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Learning to Live Well Together: Case Studies in Interfaith Diversity by Wilson T. and Ravat R.

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Modern society presents challenges on how to constructively engage with diversity, of which the world's religions and ethical convictions are integral. Wilson and Ravat's book *Learning to Live Well Together: Case Studies in Interfaith Diversity* provides guidance on approaches towards improving interfaith relationships and practical examples. In so doing, it contributes to literature on learning organisations, bringing valuable insights from a contextual perspective, supporting a process towards a vision, as a continual aspiration, as described by Örtenblad (2013, pp. 7-8). The case studies bring to life the Fiol and O'Connor's (2007, p. 82) theorising of leadership interventions to incite "behavioral processes of discarding the old and experimenting with the new" in that Wilson and Ravat's (2007) book exemplify the need for "progressive refocus on positive possibilities and engaging people in activities to explore them".

Similar to comparative theology, interfaith emerged within Christianity (Clooney and Von Stosch, 2018), as is the case for this book; however, the authors make every effort to embrace diverse perspectives and view challenges from other religions towards overcoming potential biases and questioning assumptions. Their book catalyses open conversations about points of tension as well as points for further understanding and inclusiveness to arise between people of various values and belief systems.

While the interfaith movement is growing and has been explored from an American standpoint (see for instance McCormack, 2012; Edwards, 2016), analysis and reflections from other perspectives, including from the UK such as this book presents, has been limited. Yet, in the UK, there are more than 170 religions represented, and tensions persist that at times hinder peaceful coexistence. As the very nature of interfaith necessitates considering an array of viewpoints, and given the challenges internationally in maintaining harmonious relationships between peoples and nations alike, this book is a well-positioned and timely contribution.

Learning to Live Well Together begins, in Chapter 1, by outlining the Leicester Model of social cohesion and interfaith issues, spanning out from the context of the St. Philip's Centre to the UK. The authors acknowledge the "complex adaptive" nature of faiths in society (p. 16), and through a historical overview, point out suspicions that have arisen and deterrents enacted against diversity along the journey to the current more open and mixed society of Leicester. Thus, the authors are aware of past faults of the region and do not negate that these pitfalls could still



colour how integration occurs. A current point that could be controversial is that in the UK, religious affiliation is collected in census forms (p. 21), whereas in other countries such as France this is not done and is avoided in order to avoid persecution of any particular group.

Next, in Chapter 2, the St. Philip's Centre is introduced, within the interplay of cultures and religions, along with its efforts to "further the common good" through education training, resources and equipment, and development and support (p. 28). The authors describe how the Centre "embraces people from a wide variety of perspectives and backgrounds to serve the common good" and includes "people of all faiths and no faith" (p. 29) in its reflections. Distinction is made between doctrinal and "lived" religion, with examples of how Kashrut laws within Judaism are practised (pp. 32-35) to give deeper understanding on how faith can be enacted in daily life. These examples build up to their explanation for the need to go beyond simply tolerating and respecting others, to appreciating them (p. 36), creating the conditions for trust to flourish and enabling cooperation (p. 37). The authors then embark upon discussing what comprises "British values" and engage dialogue of how they could be taught (p. 39). As with the rest of this book, the authors relate this as being an ongoing process of learning, both within St. Philip's Centre, organisations, and society at large.

Then, the following four chapters each address a theme which together builds a foundation for interfaith cohesion. That of Chapter 3, Encounter, brings notions of interactions between individuals and groups, raising how we perceive and at times misperceive, or misunderstand others. A combination of description and illustrative examples brings to light how our outlook and assumptions influence our experiences with others and possible avenues for extending beyond our habitual ways of thinking. The theme of Chapter 4, Understand, outlines the concept of intrafaith and highlights symbols, rituals and ethics of prominent religious groups, with the aim of enhancing awareness and integration. The importance and value of learning and education about other backgrounds and faiths is clear, from the case studies of integration. Within Chapter 5's theme of Trust, the authors examine how trust can be cultivated, and how this strategy could prevent problems. An intangible and abstract concept, trust is suitably described in ways that give space for human aspects of care and compassion. In Chapter 6, Co-operate, the authors recount two areas of work that the Centre has carried out, and how a "relaxed, informal, non-pressured environment" can be conducive to aligning people towards shared goals. A salient theme, co-operation is explained as requiring effort, goodwill and compromise, as well as a vision of how people from diverse faiths can learn to co-exist peacefully.

Onward, Chapter 7 examines interfaith in this unfolding century, wrought with political tensions and economic inequality. The authors envisage a pathway forward with liberty and freedom, a scenario allowing for societies "where conflicts are solved peacefully" (p. 141). Towards this, the Centre's Catalyst program is mentioned as an initiative, teaching young adults about life skills and leadership, given religious or non-religious beliefs. Finally, Chapter 8 questions where to go from here, and broadens the issue of diversity to include other types, namely, LGBTQ, and recognising potential interplay of social, political and economic factors. In this, the book approaches addressing concerns that [Dreher and Smith \(2016\)](#) state, in that religion is intertwined with the global economy, and collective action is needed to bring about desired changes in society. Overall, this book guides society towards greater respect and compassion towards others, and as such, can be useful for politicians,

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non-governmental organisations, managers and practitioners alike, in addition to other audiences.

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