The "Circle of Sensibility": How Spiritual Type Theory Informs an Understanding of Patterns and Preferences in Christian Spirituality

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Abstract

This paper compares spiritual typologies found in antiquated and present-day expressions of Christian faith, drawing on a framework embedded in historical and contextual models of *apophatic* and *kataphatic* taxonomies. Understanding individual and corporate typological traits of expressed spirituality, along with patterns and preferences of sacred and spiritual engagements, will ultimately promote a broader appreciation of differing historical traditions and relevant explanations of practices found in current faith communities. In recent years, researchers have designed and applied various models to investigate and explain these preference-based representations of Christian spirituality. Spiritual type theory takes advantage of this phenomenological explanation, delineating a concise overview of key concepts characteristic of the Christian faith tradition.

When "Circle of Sensibility" spiritual type schemata have been applied to the context of historical Christian faith traditions, there are generally thought to be dividing lines between eastern and western forms of spirituality. As a consequence, the typical sentiment shared by traditions in both east and the west is that little or no commonality exists between the groups, rather distinct and separate differences. In many cases, catechetical models have tended to provide the means by which these differences are encouraged and preserved. These differences are noted as well.

Introduction: Christian Spirituality in Perspective

Much attention has been given to the study of Christian spirituality and its many-faceted expressions. The Pew Research Center, for example, reported in a nationwide survey the following:

> About six-in-ten adults now say they regularly feel a deep sense of "spiritual peace and well-being," up 7 percentage points since 2007. And 46% of Americans say they experience a deep sense of "wonder about the universe" at least once a week, also up 7 points over the same period.[1]

Boa has rightly observed, "Religion is out, but spirituality is in. There has been a remarkable hunger and quest for spiritual answers to the big questions of life in the last three decades."[2] Bloesch equally notes, "*Spirituality* is now an 'in' word and is definitely more palatable than orthodoxy and doctrinal purity…"[3] By way of example, in the United States, and in other

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1. "U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious." Pew Research Center, accessed November 15, 2015, http://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious/.
2. Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 18.
3. Donald Bloesch, *Spirituality Old & New: Recovering Authentic Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2007), 25 (emphasis in original).

countries, there has been an increase in undergraduate and graduate level course offerings focusing on the methodological study and self-expression of spirituality.[4] Specifically:

> A steady number of graduate students are choosing spirituality as an area of specialization. Courses in the discipline are multiplying at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The tools of research and the organs for the communication of research are being developed. Serious and ongoing discussion is being pursued in academic societies and institutions.[5]

But what is "Christian spirituality" in the first place? In some cases, the study of Christian spirituality has focused on "particular ways in which Christian men and women have come to understand, value, and direct their lives as disciples of Jesus of Nazareth in their own worlds."[6] In more general terms, however, investigators of Christian spirituality have simply noted that a spiritual life is concerned with our relationship with God,[7] or that spirituality in the "Christian" sense is the way we live out our calling under the cross of Christ.[8] Narrowing the definition to current evangelical Christianity, especially in the West, spirituality may be viewed as a journey of the spirit, beginning with the gift of forgiveness and progressing through faith and obedience on a continuing journey *with* Christ rather than a journey *to* Christ.[9]

For others, however, spirituality has been viewed as something more tangible—something that can be observed, objectified, and deliberately directed. Some contend, "Spirituality deals with material that often cannot be understood except through analogy with personal experience."[10] Others simply claim, "Spiritual values, and the distinction between good and evil, are discerned from within the Christian tradition."[11] And some, too, have sought to understand spirituality within the context of strict empirical investigation.[12]

Methodologies for the study of spirituality have been many and diverse, sprouting up at an ever-increasing rate. Kinerk, for example, proposes the study of spirituality within the strict context of a historical understanding of faith as seen through different schools of thought, or ecumenical traditions that have held constant across time (i.e., Protestant and Catholic

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4. Sandra Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader*, ed. Kenneth Collins (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 266.
5. Ibid, 264.
6. Charles Healey, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction to the Heritage* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1999), xii-xiii.
7. John Westerhoff, *Spiritual Life: The Foundation for Preaching and Teaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 53.
8. Donald Bloesch, "Is Spirituality Enough? Differing Models for Living," in *Roman Catholicism: Evangelical Protestants Analyze what Divides and Unites Us*, ed. John Armstrong (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994), 143.
9. Boa, *Conformed*, 19.
10. Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 262.
11. Richard Hosmer, "Current Literature in Christian Spirituality," *Anglican Theological Review* 66, (1984): 425.
12. See: K. Edwards, W. Slater, T. Hall, A. Oda, & B. Eck, "Assessing Spiritual Functioning Among Christian College Students" (paper presented at the convention of the American Psychological Association, San Francisco, CA, August 24, 2001). James Goalder, "Christian Development and Religious Typologies: A Proposed Theory and Tests of its Validity," *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 51 (07B), 354B (1990). (UMI No. 9025879), 169-182. & Ralph Piedmont, "Spiritual Transcendence and the Scientific Study of Spirituality," *Journal of Rehabilitation* 67, (2001): 4-14.

traditions in particular).[13] Magill and McGreal stress a methodological study of spirituality as viewed through the greatest thinkers and theologians throughout Christian history.[14] Schneiders asserts, "…spirituality is ecumenical, interreligious, and cross-cultural. This does not mean that every investigation in the field is comparative in nature but rather that the context within which spiritual experience is studied is anthropologically inclusive."[15] One way the ecumenical, interreligious, and cross-cultural task of investigating spirituality has been accomplished is by grouping the study and application of spirituality into the broader context of "spiritual formation."[16] Concerning the methodological study of spirituality in strictly empirical terms, Holmes provides a word of caution related to the end goal. He warns, "…in *all* methods [of spiritual inquiry] the ultimate goal is union with God."[17] Even this underscoring of "union with God" is met with inquisitive purpose, as people of faith attempt to determine how spirituality on personal and corporate levels are assessed and applied.

More recently, emerging theories and understandings of spirituality have been developed through phenomenological frameworks of spiritual typologies. Bloesch, for example, suggests that the "role of spirituality in Christian life and thought will become more evident when seen against the background of a comparative analysis of various *types* of spirituality,"[18] A point with which Ware agrees: "There are differences in the way people feel about and respond to patterns of worship… there are *types* of spirituality," and these "types" help us to understand where one fits within the community of faith.[19] Moreover, these "types," as Sager emphasizes "may properly be called spiritual" insofar as they "help a person attend to the presence of Christ."[20]

In other words, those concerned with analyzing and codifying spirituality have affirmed the intermingling role of spiritual typologies play within a worshiping congregation, which provides variety, role models, and choices for individual spiritual growth and shared group experiences. This understanding is one of a growing capacity for each type to be more fully expanded, while at the same time avoiding unhealthy extremes.[21] As a result a more altruistic and more helpful end then becomes, "A faith community desiring to embody this wholeness

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13. E. Kinerk, "Toward a Method for the Study of Spirituality," *Review for Religious* 40, (1981): 3-19.
14. Frank Magill and Ian McGreal, *Christian Spirituality: The Essential Guide to the Most Influential Spiritual Writings of the Christian Tradition*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988).
15. Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," 261.
16. See: Bloesch, "Is Spirituality Enough." Boa, *Conformed to His Image*. Trish Greeves, "Nurturing Spirituality in the Local Church," *Clergy Journal* 78, (2002): 5-7. & G. L. Rediger, "Spiritual Formation, Etc.," *The Clergy Journal* 09, (2001): 13-16.
17. Urban T. Holmes, *A History of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 4 (emphasis added).
18. Bloesch, "Is Spirituality Enough," 143 (emphasis added).
19. Corinne Ware, *Discover Your Spiritual Type: A Guide to Individual and Congregational Growth* (New York, NY: The Alban Institute, 1995), 2 (emphasis added).
20. Allen Sager, *Gospel-centered Spirituality: An Introduction to our Spiritual Journey* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 10.
21. Greeves, "Nurturing Spirituality," 6.

must nurture and validate each spiritual type… an awareness of differing spiritual types can help a church become more compassionate, welcoming, and responsive to all its members."[22]

Self-Disclosure: A Path to the Theory of Spiritual Types

At one time or another, we all will encounter a "type." Such classifications and arrangements are evidenced in a wide array of structures and systems. The anthropologist, for example, speaks of Population and Clinal models. The biologist utilizes nomenclature like "Animal," "Bacterial," "Plant," "Fungi," "Virus," etc. The zoologist divides animal life between Kingdom, Class, Order, Genus, Species, and Variety. In the realm of Philosophy, one talks of Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ontology, Axiology, and so on... I suppose one might even say a "solipsist" could easily classify herself as a perfect, or complete, type of herself. Theologians have also commonly divided themselves along corridors of Systematic, Historical, Biblical, and Practical strands.

Some of the more common and familiar types have to do with things like personality, leadership, temperament, learning, character, ethnicity, social class, gender, and other such taxonomies and/or groupings. Assembling an understanding of who we are according to typologies helps in comprehending and appreciating ourselves as individuals, groups, cultures, and societies. It really is no different when considering "spiritual types." Understanding the individual and corporate traits of expressed spirituality, along with the patterns and preferences of our sacred and spiritual engagements, will ultimately promote a broader view of our unique place within the historical traditions of our religion, as well within our local communities of faith.

As types relate to specific individuals, every person has a story to tell—a story of where they were born, how they were raised, what they have accomplished throughout their lifetime and how they hope a life well-lived will someday end. In the midst of self-reporting one can articulate thoughts, feelings, hopes and dreams, as well as things uniquely spiritual. And while some individuals view spirituality as an indefinable reality, neither capable of being objectively observed or codified, others have found—through systematized methods of self-disclosure—ways to unmask the dynamics of faith, which ultimately leads to the development of theoretical underpinnings and generalizable understandings of spirituality.

Laing, for example, advocates using a wide array of self-disclosing techniques in obtaining generalized personal data.[23] Such procedures include, but are not limited to observation, personal interview, standardized assessment tests, surveys, questionnaires, written narratives, etc. Some researchers have questioned the reliability of self-reporting

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22. Ibid, 6.

23. Joan Laing, "Self-report: Can it be of Value as an Assessment Technique?" *Journal of Counseling and Development* 67 (1988): 60-61.

techniques,[24] while others have found their uses quite successful.[25] Osberg concluded self-reporting techniques had been successfully used in assessing such things as vocational choice, academic achievement, and psychotherapy outcomes. He further suggests that "the use of direct verbal self-reports… provide a structured means for eliciting clients' self-assessments…" which outperforms other types of reporting tests, such as projective psychological analysis.[26]

When applied to varying types of spirituality, in reality, few people self-report a purely *intellectual* orientation toward God; expressing or demonstrating little or no emotion. Contrastingly, few will solely self-disclose an exclusive *feeling-oriented* projection of his or her faith, one with no cognitive dimensions involved. Throughout Christian history, few individuals have solely behaved as if God is absolutely unapproachable, or correspondingly completely unknowable. Likewise, few in Christian history have claimed relationship *to* and *with* God to be purely approachable and comprehensible. The dynamics of spiritual type theory then aid in understanding and appreciating the wider diversity of spiritual practices and expressions that have occurred throughout history in various traditions of expressed Christian faith.

A caveat at this point: as with anything, rigidly fortifying or "locking" oneself into a particular type of Christian spirituality can lead to excesses, possibly causing potential harm. For example, those who become overly dogmatic in stressing logic and propositional truth to the exclusion of mystery and ineffability are in potential danger of falling into an excessive type of spirituality accentuating rationalism. These excesses are further delineated for each of the spiritual types below.

One key feature noted in the accuracy of self-reporting has to do with participants' confidence in individual accounts of what is reported. In other words, if a person is confident with their story, the data obtained by the investigator(s) verifies the stories are most likely verifiable and usable. If, however, the person is conflicted about their own story, the soundness of their narrative becomes suspect and insupportable. Validity of confidence can thus be measured by "the extent to which a person offers a self-description in a *definitive*, as opposed to a tentative, manner… providing an implicit self-evaluation of the likely accuracy of their judgments."[27]

Investigators have extensively used self-disclosing techniques as a way of observing, analyzing, and evaluating spiritual and religious functioning. Jungmeen, Nesselroad, and Featherman used the self-reporting technique of survey analysis in the form of a four-point

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24. Norbert Schwarz, "Self-reports: How the Questions Shape the Answers," *American Psychologist* 54 (1999): 93-105.
25. See: Kim, Jungmeen, John Nesselroade, David Featherman, and Timothy Salthouse (editor), "The State Component in Self-reported Worldviews and Religious Beliefs of Older Adults: The MacArthur Successful Aging Studies," *Psychology and Aging* 11(1996): 396-407. Timothy Osberg, "Self-report Reconsidered: A Further Look at its Advantages as an Assessment Technique," *Journal of Counseling and Development* 68 (1989): 111-113. & J. C. Ventimiglia, "Significant Others in the Professional Socialization of Catholic Seminarians," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 17 (1978): 43-52.
26. Osberg, "Self-report Reconsidered," 111.
27. Ibid, 112 (emphasis added).

Likert-type rating scale to assess the religious beliefs of older adults.[28] Piedmont developed a twenty-four-item "Spiritual Transcendence Scale" (STS) in which spiritual dynamics were precisely investigated, such as: "Universality (a belief in the unity and purpose of life), Prayer Fulfillment (an experienced feeling of joy and contentment that results from prayer and meditations), and Connectedness (a sense of personal responsibility and connection to others)."[29] Goalder, utilizing self-reporting questionnaires, successfully assessed intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in developing a religious typologies theory.[30]

The Enneagram, a renowned and mainstay personality typing system, has been widely used as a way of assessing spirituality through self-reporting.[31] The Enneagram, through a self-discovery of nine different personality types, has served as an accommodating method for the study of spirituality for researchers, clergy, and counselors, as well as serving as a practical tool in assisting individuals to better understand patterns and behaviors within their own expressed spirituality. Other such self-disclosure assessment tools have included: the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI), Faith Maturity Scale (FMS), Religious Maturity Scale (RMS), Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (T-JTA), Religious Orientation Scale (ROS), Spiritual Maturity Index (SMI), and the Spiritual Experience Index (SEI)… to name a few.

More specific to the context of this study, faith formation scholars and theorists have dynamically assessed spiritual functioning among individuals and groups within the Christian faith tradition. One such longitudinal study incorporated the use of seven existing self-report questionnaires of faith and spiritual functioning as a way to examine the faith patterns and practices of Protestant Christian college students over their academic careers.[32] Another inquiry used self-reporting techniques to assess professional identity as it relates to significant others in the context of Catholic seminary training.[33] A more recent study effectively utilized a spiritual typological assessing battery, which incorporated individualized narratives, along with forced-choice inventories, in determining patterns and preferences among emerging adults in a Protestant evangelical Christian university context. This study, in particular, found four distinct types of spiritual types emerging along catechetical and specific theologically-oriented determinants unique to Christian faith traditions.[34]

The ultimate goal of spiritual type theory, therein, lies in broadening one's awareness of individualized spirituality, plus developing a growing appreciation for the faith patterns,

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28. Jungmeen, Et. al, "The State Component."
29. Piedmont, "Spiritual Transcendence," 6.
30. Goalder, "Christian Development," 169-182.
31. See: Renee Baron, and Elizabeth Wagele, *Are You My Type, am I Yours?: Relationships Made Easy through the Enneagram* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1995). Maria Beesing, Robert J Nogosek, and Patrick H O'Leary, *The Enneagram: A Journey of Self-discovery* (Denvile, NJ: Dimension Books, Inc., 1984). & Kathleen V. Hurley and Theodore E. Dobson, *What's my Type?* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1991).
32. Edwards, Et. al. "Assessing Spiritual Functioning."
33. Ventimiglia, "Significant Others,"43.
34. Samuel E. Baker, "Raised a Teenage Kataphatic: Utilising Spiritual Type Theory in Assessing Catechetical Models of Adolescent Faith Development," *Journal of Youth and Theology* 14 (2015): 45-71.

preferences and expressions of others. It helps to realize why some people convey faith one way, while others choose a different path. It also endeavors to build a relationship between people of differing types, thereby enhancing greater opportunities for personal growth, mutual respect, and a deeper appreciation for the diversity of faith found in the historical Christian community.

The examples noted above support the notion that self-reporting techniques can be used successfully in the acquisition of data concerning faith and spirituality. For this reason, this study makes use of spiritual type theoretical models and assessing mechanisms for investigating and explaining preference-based representations of Christian spirituality. Spiritual type theory takes advantage of this phenomenological explanation, delineating a concise overview of key concepts characteristic of the Christian faith tradition.

The "Circle of Sensibility" and Four Emerging Types

When spiritual typology schemata have been applied to historical, orthodox Christian faith, researchers have generally found a dividing line between expressions of spirituality over time.[35] Theological disagreement, religio-political posturing, ecclesiastical disparity, and institutional-bound training have only exacerbated the extent of these differences. As a consequence, the sentiment *typically* shared by Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians alike is that little or no commonality between the groups exists, as far as perceptions of spiritual formation are concerned. Ergo, we have group differences. In many cases, catechetical models have tended to provide the means by which these differences are encouraged and preserved.[36]

For centuries Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians have tended to reflect their spirituality along the lines of their unique training models. One typically associates the visages of monasticism, asceticism, sacra-traditional liturgy, and High-Church tradition with Orthodox or Catholic forms of spiritual training. On the other hand, emotionally animated, charismatic, extrinsic homiletic and pedagogical models of faith instruction have classically characterized Protestant groups. As students enter the halls of ecclesiastical academies, they soon learn the particular facets of a unique type of spirituality taught to them by their professors.[37] What is accurate, however, for the academy is equally proper for congregants and parishioners as they enter through the doors of their ecclesiastical communities.

In recent decades, scholars, theologians, clergy, clinicians, educators, and researchers alike have considered varying theories related to spirituality; all have developed assessment instruments and constructed models of spirituality to investigate and explain how people have expressed Christian faith throughout history. Urban T. Holmes III, of particular interest,

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35. See: H. F. Wit (editor), *The Spiritual Path: An Introduction to the Psychology of the Spiritual Traditions* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University press, 1999). & Greeves, "Nurturing Spirituality."
36. Greeves, "Nurturing Spirituality," 7. & Holmes, *A History of Christian Spirituality*, 4-5.
37. See: Edwards, Et. al., "Assessing Spiritual Functioning." & Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy."

espouses a specific phenomenological model of spirituality, delineating a concise overview of key concepts characteristic of Eastern and Western Christian faith traditions.[38] Using a two-scaled model referred to as the "Circle of Sensibility," Holmes provides a user-friendly model of understanding Christian spirituality, which is represented diagrammatically along horizontal and vertical axes, (see Figure 1). According to Holmes, "sensibility," "Defines for us that sensitivity to the ambiguity of styles… and the possibilities for a creative dialogue within the person and within the community as it seeks to understand the experience of God and its meaning for our world."[39] Or as Ware notes, "[the Circle of Sensibility] provides a tool and a method by which to conceptualize and name spiritual experience within a basic framework."[40]
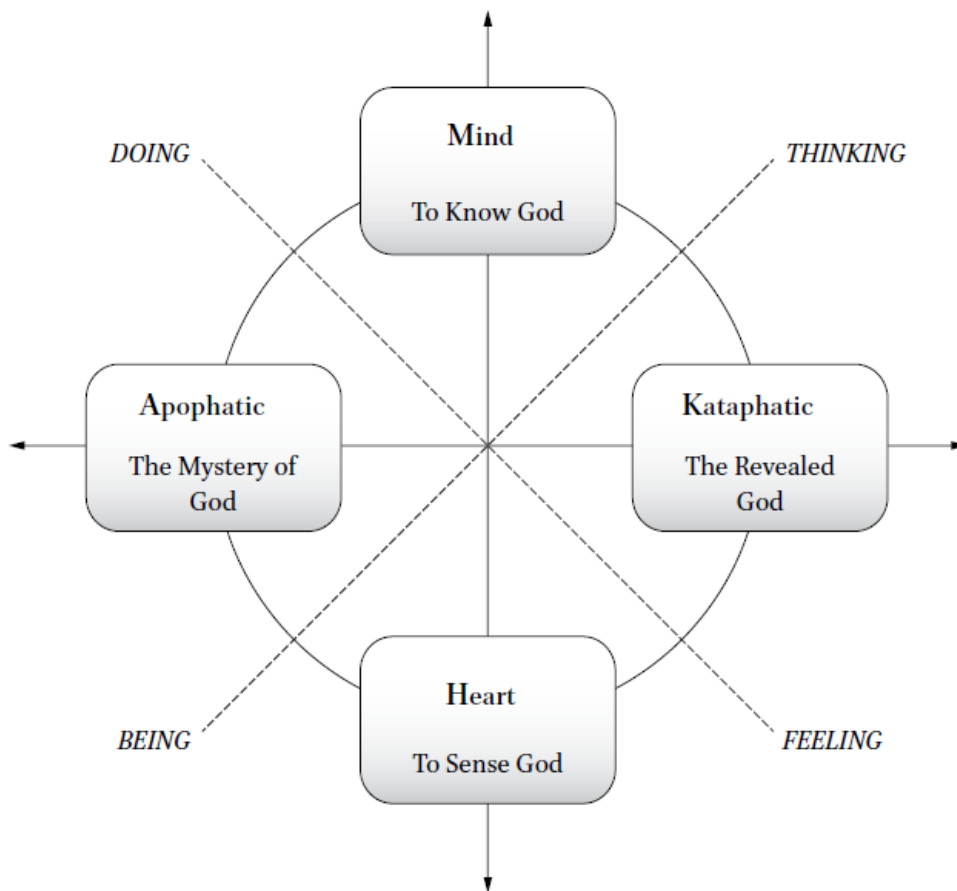

FIGURE 1   *The Circle of Sensibility*

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38. Holmes. *A History of Christian Spirituality*.
39. Ibid, 5.
40. Ware, *Discover*, 7.

Spiritual type theorists maintain that within the Circle of Sensibility it is possible to locate almost every Christian type of spirituality.[41] Healey exactly asserts, "These two scales, the kataphatic/apophatic and the speculative/affective can be variously joined so as to bring out differences and contrasts between schools, writers, and trends."[42]

By way of definition, the terms "apophatic" and "kataphatic" come from the Greek language, meaning *negation* and *affirmation* respectively. As Hosmer explains, "*Apophasis* is used by the Pseudo-Dionysius in the fifth century to describe the *via negativa* as a way of describing God… *kataphatic* to describe an affirmative theology, which asserts that God is omniscient, omnipotent, good, Lord, etc."[43] Healy extends these definitions by asserting:

> The *apophatic* way is that of darkness, emptiness, and the negation of images… and the *kataphatic* is generally referred to as the way of light. It advocates the use of images and various aspects of created reality in speaking about one's relationship and union with God.[44]

Apophatic and kataphatic expressions of faith have long been understood in Christian history and traditions as two spiritually expressive ways of relating to God. While kataphaticism tends to make use of symbols and images in theological understanding "…apophatacism is… an attitude of mind which refuses to form concepts about God."[45] Holmes acknowledges, "In each age, and often in each individual, the experience of God is thematizied [sic] by certain key images. These images represent both the way to openness before God and the result of the experience of God."[46]

Kataphatic spirituality, or the *via affirmative* (the way of affirmation)*,* then describes the revealed God. The kataphatic makes use of words, symbols, and images to relate to and describe God. The kataphatic advocates using metaphors, anthropomorphisms, and anthropopathisms in speaking about one's relationship and union with God. Kataphaticism, "…underscores that God Himself has had a history and that the way to Him is through that history."[47] At the other end of the horizontal axis is the apophatic way, or the *via negativa* (the way of negation), a type of spirituality descriptive of the mystery of God. The apophatic seeks to understand and relate to God through silence, going beyond images and words to mystical union. The apophatic way is one of darkness, emptiness, and the negation of images. Apophaticism, "…underscores in an unusually powerful way that the human heart is satisfied by nothing other than God."[48] Apophaticism, "Points to the ever-greater God, a God greater than

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41. Paul Bosch, "I Was a Teenage Kataphatic."
42. Healey, *Christian Spirituality*, xiii.
43. Hosmer, "Current Literature," 427 (emphasis in original).
44. Healy, *Christian Spirituality*, xiv.
45. Verna Harrison, "The Relationship Between Apophatic and Kataphatic Theology," *Pro Ecclesia* 4 (1995): 318.
46. Holmes, *A History of Christian Spirituality*, 10.
47. H. D. Egan, "Christian Apophatic and Kataphatic Mysticisms," *Theological Studies* 39 (1978): 424.
48. Ibid, 422.

our hearts, the ineffable, the Nameless, utter Mystery, who can be loved only because he has first loved us."[49]

The vertical (North/South) axis represents the *mind* and *heart* scale. At one end of the axis is an illumination of the mind, a thinking, cognitive, intellectual-oriented type of spirituality. The other end of the vertical axis is an illumination of the heart type of spirituality, which focuses on feeling, sensation, and emotion.

Those who speak of apophatic and kataphatic understandings of spirituality view these two inseparable concepts like "partners in a dance."[50] Others maintain it is important to preserve a balance between the apophatic and kataphatic approaches.[51] In general, researchers contended that within the Circle of Sensibility people respond to the presence of God, either positively or negatively, in the spiritual life.[52] Schaff, commenting further on the Pseudo-Dionysian understanding of apophatic and kataphatic theology writes:

> The former [apophatic] descends from the infinite God, as the unity of all names, to the finite and manifold; the latter [kataphatic] ascends from the finite and manifold to God, until it reaches that height of sublimity where it becomes completely passive, its voice is tilled, and man is united with the nameless, unspeakable, super-essential Being of Beings.[53]

In theological treatise, kataphaticism has been associated with the field of *positive* theology, while apophaticism has been associated with the discipline of *negative* theology.[54] By way of illustration, two classic works have typified the apophatic and kataphatic Christian traditions of theology and practice: On the apophatic side of the scale, the fourteenth-century devotional classic *The Cloud of Unknowing*, whose author remains unknown, provides an excellent example of apophatic thought. The *Cloud,* "Urges forgetting and unknowing in the service of a blind, silent love beyond all images, thoughts, and feelings—a love which gradually purifies, illuminates and unites the contemplative to the Source of this love."[55] On the kataphatic end of the spectrum the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, written in the sixteenth-century, presents a highly structured symbolic-image oriented approach to spirituality that continues to the present.

There are equally strong arguments to consider within all types of expressed spirituality. For the apophatic:

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49. Ibid, 422.
50. Hosmer, "Current Literature," 441.
51. Harrison, "The Relationship," 320.
52. Holmes, *A History of Christian Spirituality*, 157.
53. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Computer Software, V. 5 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 4.
54. See: Roger Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarstiy, 1999) & Ralph Martin and Peter Davids, Eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarstiy, 1997).
55. Egan, "Christian Apophatic and Kataphatic Mysticisms," 413.

- Apophaticism emphasizes in an unusually powerful way that the human heart is satisfied by nothing other than God.

- Apophaticism also points to the incomprehensible God, a God greater than our hearts, the ineffable, the Nameless, utter Mystery, Who can be loved only because He has first loved us.

- Apophaticism offers a more Trinitarian-centered spirituality to correct certain Christological and Pneumatological imbalances.

- The strengths of the kataphatic side are:

- Kataphaticism emphasizes that God Himself has had a history and that the way to Him is through that history.

- Kataphaticism stresses the incarnational dimensions of mysticism that Christian faith is inextricably bound to the Jesus of history and the very special events of His life in human history.

- Kataphaticism offers way of engagement most in line with God's gradual Self-revelation of His being, personality, and attributes.

It should be noted, however, researchers who employ a typological understanding of spirituality also speak of "excesses" within each of the four expressed types of spirituality.[56] Westerhoff, in particular, defines an excess as a "heresy," that is "a truth that has gone too far, that has denied its counter truth."[57] By way of example, the kataphatic mind type will posit and excess in *thinking*, or rationalism, when an unbalanced concern for right thinking ultimately leads to dogmatism. Or, "…an over-concentration upon the cognitive and analytical powers of the mind to the exclusion of the cultivation of feeling and sensuality."[58]

Each of the three remaining types uniquely exhibits excesses as well. The Kataphatic/Heart (K/H) excess, for example, is focused on *feeling*, an excessive concern for right feelings leading to emotionalism; or, "the confusion of subjective superficial feelings with theology."[59] The Apophatic/Heart (A/H) excess is focused on accentuating a *being* type of spirituality, where an excessive concern for right interior experience drives one to escapism and/or asceticism; or, "a retreat from responsibility into passivity."[60] And the Apophatic/Mind (A/M) excess is demonstrated through disproportionate concern with *doing*, or encratism, an extreme concern for right behavior leading to social and moral action; or, "the overdoing of ascetical discipline and mortification."[61]

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56. See: Holmes, Sager, Ware, and Westerhoff.
57. Westerhoff, *Spiritual Life*, 54-55.
58. Hosmer, "Current Literature," 427.
59. Holmes, *A History of Christian Spirituality*, 9.
60. Hosmer, "Current Literature," 427.
61. Ibid, 427.

In order to create a proper balance between the extremes, and in order to avoid the trappings of any one particular excess, each spiritual type must be held in tension with its diagonally corresponding opposite. For example, K/M spiritual types must seek to balance themselves against A/H types, and A/H with K/M types, conversely. K/H spiritual types must seek to balance themselves against A/M types, and A/M with K/H types. These "tensions" may be properly held in the context of one's own family, corporate worship experiences, or individual encounters with those included in the universal body of believers.

In keeping with this idea of creating a proper balance between the extremes of each spiritual type, Hosmer suggests four healthy ways in which the spirituality of each type can be cultivated. Specifically:

> For *apophatic-speculative* it is a healthy *asceticism* which leads to wholeness of life and to a spirit of sacrifice. For *apophatic-affective* spirituality, it is *contemplative prayer*. For the *kataphatic-speculative,* it is *meditation* and the theological understanding of the spiritual life, and for the *kataphatic-affective,* it is *devotion* or true piety.[62]

In more general terms, Harrison eludes to a healthy and balanced perspective by stating:

> Concepts are to be examined in light of their presuppositions and implications, and metaphors are to be read within the nexus of related metaphors and their uses in the church's practice. In this way, the coherence and truthfulness of kataphatic theology are preserved, and many doors are opened into the apophatic.[63]

Some have suggested apophatic, and kataphatic expressions of spiritually should be viewed as a means to an end. Specifically, "A kataphatic means, an indirect way of knowing in which our relationship with God *is* mediated, and an apophatic *means*, a direct way of knowing, in which our relationship with God is not mediated."[64] King agrees with a mean-ends analysis by stating, "… negation in religion is never absolute or final, indulged in simply for its own sake and without positive counterpart."[65] In providing a balanced perspective, both apophatic and kataphatic traditions should be equally viewed as authentic, orthodox ways in the mystical journey. "There is no permanent resting place; no one has captured the ineffable God in his or her formulae; perfection lies in the desire for God, not in the accomplishment of the union."[66]

Conclusion and Recommendations

In assessing individual preferences within spiritual typologies, researchers and practitioners alike have applied the Circle of Sensibility model to collecting, analyzing, and interpreting a wide variety of data. In practical ecclesiastical terms, some have applied the dynamics of the

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62. Ibid, 428 (emphases in original).
63. Harrison, "The Relationship," 332.
64. Westerhoff, *Spiritual Life*, 53.
65. W. King, "Negation as a Religious Category," *Journal of Religion* 37 (1957): 112.
66. Holmes, *A History of Christian Spirituality*, 158.

Circle of Sensibility spiritual typologies model in helping church leaders understand dynamics endemic to church body-life.[67] Greeves, also in this way, employed spiritual type theory in the successful training of church lay-leaders.[68] Others have used the Circle of Sensibility model successfully in assessing preferred spiritual types in Lutheran, Anglican, and Roman Catholic faith formation.[69] Lee successfully investigated the differences between spirituality types and learning styles of pastors, seminary staff, and students through a correlation-analysis study.[70] Baker utilized Circle of Sensibility typologies in assessing catechetical models of theological and religious training both within higher education and post-graduate seminary training.[71]

Spiritual type theorists have also compared and contrasted spiritual type theory against other types. Hosmer, for example, compared apophatic and kataphatic spiritual types to general personality types associated with Jungian psychology. He reported in general terms, "The introvert tends to receive energy from outside and consolidate it within, while for the extravert attention flows out to objects and people and stimulates action upon the environment."[72] When specifically comparing and contrasting introvert and extravert Jungian personality types to apophatic and kataphatic types, Hosmer remarks, "Apophatic spirituality, on the whole, is preferred by the introvert and kataphatic by the extravert."[73]

Westerhoff, also in comparing the four spiritual types to Jungian personality types, makes the following distinctions: "There are four categories available: T [thinking], S [sensing], N [intuitive], and F [feeling]. The schools of spirituality and personality types look like this: speculative-apophatic = T, speculative-kataphatic = S, affective-apophatic = N, and affective-kataphatic = F."[74]

Utilizing spiritual type theory in assessing individual preferences and proclivities in expressed spirituality has many benefits. As Ware points out, "Once we have found where we fall within the total circle, we then have opportunity to grow by 1) acknowledging and strengthening our present gifts, 2) growing toward our opposite quadrant, and 3) appreciating more perceptively the quadrants on either side of our dominant type."[75] A few other benefits worth noting are:
- Spiritual typologies enlighten us about personal preferences and attributes.

67. Martha Ainsworth, "What is Your Spiritual Type?" *Metanoia.org* (2002). Accessed October 17, 2013. http://www. metanoia.org/martha/writing/spiritualtype.htm.
68. Greeves. "Nurturing Spirituality in the Local Church."
69. Bosch. "I Was a Teenage Kataphatic."
70. Y.W. Lee, "Relationship Between Spirituality Types and Learning Styles," (adaptation of a presentation given at the 19th Annual Meeting of the North American Professors of Christian Education , San Diego, CA, October, 1999).
71. Baker, "Raised a Teenage Kataphatic." & Samuel E. Baker, "Apophatic & Kataphatic Spiritual Types: A Descriptive Comparison of the Similarities & Differences Between Protestant & Catholic Seminarians' Spirituality" (EdD diss., George Fox University, 2003).
72. Hosmer, "Current Literature,"440.
73. Ibid, 440.
74. Westerhoff, *Spiritual Life*, 61.
75. Ware, *Discover*, 44-45.

- Spiritual typologies help identify weaknesses and prejudices, while encouraging balance for spiritual health.
- Spiritual typologies encourage interaction with opposite types for the sake of personal growth.
- Knowing one's spiritual type aids in the development of natural gifts and talents.
- Learning about opposite types helps one understand the broader diversity of those in the community of faith.
- Recognizing other types helps in understanding spiritual writings.
- One of the most important functions of the typologies, "…lies in its power to point each one of us to the place of encounter with our opposite and call us to an interaction which is painful, risking, and costing, but supremely fruitful. Encounter with the other, with the opposite, is the place of love."[76]

Thus, through a comprehensive understanding of spiritual typologies, differences and similarities between believers—both past and present—within the Christian faith can be observed and considered. It becomes imperative to the overall goal of understanding the broader context of Christian spirituality that both individuals and groups be made aware of their similarities as well as their differences. In this way, a basic understanding of spiritual types enhances our understanding of faith. When individuals realize their own unique faith-expressed tendencies, they gain more wisdom into their own path of spiritual growth and perhaps, too, the paths of others.

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76. Hosmer, "Current Literature,"440.

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