

## Dynamic Discernment: Reason, Emotion, and Power in Change Leadership

**Sarah B. Drummond**

*Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2019*

*(xx + 171 pages, ISBN 978-0-8298-2045-4, \$18.00)*

### Reviewed By

Karla L. McGehee  
*New Orleans Baptist  
Theological Seminary*

Sarah Drummond opens her text with a story that immediately draws readers into the powerful dynamics at play when a community of faith experiences change, controversy, and potential crisis. She weaves brief and pertinent stories throughout her book, encouraging readers to consider their own contextual dynamics with respect to change and how they react and adapt to this change. Drummond's desire is twofold: to challenge leaders to have healthy responses in the midst of change and to create a common vocabulary to define the dynamics of change so that all parties involved can work cooperatively instead of in opposition. The title *Dynamic Discernment* is purposeful. Dynamic intimates movement and engagement within an ever-changing community; discernment conveys that the goal of change is for organizations and communities to more closely resemble what God desires, not what the leader desires.

The book consists of five chapters, with the middle three chapters respectively devoted to the dynamics at work in an organization facing change: reason, emotion, and power. A theoretical concept is outlined in each chapter, which is then connected to a leadership practice. Drummond concludes the chapters with a fictional case study and workshop-style exercise to help the readers relate to and work through the change dynamic within their own organizational context. Throughout the book, the author shares her experiences as a seminary dean when the school transitioned from a freestanding institution to merger with a larger divinity school. She also recounts change experiences within her faith community. Drummond's transparency and skill in relating her own journey of discerning the dynamics of reason, emotion, and power—what she calls “change dynamics”—during significant and, at times, unsettling change lends both credibility and practicality to the discussion.

Her discourse on the three change dynamics is insightful and well-informed. Integral to the dynamic of employing reason during a time of change are visioning, making a time line, and creating an evaluation plan. To guide the reader, Drummond uses John Kotter's stages of change and considers each step in light of a faith-based community. When she turns to the dynamic of emotion, Drummond relies quite heavily on the work of Edwin Friedman, who promoted the “separate-yet-together” emotional mentality. To navigate change in a healthy manner, a leader is to refrain from being enmeshed with others; a leader must know where she “ends and another begins.” Finally, the author discusses power, the third change dynamic, by focusing on its correct use, which is to liberate others and not to enact oppression. In a liberating stance, the leader engages in intentional dialogue, creates genuine relationships, and fosters effective community building.

According to Drummond, the twenty-first-century leader is charged with “planning, guiding, and anchoring change.” To do this, a leader is to consider the three change dynamics of reason, emotion, and power—considering how each is employed, perceived, and at play throughout the change process.