

Peter Clarke (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2009, pp. xvi + 1046, ISBN 978-0-19-927979-1. Review doi: 10.1558/arsr.v24i3.371.

This handbook has 54 chapters and their content covers the wide scope of research found in the discipline of sociology of religion. These chapters are divided into ten parts which are: I—Theory: Classical, Modern, and Postmodern; II—Method; III—Religion and Boundaries: Morality, Science, Irreligion, Art and Embodiment (Trance); IV—Religion and the State, the Nation, the Law; V—Globalization, Fundamentalism, Migration, and Religious Diversity; VI—Religious Collectivities and the Status and Role of the Religious Professionals (the Clergy); VII—Secularization and the Reproduction and Transmission of Religion; VIII—Religious Change: New Religions and New Spiritualities, Esotericism and Implicit Religion; IX—Religion and Ecology, Health, Social Issues, and Violence; X—Teaching the Sociology of Religion. The contributors of these chapters have been chosen from an impressive pool of top international academics in the field. Not only has the editor done a great job in finding leading academics to write on the most topical issues, but also all the contributors have written very informative pieces, using the most recent data and theories. All the chapters are a delight to read.

The underlying focus of this handbook aims towards a more organic understanding of religion within a global framework. By organic, the editor explains that the volume attempts to overcome the institutionalised understanding of religion by pointing to the fact that religion is not fixed and static, especially when taking a global framework. *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* is a celebration of religious vitality in the sense that there is an increase of dynamism, or ‘force’, or ‘scope’ of religion in the contemporary world. This vitality, as this handbook demonstrates, shows to the academic world that thinking of religion in the same way as in the past is no longer sustainable. There is a need to use a more sophisticated approach to the study of contemporary religions, and as such this handbook is a successful attempt.

It is an impressive volume that will delight the student as much as the erudite in the field. All academic libraries should order this volume as it will soon become an essential reference to any subject in the sociology of religion. It is a must for anyone who calls himself or herself a sociologist of religion to have a copy of this book on his or her bookshelf. It is also a useful volume for those who would like to familiarise themselves with the most recent discussions and findings in the field. The jacket mentions that each volume in the Oxford Handbook series offers an authoritative and state-of-the-art survey of current thinking and research in a specific field, and without any doubt, this description aptly fits this volume.

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