Welfare and Religion in 21st Century Europe
Volume 1: Configuring the Connections

Edited by Anders Bäckström, Uppsala University, Sweden and Grace Davie, University of Exeter, UK, Ninna Edgardh and Per Pettersson, Uppsala University, Sweden.

‘… the contributors ably show how questions of religious identity and belonging are central in understanding the welfare-religion relationship. … The researchers forecast a greater role for religious groups in welfare provision, not only because of financial strains in most systems and aging populations, but also because of the more personal approach and cultivation of ‘local knowledge’ that characterize these groups. Yet, at the same time, the secularization well advanced in most of these countries means that churches are struggling to sustain their core functions, and that welfare recipients may not be very receptive to a faith-based approach.’

Religion Watch

Historically, European churches have played a large part in the provision of welfare. Responsibility, however, has gradually shifted to the state—a shift that forms an integral part of the process of secularization and one that has been readily accepted by European populations. But what happens when the state itself begins to recede—a process that is occurring in most, if not all, European societies for a wide variety of reasons? The implications for welfare are considerable, not least for the role of the churches which begin to resume the responsibilities previously shed but in new and different ways. This book looks at the connections between religion and welfare in Europe, exploring in detail eight European societies—Sweden, Norway, Finland, Germany, England, France, Italy and Greece. The different theological traditions, different church-state relationships and different welfare regimes are all examined. The analysis is based on first-hand empirical research which examines not only the changing situation on the ground, but attitudes towards this within a range of different constituencies—the churches, local government and the general public. Particular attention is paid to the significance of gender in both the process of change and in attitudes towards this. Welfare and Religion in 21st Century Europe Volume 1 represents comparative research at its best and highlights key policy implications for the future.

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Welfare and Religion in 21st Century Europe
Volume 2: Gendered, Religious and Social Change

Edited by Anders Bäckström, Uppsala University, Sweden, Grace Davie, University of Exeter, UK, Ninna Edgardh and Per Pettersson, Uppsala University, Sweden.

This book considers the changing nature of both religion and welfare in Europe. It is the second of two volumes. Together they examine the function of majority churches as agents of social welfare in eight European societies (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Germany, England, France, Italy and Greece). Volume 2 explores the connections between religion and welfare from three perspectives: sociology, gender and theology. The authors ask new questions about the religious and the secular and the implications of each for the process known as secularization. Looking carefully at the gendered nature of care, they ask why women predominate so noticeably in both religion and welfare at least in the delivery of service. With regard to theological discourse, they explore the ways in which religious belief operates as an independent variable in the construction of welfare systems.

Contents: Preface; The WREP project: building bridges, Anders Bāckström, Grace Davie, Ninna Edgardh and Per Pettersson; Majority churches as agents of European welfare: a sociological approach, Per Pettersson; A gendered perspective on welfare and religion in Europe, Ninna Edgardh; Thinking theologically about welfare and religion, Thomas Ekstrand; Welfare and religion in Europe: themes, theories and tensions, Anders Bäckström and Grace Davie; Appendix; Index.

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