

Religious Leadership: A Reference Handbook

Sharon Henderson Callahan, ed. *Religious Leadership: A Reference Handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. 2013. 2 vols: 783 pp. \$350.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 9781412999083. Also available electronically via SAGE, Gale, EBL, EBSCOhost, ebrary, and Credo Reference; contact vendor for pricing.

Religious Leadership: A Reference Handbook, available in both print and electronic formats, is part of the SAGE Reference Series on Leadership. The goals of this series are clearly stated by the editor, Lucretia McCulley, a liaison librarian for leadership studies at the University of Richmond. Leadership studies, as a discipline, has emerged in the last twenty years by drawing “on established resources in the social sciences, humanities, and organizational management” that address this broad interest. McCulley contends that since leadership studies has typically been an interdisciplinary field, it has not had established resources devoted specifically to the topic. The handbooks from SAGE seek to fill this gap and to “provide a starting place for students who want an understanding of primary leadership topics within a particular discipline. Each chapter covers key concepts, controversies and history, among other issues. They also introduce central figures within the discipline being covered” (xi).

RL is one of a number of handbooks on the topic of leadership that SAGE has recently published. *RL* is a two-volume set that “tackles issues relevant to leadership in the realm of religion. It explores such themes as the contexts in which religious leaders move, leadership in communities of faith, leadership as taught in theological education and training, religious leadership impacting social change and social justice, and more. Topics are examined from multiple perspectives, traditions, and faiths” (<http://www.sagepub.com/booksProdDesc.nav?prodId=Book235989>).

The print version of the handbook is broken into six broad sections with subjects that include “The U.S. Religious Context” and “Formal and Informal Leadership in Spiritual and Religious Traditions.” In the print edition these are further broken down into subtopics. For example, Part IV, “Dialogue and Action for the Common Good and Peacebuilding,” encompasses the subtopic “Leading Action for Common Good” and a “Spotlight” section that addresses “Leaders Who Have Shaped Religious Dialogue.” Leaders included range from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King to Fetullah Gulen and Karen Armstrong. The electronic version does not include these divisions, which were helpful in navigating the table of contents and in understanding the categorizations used in the handbooks.

To take a closer look at the content itself, Part II on “Formal and Informal Leadership in Spiritual and Religious Traditions” provides an example of material contained in *RL*. Within this section is a chapter entitled “Innovations in Mainline Protestant Leadership” by Anthony B. Robinson. Robinson is president of Congregational Leadership Northwest and a senior consultant with the Center for Progressive Renewal. This chapter briefly outlines “changes that have led to challenges for Mainline Protestantism while also looking ‘at a host of movements of renewal.’” The author describes seven renewal movements that are changing and affecting mainline Protestantism. He asserts that the “end of North American Christendom” and the “waning of modernity” represent a call that “requires learning and change, new thinking and new behavior on the part of churches and church leaders” (100-101). This chapter, like many of the others, is thoughtful and engaging. The authors and topics covered represent a wide range of perspectives on the forms that religious leadership can take throughout the world. To get a better understanding of the contributors to *RL*, a brief description of each is included at the beginning of Volume 1.

It’s hard to consider *RL* as a reference item without comparing the usability and navigation between the print and digital. The handbook contains a vast amount of information that is opened up with the digital version. The index for the print version is incomplete, which makes it slightly confusing to use. For example, I was interested in finding a particular faculty member who had written a chapter for this resource, and his name was not indexed in the print version. It was only found by looking through each chapter in the table of contents. Also, authors that are included in the “References

and Further Readings” at the end of each chapter had more linked material in the digital version. For instance, when I looked for Phyllis Tickle in the digital version, I was linked to chapters 12 and 97. However, in the print version only the chapter 12 reference was included. When I searched for the word “prophecy” in the digital version, I received results in eleven different chapters. “Prophecy” was not included in the print index at all. Another advantage of the electronic is the ability to easily cite articles in any of four styles: APA, Harvard, MLA, or Chicago. These can then be exported to seven different bibliographic managers, including common ones like Endnote and Refworks and surprising ones such as ProCite.

Because of these factors, plus the general climate of shrinking library budgets and a preference to purchase digital materials when available for reference, the electronic version is an easy choice. However, the collection development decisions and challenges do not stop there. *RL* can currently be purchased from six different sources with a choice among eight different purchase options. The SAGE e-book license, which was the first purchasing option made available, offers unlimited access and a perpetual license. Despite these attractive features, however, licensing directly with the publisher can be time consuming. *RL* is also available through YBP and as part of the Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL). If the handbook is purchased directly from Gale, it can be added to the library’s existing GVRL collection and is searchable within it. In our library’s experience, *RL* could not be added to GVRL retroactively after purchase directly from SAGE, so libraries that would prefer to make the handbook’s content available on the Gale platform should investigate the available options carefully.

Anecdotally, many of the students (MDiv and PhD) who passed by my desk while the handbook was sitting there paused to flip it open and express their interest. It easily garnered more attention than most of the items surrounding me. Leadership is a topic of current interest in theological education, and *RL* is a unique contribution with chapters written from a number of different perspectives covering many faith traditions. Whether you choose to buy the electronic or print version, it is sure to be a useful addition to your reference collection.

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