

Michael S. Hogue and Dean Phillip Bell. *Interreligious Resilience: Interreligious Leadership for a Pluralistic World*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024. 231 pages.

Interreligious Resilience: Interreligious Leadership for a Pluralistic World has arrived at a time when religious leaders, clergy, and chaplains are facing the dilemma of how to engage with colleagues and clients when views are so polarized politically at home and through violence and crises abroad. This book urges its readers to be more effective in working with diverse religious groups by building interreligious resilience through applying characteristics of vulnerability, intentionality, trust, and awareness (VITA). Interreligious resilience is described as a condition that “enables one to learn and grow through, rather than be threatened by, encounters with religious difference” (42). What is emphasized here is the “capacity for learning in contexts of diversity and change.” Building relationships and connections are key in this work, and VITA are important elements in “developing deeper and more effective interreligious leadership” (1). Authors Michael S. Hogue and Dean Peter Bell lay out their rationale and method in six chapters, with an introduction, notes, bibliography, and index. In the first four chapters (part one), they address interreligious history and modes, contexts, leadership, and resilience. They discuss and compare important definitions in the field of interreligious leadership and engagement—including religious supremacy and religious pluralism. They detail how legendary scholars such as Jeannine Hill Fletcher contributed to the field by prioritizing “lived experiences” (31). They commend Diane Eck’s masterful comparison of pluralism and tolerance (22–23), Catherine Cornille’s description of interreligious empathy and humility as a “necessary condition of dialog” (34, 32), and Eboo Patel’s beautiful description of “relationship” as a “positive, constructive, warm, caring cooperative engagement” that has “concern for the other’s well-being” (37). Qualities of leadership are also discussed at length, with comparisons made between traditional and contemporary leadership approaches. The fifth and sixth chapters (part two) spell out the “VITA pathway.”

In several sections of this book, models, theories, definition and practices are reviewed and compared in some detail: models of interreligious engagement (31), simple and complex resilience (42), models for cultural globalization (50), religious pluralism and religious fundamentalism (55), secularization theory/trans secular theories (56–58), and functionalist and phenomenological theories (110). It would have been helpful for the reader if this information were repeated in a tabular format or listed in an appendix, allowing the reader to reference these important studies and interreligious benchmarks at a glance.

Portions of this book are challenging. Examining effects from a systems mindset as a way to understand the many parts of a problem in terms of resilience is an approach many clergy and chaplains may not necessarily gravitate towards; systems

mindset language may take certain readers some time to process if this subject is not familiar to them (124). However, the authors did put significant effort into explaining it. Readers will appreciate the inclusion of fourteen case studies, each with suggested guiding questions, as an illustration of how the VITA pathway can be utilized. Case studies were selected to cover the various contexts that impact interreligious engagement (44). Thus, the reader is given three case studies involving situations pertaining to clergy, two concerning chaplains, and nine about interreligious community social activism involving religious leaders. More chaplaincy case studies in the various fields of chaplaincy (campus, hospital, prison, and military) would be a great addition for the next edition.

Interreligious leaders, clergy, and chaplains who are interested in working with people of diverse faiths will find this book an excellent resource. Professors who teach courses in interreligious studies, a subject that is becoming increasingly popular in seminaries and universities, will appreciate the time the authors took to review the literature and highlight the foundation, research, and trajectory of inter-religious experiences. Those who teach courses in ethics or leadership will find this book useful and relevant—as will students completing their Doctor of Ministry in subjects linked to chaplaincy and interreligious engagement. The case studies cover a lot of ground, and the “suggested guiding questions” for each individual case are excellent guides to what the focus should be in facilitating discussions and creating templates in a class. While the reader may not agree with every position taken in this book, I highly recommend it as a source of important information on the field of interreligious engagement and an aid to deep reflection on the subject.

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