate than did those who were high on church attendance and low on one of the other religiosity measures.

A second pattern revealed by this analysis is that in most cases, those who were high on both church attendance and one of the other three measures of religiosity gave or volunteered at higher levels than did those who ranked high only on church attendance or only on one of the other three religiosity measures.

Respondents who ranked low on both church attendance and one of the other three measures of religiosity gave or volunteered at lower levels than did those who ranked low only on church attendance or one of the other three measures of religiosity.

The conclusion I reach from these two patterns is that church attendance—with its associated integration into a social network—and individuals' more personal, internalized religious beliefs both motivate giving and volunteering. I found support for both the social network and the religious belief theories, but the former proved to be a stronger factor than the latter.

Is Religious Tradition Related to Giving and Volunteering?

I noted earlier that previous studies reported wildly varying results on the question of whether or not the adherents of certain religious traditions give or volunteer in higher proportions than do the adherents of other religious traditions. The patterns that I uncovered by the use of two different datasets shed additional light on this question, although they are not fully consistent.

In regard to giving, varying results emerged according to whether the giving was for a religious cause or a secular cause. (Recall that I excluded religious congregations in their worship and religious rituals from religiously based causes. The term *religiously based causes* refers to social or community services that are sponsored by religious bodies or that have a religious component.) Table 3 shows that in both surveys, the irreligious, or secular, respondents were the least likely to give to religiously based community service programs. In the columns labeled "All," only about 15 percent of the secular respondents reported doing so, while 30–50 percent of the five religious traditions did so. The mainline Protestants were the most likely to give, followed very closely by the evangelical and black Protestants. Catholics and Jews were somewhat less likely to give. These differences were statistically significant.

For the four Christian traditions, I also looked at giving patterns divided by respondents who attended religious services weekly or more and those who attended less than monthly. In both surveys and all four religious traditions, respondents who attended religious services regularly were more likely to give than those who did not. This is not surprising; it is in line with other of my findings and those of earlier studies.

Table 3: Percent of Respondents Giving to Religious Causes, by Religious Tradition and Level of Attendance at Religious Services

	Pew IV	GSS 1988
<i>Evangelical</i>		
<i>High Attendance</i>	59% ^b	51% ^b
<i>Low Attendance</i>	25% ^b	31% ^b
<i>All</i>	46%^a	40%^a
<i>Mainline Protestant</i>		
<i>High Attendance</i>	72% ^b	63% ^b
<i>Low Attendance</i>	25% ^b	30% ^b
<i>All</i>	48%^a	44%^a
<i>Black Protestant</i>		
<i>High Attendance</i>	65% ^b	32%
<i>Low Attendance</i>	10% ^b	27%
<i>All</i>	48%^a	31%^a
<i>Catholic</i>		
<i>High Attendance</i>	53% ^b	50% ^b
<i>Low Attendance</i>	24% ^b	24% ^b
<i>All</i>	38%^a	34%^a
<i>Jewish</i>		
<i>All</i>	29%^a	50%^a
<i>Secular</i>		
<i>All</i>	15%^a	16%^a

Note: For both surveys, religious causes were determined in the same way as for Table 1. The table presents only the findings for those who scored high or low in attendance at religious services; those falling into the medium category are not presented here. Those who reported attending services weekly or more were put in the high-attendance category, and those who reported attending services less than monthly were put into the low-attendance category. The distinction among the six religious traditions was made on a combination of self-reported denominational affiliation (or lack of any affiliation) and reported religious beliefs. All Jewish and secular respondents were considered together, owing to the very small numbers in the high-attendance category.

^aSignificant at the .001 level, based on all of the adherents of the six religious traditions without regard to church attendance.

^bSignificant at the .001 level, based on the attendance levels of each religious tradition taken separately.

The differences between high and low church attendees *within* a religious tradition tended to be greater than the differences *among* the religious traditions. The differences were statistically significant, except in the case of black Protestants in the General Social Survey. This supports the social network theory for the conjunction of religiosity and philanthropic giving. Church attendance and its associated integration into a social network had a stronger influence than did the differing beliefs emphasized by the various religious traditions.

Table 4 reports giving to nonreligious, or secular, community service programs. Here, the patterns are not consistent. The General Social Survey secular respondents were less likely to give than were the respondents from any of the five religious traditions, while the Pew secular respondents gave at higher rate than the respondents from three of the five religious traditions. Adding to the puzzle, in both cases, the differences were statistically significant. In both surveys, the Jews and mainline Protestants were the most likely to give to nonreligious programs. The evangelicals, black Protestants, and Catholics were less likely to give than were the mainline Protestants and Jews. In short, the differences in giving to religious causes between the high and low attendees largely disappeared in regard to nonreligious causes.

Table 4: Percent of Respondents Giving to Nonreligious Causes, by Religious Tradition and Level of Attendance at Religious Services

	Pew IV	GSS 1988
<i>Evangelical</i>		
<i>High Attendance</i>	51% ^c	70%
<i>Low Attendance</i>	55% ^c	63%
<i>All</i>	54%^a	66%^a
<i>Mainline Protestant</i>		
<i>High Attendance</i>	59%	74%
<i>Low Attendance</i>	61%	71%
<i>All</i>	60%^a	74%^a
<i>Black Protestant</i>		
<i>High Attendance</i>	48%	46%
<i>Low Attendance</i>	48%	44%
<i>All</i>	49%^a	50%^a
<i>Catholic</i>		
<i>High Attendance</i>	54%	77% ^b
<i>Low Attendance</i>	57%	51%
<i>All</i>	56%^a	60%^a
<i>Jewish</i>		
<i>All</i>	65%^a	85%^a
<i>Secular</i>		
<i>All</i>	59%^a	47%^a

Note: For both surveys, religious causes were determined in the same way as they were for Table 1. High and low church attendance and the various religious traditions were determined in the same way as they were in Table 3.

^aSignificant at the .001 level, based on all of the adherents of the six religious traditions without regard to church attendance.

^bSignificant at the .001 level based on attendance levels of each religious tradition taken separately.

^cSignificant at the .05 level based on attendance levels of each religious tradition taken separately.

Table 5: Percent of Respondents Volunteering for Religious Causes, by Religious Tradition and Level of Attendance at Religious Services

	Pew IV	GSS 1988
<i>Evangelical</i>		
<i>High Attendance</i>	54% ^b	81% ^b
<i>Low Attendance</i>	25% ^b	12% ^b
<i>All</i>	42%^a	49%^a
<i>Mainline Protestant</i>		
<i>High Attendance</i>	67% ^b	84% ^b
<i>Low Attendance</i>	23% ^b	11% ^b
<i>All</i>	43%^a	38%^a
<i>Black Protestant</i>		
<i>High Attendance</i>	65% ^b	82% ^b
<i>Low Attendance</i>	21% ^b	33% ^b
<i>All</i>	50%^a	57%^a
<i>Catholic</i>		
<i>High Attendance</i>	42% ^b	53% ^b
<i>Low Attendance</i>	20% ^b	9% ^b
<i>All</i>	31%^a	28%^a
<i>Jewish</i>		
<i>All</i>	28%^a	45%^a
<i>Secular</i>		
<i>All</i>	17%^a	9%^a

Note: For both surveys, religious causes were determined in the same way as they were in Table 1. High and low church attendance and the various religious traditions were determined in the same way as they were in Table 3.

^aSignificant at the .001 level, based on all of the adherents of the six religious traditions without regard to church attendance.

^bSignificant at the .001 level, based on the attendance levels of each religious tradition taken separately.

Overall, these findings in regard to giving and religious traditions demonstrate, first, the motivating power of religion, as mentioned elsewhere in this article. People who are affiliated with a religious tradition are, as a rule, more likely to give than those who are not, a pattern that was clear in the case of religiously based services. Second, the mainline Protestants were among those most likely to give, whether to a religious or to a secular cause, although the differences between them and the other religious traditions were usually small. By a number of measures, evangelical Protestants were almost as likely to give, despite their reputation for being inward looking and concerned with individual salvation, not social causes. This may be due to evangelicals being less inward looking than is sometimes claimed or to the power of church attendance and the resulting integration into a social network. This latter conclusion is supported by

the fact, noted earlier, than the differences in giving were greater between high and low attendees within a tradition than among the different traditions.

Tables 5 and 6 report my findings in regard to volunteering by religious tradition and level of church attendance. In regard to volunteering for religious causes (Table 5), black Protestants tended to volunteer the most, followed closely by mainline Protestants and evangelicals. In the General Social Survey, Jews also ranked high in volunteering. As with giving, the secularists had the lowest levels of volunteering. Most striking, however, is the size of the differences between the high church attendees and the low attendees. People who attended church weekly or more volunteered at a much higher rate than did those who rarely attended. This was the case within all four religious traditions to an even greater extent than is seen in giving to religious causes. This pattern adds support to the social network theory.

Table 6: Percent of Respondents Volunteering for Nonreligious Causes, by Religious Tradition and Level of Attendance at Religious Services

	Pew IV	GSS 1988	God and Society
<i>Evangelical</i>			
<i>High Attendance</i>	54%	63% ^b	52% ^b
<i>Low Attendance</i>	56%	32% ^b	25% ^b
<i>All</i>	56%^a	51%^a	43%
<i>Mainline Protestant</i>			
<i>High Attendance</i>	68%	73% ^b	60% ^b
<i>Low Attendance</i>	65%	43% ^b	34% ^b
<i>All</i>	66%^a	56%^a	48%
<i>Black Protestant</i>			
<i>High Attendance</i>	56%	68%	49% ^c
<i>Low Attendance</i>	59%	59%	23% ^c
<i>All</i>	57%^a	63%^a	36%
<i>Catholic</i>			
<i>High Attendance</i>	56%	54% ^d	51% ^b
<i>Low Attendance</i>	61%	38% ^d	29% ^b
<i>All</i>	60%^a	44%^a	43%
<i>Jewish</i>			
<i>All</i>	57%^a	55%^a	46%
<i>Secular</i>			
<i>All</i>	60%^a	44%^a	40%

Note: High and low church attendance and the various religious traditions were determined in the same way as they were in Table 3.

^aSignificant at the .001 level, based on all of the adherents of the six religious traditions without regard to church attendance.

^bSignificant at .001 level, based on attendance levels of each religious tradition taken separately.

^cSignificant at the .01 level, based on attendance levels of each religious tradition taken separately.

^dSignificant at the .05 level, based on attendance levels of each religious tradition taken separately.

In the case of volunteering for nonreligious community causes, I was able to use, in addition to the Pew survey and the General Social Survey, data from the 1996 God and Society in North America survey, since it also clearly asked about volunteering for nonreligious causes. Table 6 shows there were no clear patterns by religious tradition. Although there were significant differences between the Pew survey and the General Social Survey, no one tradition was consistently higher or lower in such volunteering. Differences persisted, however, between those who attended church regularly and those who did not in the General Social Survey and the God and Society survey. In both surveys, respondents who attended regularly were more likely to volunteer for secular causes than those who did not attend regularly. This again demonstrates the motivating power of religion, even when it comes to volunteering for secular programs. It also adds support to the social network theory.

Relating Giving and Volunteering to Other Measures of Civic Responsibility

Giving to or volunteering for organizations that actively serve community needs is one way for people to fulfill the norms of civic responsibility. But giving and volunteering—and their links to religiosity—may indicate a more general sense of civic responsibility. Thus giving and volunteering may have significance beyond their immediate effect. In this section, I explore the relationship between philanthropic giving and volunteering and several other measures of civic responsibility.

One key aspect of civic responsibility that was outlined at the beginning of this article is responsible citizenship, which includes such traits as voting in elections and being informed on public issues. I used four measures to identify people who fulfill the ideal of responsible citizenship: voting, political activities other than voting, regular newspaper reading, and knowing one's U.S. Senators. I found that respondents who had given or volunteered ranked higher in these four measures of active citizenship than did those who had not given or volunteered. In regard to voting, Table 7 shows that the respondents who gave or volunteered were also more likely to have voted. In both surveys used in the analysis, respondents who gave or volunteered—whether for a religious or a secular cause—were more likely to vote than were those who had not given or volunteered. There were no exceptions, and the differences were clear and significant, not small or marginal.

Table 7: Percentages of Respondents Voting and Not Voting, by Giving and Volunteering to Religious and Nonreligious Causes

	General Social Survey, 1998 ^a			Pew IV ^b		
	<i>Percent Voting</i>	<i>Percent Not Voting</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent Voting</i>	<i>Percent Not Voting</i>	<i>N</i>
If gave, religious causes:						
<i>Yes</i>	71% ^c	16% ^c	452	49% ^c	24% ^c	1248
<i>No</i>	60% ^c	28% ^c	783	36% ^c	37% ^c	2015
If gave, nonreligious causes:						
<i>Yes</i>	70% ^c	17% ^c	787	47% ^c	25% ^c	1832
<i>No</i>	55% ^c	34% ^c	448	33% ^c	41% ^c	1430
If volunteered, religious causes:						
<i>Yes</i>	73% ^c	17% ^c	386	45% ^c	27% ^c	1170
<i>No</i>	59% ^c	27% ^c	658	38% ^c	34% ^c	2092
If volunteered, nonreligious causes:						
<i>Yes</i>	73% ^c	17% ^c	531	45% ^c	28% ^c	1942
<i>No</i>	56% ^c	30% ^c	507	38% ^c	34% ^c	1338

^aPercent voting were those who reported that they had voted in both the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections; percent not voting were those who reported that they had voted in neither of these elections. Those who had voted in one election but not the other were excluded from this analysis.

^bPercent voting were those who reported they had voted in both the 1996 presidential election and the 1998 congressional election; percent not voting were those who reported they had voted in neither of these elections. Those who had voted in one election but not the other were excluded from this analysis.

^cSignificant at the .001 level.

In studying political activities other than voting, I was able to use, in addition to the Pew survey and the God and Society survey, data from the 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey of the Saguaro Seminar. Table 8 shows that on the basis of a number of possible political activities other than voting—attending political meetings, contacting public officials, and working or contributing to a party or candidate—respondents who had given or volunteered were much more likely to be politically involved than were those who had not given or volunteered. This pattern was significant and consistent across the three studies for respondents who had given or volunteered for either a religious or nonreligious cause.

Table 8: Percentages of Respondents with High and Low Political Involvement, by Giving to and Volunteering for Religious and Nonreligious Causes

	Pew IV			Saguaro			God and Society		
	Percent High	Percent Low	N	Percent High	Percent Low	N	Percent High	Percent Low	N
If gave, religious causes:									
Yes	16% ^a	45% ^a	1440	32% ^a	37% ^a	1800	NA	NA	NA
No	10% ^a	56% ^a	2273	18% ^a	56% ^a	738	NA	NA	NA
If gave, nonreligious causes:									
Yes	16% ^a	44% ^a	2083	36% ^a	32% ^a	1690	NA	NA	NA
No	8% ^a	61% ^a	1628	14% ^a	62% ^a	934	NA	NA	NA
If volunteered, religious causes:									
Yes	15% ^a	47% ^a	1328	NA	NA	NA	59% ^a	12% ^a	817
No	11% ^a	54% ^a	2385	NA	NA	NA	33% ^a	37% ^a	2193
If volunteered, nonreligious causes:									
Yes	15% ^a	45% ^a	2218	44% ^a	21% ^a	1467	62% ^a	12% ^a	1303
No	8% ^a	61% ^a	1514	13% ^a	54% ^a	180	23% ^a	45% ^a	1707

Note: The levels of political activity were based on a series of questions (five in the case of Pew IV and four in the other two studies) the three studies asked concerning whether or not the respondents had engaged in such political activities as attending a political or civic meeting, contacting a political official, working for a candidate or party, or participating in a demonstration or protest. Those who had taken part in none of these were put in the “low” category, and those who had taken part in two or more of these were put in the “high” category (or in three or more in the case of Pew IV, since it had a possibility of five activities). It should be noted that the Saguaro survey in terms of giving to religious causes and the God and Society survey in terms of volunteering for religious causes did not clearly distinguish between community-serving religious causes and core religious activities and rituals.

^aSignificant at the .001 level.

In regard to newspaper reading, the General Social Survey found that of respondents who had given to a religious cause, 51 percent reported reading a newspaper on a daily basis, and only 13 percent reported reading a newspaper less than once a week, while only 39 percent of those who had not given reported reading a newspaper daily, and 24 percent reported reading one less than once a week. Similarly, of respondents who had given to nonreligious causes, 48 percent reported reading a newspaper daily, and 15 percent reported reading a newspaper less than weekly. In contrast, of the nongivers, 35 percent reported reading a

newspaper daily, and 28 percent reported less than weekly reading. I found similar patterns in regard to volunteering.

In regard to political knowledge, the Saguaro survey asked the respondents to name their two U.S. Senators. I found that respondents who had given to or volunteered for nonreligious community causes were more likely to know the names of their Senators than were those who had not given. Of respondents who had given to nonreligious causes, 47 percent could name one or both of their Senators, and 53 could name neither; of those who had not given to nonreligious causes, only 26 percent could name one or both of their Senators, and 74 could name neither. Of respondents who had volunteered for a nonreligious cause, 48 percent knew the names of one or both of their Senators, and 52 percent knew neither, while 38 percent of those who had not volunteered knew one or both Senators' names, and 62 percent knew neither. However, when it came to giving for religious causes, the differences were small or inconsistent.

This leaves the question of whether or not the respondents who were givers or volunteers *and* who were marked by other characteristics of responsible citizenship also tended to be more religious than did those who were not givers or volunteers or who were not marked by other characteristics of responsible citizenship. Table 9, based on data from the Pew survey, addresses this question. It considers both voting and the other marks of political involvement on which Table 8 is based. Voting, other forms of political involvement, philanthropic giving and volunteering, and religiosity as measured by church attendance all tend to go together. If we look at giving first, the highest levels of voting and other forms of political involvement were among those respondents who had given *and* attended church on a weekly basis. The lowest levels of voting and other forms of political involvement were found among those respondents who had not given and who attended church less than monthly. The pattern was the same in the case of volunteering, except that those respondents who had failed to volunteer for any religious cause were not the lowest in voting and other forms of political involvement (and they tied with those who were low in church attendance and had volunteered).

In short, individuals who fulfill the marks of civic responsibility by giving and volunteering for causes that meet community needs also tend to meet the civic responsibility norms for responsible citizenship by voting, taking part in the political process, reading newspapers, and knowing the names of their Senators. Also, there is evidence indicating that among people who give and volunteer, those who are regular church attendees are the most likely to meet the norms of responsible citizenship.

Table 9: Political Involvement, by Church Attendance and Whether or Not Respondents Had Given or Volunteered to Religious and Nonreligious Causes (percent voting or ranking high in political involvement, Pew IV data)

	Percent with a High Level of Voting ^a		Percent with a High Level of Political Involvement ^b	
	<i>High Church Attendance</i>	<i>Low Church Attendance</i>	<i>High Church Attendance</i>	<i>Low Church Attendance</i>
If gave, religious causes:				
<i>Yes</i>	54% (N = 522)	35% (N = 265)	16% (N = 918)	13% (N = 300)
<i>No</i>	39% (N = 522)	33% (N = 1125)	10% (N = 610)	9% (N = 1254)
If gave, nonreligious causes:				
<i>Yes</i>	55% (N = 680)	41% (N = 581)	18% (N = 801)	13% (N = 905)
<i>No</i>	40% (N = 625)	24% (N = 807)	9% (N = 725)	6% (N = 650)
If volunteered, religious causes:				
<i>Yes</i>	51% (N = 715)	33% (N = 271)	16% (N = 830)	10% (N = 300)
<i>No</i>	44% (N = 591)	34% (N = 1118)	11% (N = 698)	10% (N = 1254)
If volunteered, nonreligious causes:				
<i>Yes</i>	53% (N = 730)	38% (N = 846)	19% (N = 872)	12% (N = 945)
<i>No</i>	42% (N = 580)	28% (N = 553)	8% (N = 662)	7% (N = 619)

^aThe percentages are the percent of respondents who reported having voted in both the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections out of the total number of high or low church attendees who had reported either giving or volunteering or not doing so.

^bThe percentages are the percent of the respondents who reported having taken part in three or more political activities besides voting out of the total number of high or low church attendees who had reported either giving or volunteering or not doing so.

SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS

This study yields seven key results concerning civic responsibility and religion:

1. There is a relationship between religiosity and giving to and volunteering for religious causes, even when religious congregations in their core religious services and rituals are eliminated.
2. There is a relationship between giving to and volunteering for religiously based, community-serving causes and marks of religiosity other than church attendance (the measure on which earlier studies focused). People who rank high in religious salience, in traditional religious beliefs, and in private religious practices were found to give and volunteer more for religiously based community-service causes than did their counterparts who ranked low on those variables.
3. There is no clear relationship between giving to and volunteering for secular community causes and the marks of religiosity noted in point 2.
4. Church attendance and the associated integration into a social network and internalized religious beliefs are both related to giving and volunteering, but the former is more strongly related than is the latter.
5. Adherents of certain religious traditions tend to give or volunteer at higher levels than do those of other traditions. However, the patterns vary for giving or volunteering and in relation to religiously or secularly based programs. Adherents of all of the five religious traditions studied gave to and volunteered for religiously based causes more than did the secular respondents. The surveys varied on whether or not the adherents of the five religious traditions give to or volunteered for nonreligious causes more than the secular respondents did. The surveys agree that religious respondents gave to and volunteered for nonreligious causes at higher levels than those at which nonreligious respondents gave to or volunteered for religious causes.
6. Among the religious traditions, mainline Protestants had a slight tendency to rank higher in giving and volunteering than did the adherents of the four other religious traditions. However, evangelical Protestants, black Protestants, and Jews sometimes ranked almost as high as or higher than mainline Protestants, depending on whether giving or volunteering was being considered and on whether the giving or volunteering was for a religiously based or a secularly based cause.
7. Philanthropic giving and volunteering, religiosity, and the marks of civic responsibility I have termed *responsible citizenship* are all related. Givers and volunteers rank higher in voting, other political activities, newspaper reading, and political knowledge. Among people who give and volunteer, a higher level of religiosity is related to increased voting and other political involvements.

These findings reveal that religiously committed people who give and volunteer are also active citizens. As such, they may constitute the chief exemplars of civic responsibility. Those who, by several measures, are religiously active and committed are the citizens who are likeliest to give to and volunteer for religiously based community causes. Moreover, they give and volunteer to about the same extent as the irreligious respondents do to secularly based community causes. In addition, the highly religious respondents were much more likely to give to or volunteer for secularly based causes than the secular respondents were to support religiously based community causes. Giving and volunteering are related to other aspects of civic responsibility, such as being politically involved and aware. This is especially true of people who give and volunteer and are also religiously involved.

There is an irony here. Emerging from the Enlightenment era—with its reaction against the religious wars of Europe—was the idea that religion was dangerous for democracy. Even today, the Supreme Court regularly warns against “religious divisiveness.” In 2002, Justice Stephen Breyer wrote of the need “for protecting the Nation’s social fabric from religious conflict” (2002: 717). Chief Justice Warren Burger once declared that “political division along religious lines was one of the principal evils against which the First Amendment was intended to protect” (1971: 622). Ted Jelen and Clyde Wilcox report that some 75 percent of people included in an elite survey believe that evangelicals and the religious right are a threat to democracy (1995: 46).

Since deeply religious people believe that they know the truth, it is often argued, their minds will be closed to discussion and accommodation. It is thus presumed that rational secularists are the natural and best carriers of the democratic tradition. Being unfettered by a faith-based religious tradition and otherworldly values and aspirations, they presumably are inclined toward making this world a better place—and toward doing so in a moderate, rational, open manner. Thus they ought to be the backbone of a free, democratic society.

This study seriously challenges such conventional wisdom. In fact, it is the religious among us, not the irreligious, who are more likely to give to and volunteer for community causes. And people who give and volunteer tend to vote and in other ways to be politically informed and active. Even evangelical Protestants—whose growing influence some social critics characterize as a threat to normal democratic processes—are more likely to give and volunteer than are the irreligious. As a rule, religionists live out more facets of civic responsibility than do the irreligious.

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