

Journal of Religious Leadership

GUIDELINES FOR BOOK REVIEWS

(GUIDELINES FOR ARTICLES AVAILABLE UNDER DIFFERENT COVER)

Book Review editor Michael Wilson has a list of books to review (receive a free book!), or you may suggest your own, at mwilson@lancasterseminary.edu. **No unsolicited reviews accepted.**

SUBMISSION STANDARDS FOR Book Reviews:

- 1) Yes, we are serious about the word limit. Stay close to 800 words. Yes, it will get returned to you for you to shorten it if it is too long.
- 2) Consider your audience. Your readership are people who are teaching and/or engaged in religious leadership. They want to think theologically and critically about leadership theory and practice. Consider whether and how this book would be helpful in a classroom, a boardroom, or a congregation. It is ok to name this directly at the end of the review and say, eg., “This would be a great book for introduction students to leadership” or “I would recommend this book for use with a church board but not in a classroom. While it is very practical, it does not try to present primary literature for critical engagement.”
- 3) The content of your review should engage these issues:
 - a. Descriptive work – what is the big argument?
 - b. Structure of the book – how is it laid out?
 - c. Analysis of content – what theories does it engage?
 - d. Audience – who would be helped most by this book?
- 4) We recommend that your book review be structured in this way:
 - a. First paragraph – introduce us to the book, the author(s), and the main argument of the book. What does this book intend to do/say?
 - b. Next paragraphs – Give us the structure and main points of the book. This is not evaluative work. This is letting the reader know what the author is attempting to say.
 - c. Final paragraph or two – This is where your voice emerges. You can let us know how this book would work/not work in your ecclesial context. You can pose questions you would want to answer. Finally, let us know where you would recommend this book would be helpful/useful in religious leadership.
- 5) We encourage you to engage theologically. Do remember that you are writing to a broad Christian audience, with readers from varying denominational, theological, and ecclesiological perspectives and backgrounds. While doing this, you are helping all of us think about the work of religious leadership. The question isn’t about our personal preferences – it is: *how does this author speak to the intended audience*. The intended audience may not be you or your denomination/theology. That’s ok, and it is ok to point that out. When we are critical, we want our comments to be more descriptive and analytical and not personal. We are not sycophantic, nor are we ad hominem. Engage critically without engaging negatively. Have an intellectual debate. And do not criticize personal preference. The question is – *does this book serve the purpose it sets out for itself?*
- 6) Remember that we live in a web of relationships, and we definitely want to treat others as we would want to be treated.