

Review: The Wealth of Religions

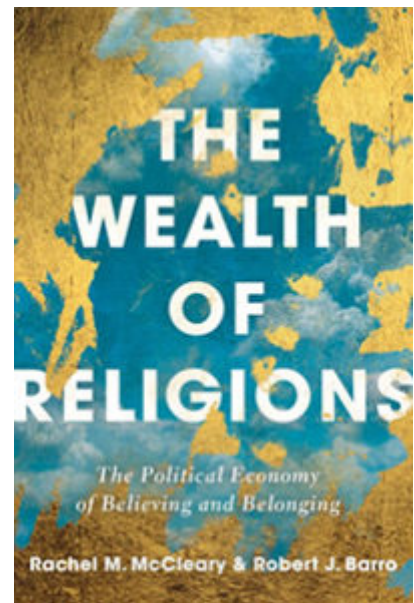
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The Wealth of Religions: The Political Economy of Believing and Belonging

By Rachel M. McCleary and Robert J. Barro (Princeton)

Why would anyone be committed to a religious group that demanded complete loyalty? What effect do government regulations have on the growth and quality of religious groups? How does religion contribute to a country's economic growth? These questions and more are the subject of *The Wealth of Religions*.

Robert J. Barro, an economist, and Rachel M. McCleary, a moral philosopher, apply various research models to questions of religion and society to examine the relationship between the two. Each of the eight chapters carefully guides the reader through the researchers' approach, the models considered and applied, their findings and a restating of conclusions.



The researchers' analysis goes beyond considering economic effects of religion to the influence of religion on social capital. To use the economic metaphor: As religion gains market share, what is it able to accomplish?

How does it change to maintain market share?

One of the interesting findings relates to the effect of government regulation of religion on the quality of religious offerings. Another interesting set of findings relates to the factors contributing to the economic differences between Islamic and non-Islamic countries.

The Wealth of Religions is a good read for those who enjoy sociological, political and economic research. Furthermore, those interested in the sociology of religion, the effects of church growth, and the influence of religion on society will find this book fascinating.

For those unfamiliar with research writing, the authors provide ample explanation of unfamiliar terms and state and restate their process and conclusions.

Eric Black, executive director/editor/publisher

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