

BOOK REVIEWS

SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE, By Lawton, D., Carenage: Lifegate, 2012, 199 pp. \$25.95.

Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory, first published in *Frames of mind* (1983), was swiftly recognized as a representation of the characteristics of human intelligence, personal learning styles, and behaviors. Gardiner claimed human intelligence was best explained as *intelligences* comprised of spatial, linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic facets. While Gardner (1999) hesitated to suggest a spiritual intelligence due to the variety of interpretations and definitions of the term, the discussion was nonetheless continued (Gardner, 2000; Hyde, 2004). The debate regarding the possibility of spiritual intelligence was enticing; however, it was fraught with questions. How was spirituality defined? How was spirituality measured? How did morality relate to spiritual intelligence? Was there a single spiritual intelligence? Was spiritual intelligence culturally and socially created?

Lawton defined spiritual intelligence as “a divine or supernatural ability to appreciate, receive, discern, understand, and apply spiritual truths...[an] attunement with God, openness and obedience to spiritual direction, appropriate use of spiritual gifts, moral and spiritual values, moral centering, meaning and purpose” (p. 15). As broad as the definition may be, and certainly touching on characterizations found in Personalism as well as the moral reasoning of Kohlberg, Piaget, and others, Lawton’s broad brush touched on recent theories proposed by Emmons, Zohar, and Marshall directing us to the plausibility of spiritual intelligence. Despite attempts to quantitatively measure spiritual intelligence, Zohar and Marshall (2000) maintained such measurements could not statistically determine the respondents’ levels of spirituality. Spiritual intelligence is not logically linear. Lawton concurred and proposed a qualitative approach.

In *Spiritual intelligence: A Christian perspective*, Lawton addressed the problems of spiritual intelligence systematically in eight chapters. The objectives are “to provide evidence supporting the existence of spiritual intelligence, to build a theory of spiritual intelligence, to describe and explain the nature of spiritual intelligence, and to show some of the benefits and possible impact of spiritual intelligence on human development” (p. 13). The goals were high, perhaps too lofty for a single volume. Still, Lawton does an admirable job in his attempt to condense the recent and theories.

Beginning with a discussion regarding the need for a study of spiritual intelligence, in which the relationship between morality, justice, intelligence quotients, and spirituality were examined, Lawton directed the reader to the current challenges facing the topic. Chapter three is devoted to an argument supporting the claim for spiritual intelligence. Various spiritual intelligence theories were discussed, with a lengthy chapter devoted to biblical support. Chapter six, regarding the uniqueness of spiritual intelligence, was particularly well written and presented

an excellent summary of the practical application of the theory. Chapter seven offered the benefits of the theory, spanning from the personal through the national and ultimately the environmental rewards.

The strength of *Spiritual intelligence: A Christian perspective*, written in a fashion similar to a dissertation, was evident in Lawton's analysis of biblical evidence of spiritual intelligence. The extensive use of citations, while appreciated by some readers, created a cumbersome and choppy chapter. Indeed, this was a problem throughout the work and distracted from the author's writing skill. Lawton would, at times, shift the reader's attention to theological issues while reaching for conclusions. For example, the claim that "spiritual intelligence is a means of sanctification" may raise a few eyebrows and calls for clarification (p. 108). Lawton found ample scriptural support for considering the existence of spiritual intelligence; however, was the definition for *intelligence* being conflated and confused with the definition for *wisdom*? *Spiritual intelligence: A Christian perspective* raised a number of philosophical questions found in classical epistemology, such as the subtle distinctions between *nous* (νοῦς), *phronesis* (φρόνησις), and *sophia* (Σοφία).

Did *Spiritual intelligence: A Christian perspective* meet Lawton's goals? To a degree, the book did. If a book should stimulate thought and promote further study, then *Spiritual intelligence: A Christian perspective* has fulfilled the task. Buried within the book are nuggets worthy of additional study. Hopefully, the author will continue to write on the topic and add to the discussion regarding cognitive science and faith.

K. Schmidt
Brandman University

Works Cited

- Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: NY: Basic.
- Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed*. New York, N.Y: Basic.
- Gardner, H. (2000). A case against spiritual intelligence.
International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 10(1), 27-34.
- Hyde, B. (2004). The plausibility of spiritual intelligence: spiritual experience, problem solving and neural sites. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 9(1), 39-52.
- Zohar, D., & Marshall, I. (2000). *SQ: Connecting with our spiritual intelligence*. New York, N.Y: Bloomsbury Publishing.