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Spiritual Formation for the Global Church

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Spiritual Formation for the Global Church

Abstract

Ryan A. Brandt and John Frederick. *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021. ISBN 978-0830855186. \$23.78.

Cover Page Footnote

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Spiritual Formation for the Global Church: A Multi-Denominational, Multi-Ethnic Approach, is a book that aims to be a global, multi-denominational, multi-ethnic effort in which evangelical Biblical scholars, theologians, and practitioners from around the world join together to represent the one body of Christ in pursuit of a cohesive yet diverse constructive theology and praxis of spiritual formation for the global church in the twenty-first century.¹ In order to accomplish the task of spiritual formation from a global perspective, a unified approach towards theology and oneness must be apparent. This is the heart of the contributors of this work. A global perspective on spiritual formation can change the lives of believers all over the world. The contributors of *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church* develop their argument throughout the narrative of their book, splitting it into three key parts. The first part evaluates biblical and theological study as spiritual formation—looking at New Testament theology, theological education, Biblical faithfulness, and spiritual theology. The second part of this book addresses the acts and elements of worship as spiritual formation—specifically analyzing liturgy as spiritual formation, the eucharist as spiritual formation, sacrifice and surrender as spiritual formation, and the beatific vision as spiritual formation. The third section of the book addresses Christ, contemporary culture, and spiritual formation. This section focuses on the Old Testament ethics and spiritual formation, second Peter, postmodernity, and spiritual formation, the Holy Spirit, supernatural interventionism, and spiritual formation, and spiritual formation through failure and faithful perseverance.

In an effort to seek spiritual formation through a global perspective, the contributors of this work attempt to dive deeper into theological, cultural, and practical elements of spiritual formation, so that their audience may be encouraged that hope indeed may be found through our differences and perspectives on spiritual matters. In an attempt to define the meaning and substance of spiritual formation, the editors are intentional in clarifying that spiritual formation has a variety of perceptions—rooted in one’s geographical location and upbringing.² In other words, depending on one’s denominational context and personal presuppositions, a variety of views on spiritual formation are established. This is both unique and profound. Michael J. Gorman writes that “Churches and students of the Bible—whether lay, clergy, or academics—in the West have often manifested certain perspectives with respect to the relationship between Scripture and spirituality.”³ The perspectives of those involved are never

¹ Ryan A. Brandt and John Frederick, *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church*, 1.

² Ryan A. Brandt and John Frederick, *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church*, 1.

³ Michael J. Gorman, *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church*, 17.

entirely in sync with one another. This is due to the cultural context, as well as the cultural lens that certain people groups read the Scriptures through. In other words, their hermeneutic is determined by a variety of variables and life circumstances.

The remainder of the book focuses on a variety of practical elements of the Christian faith being lived out on a daily basis. Contributors focus on practical ways for one to demonstrate and live out their spiritual formation in whatever context they may find themselves in. Sammy Alfaro focuses on theological education and spiritual formation, whereas Alfred Olwa hones in on biblical faithfulness and spiritual formation.⁴ These elements work in people's lives at different times, but they're at work nonetheless. Through this presumption, the author continues to expound on the primary thesis statement from Brandt and Frederick. Whether it be biblical faithfulness and spiritual formation, theological education of spiritual formation, spiritual theology and spiritual formation, liturgy, the Eucharist, sacrifice, beatific vision, Old Testament ethics, Second Peter and postmodernity, the Holy Spirit and supernatural intervention, or spiritual formation through failure and fail perseverance—there is a unified approach in the Spirit—that allows for all of these to reside in harmony with one another. This is the editor's goal.

Having various perspectives with a diverse group of authors might scare some. Perhaps it is because their theology is not dogmatic and centered around core theological beliefs and outcomes. This is understandable. Although, there is breath and life that stems from the diverse thought of theology. People come from various contexts all throughout the world and not everyone sees eye-to-eye with one another—even theologically. John Frederick and Ryan A. Brandt write:

It is crucial that we, the church catholic, recognize that the fellowship that we have through the Spirit by faith is a participation in the life of Christ, and therefore in the very life of God himself. Since we are partakers of the divine nature by means of the unity that we have in the Spirit, we must rightly understand our participation in the communion of the saints as a reality that exists not only across cultures and continents but also across the ages. The great Methodist theologian Thomas Oden has identified a tendency toward a form of “modern chauvinism” that is pervasive in the contemporary Christian church. This allergic attitude toward all things ancient considers everything that is premodern to be intrinsically inferior and in need of progressive replacement. As evangelicals, therefore, it is crucial that we model

⁴ Alfred Olwa, *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church*, 50.

our new forms of collaborative theological engagement within the framework of faithfulness provided by the apostolic rule of faith, which is evidenced through the ancient Creeds, and in the apostolic, infallible, Spirit-inspired witness of Holy Scripture.⁵

Frederick and Brandt give an in-depth perspective on how our fellowship is something that is interconnected throughout the history of humanity, dating back to the beginning of time. This interconnectedness is what produces a global growth of spiritual formation. Valid points are drawn out of this statement, although, not everything rooted in the ancient Creeds can be a basis for this argument. Humans have flaws and can make mistakes as they derive foundations for the Christian faith. God is capable of revealing and doing whatever He pleases to do. He can reveal and rewrite the Creeds in the form of another Creed through human conviction. The point is that having a dogmatic approach to theology can bring harm. No one had figured God out. Though a lot stated by the authors and editors is powerful, accurate, and revolutionary, nothing can be set in stone.

There is a significant need for global unity within the realm of spiritual formation. This book is strongly encouraged for any and all congregations to think through how to make a global impact holistically while remaining faithful to the historical teaching of theology.

⁵ Ryan Brandt and John Frederick, *Spiritual Formation for the Global Church*, 221.