

BOSTON COLLEGE
SOCIAL WELFARE
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

"Wealth and the Spritual Secret of Money"

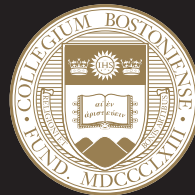
Paul G Schervish

Published in

*Faith and Philanthropy in America: Exploring the
Role of Religion in America's Voluntary Sector*

edited by Robert Wuthnow and
Virginia A. Hodgkinson

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990, pp. 63-90





*Robert Wuthnow
Virginia A. Hodgkinson
and Associates*



Faith and Philanthropy
in America

*Exploring the Role
of Religion
in America's Voluntary Sector*



Jossey-Bass Publishers
San Francisco • Oxford • 1990

Smith, T. L. *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War*. New York: Harper & Row, 1957.

Walker, S. H. "Privately Supported Social Welfare Work." In *Recent Social Trends in the United States*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933, pp. 1168-1223.

Warner, A. G. *American Charities*. New York: Crowell, 1908.

Weiss, J. A. "Substance versus Symbol in Administrative Reform: The Case of Human Services Coordination." *Policy Analysis*, 1981, 7, 21-45.

Chapter 4



Paul G. Schervish

Wealth and the Spiritual Secret of Money

They [the wealthy] get to the point where their money is like their God. They've got to hoard it.

— Beverly Geiger (Miami)

I reject the notion that living at the lowest level is God's intended solution. In many instances in life, we are where we are because it was part of God's plan.

— Donald Mason (Atlanta)

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

— Matthew 6:19-21

An ever-expanding literature exhorts or documents the connection between religion and philanthropy, yet the *process* by which religion actually induces charitable outcomes remains largely unexamined.¹ In this chapter, I seek to take a modest first step in this direction. My purpose is to take a fresh look at the fundamental meaning of wealth and religion and to explore how and under what conditions religion opens the wealthy to a more

generous and encompassing care for others.* What is distinctive about the wealthy and their approach to the world? What is religion as a particular type of normative consciousness, and just what is it about religion—and certain nontheistic spiritualities—that helps to mobilize attention to the needs of others? In addressing these questions, I draw on the findings from the recently completed Study on Wealth and Philanthropy, in which intensive interviews were conducted with 130 millionaires distributed over twelve metropolitan areas.²

The leading question is how in fact religion contributes to translating the worldly empowerment of wealth into a strategic practice of philanthropy. The concomitance of religious and philanthropic commitment has been documented by a number of important surveys studying the activities of individuals (Hodgkinson and Weitzman, 1988) and religious congregations (Hodgkinson, Weitzman, and Kirsch, 1988). What remains to be explained is the inner logic of this connection, a concern, I am pleased to note, that is taken up in an important way by Wuthnow in his research on the virtue of compassion in human interactions.

I argue that religion or spirituality encourages philanthropy by explicitly linking givers to the concerns and needs of others. My analysis follows a three-step logic: (1) if *wealth* affords individuals the ability to have what they want (at least in the material realm) and (2) if *philanthropy* can be understood as the transformation of time and money from a pool of wealth into a disposable gift to others, (3) *religion*—as it takes form in what I call the spirituality of money—motivates or spurs philanthropy, in amount and type, by shaping the quality of the wants or desires among the wealthy. If the wealthy generally can have what they want, it is the realm of spirituality that directs their wants into a bond of care for others.

In the first section, I describe how wealth provides the

* I am grateful to the T. B. Murphy Foundation Charitable Trust for supporting the research reported here, to Andrew Herman, with whom I developed a number of the ideas in the paper, and to Ethan Lewis, who graciously and competently assisted in the preparation of this chapter.

basis for the wealthy to shape the world according to their desires. Although all members of society to some extent create the world around them, the wealthy are most able as individuals to exercise agency in determining what happens to and around them. In the second section, I explore the meaning of religion as a *tie* or *bond*, both to God and others. Religion or spirituality brings into the purview of the wealthy a set of wants or desires having to do with the welfare of others who live beyond their immediate horizons. This also helps explain the sometimes comparable effect of nontheistic forms of spirituality that encourage bonds of care between people. In the conclusion, I discuss the implication for how donors mobilize or transpose resources from a pool of wealth into disposable gifts for others. Although it does not always occur, the major positive effect of religious consciousness is its potential to affect not just the amount of giving but the quality of the care and involvement of the donor.

Where Your Treasure Is: The Worldly Empowerment of Wealth

The first step in tracing the path through religion from wealth to philanthropy is to demarcate the distinctive characteristic of wealth in this context and to understand how it positions the wealthy in regard to the other two terms, religion and philanthropy. The most fundamental finding derived from the Study on Wealth and Philanthropy in regard to wealth is that at least in the material realm, the wealthy can have what they want. By this I do not mean that they become released from the laws of gravity or aging. Rather, in the dialectic of socialization and social construction, they are masters of social construction. As such, what the wealthy want and do for others is fused to what they want and do for themselves.

*Freedom, Empowerment, and Hyperagency:
“Them with the gold makes the rules.”*

With varying degrees of explicitness, the wealthy describe the distinctive attribute of wealth as a reciprocal or twofold set of

freedoms. The first is the freedom *from* necessity, especially from having to depend for their material well-being on people or circumstances outside their control. The second is the freedom *to* determine circumstances or at least to choose freely among those handed to them. "That the freedom to choose is a privilege," reflects Bradley Stark,³ a thirty-two-year-old heir of a distinguished American family, "is the single most important fact. It's the nature of privilege itself." In everyday practice, the two forms of freedom go hand-in-hand and flow easily into each other. "What I do I want to do," says Paul Goetz, a Los Angeles philanthropist. "Money buys you complete mental freedom," adds Walter Adams, an exceptionally successful real estate speculator. "When you have money you can do whatever you want. You could buy the White House for yourself if you wanted to."

This attribute of freedom is a potent form of *empowerment*—the capacity of the wealthy to shape the world and themselves according to their wishes. Wealth enables the wealthy to be efficacious agents in the unfolding of their lives, to live in the world more as constructing subjects than as socialized objects. Often this empowerment is taken on gradually. It usually emerges in the fullest sense only after the wealthy pass through one or more phases of personal self-development in which they undergo a moral education in regard to money. They struggle in the public sphere to establish a business, to wend their way up the corporate or professional hierarchy, or to take up family civic obligations or philanthropic commitments. Privately, they may seek to come to grips with the guilt, expectations, and responsibilities of their inheritance and earnings. In so doing, they transform their identities just as they transform the world around them. At the end of these formative trials, the wealthy emerge with an enhanced capacity to shape their fortunes. For Allison Randall, it took an emotional battle with her father over legal custody of her inheritance to proclaim her personal declaration of independence. Launching her career as a progressive political activist is just one of an abundance of possibilities. "I'm free, you know. I'm free of financial restrictions. It's wonderful. What more could I want? I have money that I can do things with—for myself and for the causes I feel are important. My next

career could be anything. I have that freedom and I'm not afraid to sort of think, "Well, maybe you *could* do that."

Of course, most individuals enjoy some ability to dispose over the world in accordance with their wants. Few are without some autonomous capacity in society. What distinguishes the wealthy in the reciprocal process of shaping and being shaped by the world is that they can do more than deflect social pressures. They need not settle simply for finding a more or less compatible place within prescribed limits. In more ways and in more institutionally profound fashion than the nonwealthy, they can shape the very constraints and requirements in which they live. What the nonwealthy can accomplish only by mounting a social movement, the wealthy can implement single-handedly. "I can pick up the phone and call a congressman who's heard my name and have the impact of one million votes on the issue with a phone call," claims Graham Reynolds, an outspoken missionary of wealth. Reynolds unabashedly extols what numerous other respondents care to recount only in more reserved terms. This distinctive additional capacity of the wealthy not simply to find a favorable place within the institutional limits of everyday life but to transcend and remake this place is *hyperagency*. This is just "the Golden Rule," explains David Stephanov, a shoot-from-the-hip real estate magnate: "Them with the gold makes the rules."

The notions of freedom, empowerment, and hyperagency capture worldly capacities of wealth at a general level. In actual practice, freedom and hyperagency become incarnated in three interrelated yet distinct manifestations: temporally, spatially, and psychologically.

Temporal Empowerment: "I never washed my daughter's hair."

Temporal empowerment entails the capacity to overcome or avoid the limits imposed by time, to bring the past and future under the control of the present and to expand the present by substituting money for time. As to the past, the wealthy are able to accentuate the beneficial aspects of their biographies and to deflect or redeem what they regret. In regard to the future, the

wealthy do not simply await passively what is to come but intervene in the present efficaciously. They initiate or set the contours of the institutional life within which they and others live. As Michael Hodson explains, his great-grandfather's financial legacy shapes his thinking even as he ensconces himself as a young artist in England: "When you know that there's money left to you by your great-grandfather who's been dead God-knows-how-many-years before you were born, that gives you the sense that it isn't your money. It's the family's."

In addition to reconstituting the past and shaping the future, the wealthy expand the present. They hire others to perform tasks for them—what entrepreneur Brian Riley describes as "spending money to buy my time back." They also exert enough clout to get things done quickly on their own terms. "People want to come and see me," explains Paul Goetz. "I don't see them because it takes time away from what I want to do." When you are wealthy, says Graham Reynolds, "You always have the upper hand in negotiating, and you can do in one-tenth the time what it would take someone else ten times the time to do—because of the credibility they'd have to develop." The wealthy also spend less time on mundane tasks. This frees them up to pursue those things they like to do rather than have to do. "I never washed my daughter's hair," reveals Rebecca Austin, a West Coast attorney who has hired a nanny. On his part, Reynolds tells how he buys ten suits at a time, racing "to see how quickly I can get into the store and out." "The real value I have in my life is time," he confides; "that's the only limiter. It's certainly not money."

Spatial Empowerment: "You give me Mexico; that's what I want."

Spatial empowerment is the ability of the wealthy to extend themselves and their influence geographically or territorially. The most localized aspect concerns the individual as a *physical being*. The spatially empowered insulate themselves from the demanding presence of others. They move relatively unimpeded through the world, procuring for themselves an efficacious social presence at meetings, vacation hideaways, and charity

events. They obtain all needed medical care and have the wherewithal to attend to their psychological and physical fitness. They gain access to people and places—what Reynolds calls "power to get through time and red-tape barriers"—even as they restrict access to themselves. And when they wish to be in contact even with prominent people, they bring them in for audiences. Boasts Stephanov, who once bought a bank simply "to learn how bankers thought": "When I want something, the people I can get it from come here and meet me for breakfast, and I tell them what I want. When I have to convey a message to the governor, he comes here or he'll have his top two or three aides come down, and I'll tell them what I think should be done, and then we'll go from there."

In addition to projecting and protecting their own physical beings, the wealthy exert spatial empowerment by constructing a *base of command*. A base of command is a material site in the form of a company branch, social organization, or staff personnel through which the wealthy exert control over people, organizations, and policies located geographically beyond their bodily presence. Such territorial self-extension can be intensive (the degree to which individuals saturate an area with their presence) or extensive (the degree to which such control expands geographically). For Rebecca Jacobs, a Detroit-based importer, the growth of her business is the flourishing of her dream: "First I had one outlet, fifteen outlets, twenty outlets, then I had fifty outlets, a hundred outlets; I had two hundred outlets and I just couldn't believe it. Now I'm supplying a thousand outlets on a weekly basis in the United States alone, and I haven't even stopped. I figure I'm in my infancy right now. This is just gradual growing. Turning point? No. There have just been a lot of dreams."

As business owners, philanthropists, investors, political contributors, and board members, the wealthy create for themselves a series of "outposts" or franchises of their worldly power—conveyors of their will by which they exert control even when not physically present. Establishing such outposts is not just a material undertaking; it becomes a kind of personal manifest destiny. Jacobs, for instance, relishes her success in

cornering the Upper Midwest, Canada, and the Northeast. Being “closed out” of Cleveland and California is only a temporary setback in her grand design. “I’ll tell you what,” she declares. “You give me Mexico; that’s what I want.”

A third manifestation of spatial empowerment is through *artifactual re-presentations* such as art collections, homes, businesses, real estate empires, personal foundations, or other visible constructs that make the selves of the wealthy present even at a distance. Such physical constructs empower the wealthy by literally re-presenting or visibly interjecting their tastes, interests, and priorities over a wider geographic realm. For example, many individuals extend their spatial empowerment by self-promotion through advertising and press releases. The most explicit expression of artifactual re-presentation occurs among those who bestow their family names on their businesses, estates, or charitable gifts. So it is for Michael Hollander, an East Coast media and food entrepreneur, who explains, “I have been very happy to have my family name on things because I think it is very meaningful to children coming along in the family to see and understand that their family was responsible and is a responsible family in the institutions where it had people and involvement.” The family name thus becomes “a visible example,” something “under their nose” that they will “have to live up to.”

Psychological Empowerment:

“To affect the lives of forty million people”

While temporal and spatial empowerment are capacities by which the wealthy project and exert themselves in the world, *psychological empowerment* refers to the corresponding mode of consciousness by which the wealthy perceive themselves as both efficacious and entitled to be so. “My goal, long term, is to affect the lives of forty million people—and those forty million will affect the rest of the world,” proclaims Reynolds, who again differs from his colleagues only in the scope of his expectations, not in their content. Because psychological empowerment operates ultimately as an inner capacity, it proves to be less exclusively the preserve of the wealthy or powerful than temporal

and spatial empowerment. Many nonwealthy, including those on a quest for wealth, display this quality of self-assurance. As the basic ingredient for building a worldly domain, psychological empowerment exists as a key precondition and not just a consequence of being wealthy.

Such psychological empowerment is apparent in the determined vision of many entrepreneurs who confidently discount—indeed even celebrate—the element of risk in their transition from the safe harbor of salaried employment to the uncharted waters of self-directed enterprise. “It’s a lot different from the corporate executive who works his way up from the ground floor and never really took a risk other than a career risk,” remarks Walter Adams. “It’s the lone wolf who’s never really comfortable in a General Motors type structure. Clearly, the most dominant force in my success has been pure instinct.” This same egoism leads many inheritors to aggressively claim positions of authority and stewardship in progressive community foundations or in more conventional cultural institutions. Despite his progressive politics, for instance, Bradley Stark readily describes his philanthropic orientation as a “charitable posture right out of Dickens.” It is “a classic example of the ‘haves’ acting on behalf of the have-nots without help or involvement.”

Psychological empowerment is the personal disposition on the part of the wealthy that they can entertain “great expectations,” that they can be efficacious in achieving those expectations, and that their wants or goals are socially productive. “When it came to Boston,” reports Jacobs, “when they said ‘you can’t do that, you can’t pay that much money for the district,’ I said, ‘I’m paying that, and that’s it.’ I knew that it was right for me, and I bought it. And I was never sorry. I paid that bank loan back in two years.” It is the complex conviction of entitlement—the wealthy’s realization that they can have what they want and, imbued with the ethos of the invisible hand, that their pursuit of private interest promotes the public good.

**There Shall Your Heart Be Also:
The Spiritual Secret of Money**

It is clear that attaining the full empowerment of wealth as the capacity of self-construction and world building does not neces-

sarily preclude even extensive philanthropic involvements. In fact, one of the most important findings from the Study on Wealth and Philanthropy is that for many wealthy individuals, philanthropy is little more than an extension of the moral disposition and worldly control by which they approach their everyday activities. Despite its aura of moral selflessness and public contribution, philanthropic commitment frequently reflects the push of social, family, and business obligation and the impulses of temporal, spatial, and psychological empowerment already described. This is how Carol Layton, a New York interior decorator, seems to view it. Once you have succeeded in business and saturated your consumption needs, she explains, "that's when you come into the idea . . . of what do you do with the money. First you have children and you want to help make them financially secure. Then if you're like me, I have a need for ongoing things. I want the business to go on. I want to build something that doesn't die when I die. So we're building something that I hope will have continuity. Now I can indulge in certain kinds of fantasies where you get active in certain kinds of philanthropic organizations."

It is also clear that religion is not the exclusive path to a spiritually committed philanthropy. Our interviews reveal how various nontheistic modes of consciousness or spirituality can induce a comparable internal transformation. However, my intent here is to uncover what is going on in those instances where religion does in fact forge a link between wealth and morally committed philanthropy. If survey research highlights the general statistical importance of the religious factor,⁴ our interviews provide insight into how religion helps translate worldly empowerment into philanthropic commitment.

*The Second Mode of Psychological Empowerment:
"How can I be counted on somehow?"*

The first task is to identify that moral ethos by which the wealthy move from being able to have what they want to being concerned about the quality of their wants. "I love having money," says Carol Layton. "It makes it possible for me to do whatever I

want to do." But what is that quality of will, emotion, and affection that moves the wealthy from a concern about the quantity of their interests to a concern about the quality of their wants? Our research reveals that for many respondents—both those who earned and those who inherited their wealth—a major transformation in consciousness takes place at some point as they come into that wealth. This point may arrive quietly and gradually or appear as a dramatic realization, "a cruncher," as Ethan Wright, a Chicago entrepreneur, describes it. The recognition that his business could now offer him financial security "was like a seizure. . . I could do anything I wanted to do. But I didn't know what the hell to do. So the first thing I did was hired myself a psychoanalyst." Soon after Wright set out on a European vacation with his wife and kids, recapitulating the classic motif of journey-quest. Upon his return he concentrated on identifying his deeper interests: "I had arrived at what the goal was, which was financial independence. My problem was that I had made it. In a sense, I had separated myself from my main business activity. . . . So I had to find something to do. And what you end up doing, I think, what I discovered is you go to those things that truly interest you, have been an interest of yours in your life."

At first Wright gained only an inkling of the spiritual secret of money, with his new-found freedom rekindling his musical interests. But as time went on he began to experience ever more fully the capacity financial security allows for turning consciousness inward and concerns outward. He came to evaluate the moral or spiritual content of his wants and to consider how he could recast or apply his worldly empowerment to a broader and deeper set of purposes. This is in effect a *second level of psychological empowerment* whereby the wealthy move beyond pursuing private interest as their public contribution to pursuing public needs as their personal concern. "I now see that I don't have to concentrate on my struggle to survive or grow, or get over being poor," explains Gregory Singer, a Detroit entrepreneur who has survived a series of business downturns. "I can now look with a lot more depth at who I am, what I need, what

my purpose in life is, how can I give back to the system, how can I be counted on somehow."

Accounts of major shifts in consciousness like those reported by Wright and Singer suggest that for some wealthy individuals the two phases of psychological empowerment are sequential. For many others, however, the two modes of psychological empowerment coexist—either because the initial aura of the transformation wears off or, as with Todd Schlesinger, a Miami developer, because both modes of consciousness have advanced together and now overlap and even compete. "My interests probably run the entire gamut: from the things that pull at my heartstrings, to the things that I see as pure need, to coming from a desire to pay back a little bit to the community, going all the way to the other extreme—ego, prestige, *et cetera*."

Whether sequential or congruent, the second mode of psychological empowerment is not limited to any particular doctrine or specific activity. It is a disposition that undergirds a wide range of specific religious and spiritual ideas and that includes the conscious dedication to worldly efficacy on behalf of others. Even though there is no single orientation or activity that encapsulates the religious content of the second mode of psychological empowerment, it is possible to identify from our interviews a fundamental core.

Religion: "When I'm vertically in tune, then I'm horizontally in tune."

Although often derived from nonreligious experiences and expressed in nontheistic language, what gets enunciated is remarkably close to the most basic experience of religion, namely, *an empathetic bond to others*. The etymology of the term *religion* in Latin is somewhat uncertain, having three possible derivations (Schiffers, 1975, p. 1359). But because the meanings are complementary rather than contradictory, it is less important to single out a particular one. According to Schiffers, the verb *relegere* means "to constantly turn to" or "to conscientiously observe" some worthy object of attention. The verb *reeligere* means "to choose again" this origin or goal.

Yet the most encompassing meaning, as well as the most commonly cited source, is *religari*, denoting "to tie together," to bind, or "to form a bond." In this basic way, then, the second level of psychological empowerment in which individuals become sincerely conscious of their bonds to others can be united to the notion of religion. A tie to the transcendent is a tie to the earth. In theistic terms, this entails the experience of a tie of duty or love to God along with a corresponding tie to other people. "When I'm vertically in tune, I'm horizontally in tune," reports Mark Heller. "Whenever I take seriously God's word and follow in my faith, I'm positioned to deal with the problems on a satisfactory basis." In nontheistic terms of spirituality, the transcendent plane is deemphasized or eliminated though the importance of affective concern remains highlighted. That is, psychological self-actualization or humanism still cultivates empathetic social identification or attention to the lives of individuals. This connection is especially crucial to the wealthy, actor Gene Sanders points out, because "through wealth there is a way to become isolated, not only a way to protect yourself financially, but a way to isolate yourself personally and emotionally, closing off consciousness and closing oneself off to the needs of others."

Transforming Consciousness:

"How the hell do you get that blind up?"

The issue is the same no matter how it is expressed, insists Boston businessman Charles Dore. "There are so many people that are just into themselves and can't seem to get out of themselves, can't seem to see the broad picture. People don't want to see. They draw the curtain. You start to tell them about Ethiopia or poverty and—and these people basically are good, but they tend to pull the blind. How the hell do you get that blind up?"

How indeed do some of the wealthy "get that blind up"? And what do they say to explain how a committed bond to God, to principles, or to other people becomes a dynamic, constructive force in their lives? Sara Elster, a savvy progressive philanthropist in New York, helps provide an answer. She views her life as a "spiritual journey" in which she draws on her personal

religious experience to carry out the worldly vocation of “co-creativity” with God: “I have a lot of distance to go in my spiritual development. But I have a very, very strong sense now that I really am on a spiritual journey. And that when you do let go and hand yourself over to that, you are no longer in control and at the same time you use all of your intelligence. What I’m trying to work out for myself is how do you use your intelligence, how do you use your contacts in high places effectively? It’s not handing everything over to God and saying, ‘What will happen, will happen,’ sort of in an apocalyptic sense. It’s that you are very much a co-creator and this is what you’ve been given. And I’ve been given a lot and therefore it’s my responsibility to give my best in every way whether it’s money or intelligence.”

Sara Elster articulates the inner meaning of religion and spirituality more concisely than many of our respondents. Nevertheless, her words reflect the religious experience of a broad cross section of those we interviewed. Her emphasis on being a co-creator characterizes the nontheistic spiritual consciousness of many others.

Participative Agency. The first point to note is Elster’s *reverse insight*—as philosopher Bernard Lonergan terms it—into the meaning of wealth at the second level of psychological consciousness. Empowerment is not the ability to create a world in accord with her will but the ability “to let go and hand yourself over.” It is acceptance of the fact that “you are no longer in control.” This does not imply simple disinvestment of wealth or power but a rechanneling of it. Through hyperagency the wealthy become self-determined and efficacious agents. Religious consciousness, as defined here, rather than destroying such agency makes it a *participative agency* linked and responsive to the agency of God and other people.

“It’s not handing everything over to God,” cautions Elster, but the devotion of “money and intelligence” to a more encompassing agenda than her own. She remains a subject and retains her temporal and spatial empowerment. What is different is that she now experiences her subjectivity as tied to the subjectivity

and empowerment of God in a relation of what she calls “co-creativity.” Wealth is not eschewed but mobilized.

Taken with Gratitude. This worldly vocation becomes embedded in Elster’s consciousness through a second insight inversely related to the first. Just as she recognizes that she is “no longer in control,” she acknowledges too that she has “been given a lot.” Theologian Robert Ochs has remarked that there are three ways to take a gift: It may be taken for granted, taken with guilt, or taken with gratitude. For Sara Elster and numerous other respondents, including many who are not religiously dedicated, taking their fortune with gratitude is the single most crucial aspect of their consciousness. Gratitude sets them apart from those who stay locked within the first-mode psychological empowerment. They recognize that their wealth and abilities are unearned gifts—that despite their worldly capacities, they are not demigods determining their own and others’ fates but beings who are themselves humbly abiding within a gracious dispensation.

How the wealthy understand the story of their own agency is inextricably connected to how they act in regard to the stories of others. The etymology of religion as “conscientiously observing one’s origins” here comes to the fore. Such knowledge never produces a fatalism or quietism. Rather, as Susan Aldrich puts it, the experience of wealth as a gift leads the wealthy to “take their money very seriously.” This means placing the hyperagency engendered by wealth at the service of the goals engendered by spirituality: “The best thing about being wealthy is the access, the ability to make choices, to not be bogged down in long mundane things. I have a tremendous amount of creative potential to do things that a lot of people don’t have the time or the ability to do. There is a spiritual quality to it, too, because you know, you feel tremendously fortunate to have this gift and you want to do something with it. At least I do. Most of the people I know that have wealth feel that way too. Most of the wealthy people I know take their money very seriously and have a spiritual connection with it to do something with it.”

Describing his spiritual awakening, Paul Moore says, "The first thing that really happened to me was when I discovered quite by accident. . . that I really couldn't do everything myself. People tend to equate wealth with power. I've gotten in touch with the fact that I really don't believe I have any power that I don't get from God, and that's a lot different idea than what I had when I was in business. I used to think that I was generating all of it."

If religion is one path to a less self-encumbered life of wealth, the recognition of a life graced by unearned opportunities, unachieved benefits, and ultimate contingency is at the core of the transformative capacity of religion to bring about this result.

Religion and Responsibility:

"I wasn't put on this planet to play it safe."

The experience of wealth as gift never produces an ascetic quietism. The respondents in our survey are too American for that. Although only a minority of them report that riches impose a gnawing burden of guilt, virtually all disclose an apprehension about the amount or source of their wealth. This uneasiness spurs the wealthy to work out a range of words and actions that sanction their advantage. Such justifications invariably revolve around a discourse of responsibility. Entrepreneur Gary Newmann rejects the possibility of living comfortably with his wealth. He is driven in business and philanthropy by "that hungry feeling" of "obligation" that makes him realize that he "wasn't put on this planet to play it safe." "I've a responsibility and obligation to really do that which nobody else can. . . . [We wealthy must] make the most of this God-given gift of being able to live dangerously with what we are given."

Despite this and similar testimonies about the link among gift, religion, and responsibility, it is not particularly apparent how this connection occurs. Because of its high ethical overtones the discourse of responsibility can obscure the fact that religious consciousness may be marshaled simply to reinforce rather than transform what the wealthy view as the nature of

their responsibilities. The philosopher Jules Toner defines care as loving others in their true needs. The question is whether religiosity provides a sacred canopy, as Peter Berger calls it, for the wealthy to do what is just in their own interest rather than what people need. Once again, religious consciousness is indeterminate. It can play a distinctive role in either bolstering or prodding the believer beyond what I have described as the first level of psychological empowerment.

One set of such justifications concerns why it is futile, misguided, or even counterproductive to disinvest wealth. It is argued that there is no obligation to share what is properly obtained; that even if wealth were shared it would in short order become reconcentrated in productive hands; and, more fundamentally, that the concentration of wealth is needed to finance and reward the entrepreneurial initiative that is so crucial to the vitality of a free society.

How religious sentiments shore up these orientations and fail to induce bonds of care for others will be addressed in a moment. But first I want to discuss the nexus between financial responsibility and religious consciousness when religion makes a relatively autonomous contribution to the economic morality of the wealthy. To begin with, even under the influence of a more challenging religious perspective, the wealthy do not necessarily abandon the pursuit of making and controlling wealth. What changes, however, is that religious consciousness moves their "getting and giving" of wealth onto a plane where logics of legitimation not dictated by market criteria come into play.

Stewardship as a Vocation: "He's only got our hands."

The paramount religious justification, embraced by progressives and conservatives alike, revolves around the vocation of stewardship. Simply stated, the contention is that wealth is not evil; only squandering it is. "We are where we are because it was part of God's plan," explains Donald Mason, the owner of a publishing firm. "Paul writes to Timothy and says, 'As for the wealthy, encourage them to be generous and do good works.' He doesn't say, 'As for the wealthy, tell them to get rid of it because

they can't go to heaven.' He's saying that they have a stewardship." God's "only got our hands," adds Dore, explaining what inspired his funding of a halfway house for black alcoholics. Exasperated by a friend's callous suggestion that he not support a program for blacks, Dore asks, "Don't they listen to what Jesus said to them—'Help my people?'—that's all he said."

A close look at the inner logic of stewardship helps explain the compelling feelings of "responsibility" that Dore and others report and takes us a step closer to uncovering the distinctive contribution of religious consciousness in marshaling bonds of care. To begin with it is important to distinguish the impulse of *stewardship* from that of *noblesse oblige*. Although the orientation of noblesse oblige has a contemporary application, it is an ethic of economic responsibility derived from the parentalism of the feudal dispensation, just as stewardship is an ethic of responsibility born of capitalism. Without going into detail here, the major difference is that the cultural logic of noblesse oblige proffers a doctrine of distribution while that of stewardship furnishes a code of production. Regardless of how one views the moral status of capitalism, the ethos of stewardship focuses attention on how wealth is concentrated and put into use as an engine of production and employment rather than consumption and leisure. It is for this reason that, almost to a person, even religiously oriented respondents couch their philanthropic commitments of wealth in the productive language of investment, systemic change, "making a difference," and social entrepreneurship. Time and again they repeat some version of the adage that to provide a fish is to feed someone for a day, but that to teach someone how to fish is to provide food for a lifetime.

As a form of religious discipleship, the productive ethic of stewardship imbues its followers with what Max Weber calls worldly asceticism. This discipline requires from its devotees a dual consciousness capable of discerning the interstices between God and world. Other-worldly asceticism draws direction for daily life from a knowledge of God's will as embedded in scripture and dogma. In contrast, a nonreligious, this-worldly humanism obtains its bearings by observing patterns of histor-

ical causality. The distinguishing characteristic of worldly asceticism, however, is that it attends to and intersects with a cognizance of both Divine will *and* social structure.

Attending to the two realms of religion and history as sources of data means that the worldly ascetic incorporates a *duality* and not a *dualism* of consciousness, to borrow a distinction from Anthony Giddens (1984). As such, religiously inspired uses of money must heed the realities of both the City of God and the City of Earth. The two realms impinge upon and mutually shape each other while not being collapsed into each other. Gregory Singer exemplifies the duality of consciousness of those respondents who take seriously not just the intersection of the will of God and the course of history but their relative autonomy. On the one hand, Singer's religious conviction dictates a realm of responsibility that goes beyond just giving money, namely, a personal relationship with those whom he helps. Singer states his version of how a tie to God implies a special bond of care: "I feel like I've studied enough about the Christian principles of giving. . . that I think I have a responsibility to a higher involvement than to just give funds. Unless I get involved myself, it doesn't really mean very much. It's just money; it's from my hand to somebody else's. That doesn't put me in a relationship to the need. It doesn't put the recipient in any kind of relationship with me or understanding of who I am or of the source of my feelings or beliefs or of where the giving comes from. And I feel that if one does give, that he somehow connect the source of the gift to the receiver of the gift."

But Singer also takes seriously his earthly citizenship. While his religious devotion proffers an ethic of care, his historical consciousness stipulates the kind of worldly responsibilities needed to put this care into actual practice. "I don't believe in just giving money," he insists, "but in putting legs on the money." He commits his money toward achieving those productive outcomes dictated by the ethic of stewardship, including making stewards of others: "We very often overlook the fact that when we give someone something we also give them a responsibility to use that gift in its most productive fashion. If we just hand somebody ten bucks and walk away, that person isn't going to

feel very responsible because all someone's done is kept him in that same receiver mode. He hasn't lifted the guy up, corrected that problem or that need. I feel that there is a quality to putting legs on the money and getting involved and letting people know that a little more effort on their part makes a lot of difference."

Laura Madison likewise brings religious and historical consciousness to bear in charting the use of her inheritance. The fruit of her fifty-year trek from Long Island debutante to central Manhattan activist is the simple injunction that she must be "totally loving." Invoking the metaphor of listening, Madison demonstrates how a vocation of worldly asceticism involves being attuned to the logic of human personality: "I listen and I go where I think I'm needed. I do whatever I hear about that seems to be working towards helping humanity, which is my prime goal. It's the only thing I'm interested in in the world—the health of humanity: human beings having an opportunity to be truly human, which very few people are. Most people don't even know what it is to be human, which is to be a spiritual person as well as a physical, mental, emotional person. And to really relate to other human beings all over the world, whoever they are, wherever they are. And in making a oneness that's there but isn't seen by most people." It is a matter of "healing the earth, healing the rifts between people," she continues. Turning to the metaphor of healing, she manifests the underlying sensitivity that religious orientations operate within rather than against the workings of human nature. She implicitly answers in the affirmative the question that Einstein said was crucial for discerning the meaning of human existence: whether the universe is friendly.

Although I have indicated some ways by which religious engagement with God inspires personal engagement with others, just how this happens always remains partially hidden from our respondents—something Gabriel Marcel (1950) would call *mystery*. The mystery of being always remains unfathomable and can never be fully deciphered. Mystery is to be entered into, participated in. This does not mean that we are excused from trying to comprehend what is going on, only that we not treat this spiritual transposition, in Marcel's terms, simply as a secret

to be found out or a problem to be solved. It is therefore not surprising that our respondents eventually turn simply to enunciating their spiritual sentiments in the form of paradoxes—all of which say in one way or another that to give is to get, to care for others is to care for oneself, to die is to live. "You let go of your ego, and you can be more loving than in any other way. It's all the letting go that brings everything to you in every way, for yourself, and for everybody else," explains Laura Madison, who struggled much of her life to surmount the hurdles imposed by her inheritance and movingly recalls the key incident in this struggle as follows: "I heard a voice and the wind almost blew me down as I came into the alley, and the voice said, 'If you really believe what you think you believe, then you've got to let go.' Life is all letting go of your children, letting go of your ego, letting go of your money, letting go of everything that you think is contributing to you. . . . Finding out who you are and coming from what is inside of you. . . is everything you need."

To commit oneself merely to the quest for empowerment is to distort one's life. "My role is to attempt to harmonize my activity with the roles that the Creator would like to see born," reflects Brendan Dwyer, a Detroit wholesaler. "To the extent my activity harmonizes with the role he sees for me, then I'm going to have a peace and tranquility in exercising that [role] and in living that you can't get in any other way. And when I'm in conflict with that, then I'm going to have a certain tension and disunity."

The Shadow Side of Religion: "Money is trouble."

A frequently stated sentiment is that money is a two-edged sword—unless wielded properly it can prove dangerous. "Money is trouble," says Mark Heller, reflecting on the temptations of wealth. "God is interested in the material, but he's more interested in the spiritual, because you see all of us are terminal cases. It isn't just a cancer patient who has been diagnosed with advanced cancer who is terminal. We're all terminal." But not only in money trouble; religion can be trouble too. Religion not only fails at times to provide a path to the second level of psychologi-

cal empowerment—it can also keep the wealthy from the path of care altogether—or lead them into self-righteousness.

Religion becomes trouble, for instance, when the experience of wealth as a gift is missing. Without such humility, religion ceases to be transformative, becoming instead an occasion for proud willfulness. Such is the tendency described by Beverly and Ross Geiger, whose own vocation involves converting the wealthy to born-again Christianity and encouraging them to practice philanthropy. The Geigers remark that the wealthy are especially difficult to convert because they are already “upstanding people. . . sufficient unto themselves,” people who say, “I’m me, I made it, and I don’t need anything.” The wealthy can all too easily “get to the point where their money is like their god. They’ve got to hoard it.”

Religion becomes trouble as well when the bond or partnership with God ceases being one of participative agency and turns into an outright appropriation of Divine authority. Rather than remaining humble participants in the *mysterium tremendum*, the wealthy too readily become dispensers of God’s will. Instead of learning what to do by unraveling how things work and what people need, the wealthy can too readily become dogmatic purveyors of scripturally deduced morality. “We usually ask the Lord; he shows us,” says one respondent whose narrative of her spiritual autobiography recounted no instance where God’s will challenged her or was not in accord with her own. God wanted her to have the very same estate she wanted all along. God rewards her for being charitable; and she presents her personal reading of the Bible as God’s literal word. To point this out is not to judge harshly. It is merely to recognize an instance where the first mode of psychological empowerment has become substituted for the second mode.

Even though a language of stewardship continues to occupy their narratives, those who violate the relative autonomy of history and heaven end up substituting a dualism of consciousness for the duality of consciousness that makes philanthropists examine not just “what God wants” but what needs to be done. Atlanta publisher Mason warns of the danger in substituting what we want for what God wants. But he fails to warn

against the danger of substituting “what God wants” for what needs to be done: “I think there is a delusive glamour of sin that the apostle Paul talks about in the early chapters of Romans. He refers to these people: ‘They gave up God and therefore God gave them up to be the playthings of their own desires.’ And I think that when we give up our sense that we are creatures of a creator God who has a plan for our lives and loves us and cares for us, and we turn our backs on that—whether it’s for physical lust or material lust or whatever—to pursue what we want, we run the risk of becoming playthings of our own desire.”

Ironically, Mason and others who verbalize an ethic of stewardship to bring salvation to the world, tend to underplay the dialectic tension between the logic of heaven and the logic of earth. Theology is substituted for anthropology, as Ludwig Feuerbach put it, in an effort to make sure that anthropology does not become substituted for theology. Although “we are creatures of a creator God,” creation itself is not to be excavated as an historically available incarnation of God.

Conclusion

The narrator in Dylan Thomas’s *A Child’s Christmas in Wales* reports, “I can never remember whether it snowed for six days and six nights when I was twelve or whether it snowed for twelve days and twelve nights when I was six.” Similarly, I can never remember whether the passage from Matthew and Luke reads “where your treasure is there will your heart be also,” or “where your heart is there will your treasure be also.” Perhaps like the snow it matters only that we remember—in this case that treasures and hearts go together. Because the treasures of the wealthy are large and affect the treasures and hearts of others, it matters how the wealthy come to define the relation between their treasures and their hearts.

My purpose in posing the relation of wealth and religion in biblical terms is not to write a brief for religion. My findings provide no evidence to conclude that religion is an exclusive or even an especially reliable path to the care for others. The findings do indicate, however, that an inner conviction about a

tie to God often eventuates for the wealthy in the mobilization of their treasures on behalf of others. Yet the question remains what is going on when religious conviction is at work.

For Patrick Lockwood the major affect of religion on his philanthropy is quantitative. He reports no particularly creative involvements. His philanthropic aspirations are simply "to share with the Church or other institutions." But his religious conviction has inspired him to increase the percentage of his giving each year over the past thirty years to a point where it vastly exceeds the ten percent he speaks about here: "I was taught as a youngster from my mother's knee that tithing was the proper thing to do, giving ten percent of your income. Well, later on as I began to read the Bible for myself I discovered that giving ten percent is what is expected by God; that's just the minimum. . . . That's like giving God a tip. But when you are really interested in helping the work of God, and you want to do something to show your gratitude, you give more than ten."

Spiritual conviction can also induce the wealthy to break through the traditional limitations on their involvement with recipients. Benjamin Ellman expresses not just a bond of care for others but a reciprocal relationship with them. His early charitable engagements stimulated his interest but were strictly money based and impersonal. Yet all this changed after he began to participate firsthand in the community projects to which he donated: "I then became very much involved. In many instances where you've done things, you can actually see concrete results where people have benefited. It was unbelievable what I learned about the numbers of people in this community whose life depended on that agency. I mean, if they didn't get the subvention so their kids could go to camps or day-care centers, while older people were taken care of and brought meals—their whole life depended on that institution. And you see instances where children have gone on from very humble beginnings to become major contributors not only to themselves but back to the community. I think that those are things that you get personally. You feel real good about that. I think the minute someone starts to help, they make a difference—they make a difference in their own lives, you see."

It is rare that religion creates a worldly vocation that is as distinct as Lockwood's or Singer's. Yet religion did so in these two instances and does so to a lesser extent in the lives of many other respondents. In the course of their daily dealings with money, all wealthy individuals arrive at the first level of psychological empowerment by uncovering the rules and exercising the capacities of temporal and spatial empowerment. Less frequently, however, do the wealthy unearth the *spiritual secret* of money—that paradoxical capacity of money to be turned to the service of others.

The capacity of the wealthy to exercise hyperagency in building both a worldly and an inner domain eventuates for all our respondents in the encounter with what the Hindus refer to as Kalpataru or "wishing" tree (Smith, 1958). At least in the material realm, the wealthy, far more than any others, can heed the inscription on the Kalpataru tree that promises "you can have what you want." The question is the quality of those wants. Although we have no way of knowing how many of the wealthy self-critically attend to the quality of their wants, our findings persuade us that financial security bestows on all wealthy the opportunity to do so. Not least among the reasons why the wealthy come to harbor "great expectations" about what they should or would like to do on behalf of others is the fact that they can actually accomplish much of what they envision as their calling.

The spiritual secret of wealth, then, is that riches can offer their proprietors an avenue to deeper meanings and purposes. Wealth offers an opportunity for conversion to care for others just as it offers an opportunity for steadfast adherence to ingrained behavior at the first level of psychological empowerment. The wealthy can have what they want not only in the material realm but in the spiritual realm as well, not only for themselves but on behalf of others also—provided they choose "appropriate" wants. Like wealth itself, the spiritual secret of money is both constraining and empowering, both socializing and enabling. The empowerment of wealth that grants individuals the capacity to pursue their interests guarantees *nothing* about the quality of those interests or about the degree of

selflessness with which they are pursued. The meaning and practice of economic morality differs for the wealthy not because they are inherently more (or less) spiritual or can learn the spiritual secret of money better than others. Nor is it simply because hyperagency, along with other resources and responsibilities of empowerment associated with the possession of wealth, opens a *broader panorama* of potential empathetic involvement than would otherwise be the case. Rather, economic morality differs for the wealthy largely because wealth has the potential to relieve the material insecurities of everyday life, to awaken sensibilities of gratitude, to provoke questions about the quality of wants, and to provide the wherewithal for an economic vocation.

Notes

1. For instance, Hall (in Chapter Three of this volume) documents how "scholarship of philanthropy has given religion short shrift" and argues that this is due in large part to the uneasy history of critical encounters and accommodations between religious consciousness and efficiency-oriented philanthropy. A comprehensive account summarizing what we now know theoretically and empirically about the relation of philanthropy and religion still needs to be compiled, although some good beginnings have been made (Hodgkinson, this volume; Layton, 1987; Fraker, 1989).
2. The study was conducted by the Social Welfare Research Institute at Boston College and was funded by the T. B. Murphy Foundation Charitable Trust. With only a few exceptions, respondents possessed a net worth well in excess of \$1 million and included several who appear on lists of the most wealthy Americans. For a detailed description of the sample, methodology, and interview protocol, see Schervish and Herman (1988). A comprehensive presentation of the findings in regard to the practice of philanthropy among the wealthy appears in Schervish (in preparation).
3. All names, along with any geographic or organizational descriptions that could be used to identify specific indi-

viduals, have been changed to preserve the anonymity of the respondents.

4. It is true that survey research indicates that on average religiously committed people give more time and money. It remains unclear, however, what percentage of this disproportionate inclination toward charity reflects giving to support buildings, personnel, and activities from which givers directly benefit as church members—what we call consumption philanthropy (Schervish and Herman, 1988)—and what percentage derives from the specific kind of religious concern for others I describe below. Moreover, all such statistics are summary measures that state the overall impact of religion as averaged over the lives of many individuals, some of whom embody a substantial effect of religion and some of whom embody little or no effect. Therefore, without the assistance of other information, statistical findings alone are incapable of filling in the causal linkages by which religious concern encourages other-directed giving.

References

- Fraker, A. T. *Religion and American Life: Resources*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1989.
- Giddens, A. *The Constitution of Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Hodgkinson, V. A., and Weitzman, M. S. *Giving and Volunteering in the United States: Findings from a National Survey*. Washington, D.C.: INDEPENDENT SECTOR, 1988.
- Hodgkinson, V. A., Weitzman, M. S., and Kirsch, A. D. *From Belief to Commitment: The Activities and Finances of Religious Congregations in the United States*. Washington, D.C.: INDEPENDENT SECTOR, 1988.
- Layton, D. N. *Philanthropy and Voluntarism: An Annotated Bibliography*. New York: The Foundation Center, 1987.
- Marcel, G. *The Mystery of Being*. Chicago: Regner, 1950.
- Schervish, P. G. *The World of Wealth and the Vocation of Charity:*

- Strategies of Philanthropy Among America's Rich*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. In preparation.
- Schervish, P. G., and Herman, A. *Final Report: The Study on Wealth and Philanthropy*. Boston: Social Welfare Research Institute, Boston College, 1988.
- Schillers, N. "Concept of Religion." In K. Rahner (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*. New York: Seabury Press, 1975.
- Smith, H. *The Religions of Man*. New York: Harper & Row, 1958.



SOCIAL WELFARE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

BOSTON COLLEGE

MCGUINN 515

140 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE

CHESTNUT HILL, MA 02467

TEL: 617-552-4070

FAX: 617-552-3903

EMAIL: swri508@bc.edu

WEBSITE: www.bc.edu/swri