Diane J. Chandler


*Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness* utilizes a cross disciplinary method with an emphasis on a holistic perspective to spiritual formation. This approach is consistent with the research interests and scholarship of its author, Regent University professor Diane J. Chandler, who intersects spirituality, self-care, theology, biblical texts, history and spiritual formation in her book. A commendable feature in this book is the breadth of theologians and historical figures employed in her argumentation ranging from evangelical thinkers, reformed theologians and liberation theologians. In addition, Chandler places significance to the renewing work of the Holy Spirit which is consistent with Regent University’s commitment to renewal theology.

Chandler designates spiritual formation as Christian and this categorization is important to the development of her thesis. Subsequently by defining spiritual formation as Christian it achieves the following: (1) disassociates spiritual formation from Eastern mysticism, (2) expands spiritual formation from simply being a contemplative activity by incorporating ethical engagement, (3) indicates the aim of Christian spiritual formation as conformity to Jesus Christ and restoration of the imago dei. Also, by Chandler positioning the work of the Holy Spirit within a Christian framework, it subtly contradicts the notion of the Holy Spirit operating in/among non-Christian communities as espoused by Amos Yong.

The author posits in chapter one an integrated approach to Christian spiritual formation as being necessary because humans are not one dimensional (i.e. spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical) but multi-dimensional. In chapter two, she undergirds her position by laying out four understandings related to the imago dei based on the various understandings of the Genesis account.
put forth in Christian tradition. These divergent theological notions throughout church history isolated the imago dei as rational, relational, responsible for creation or sanctification. However, Chandler reveals the limitations of each perspective using a combination of theology and the New Testament in one of the most lucid but thorough chapters in her book.

Chandler advances her argument for an integrated approach to Christian spiritual formation by rightly assessing disorder in one area of the self can affect multiple areas of a person's life. For example, emotional instability can negatively affects one's health, spirituality and vocation. Moreover, this multidimensional perspective correlates to her employment of a trinitarian model linked to Christian spiritual formation which holds together the love of God the Father, restoration of the imago dei through salvation in Jesus Christ and transformation by the work of the Holy Spirit as Christians progress toward wholeness of the self and relationships. Accordingly, Chandler puts forth seven areas to be included in an integrated approach to Christian spiritual formation: “(1) spirit, (2) emotions, (3) relationships, (4) intellect, (5) vocation, (6), physical health and wellness, and (7) resource stewardship” (17).

In chapter three, Chandler locates the love of God as the crux of Christian spiritual formation; because of God's love, Christians appropriately respond to God's love by expressing love to one's neighbor and living ethically. In her attempt to make known the love of God through the Trinity, Chandler focused her attention on the love of the Father but perhaps she could have given more consideration to the love of the Son. In chapters four to ten, the author expounds on each of the seven basic dimensions of spiritual formation. Chapter four begins with an exploration of the spiritual dimension of Christian spiritual formation and Chandler considers the spiritual to be the preeminent of the seven areas. Though the significance placed on spirituality is a standard consideration of spiritual formation, the author utilizes the focus on spirituality in a laudable way to draw attention to the vitality of spiritual disciplines and contemplative practice in the process of spiritual formation. The subtly of bringing this to light is that the Holy Spirit becomes active and central to spiritual formation. This is important because the Reformers placed such an emphasis on the Scripture to the neglect of the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter five pertains to emotional formation and explores the role early childhood emotional development contributes to emotional stability. In a section incorporating numerous scriptural citations, Chandler could have augmented her argument on childhood emotional development and spiritual formation with data from studies that correlate with the biblical references. Relational formation is the crux of chapter six and is significant as Chandler chal-