

***Interreligious Studies: Dispatches from an Emerging Field.* By Hans Gustafson. Foreword by Anna Halafoff. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020. xvi + 279pp. ISBN 9781481312547 \$49.95 hardcover.**

Hans Gustafson's *Interreligious Studies: Dispatches from an Emerging Field* contains essays by thirty-four scholars (plus Gustafson himself) organized under five headings: Sketching the Field, History and Method, Theological and Philosophical Considerations, Contemporary Challenges, Praxis and Possibility. By calling them "dispatches" Gustafson means that these essays are tightly focused, purposeful, and brief. (Most are fewer than five pages long.) Bookending the contents are Gustafson's introductory and concluding pieces in which he describes (with what might be called intentional awkwardness) the topic of this book as "an academic field of inquiry [that] examines, by one or several disciplinary methods, encounters that take place and relations that exist or existed, in the contemporary world or historically, between, within, and among groups with significant difference in worldview or lifeway, including religious, nonreligious, and secular traditions;" [4] and insists that "this volume represents but one step toward a greater self-definition" of this field. [270] In between, as that definition hints will be the case, authors have considerable latitude regarding terminology and themes. For example, while the matter of whether interreligious and interfaith studies are distinct—and if so, how—certainly is addressed, it is left unresolved; authors use the term they prefer. And who are those authors? This international roster is almost equally divided between interreligious studies scholars whose work I know well (thus whom I expect would be among the contributors to a volume such as this) and scholars who are new to me. The presence of so many familiar voices make this work feel like the continuation of a solid conversation begun elsewhere; the opportunity to hear new voices is stimulating.

Where other recent interreligious studies volumes have centered on "teaching, pedagogy, curricular development, and leadership competencies," [xiv] this book's focus is "scholarship and research" [xiii]. That is, it has provided a venue for investigating such questions about interreligious studies as "its object(s) of study, histories, methodologies, challenges, opportunities, ethics, and politics among others." [xiv] And so, we have an array of well-written, concise pieces that offer definitions, probe boundaries, delineate urgent concerns, call for decolonizing, consider how theology fits in, put forth practical applications, and help us see (from several angles) how we got to this place of having deep conversations about this multidisciplinary field. They are grouped well enough, but could be read in any order. Many, especially those in the "Praxis" section, should appeal to non-specialist readers—although the broad use of abbreviations (IRS for "interreligious studies", LR for "lived religion, and so on) may be off-putting to some. Specialists will appreciate *Interreligious Studies: Dispatches from an Emerging Field* as a reference volume. For instructors, it has interesting potential as a textbook. Individual chapters will be useful as in-class discussion-starters or as prompts for student research assignments. Essays can be paired for analysis. Each of this book's five sections might undergird a unit of a syllabus.

Put succinctly, *Interreligious Studies* is full of good material, beautifully presented. If anything falls short, it is its index. I would have preferred more detail. Be that as it may, this collection of dispatches is a wonderful resource—a fine gift from Hans Gustafson to an emerging field.

Lucinda Mosher, Th.D.
Senior Editor
Journal of Interreligious Studies
Faculty Associate in Interfaith Studies
Hartford Seminary



The views, opinions, and positions expressed in all articles published by *the Journal of Interreligious Studies* (JIRS) are the authors' own and do not reflect or represent those of the JIRS staff, the JIRS Board of Advisors, or JIRS publishing partners.