

BOOK REVIEWS



Jaco J. Hamman, *Becoming a Pastor: Forming Self and Soul for Ministry*, rev. and updated (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2014), 236 pp.

A faculty colleague at my seminary often said to people, “I like who you’re becoming.” I related, therefore, to the title of Hamman’s book, which infers that pastoral formation is a work in progress, not a place where someone arrives and proceeds to stay put, either emotionally or vocationally.

A feature of this book, new for the second edition, is Hamman’s approach of examining what ‘becoming’ means for different generations of pastoral leaders (Boomer, Xer, Millennial) in chapter 1. Although I usually bristle at being categorized in this manner, I found Hamman offering insights about my generation that are recognizable while readily observing that not everything shared will necessarily speak to all readers. Chapter 1 was helpful not only for exploring my own generation but also for reflecting on general traits my colleagues and students in other age groups bring to religious leadership. An opening quote from Margaret Mead in this chapter notes: “It is true that the continuity of all cultures depends on the living presence of at least three generations.” I would add to this how important it is to seek understanding of and partnership with our older and younger colleagues for the sake of the work to which we’re called.

Chapters 2 through 7 embrace the “forming self and soul” part of the book’s title by framing ‘becoming’ in terms of capacities: “The Capacity to Believe,” “The Capacity to Imagine,” “The Capacity for Concern,” “The Capacity to Be Alone,” “The Capacity to Use Others and Be Used,” and “The Capacity for Play.” This is all about the interior work of becoming, and each topic is deeply researched. Hamman writes, “You need to grow in emotion-

al intelligence and mindfulness, gaining language to describe what kind of formation you need and what is happening inside you" (p. 46). I wish a book such as this had been made available to me during my theological education. These chapters on capability would make a superb frame for a semester's course in ministry formation. But, it is never too late for us; *Becoming a Pastor* can be a resource and blessing at any stage in ministry.

Chapters 2 through 7 also address the "unbecoming leader," including the attributes of "someone whose capacities are compromised," which serves as a checklist of what our inner voices may be saying to us. The author is not finger-wagging but rather pointing out that all of us have unbecoming parts and that recognizing these is the first step toward exploring our inner spaces. Transformation of our sense of self is the goal, learning and growing through strengthening the six "core competencies" each chapter introduces. Some of our capacities are well developed; others are not. This is autobiographical work. "When you learn to tell about yourself, writes Hamman, "you truly live into your call to be a leader" (p. 299). Too often, we in ministry have considered such a focus to be self-indulgent. It is the opposite.

Becoming a Pastor holds the basic assumption that who you are—including your childhood and life experiences—determines the way you lead. Taking the time to do this essential work on the self is critical not only to our own lives and calling but to the people we seek to nurture and to lead in ministry and to all of our relationships. "'Unbecoming' describes the ways we lead that neither enhance the body of Christ or the communities we serve nor our own well-being." And, "'Becoming' speaks of a life-long journey of sanctification" (p. 210).

I recommend this book and thank Jaco J. Hamman for a readable, supportive, rich, and stirring tool on the art and practice of pastoral formation and vocation.

Nancy E. Hall
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