

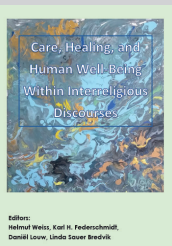
Consideration of believers' relief actions among the needy in different religious traditions



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Care, healing, and human well-being within interreligious discourses

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Consideration of believers' relief actions among the needy in different religious traditions

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The recent Covid-19 pandemic illustrated the interrelatedness of a global world, consisting of a network of shared and competing interests. This book intends to confront some of the challenges, presented to the quality of humanity by a world faced, for example, by natural catastrophes that seemingly accompany global warming, the human tragedies that accompany ethnic conflicts and regional wars, and the effects of deep-seated historical social and economic inequality, that doom many victims to a life of poverty driven by a lack of opportunity to skills development, and accompanied by the hopelessness of unemployment, crime and violence against women and children. The context of the discussion about human well-being includes the diverse cultural settings, and religious convictions of global citizens within the common quest for multi-faceted spiritual wholeness, that is becoming increasingly imperative for human survival.

The presupposition used by this book, published by the Society for Pastoral Care and Counselling (SIPCC), is that religion and culture are intertwined and shape a vital part of the conditions of human life. The implication is that interreligious endeavours can significantly contribute to an ordinary human sense of meaning, hope and dignified self-worth to promote the healing of life. The book's interreligious debate occurs against the background of the interplay between responsibility, a sense of justice that requires a moral sensitivity, and a habitus of compassionate involvement in the suffering of less-fortunate people. Furthermore, the well-being of humanity is served by encountering and being with the foreign and diverse 'other', as a prerequisite to becoming human.

The four sections in the book consist of an introductory part, discussing methodological questions that focus on the common ground and differences between approaches to pastoral care and counselling. Religious and cultural diversity necessitates a team approach to providing help to communities in need, as well as different methodological and theoretical approaches of which the perspective of each approach can contribute to the interfaith discourse. The context is the notion of hospitality and the dialogue with the foreign 'other'. How can it be conceptualised and manifested effectively? In the next section, the authors concentrate on faith communities that reflect human care, healing and well-being within the Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist traditions. How do they understand the divine and determine their approach to human suffering, vulnerability and spirituality? Do their practices contribute to cooperation and understanding, or do they further divide faith communities through dogmaticism and fanaticism? A significant trend running through the discourse is that love, exercised through compassion, is a necessary prerequisite for human well-being.

The third section concentrates on the challenges diverse cultural contexts pose to faith communities, concerned with serving the well-being of humanity. For example, what is required for effective past counselling to people impoverished by their political and economic practices, that resulted in the loss of their identity? It implies that faith communities should also concern themselves with social justice and eco-healing. The last section looks at the exercise of spiritual care by caregivers, working with victims and refugees in the medical, law enforcement and related fields. How can they promote human well-being in pluralistic organisations? How does their faith practice determine their methods and approaches? Do they care for everyone, regardless of the 'other's' faith tradition or spiritual practice?

The result is an array of theoretical and practical answers, based on a wide variety of experiences to the questions and challenges, posed by the quest for the practice of interreligious care for human well-being. It will be valuable for caregivers in different disciplines, strategists of relief

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agencies, pastors and church leaders and theologians interested in the interfaith dialogue.

The book's purpose, to illustrate the various discourses on care, healing and well-being that contribute to human survival in a vulnerable world, endangered by an unknown future, is realised effectively by the representation of authors from all the various traditions. As a rule, their articles reflect solid and believable empirical research and well-argued conclusions, although there are some exceptions. The reader will clearly find unintended trends among the different descriptions of applicable and relevant practices for future application by caregivers and faith communities.

The authors represent a diversity of caregivers, and include religious scholars, historians, theologians, psychologists, linguists, counsellors and chaplains. As is the case with most compiled works, the various articles differ in the quality of argumentation, although the editors did an excellent work to ensure that every article is well-written and contains valid arguments.

The book makes a valuable contribution to the complex interreligious discourse about care and counselling, amidst one of the most critical challenges facing contemporary humanity, its physical, spiritual and emotional well-being, within the context of the ever-changing postmodern world.