

BOOK REVIEWS



Craig T. Kocher, Jason Byassee, and James C. Howell, eds., *Mentoring for Ministry: The Grace of Growing Pastors* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 119 pp.

As Leighton Ford writes, “Leaders need safe times, safe places and safe people to keep going for the long run” (p. 69). His observation underscores the heart of the message that the twelve essays and the “Inconclusive Conclusion” drawn by Martin Marty offer in *Mentoring for Ministry*.

The book begins with a theological reflection on the mentoring relationship between Elizabeth and Mary in the Gospel of Luke in the Christian New Testament. In his rich essay “Mentoring the Mother of God,” Jeremy Troxler lays a foundation on which the other essays build. Elizabeth “has been given three of the chief pre-requisites for becoming a mentor: a life worthy of imitation, a wisdom worthy of being shared, and a character to which another’s well-being can be trusted” (p. 2).

The remaining eleven essays, in a form of spiritual autobiography, provide personal portraits through which the assertions made above take on flesh and become plausible practices. The rigors of the mentor-mentee relationship and the practices that make it formational are neither overlooked nor discounted, nor is its mutuality. As Will Willimon writes, “Mentoring is a fierce, focused and continuing conversation in which a mentor, attempting to be helpful to a protégé, is helped” (p. 49).

Mentoring for ministry, each would affirm, is not a rigid program but a relationship. This is where the book is especially helpful and, in fact, liberating. James Howell confesses to being promiscuous in his mentoring relationships; most are with authors across genres and centuries. “I never

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met any of them, but we're quite close" (p. 20). The relationships explored by others are deeply rooted within theological frameworks, communities of practice, personal relationships, and other forms of community. Many readers will be appreciative of the different generations' peculiar witnesses to the power of mentoring.

This book empowers supervisors/mentors to practice mentoring. It encourages theological field education students and those in the process of discernment to seek out these life-giving relationships. Those looking for a how-to manual on mentoring will find much more—practices, yes, but also delightful writing, the power of testimony, and a deep love for the church and its mission in the world. At the same time, the authors are mindful of the telos to which Augustine testifies of God's grace through Ambrose's mentoring impact on his life: "Unknowingly I was led by you to him, so that through him I might be led knowingly to you" (p. 79).

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