

PALGRAVE STUDIES IN RELIGION, POLITICS, AND POLICY



# FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND SOCIAL WELFARE

*Associational Life and Religion in  
Contemporary Western Europe*



EDITED BY  
PAUL CHRISTOPHER MANUEL AND MIGUEL GLATZER



# Palgrave Studies in Religion, Politics, and Policy

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This series originated under the co-editorship of the late Ted Jelen and Mark J. Rozell. A generation ago, many social scientists regarded religion as an anachronism, whose social, economic, and political importance would inevitably wane and disappear in the face of the inexorable forces of modernity. Of course, nothing of the sort has occurred; indeed, the public role of religion is resurgent in US domestic politics, in other nations, and in the international arena. Today, religion is widely acknowledged to be a key variable in candidate nominations, platforms, and elections; it is recognized as a major influence on domestic and foreign policies. National religious movements as diverse as the Christian Right in the United States and the Taliban in Afghanistan are important factors in the internal politics of particular nations. Moreover, such transnational religious actors as Al-Qaida, Falun Gong, and the Vatican have had important effects on the politics and policies of nations around the world. Palgrave Studies in Religion, Politics, and Policy serves a growing niche in the discipline of political science. This subfield has proliferated rapidly during the past two decades, and has generated an enormous amount of scholarly studies and journalistic coverage. Five years ago, the journal *Politics and Religion* was created; in addition, works relating to religion and politics have been the subject of many articles in more general academic journals. The number of books and monographs on religion and politics has increased tremendously. In the past, many social scientists dismissed religion as a key variable in politics and government. This series casts a broad net over the subfield, providing opportunities for scholars at all levels to publish their works with Palgrave. The series publishes monographs in all subfields of political science, including American Politics, Public Policy, Public Law, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory. The principal focus of the series is the public role of religion. "Religion" is construed broadly to include public opinion, religious institutions, and the legal frameworks under which religious politics are practiced. The "dependent variable" in which we are interested is politics, defined broadly to include analyses of the public sources and consequences of religious belief and behavior. These would include matters of public policy, as well as variations in the practice of political life. We welcome a diverse range of methodological perspectives, provided that the approaches taken are intellectually rigorous. The series does not deal with works of theology, in that arguments about the validity or utility of religious beliefs are not a part of the series focus. Similarly, the authors of works about the private or personal consequences of religious belief and behavior, such as personal happiness, mental health, or family dysfunction, should seek other outlets for their writings. Although historical perspectives can often illuminate our understanding of modern political phenomena, our focus in the Religion, Politics, and Policy series is on the relationship between the sacred and the political in contemporary societies.

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Paul Christopher Manuel • Miguel Glatzer  
Editors

# Faith-Based Organizations and Social Welfare

Associational Life and Religion in Contemporary  
Western Europe

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macmillan

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## PRAISE PAGE

“This timely book makes a distinctive contribution to the growing literature on welfare and religion in Europe. Drawing from political science perspectives, it is theoretically innovative and empirically rich. In-depth case studies bring to life the following paradox: the growing presence of the churches in the delivery of welfare in an increasingly secular Europe. I recommend it warmly.”

—Grace Davie, *Professor of Sociology, University of Exeter, UK*

“This is a wonderfully illuminating book presenting a novel incisive assessment of the role played by religious-based organizations in deeply secularized Western Europe. By covering a representative selection of country cases, the volume addresses salient issues, such as their contribution to associational life, to the enrichment of the public debate and, therefore, to the advancement of democracy. Further, the analysis focuses on the activities deployed on behalf of the poor and the socially excluded, alleviating the long-lasting burden on welfare states generated by the crisis, intense immigration flows and deepening of inequalities. A must-read for both comparative welfare scholars and students and policy-makers.”

—Ana M. Guillén, *Professor of Sociology, University of Oviedo, Spain*

“Raising the core question, ‘what would happen to welfare services in Europe if faith-based organizations ceased to exist,’ this book provides insight on a new approach to theoretical understanding of faith-based organizations in contemporary European society, grounded on empirical

solid information. Given the long-term tension between religious and secular, the historical churches—both Catholic and Protestant—have sought to compensate for their weakening in church membership and attendance and their normative influence on ethical life issues, by developing new forms of societal engagement in line with the principles of the social doctrine of the churches and, to that extent, introducing new types of solidarity. Faith-based organizations related to those churches have shown the ability to (re)create various kinds of mechanisms to promote to social capital and integration of individuals (immigrants, refugees, homeless people, marginalized) at various levels. In this regard, the book shows, in a comparative perspective, and in a valid way, that the religious institutions in Western Europe continue to play a key role in the social integration. As the editors emphasize, the faith-based organizations, following a strategic silence and a muted vibrancy, meet the failures of the welfare state and provide an indispensable service to democracy.”

—Helena Vilaça, *Professor of Sociology, University of Porto, Portugal*

“The book is a fundamental contribution to social capital and social policy literature as it sheds new light on the influence of faith organizations, critically discussing the idea that secularization and losing importance of religion are the only phenomena at play. By analysing theoretical issues in eight different case studies, the book is a must-read for all scholars interested in better understanding the relation between religion, politics and society in twenty-first-century Western Europe.”

—Emanuele Ferragina, *Assistant Professor of Sociology, Sciences Po-Paris, France*

“Understudied for too long, the relationship between religion and social policy is a key issue this volume tackles by providing detailed analysis of the social welfare involvement of faith-based organizations in eight Western European countries. This excellent volume suggests that, despite secularization, these organizations remain deeply involved in social provision, an area in which they exhibit ‘muted vibrancy.’ The volume is a must-read for scholars interested in the role of faith-based organizations in social policy.”

—Daniel Béland, *Canada Research Chair and Professor in Public Policy, Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, Canada*

*But if I am doing them, then have belief in the works even if you have no belief in me...*  
*John 10:38*

*“To the rebirth of a Europe weary, yet still rich in energies and possibilities, the  
Church can and must play her part.”*

*Pope Francis, at the reception of Charlemagne Prize, May 6, 2016*

*To Professor Ted Jelen (1952–2017)*  
*With our gratitude to a giant in the scholarly field of religion and politics*

## FOREWORD

The issue of societies' secularization and associated political implications has long been an important focal point of political science and political sociology. Western European countries are collectively notable in having high degrees of secularization, often with attendant ramifications for political competition and outcomes. However, in recent years, "even" the most secular of Western European countries, such as France and the United Kingdom, have experienced increasing involvement of various types of religious or cultural actors, including explicitly political statements from churches and expressions of desire for equality from Muslims and other immigrant groups. Partly as a result, it is now widely agreed that secularization theory is significantly flawed because it predicted the demise of religion, when according to many scholars, the opposite is happening. Secularization theory anticipated that as countries developed economically and more generally became "modernized," they would as a result necessarily and irrevocably become more and more secular, leading eventually to the public "demise" of religion.<sup>1</sup> What happened, however, was different, defying secularization theory's prediction of the death of religion. "Even" in Western Europe, where regional countries without exception continue to exhibit clear signs of secularization, the issue is by no means as clear cut as once believed by many scholars.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, it would be wrong to assume that religion continues simply to "return from the dead" in Western Europe, that is, demonstrating clear ability to apply more and more influence on political outcomes in regional countries, leading to a position where religion will again resume

a position of authority in relation to secular political power. But what we are seeing in this regard is not simply the decline of secularization theory as a powerful explanatory tool for the relationship between religion and politics in Western Europe. Instead, we are witnessing novel forms of interaction, including in relation to social welfare delivery by faith-based organizations. Instead, there is what appears to be a “middle way” between, on the one hand, what secularization theory predicts (i.e., the claim that religion will eventually diminish substantially—or even disappear—as a public force) and the “return of religion” approach (i.e., the claim that religion is inexorably “returning” as a powerful and persuasive political actor, as a consequence of post-secularization and, as a result, reassuming a significant role in political discourse and competition in regional countries in Western Europe). In short, the premises of secularization theory remain a useful starting point to understand religion’s current social and political roles in the countries of Western Europe. It is, however, very difficult to accept empirically all aspects of the theory, especially a core prediction: religion’s universal public decline to irrelevance.

An area where faith-based organizations have been increasingly significant is in relation to social welfare and the delivery of associated benefits to those who need them. This is not to suggest that faith-based organizations use their capacity in relation to social welfare delivery to “entrap” the unwary and convert them to the faith-based organizations’ faith tradition. Instead, more generally and, from a political science and political sociology point of view, more interesting, it may be that this is indicative of a growing socio-political involvement of “religion” in the countries of Western Europe in response to two developments. The first is partial withdrawal of the state from social welfare delivery because of the allegedly “unsupportable” costs of continuing to provide European-style “welfare states” and the associated unwillingness of (some or many) tax payers to support such governments and their “waste” of their pounds and Euros. The second issue is the symbiotic growth of civil society organizations, including faith-based organizations, which in many regional countries have sought to step into the breach in the absence of the state’s inability or unwillingness any longer to meet its historic social welfare obligations and goals.

The case-studies of the current book are fascinating. It is great to have such well-written and comprehensive case-studies covering various countries in Western Europe, while the theoretical implications are covered

impressively by the editors in the volume's thoughtful introductory chapter. Overall, the book is a delight to read, and while this is not of course the only purpose of a social scientific volume, it is a great boon in an era when good writing is at a premium.

London Metropolitan University  
London, UK

Jeffrey Haynes

## NOTES

1. Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (London: Wiley/Blackwell, 2002).
2. Petr Kratochvíl and Tomáš Doležal, *The European Union and the Catholic Church* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Lucien Leustean, *Representing Religion in the European Union* (London: Routledge, 2013).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Miguel Glatzer and Paul Manuel first developed the idea for this volume at the July 2015 Annual Meeting of the Council for European Studies at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po) in Paris, France. They were each presenting conference papers on different aspects of social welfare programs and religion in Europe, and thought that a volume such as this could make an original theoretical contribution.

There are many people who made this volume possible. We are especially thankful to Ted Jelen and Mark Rozell, the series editors at Palgrave Studies in Religion, Politics, and Policy, who believed in this project. Thanks also to Chris Robinson and Michelle Chen, our editors at Palgrave Macmillan, as well as to John Stegner, our wonderful editorial assistant at Palgrave Macmillan. We are most grateful to Heather Dubnick for her masterful copyediting job. We are indebted to the anonymous reviewers of the original proposal for the book for their very useful comments. Our project enjoyed the generous support from the provost's office at LaSalle University. We would like to thank our families for their patience, encouragement, and support of our work.

Paul Manuel presented an earlier version of the introduction and the chapter on Portugal at the Annual Meeting of the Council of European Studies at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Paris on July 8, 2015. He is grateful to the panel chair, Simon Griffiths (Goldsmiths, University of London), and the panel discussant, Priska Daphi (Goethe University Frankfurt/Main), for their helpful and insightful comments. Paul Manuel is also grateful to another set of people who provided insights and edits: Madalena Eça de Abreu; Rui Branco; Ana Carvalho; Maria Cláudia

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Miguel Glatzer presented papers on civil society, the welfare state, and non-profit contracting at meetings of the Council for European Studies and the Society of the Advancement of Socio-Economics as well as at a conference at the University of Lisbon. He warmly thanks Ugo Ascoli, Rui Branco, Ana Guillen, Tiago Fernandes, Robert Fishman, Amílcar Moreira, Emmanuele Pavolini, Maria Petmesidou, and Dimitri Sotiropoulos for rich discussions and insightful comments.

A number of the contributors to this volume participated in the September 2017 European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) in Oslo, at the “Religious Organizations in European Welfare States in the Twenty-First Century” panel, co-chaired by Matthias Kortmann of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and Josef Hien of the Università degli Studi di Milano. Annette Leis-Peters presented on the interaction of religious organizations as welfare providers and the public in Norway and Sweden; Xabier Itçaina presented on the relationship between moralizing capitalism and solidarity alternatives. This Oslo meeting also provided these volume contributors a wonderful opportunity to discuss the key themes of this present volume.

Sadly, Professor Ted Jelen, a giant in the field of religion and politics, and one of the editors of the Palgrave Studies on Politics, Religion, and Policy—of which this volume is a part—died during the final stages of this project. Ted’s scholarly work, including the 16 books he authored, co-authored, or edited, as well as some 150 journal articles and book chapters, helped the academy rediscover the vital variable of religion in the larger processes of political, social, and cultural change. He was a big supporter of this volume. *It is our honor to dedicate this work to him.*

Washington, DC  
Philadelphia, Fall 2017

Paul Christopher Manuel  
Miguel Glatzer

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## CHAPTER 1

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# “Use Words Only If Necessary”: The Strategic Silence of Organized Religion in Contemporary Europe

*Paul Christopher Manuel and Miguel Glatzer*

The consideration of religious variables in comparative politics entered the scholarly discussion relatively late, but a number of important works over the past few years have considered the possibilities and obstacles religion presents to a democratic society.<sup>1</sup> Among other concerns, this literature examines how the work of religious interest associations might promote greater social capital, civic engagement, empowerment, and participation among the poor and other socially marginalized groups. This literature is consistent with the concept of muted vibrancy and builds on both the social capital and democratic deepening approaches.

The concept of muted vibrancy carves out a promising research area for how religion and politics, or even faith and culture, may interact in a society historically dominated by one religion. Derived from the work

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on Roman Catholicism in France (traditionally referred to as the eldest daughter of the church) by a number of scholars, including historian René Rémond, Jesuit philosopher Paul Valadier, and historian Steven Englund in a notable 2001 review article in *Commonweal*, this concept suggests that social scientists need to move beyond the lens normally applied to the question of Catholicism in contemporary Europe (i.e., it is a dying, anti-modern, anti-rational, and conservative institution) and instead examine its ongoing societal functions.<sup>2</sup> Valadier, for instance, examines the continued relevance of Catholicism in French society in his 1999 book *L'Eglise en Procès: Catholicisme et Société Moderne*.<sup>3</sup> The Spanish Jesuit Gonzalo Villagrán has asked similar questions about the church in Spanish society.<sup>4</sup> For his part, Steven Englund, in “L'Eglise de France, The Church in a post-religious age,” following Rémond, laments the ongoing anti-clericalism of the French intelligentsia, and asks “why is [French Catholicism] ... judged on its past and not its present.”<sup>5</sup> The muted-vibrancy approach seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the contemporary role of lived religion in a given society and therefore avoid the pitfalls of a facile reading of the role of religion in the public square.

We use the term *muted vibrancy* to denote two elements that are key to our understanding of the work of faith-based organizations in contemporary Western Europe. First, while acknowledging that reduced religious attendance, secularization, and increased religious pluralism constitute important trends, it is important not to overstate the case. As the chapters in this volume illustrate, identification with the dominant traditional religions (Roman Catholicism, Anglican, Lutheran, and Greek Orthodox Christianity) still plays a vital role in the lives of large percentages of the population. Traditional religious observance and identity is diminished, but is certainly not dead.

Second, we recognize that churches have lost most of the high-profile battles on moral issues that dominate much of the press coverage and discussion. Whereas many states once took their cues explicitly or implicitly from religious traditions on matters of divorce, abortion, and homosexuality, particularly in countries where Catholicism or Greek Orthodoxy was dominant, the battles to preserve such traditions have been decisively lost. Legalization, or in some cases, decriminalization, of abortion, divorce, and gay marriage now constitutes an important part of law across Western Europe; further, these previously controversial positions now enjoy majority support in virtually every Western European country.

Having lost these battles, churches essentially face three choices: they could perhaps continue to loudly proclaim their opposition; second, they could engage in doctrinal or structural reform to reflect contemporary social views (expanded roles for women, or the ability of the divorced to receive communion); or, third, they could possibly focus on other relatively non-controversial issues (compassion, good works), or where public opinion is still in flux (policy on migration and refugees). Building on that third option, this volume argues that while churches may have lost power and prestige relative to the past, they remain powerful, if often unheralded, vital actors in social services and welfare provision; we use the concept of muted vibrancy as a lens through which to understand their contribution to West European civil society.

This theoretical approach also helps us overcome—as several of the authors in this volume note—a seeming paradox. That is, even as formal religious adherence declines and as the prestige of the church, rocked in some cases by scandals, diminishes, its role in the provision of services continues to grow. While the church may be muted in some respects (experiencing declines in attendance, rising secularism, losing battles on moral issues, and, in some cases, choosing to downplay its continued opposition to society’s new positions), it is vibrant in others, namely in its commitment to serving the poor and vulnerable.

Muted vibrancy is also in harmony with the notion of *strategic silence*. The “strategic actor” model, most notably developed by Carolyn Warner in *Confessions of an Interest Group*, contends that the post-Vatican II institutional Catholic Church has comported itself not unlike an interest group in the European public square—and this insight can be certainly be applied to other religious groupings in Europe.<sup>6</sup> There have been multiple efforts to influence public policies to ensure that health and welfare benefits are available to those in need, for example. At the same time, in some of our cases, the Catholic Church has been remarkably muted on national debates over abortion and same-sex marriage. We wonder if this represents a sort of “strategic silence” on behalf of the religious groupings to de-emphasize politically divisive social issues where the battle has been lost in favor of the important work of meeting basic human needs and of advocacy on issues not yet settled in the public arena.

We argue that the literature on social capital and civic engagement is consistent with the emphasis on social services, attention to socio-economic needs, and response to new social risks that the concept of muted vibrancy tries to highlight. Putnam has argued that social capital,

meaning “features of social life—networks, norms, and trust—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives,” is necessary to the promotion of a robust associational life in a democracy.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Schmitter suggests that “interest associations may be important (if subsidiary) sites at which the legitimacy of democracy is accorded ... therefore the long-term viability of a given democratic regime may come to depend on the configuration and behavior of such.”<sup>8</sup> Stepan has noted as well that “democracy should not be considered consolidated in a country unless, among other things, there is an opportunity for the development of a robust and critical civil society.”<sup>9</sup> Combined, there is a shared concern that social scientists examine “bottom-up” civic associations—religious or secular—in order to effectively assess how well such social groupings add to democratic processes, legitimacy, and stability.

For its part, the deepening democracy scholarship is particularly concerned with how social divisions may prove to be an obstacle for democratic consolidation. Fishman argues that “the literature on the deepening of democracy emphasizes institutional factors in the opening—or closing—of spaces for effective participation by the poor and other socially subordinate sectors, but also examines social movements and social pressure from below.”<sup>10</sup> If interest associations are to have a crucial legitimizing function in consolidating new democratic regimes, one of the critical questions involves how, exactly, they may accomplish that task. Archon Fung points to six contributions that civic associations make in the process of deepening democracy, including the intrinsic good of association and freedom to associate; civic socialization and political education; popular resistance and the checking of power; interest representation; public deliberation and the public sphere; and direct governance.<sup>11</sup> With these, Fung builds on Paul Hirst’s argument in *Associative Democracy* that “the state should cede functions to such associations, and create the mechanisms of public finance whereby they can undertake them.”<sup>12</sup> To the degree that religious organizations might perform these functions, they may indeed be promoting democratic deepening.

The scholarship on faith-based interest associations specifically asks how these groups might deepen associational life in a newly consolidated democratic regime and thereby facilitate and stabilize democratic regimes. For instance, Pazit Ben-Nun Bloom and Gizem Arikan have recently found “that communal aspect of religious social behavior increases political interest and trust in institutions, which in turn typically lead to more support for democracy.”<sup>13</sup> Other research also supports these findings.