# Raised a Teenage Kataphatic

*Utilising Spiritual Type Theory in Assessing Catechetical Models of Adolescent Faith Development*

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### Abstract

The framework for this study comes from the historical and contextual theory of *apophatic* and *kataphatic* spiritual typologies within the "Circle of Sensibility" espoused by spiritual type theorists. This study analyses seven years of collected data, comparing spiritual type similarities and differences of late adolescent students at a private Christian university in the United States. A major premise of the study underscores the influence catechetical models have on faith development during mid-to-late adolescence. A subsidiary objective of the study measured participants' perceptions of the importance and frequency of practice of twelve spiritual disciplines. The results of the study confirm outcomes in all four major spiritual type categories within the Circle of Sensibility. Based on the findings, the author offers several recommendations for research in utilising spiritual type theory for understanding catechetical models within youth ministry praxis.

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## 1      Introduction

At the onset of adolescence, how does one determine which path to take in regard to faith? In the end, will one's journey lead one toward a *kataphatic* form of spirituality, or an *apophatic* one? What do these words even mean? Should later adolescents, in their movement toward adulthood, be expected to know the difference? In addition, are these historical paths to faith embedded into religious customs and catechetical models within their faith communities, or the Christian institutions they attend?

On the part of those who investigate spiritual formation there seems to be an objective to codify, sort out, and better understand spirituality in terms of cognitive, affective, behavioural, and spiritual constants.[1] How do "believers" demonstrate spirituality in terms of growing in "things of the Spirit?"[2] What cues, tendencies, indicators, or preferences are observed in the way individuals articulate their faith? Can such things be observed, analysed, or explained? What effects do such things as a fervent prayer life, devotional reading of the

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1   See for example: James Fowler. *States of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1981). Robert M. Mulholland. *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InverVarsity Press, 1993). John Westerhoff. *Spiritual Life: The Foundation for Preaching and Teaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994). Kenneth Boa. *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001). Christian Smith and Patricia Snell. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009). Kenda Creasy Dean. *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010). Amy Jacober. *The Adolescent Journey: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Practical Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011). Holly Allen and Christian Ross. *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity press, 2012). Richard Dunn and Janna Sundene. *Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults: Life-Giving Rhythms for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012). David Setran and Chris Kiesling. *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013).

2   Romans 8:5 – Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires (NIV). 1 Corinthians 2:14-15 – 14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. 15 The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments (NIV).

Scriptures, and daily practice of the spiritual disciplines have upon personal expressions of spirituality?

The questions are further attenuated when assessing the spiritual lives of individuals passing from adolescence into adulthood. As practical theologians and ministry practitioners seek to guide emerging adults toward a deeper sense of "life in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:2), there seems to be a juxtaposition between ingrained catechetical models—commonly held within strong ecclesiastical borders—and the desire to accommodate a holistic sense of authentic Christian faith. The salient question becomes, "How do we help emerging adults acquire a dynamic, nurturing and developing sense of faith?"

This study analyses seven years of collected data, comparing *spiritual type* similarities and differences of late adolescent students at a private Christian university in the United States. A major premise of the study underscores the influence catechetical models have on faith development during later adolescence.

## 2 Catechesis in Christian Higher Education

Since the establishment of the religious academy, students have tended to reflect their spirituality along the lines of their unique ecclesiastical training models. As Rhea has rightly said, "In the milieu of Christian higher education, many situational dialects exist and are fostered in order to contribute to the larger, comprehensive educational goal of a Christ-formed mind."[3] One typically associates the visages of monasticism, asceticism, sacra-traditional liturgy, and High-Church tradition with Catholic and Orthodox forms of spiritual pedagogy. On the other hand, cognitive engagement, emotionally animated, extrinsic homiletic and pedagogical models of faith instruction have classically characterised the Protestant groups. As students enter the halls of their faith-based academies, they soon learn the particular facets of a unique type of spirituality taught to them by their professors.[4] Broadly speaking, Catechesis, in the context of both higher education and the church, "…shapes missional

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3   Rob Rhea. "Exploring Spiritual Formation in the Christian Academy: The Dialects of Church, Culture, and the Larger Integrative Task." *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 39, 1 (2011): 4.

4   T. Edwards. "Spiritual Formation in Theological Schools: Ferment and Challenge. A Report of the ATS Shalem Institute on Spirituality." *Theological Education* 17, (1980): 7–52. S. M. Schneiders. "Spirituality in the Academy." In K. J. Collins, (Ed.). *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 249–269.

imaginations, which help us recognise God's activity in Jesus Christ and in us, as Christ calls us to participation in his redemptive work in the world."[5]

Emerging adulthood, most notably, takes on the resonance of transition and self-discovery in spiritually awakening terms. The twenties can be described as a, "...somewhat chaotic season of high-stakes decision making about jobs, lifestyle housing, and relationships. Young adults at this stage have been characterised as *transitional, idling, flexible,* trying or *tinkering* (emphases in original)."[6] Emerging adulthood has taken on a developmental stage of its own, often delaying entrance into adulthood well into one's late twenties and thirties.[7] Upon entering college or university, students at Christian institutions find in the combination of Bible classes, chapels, small groups, and campus-sponsored ministries opportunities for spiritual nurturing and growth.[8] Even interactions in class on singular subjects such as prayer are viewed along pedagogical, as well as institutional lines of faith developing differentiation.[9] In other words, the "curriculum" of higher education aids students in appropriating a particular type of *adult* spirituality.

Through a comprehensive understanding of spiritual typologies vis-à-vis the "Circle of Sensibility" (see below), differences and similarities between students can be observed and assessed. It becomes imperative to the overall goal of understanding the broader context of spirituality that both the professor and the student be made aware of their similarities as well as their differences. In this way a basic understanding of spiritual types enhances the greater goal within Christian higher education when individuals realise their own unique faith-expressed tendencies, and gain knowledge of the experiences and paths to spiritual growth of others.

## 3 The Circle of Sensibility & Spiritual Type Theory

In recent decades, researchers have designed instruments and constructed models to investigate and explain how people express their spirituality.

5   Kenda Creasy Dean. *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 63.

6   Richard Dunn and Jana Sundene. *Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults: Life-Giving Rhythms for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 26.

7   Dean, 9.

8   David Setran and Chris Kiesling. *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 89.

9   Mary Kate Morse. "The Teaching of Prayer in Bible Colleges and Seminaries" (2004). *Faculty Publications – George Fox Evangelical Seminary*. Paper, 1.

Typological research has used self-reporting techniques specifically as a way of observing, analysing, and evaluating spiritual and religious functioning. Some use self-reporting techniques to assess professional identity as it relates to significant others in the context of Catholic seminary training.[10] Others have utilised self-reporting questionnaires to assess intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in developing a religious typologies theory.[11] Jungmeen, Nesselroad, and Featherman used the technique of survey analysis in the form of a four-point Likert-type rating scale to assess the religious beliefs of older adults.[12]

More recently, Edwards (et. al) assessed spiritual functioning among Christian college students. Their 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.[13] Piedmont developed a twenty-four-item "Spiritual Transcendence Scale" (STS) in which he investigated such spiritual dynamics 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).[14]

The *Enneagram*, a renowned personality typing system, has been widely used in recent decades as a way of assessing spirituality through self-reporting.[15] The *Enneagram*, through a self-discovery of nine different personality types, has served as an accommodating method for the study of spirituality for

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10    J. C. Ventimiglia. "Significant Others in the Professional Socialization of Catholic Seminarians." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 17 (1978): 43–52.

11    J. S. Goalder. "Christian Development and Religious Typologies: A Proposed Theory and Tests of its Validity." *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 51 (07B) UMI No. 9025879. 354B. (1990).

12    K. E. Jungmeen, J. R. Nesselroad, & D. L. Featherman. "The State Component in Self-reported Worldviews and Religious Beliefs of Older Adults: The MacArthur Successful Aging Studies." *Psychology and Aging* 11, 3 (1996): 396–407.

13    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 Convention, San Francisco, CA (August 24, 2001).

14    R. L. Piedmont. "Spiritual Transcendence and the Scientific Study of Spirituality." *Journal of Rehabilitation* 67 (2001): 4–14.

15    See for example: R. Baron, & E. Wagele. *Are You My Type, am I Yours?: Relationships Made Easy Through the Enneagram* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1995); M. Beesing, R. J. Nogosek, & P.H. O'Leary. *The Enneagram: A Journey of Self-discovery* (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, Inc., 1984); and, K. V. Hurley and T. E. Dobson. *Discover Your Soul Potential: Using the Enneagram to Awaken Spiritual Vitality* (Lakewood, CO: Wind Walker Press, 2000).

researchers, pastors, and counsellors, as well as serving as a practical tool in assisting individuals to better understand patterns and behaviours in expressed spirituality.

Urban T. Holmes III, of particular interest, developed a phenomenological model of spirituality, delineating a concise overview of key concepts characteristic of Eastern and Western Christian traditions.[16] 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).
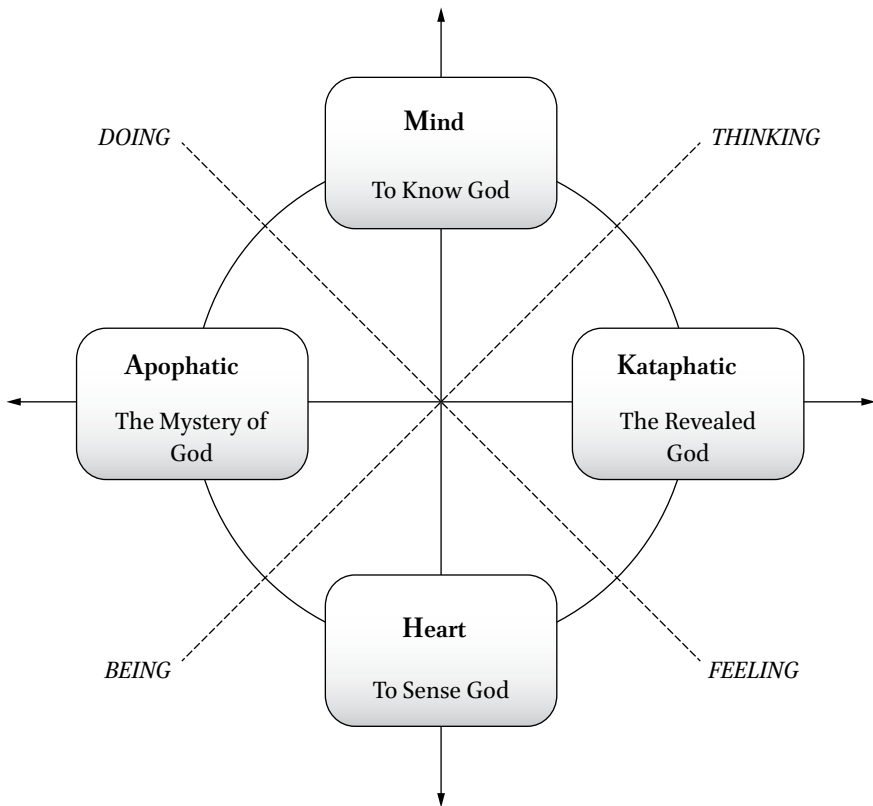


FIGURE 1    *The Circle of Sensibility*

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16    Urban T. Holmes. *A History of Christian Spirituality: An Analytical Introduction* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1980, 2002).

According to spiritual type theory, within the Circle of Sensibility it is possible to locate every Christian type of spirituality. Imagine four points on a compass. The horizontal (East/West) axis represents the *apophatic* and *kataphatic* scale. By way of definition, "apophatic" and "kataphatic" originate in the Greek (*apophatikos* and *kataphatikos*), meaning "negation" and "affirmation" respectively. In historical theological terms, Kataphaticism has been associated within the domain of positive theology and Apophaticism within negative theology.

Kataphatic spirituality describes the revealed God. The kataphatic way makes use of words, symbols, and images to relate to and describe God. The kataphatic advocate uses images and symbols 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."[17]

At the other end of the horizontal axis is the apophatic way, a type of spirituality that describes 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."[18] Apophaticism "points to the ever-greater God, a God greater than our hearts, the ineffable, the Nameless, utter Mystery, who can be loved only because he has first loved us."[19] Apophatic theology and kataphatic theology are both evidenced in a wide variety of Christian literature.[20]

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

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17    H. D. Egan. "Christian Apophatic and Kataphatic Mysticisms." *Theological Studies* 39, (1978): 424.

18    Ibid, 422.

19    Ibid, 422.

20    Two classic works in particular typify the orthodox Christian traditions of apophatic and kataphatic 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" (See Egan, 1978, 413). On the kataphatic end of the spectrum the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyla, written in the sixteenth-century, presents a highly structured symbolic-image oriented approach to spirituality that continues to the present (See also, Kenneth Boa. *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2001), 495).

illumination of the heart type of spirituality, which focuses on feeling, sensation, and emotion.

The Circle of Sensibility helps us define the variety of approaches and postures to faith formation and spiritual growth, creating an open dialogue within the person, and with those in the community of faith, as both seek to understand and understand their experiences with God.[21] Alternatively, as Ware states, "It provides a tool and a method by which to conceptualise and name spiritual experience within a basic framework."[22]

Sager, building on Holmes' work, developed an assessing tool utilising the Circle of Sensibility in evaluating individual tendencies toward a particular type of expressed spirituality.[23] When Sager's preferred spirituality type inventory is administered, individuals become aware of dominant trends in their expressed spirituality in one of the four spirituality type quadrants (e.g., Apophatic/Mind, Apophatic/Heart, Kataphatic/Mind, Kataphatic/Heart). Sager's assessment has proved helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of preferred spirituality types.[24]

Corinne Ware further applied both Holmes' and Sager's typology of spirituality to personal and congregational expressions of faith.[25] She developed what is called "The Spirituality Wheel," which provides a helpful picture-model of contrast and comparison of personal experiences, as they exist within the context of corporate worship, to a preferred type of spirituality. Ware's theory is built on the premise that when individuals compare themselves to others in the context of communal experiences, they are capable of recognising their own unique faith patterns and/or preferences.[26] Ware, in addition to Holmes and Sager, provides greater viability to the potentialities and empirical uses of spiritual type theory.

When spiritual typology schemata have been applied to the context of historical Christian faith, there is generally thought to be a dividing line between expressions of spirituality over time.[27] Theological disagreement,

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21    Holmes, 5.

22    Corinne Ware. *Discover your Spiritual Type: A Guide to Individual and Congregational Growth* (New York, NY: The Alban Institute, 1995), 7.

23    Allen Sager. *Gospel-centered Spirituality: An Introduction to our Spiritual Journey* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990).

24    Ibid, 31.

25    Corinne Ware. *Discover your Spiritual Type*.

26    Ibid, 35.

27    H.F. Wit, de. *The Spiritual Path: An Introduction to the Psychology of the Spiritual Traditions* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University press, 1994, 1999). Trish Greeves. "Nurturing Spirituality in the Local Church." *Clergy Journal* 78, 5 (2002): 5–7.

religio-political posturing, ecclesiastical disparity, and institutional-bound training have only exacerbated the extent of these differences. Consequently, the sentiment *typically* shared by Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians alike is that little or no commonality between the groups exists, rather, distinct and separate group differences. In many cases, training models have tended to provide the means by which these differences are encouraged and preserved.[28]

## 4 Method

### 4.1 *Participants*

The participants in this study were selected from a conservative evangelical liberal arts Christian university in the United States of America, from the state of Oregon. Corban University is an, "...independent Christian university with more than 50 majors and programs of study including professional, liberal arts and ministries. Adult degree completion programs in business and psychology and graduate studies in education, business counseling and ministry as well as graduate teacher licensure, online and on campus."[29] Corban University was founded in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1935. In 1943, the then "Phoenix Bible Institute" was turned over to the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC).[30] The university has gone through several organisational and operational changes throughout its history. The school's current denominational affiliation is loosely associated with the GARBC denomination, and is more broadly evangelical—continuing to retain conservative and Baptist doctrinal roots. Corban has drawn a broad cross-section of evangelical and mainline Protestant students to its campus in its recent history. Corban requires students to fulfill twenty-four units of Bible and theology course work, subsequently earning a Bible minor, along with each liberal arts degree.[31]

Spiritual type data was collected by way of convenience samples in each of the spring semesters from 2008–2014, with a total of 227 participants involved

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28 Greeves, "Nurturing Spirituality in the Local Church," 7. Holmes, *A History of Christian Spirituality*, 4–5.

29 Corban University. "Information and Facts," *Corban University*, accessed October 25, 2014, https://inside.corban.edu/employees /university-information-facts.

30 Corban University. "Picture of Our Past: Corban's History," *Corban University*, accessed October 25, 2014. https://www. corban.edu/history.

31 Corban University. "Frequently Asked Questions," *Corban University,* accessed October 25, 2014. https://inside.corban.edu/visitor/ frequently-asked-questions.

in the study. All participants were enrolled in the same upper-division theology class—in the respective semester—from which the data was collected.[32]

The sample of 227 participants was comprised of 110 males and 117 females. The mean age for male participants was 21.3, and 21.5 for females. When asked, "How long (years/months) have you been a Christian," the average number of years/months participants self-reported was 13.20 years.[33] Breakdown of denominational affiliation among participants are as follow: 39% Baptist, 13% Evangelical Non-Baptist,[34] 44% Evangelical Non-denominational, and 4% Mainline Protestant.

### 4.2     *Procedure*

Aggregate spiritual type scores for individual participants were determined by administering a spiritual type battery assessment[35]—incorporating self-reporting techniques of a written narrative,[36] a forced-choice preferred spirituality type inventory,[37] and a spirituality type selector test.[38] A subsidiary objective of the study measured participants' perceptions of the *importance* and *frequency* of practice of twelve spiritual disciplines (e.g., study, prayer, solitude, fasting, worship, etc.).

Spiritual type data was examined by means of using coding category analysis for the written narrative portion of the assessment (Part I), and verified self-scores on the forced-choice sections of the assessment (Part II and Part III). Correlation analysis for the importance and frequency of practice of spiritual disciplines was also determined.

Participants received all three parts of the spiritual type assessment battery in an inclusive packet. In Part I, entitled "Your Spiritual Story," the written narrative section of the assessment, participants were asked to write freely on the

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32    TH463: Biblical Spiritual Formation. *Corban University*, Salem, Oregon.

33    Responding to this question required participants to determine the year and month they asked Jesus to be the Lord and Savior of their lives—making a conscious and complete commitment of faith and obedience, as a committed follower of Jesus Christ. <u>Note</u>: this question did not take into account when one was baptised, confirmed, or catechised into a particular church or denomination.

34    For example: Presbyterian, Evangelical Free, Foursquare, Assembly of God, Christian & Missionary Alliance, etc.

35    Samuel Baker. *Spiritual Type Assessment: Basic* (2003).

36    Ibid, Part I, "Your Spiritual Story."

37    Ibid, Part II, "Preferred Spiritualty Type Inventory." Used and adapted by permission, from: Sager. *Gospel-Centered Spirituality*, 32–35.

38    Ibid, Part III, "Spirituality Selector Test." Used and adapted by permission, from: Corinne Ware. *Discover Your Spiritual Type*, 124–131.

subject of their self-perceived spirituality. Participants were given no other guidance beyond the initial set of instructions. In this way, Part I serves as a free-response, open-ended type of question, to which participants were asked to compose an answer.[39] Data collected from the narrative sections of the battery was obtained, specifically crosschecking uniformity measures in Parts II and III of the assessment.

Analysis of the narrative section was carried out by means of coding category analysis.[40] The coding categories for Part I are based upon patterns and regularities inherent in, and characteristic of, spiritual type theory, and the four spiritual types found in the Circle of Sensibility model. The following breakdown examples the types of key words, ideas, patterns, expressions and self-reported typological identifiers utilised in the coding analysis:

Kataphatic/Mind (KM):

· Major Identifiers = Sacramental, Symbol, Image
· Primary Aim – to understand and fulfill vocation in the world
· Belief, Doctrine, Thinking
· Theology, Study
· Fulfilling understanding/purpose in life
· Prayer leading to insight

Kataphatic/Heart (KH):

· Major Identifiers = Enigmatic, Filling, Spirit-Lead
· Primary Aim = to achieve holiness of life
· Born Again, Holiness, Feeling
· Worship, Expressiveness
· Evidencing holiness of life
· Prayer leading to passion

Apophatic/Heart (AH):

· Primary Identifiers = Mystical, Transcendence, Loss
· Primary Aim = to be united with God

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39  For further description of free-response, open-ended narrative analysis, refer to: C.M. Charles and C.A. Mertler. *Introduction to Educational Research*, 4th ed. (Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2002), 269.

40  See for example: R.C. Bogdan and S.K. Biklen. *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1992).

· Contemplate, Ascetic, Being
· Inner Peace, Quiet
· Moving toward union with God
· Prayer leading to presence

Apophatic/Mind (AM):

· Primary Identifiers = Apostolic, Authority, Obedience
· Primary Aim = to obey God's will completely
· Action, Justice, Doing
· World Peace, Relevance
· Duty and obedience to God's will
· Prayer leading to action

Written narratives where compared against the coding categories established for the study, and an independent spiritual type scores was obtained for each participant based upon recurring words, phrases, and themes found in one of the four spiritual type quadrants. Thus, participants involved in this study who obtained a determinately summarised rate of 75 percent on Part I of the assessment were suitably assigned a spiritual type score within one of the four major spiritual type quadrants. In other words, "hits" within the category needed to sufficiently represent 75 percent of the overall narrative's emphasis of one type, against the other three. If the 75 percent cut-off rate did not reveal definitive patterns and expressions of spirituality associated within a coding category, a spiritual type score was not given. In the rare case a participant did not receive a spiritual type score for Part I, it most commonly had to do with the participant's insufficiency to provide clear and adequate information related to their personal story of spirituality (e.g., a participant who only wrote one or two sentences at most, lacking comprehensible detail), or wrote nothing at all.

Part II of the assessment utilised the "Preferred Spirituality Type Inventory." The Preferred Spirituality Type Inventory contains 44 forced-choice items—divided across four subsets of paired couplings (subsets A, B, C, and D). Participants were asked to read sets of paired couplings across the page, and then circle the sentence in each coupling that comes closest to describing preferences and habits in their spiritual experience. Participants were asked to answer all questions. In the case that more than one answer applied to how a participant felt, they were instructed to choose only one answer for each pairing.

Combining scores found in subsections A & B and C & D revealed composite spiritual type scores for each participant on Part II of the assessment

(e.g., K–/M–, A+/H–, K+/H–, A–/M+, etc.). There are a total of 36 possible outcomes of composite scores. "Positive" scores obtained on both axes (e.g., K+/M+, K+/H+, A+/M+, A+/H+) indicated a tendency in spiritual patterns and expressions of the respondent toward the extreme of a given spiritual type quadrant.[41] "Negative" scores on both axes (e.g., K–/M–, K–/H–, A–/M–, A–/H–) indicated a tendency in spiritual patterns and expressions on the part of the respondent to be receptive to the diagonally adjacent, or parallel quadrant's expressed patterns of spirituality, as well as those found in their own. Variations between the extremes occur as scores reflect both positive and negative mixings between the two axes.

Part III of the assessment battery included the "Spirituality Type Selector Test." The Spirituality Type Selector Test contains twelve groups of statements regarding corporate and personal expressions of spirituality. The purpose of the test is to "draw a picture" of one's experience of corporate worship in comparison with their personal style of spirituality.[42] Each of the twelve groups in the test contains four statements; each corresponding to a particular facet of spirituality as related the four quadrants of spiritual types found within the Circle of Sensibility. Participants were first asked to read through each group of statements and select the statement(s) that best describe their experience with their place of worship group. Participants were then asked to go back through the same group of statements a second time, choosing statements that describe their personal preferences of spiritual experience.

Obtaining a spiritual type score for individual participants in Part III of the assessment consisted of simply counting the number of responses to the *place of worship* and *personal* "wheels," and then assigning a spiritual type score to the quadrant with the greatest number of responses (e.g., K/M, K/H, A/H, A/M). In this way, a self-representative and visual score was obtained for individual participants. In rare cases, participant scores resulted in a "tie" between quadrants (i.e., an equal number of responses in two or more quadrants). In the event a tie occurred, participant scores were adjusted according to displayed tendencies along the horizontal and vertical axes. In other words, participants tend to express their spirituality one way or the other toward kataphatic/apophatic and mind/heart extremes. If, however, there was no way of adjusting a participant's score along either the horizontal or vertical axes, then a "combination score" was assigned to the participant for Part III of the assessment.

A subsidiary objective of the study calculated the importance and frequency of practice of spiritual disciplines by the participants involved in the study. By

41    See Sager and Westerhoff.
42    Ware, 49.

definition, "The spiritual disciplines are those personal and corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times."[43] As Willard notes, "The disciplines are activities of the mind and body purposefully undertaken, to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order."[44] In simple terms, spiritual disciplines can be considered a form of "holy habits."[45] Spiritual type theorists speak of a disciplined life in the context of patterns and expressions of spirituality as well.[46] For example, Westerhoff states:

> We all need to develop a life lived in a rhythm of daily prayer, study, work, and leisure. We need to worship in community and alone regularly. We need to learn to live with greater simplicity and with deep compassion. We need to live self-critical lives to ensure that our spiritual life (our relations with God) is resulting in a moral life (a healthy relation with our true self, all other persons, and the whole of creation). Most of all, when faced with the difficulties of life, we need to maintain stability in our exterior life and focus on change in our interior life. The spiritual life necessarily comes first. If that is the case, we each will need to develop spiritual discipline to sustain it.[47]

There is no traditional or historically comprehensive list of spiritual disciplines, though advocates have compiled their own sets of lists.[48] For example, Richard Foster speaks of "inward," "outward," and "corporate" disciplines. The inward disciplines consist of: meditation, prayer, fasting, and study of the Bible. The outward disciplines consist of: simplicity, solitude, submission, and service. In addition, the corporate disciplines are: confession, worship, guidance, and celebration.[49]

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43     Donald Whitney. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 15.

44     Dallas Willard. *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1988), 68.

45     Kenneth Boa. *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 78.

46     See for example, Sager, *Gospel-Centered Spirituality*, 129–133; Ware, *Discover Your Spiritual Type,* 101–107; and John Westerhoff. *Spiritual Life: The Foundation for Preaching and Teaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994). Most notably, Westerhoff advocates the specific disciplines of: Practicing the Presence, Journaling, Spiritual Friendship, and *Lectio Divina*, 68–73.

47     Westerhoff, 74.

48     See for example: Adele Calhoun. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

49     Richard Foster. *Celebration of Discipline* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1988), 13–19.

Whatever list may be adopted, it is apparent spiritual disciplines should be viewed as a means to an end in understanding and expressing spirituality. In other words no individual disciplines serves as an end in itself, but rather as means to the end of a deeper engagement with God.[50] Therefore, "…it would be a mistake to claim that every follower of Christ should practice all of these disciplines in a consistent or rigorous way. Some will be more essential… at one time, and some… at other times."[51] Thus, the objective for this part of the study was to merely assess the importance and frequency of practice of spiritual disciplines by the participants involved in the study. The specific spiritual disciplines utilised in this portion of the study were: Solitude/Silence, Prayer, Journaling, Bible Study, Meditation, Fasting, Guidance/Direction, Contemplation, Stewardship, Worship/Celebration, Service, and Witness/Evangelism.

The study assumed participants to have a general understanding, both definitional and functional, of the spiritual disciplines. Therefore, Likert-type ratings were assigned according to importance and frequency of practice. For the *importance* ranking, the ratings were: 1 = not important at all, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = neutral/unsure, 4 = important, and 5 = very important. For the *frequency of practice* ranking, the ratings were: 1 = not at all, 2 = as often as possible, 3 = occasionally, 4 = routinely, 5 = every day. Rankings for all participants was verified, and means and ranks were computed for participants' rating of importance and frequency of practice of individual spiritual disciplines (see table below).

## 5      Results

Descriptive statistics and distribution of adjusted spiritual type scores of participants are reported in Table 1 and Figure 2. 92 participants (51 male, 41 female) obtained adjusted spiritual type scores of K/M (kataphatic/mind), reflecting 40% of the total sample (N = 227). 109 participants (49 male, 60 female) obtained adjusted spiritual type scores of K/H (kataphatic/heart), reflecting 48% of the total sample. 11 participants (5 males, 6 female) obtained adjusted spiritual type scores of A/H (apophatic/heart), reflecting 5 % of the total sample. 15 participants (5 males, 10 female) obtained adjusted spiritual type scores of A/M (apophatic/mind), reflecting 7 % of the total sample.

A subsidiary objective of the study was to determine the importance and frequency of practice of spiritual disciplines by participants. Participants ranked twelve spiritual disciplines according to their importance (ranging

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50    Willard, 79.

51    Ibid, 82.

TABLE 1    *Descriptive Statistics of Spiritual Type Scores*

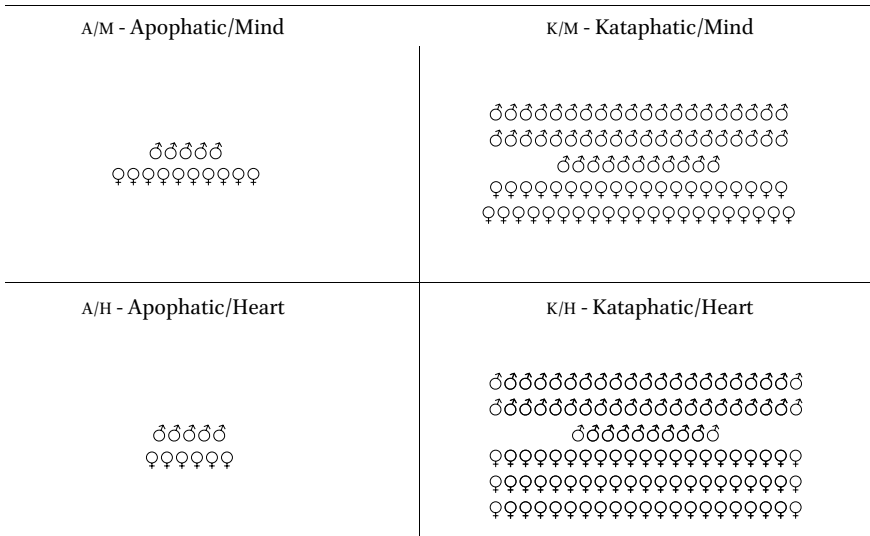| Spiritual Type | Frequency | Percentage | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| K/M<br>Kataphatic/Mind | Males – 51<br>Females – 41 | Males – 22%<br>Females – 18% | 40% |
| K/H<br>Kataphatic/Heart | Males – 49<br>Females – 60 | Males – 21%<br>Females – 27% | 48% |
| A/H<br>Apophatic/Heart | Males – 5<br>Females – 6 | Males – 2%<br>Females – 3% | 5% |
| A/M<br>Apophatic/Mind | Males – 5<br>Females – 10 | Males – 5%<br>Females – 5% | 7% |



FIGURE 2    *Distribution of Spiritual Type Scores*

from 1 = Not Important at All, to 5 = Very Important) and frequency of practice (ranging from 1 = Not at All, to 5 = Every Day) and for the frequency of practice (ranging from 1 = Not at all, 2 = As often as possible, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Routinely, to 5 = Every day). Descriptive statistics in the form of mean and rank (1 = low, to 12 = high) for each spiritual discipline's importance and frequency of practice by participants (N = 227) are presented in Table 2 and Figure 3.

TABLE 2  *Descriptive Statistics of Importance & Frequency of Practice of Spiritual Disciplines*

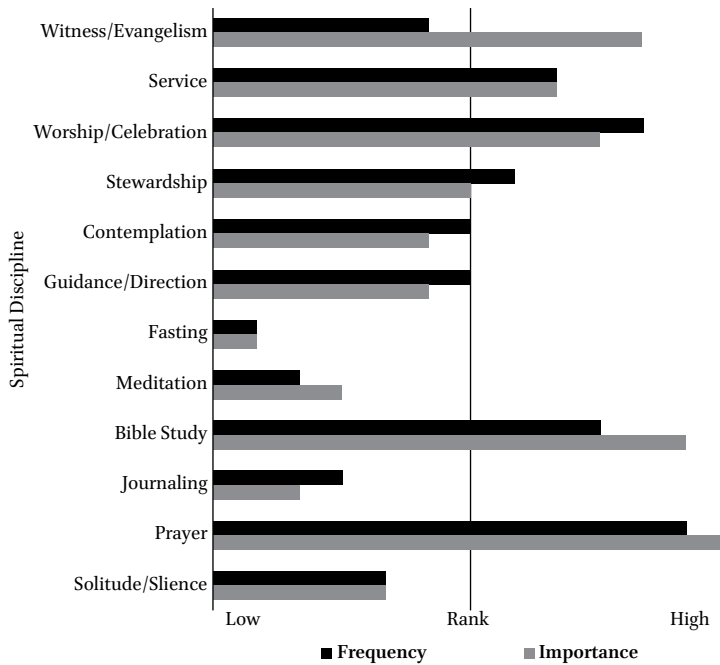| Spiritual Discipline | Importance (Mean & Rank) | Frequency of Practice (Mean & Rank) |
|---|---|---|
| Solitude & Silence | 3.64 ~ 9 | 3.02 ~ 8 |
| Prayer | 4.85 ~ 1 | 4.48 ~ 1 |
| Journaling | 3.14 ~ 11 | 2.86 ~ 9 |
| Bible Study | 4.67 ~ 2 | 3.93 ~ 3 |
| Meditation | 3.43 ~ 10 | 2.70 ~ 10 |
| Fasting | 2.61 ~ 12 | 1.82 ~ 11 |
| Guidance/Direction | 4.32 ~ 6 | 3.93 ~ 3 |
| Contemplation | 3.71 ~ 8 | 3.33 ~ 6 |
| Stewardship | 4.11 ~ 7 | 3.55 ~ 5 |
| Worship/Celebration | 4.62 ~ 4 | 4.07 ~ 2 |
| Service | 4.56 ~ 5 | 3.84 ~ 4 |
| Witness/Evangelism | 4.65 ~ 3 | 3.11 ~ 7 |



FIGURE 3  *Descriptive Comparison of Importance & Frequency of Practice of Spiritual Disciplines*

# 6 Discussion

## 6.1 *Spiritual Type Outcomes*

Of the 227 participants who participated in this study, adjusted scores revealed spiritual types' representative of all four quadrants in the Circle of Sensibility. The four types, when assessing groups of individuals, have been reported by other researchers as well.[52] A higher percentage of scores was represented in the K/M (kataphatic/mind) and K/H (kataphatic/heart) quadrants (40% and 48%) for participants. Moreover, lower percentages of scores was represented in the A/H (apophatic/heart) and A/M (apophatic/mind) quadrants (5% and 7%).

For the K/M participants, self-reported data was oriented to K/M spiritual type patterns and expressions of faith: daily involvement in Bible reading, seeking spiritual insight from intellectual and scholarly pursuits, looking for spiritual guidance from classroom and learning interactions, seeking God's will through meditation and what is revealed in selected passages of the Bible and observing ecclesiastical practices (e.g., Bible study, prayer meetings, campus related small group study and discipleship, participation in "Lord's Supper," etc.).

The data regarding prayer for K/M spiritual types revealed participants to be uniformly involved in sacramental symbol-oriented types of activities in their prayer life. This was articulated in a variety of ways in the written narratives: learning theology and doctrine in class, attending chapel, participating in Bible studies on/off campus, and praying with the Psalms and other biblical passages. The data also revealed a high concentration of spiritual effort in the area of cognitive-thinking oriented patterns found within the traditional K/M type. One participant noted, "I find prayer exhausting at times… Peace can be found through prayer of course, but more often than not I feel compelled to pray more for others than for myself. I find prayer lists to be helpful and keep me on task."

The data from participants receiving adjusted spiritual types scores of K/H disclosed emphases focused on sensate patterns and expressions of faith: celebration of expressive worship—especially in chapel services, sharing my spiritual journey with others, times of personal examination and a desire to seek God through personal holiness. By way of example, one participant stated, "I would like to say I express my love to God the most through song, but I think

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52    See Paul Bosch. "I was a teenage Kataphatic." *Paul Bosch's Worship Workbench*, Essay 24 (January, 1999), accessed October 17, 2002. http://www.worship.ca/docs/ww24.html. Sager, *Gospel-Centered Spirituality*. Ware, *Discover Your Spiritual Type*.

it leans more heavily to the way I interact with people. God has given me the gift of love and compassion for people in my life."

The data also revealed that for K/H participants' prayer involves being fed by the Lord Jesus Christ through feeling and sensate expressions. Westerhoff maintains prayer for the K/H type entails: clapping, touching, body movement, shouting, and the free expression of emotion.[53] The written narrative data for K/H participants disclose these kinds of kinesthetic self-expressions. One participant expressed it this way: "I tend to move by body to the sound of the music [in chapel, specifically], and raise my hands if I feel led and moved by the Truths [sic] that are present in the lyrics. I often close my eyes or focus completely on the screen with the words to avoid being distracted by the worship team or anyone else that is present in the room."

For participants receiving adjusted spiritual type scores of A/H, the data revealed the following kinds of spiritual dispositions: practicing the presence of virtues, seeking the movement of the Holy Spirit, meditation and contemplation, quietness, solitude, sorrow, private time for prayer and reflection and communal engagement through campus relationships. One participant typified the A/H orientation by stating, "...I similarly, ultimately lament the limits of knowledge of God, instead of a felt knowing of God... it has contributed much to my reflective and contemplative nature."

For A/H participants' prayer is rooted in the mystical expressions of Christian faith. The data disclosed such expressions by participants are exhibited in the following ways: creating an evolving dialogue with God through prayer, contemplation, experiencing God in "soulful" ways, meditation, silence, solitude, praying in the dark, experiencing the spiritual journey through prayers laden with pain and placing one's self in a position of engagement with God—specifically in locations on campus where distractions are limited. One participant poignantly revealed A/H tendencies by affirming, "I struggle with prayer existentially and intellectually... I don't have this nice and routine prayer life. Most of my prayers to God involve questions and various thoughts, hopes, and fears... I think prayer and worship is your life."

The data descriptions for A/M participants presented the following tendencies: obedience to what the Church requires, devotion to mission-focused engagement (e.g., university sponsored missions trips), consecration of life to God, religious acts of service, seeing Christ in the face of others and experiencing the sufferings of Christ. One participant reflected, "I want to glorify God by serving Him in all my actions. I want to stay saturated in Scripture and prayer so that I can know how to serve Him. I talk to other people about my

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53    Westerhoff, 56.

beliefs/convictions." This emulates the kind of "striving for justice and peace" associated most commonly with the A/M type.[54]

Prayer for A/M participants' involves intercession for justice and peace in the world, advancing the mission of the church, seeking personal insight for service and praying for difficult people. As one participant insists, "I love engaging in quiet prayer or reflection with a community of believers as well as on my own. Those reflection times are never long enough though... I think it's in the quiet that I most often feel and understand the things God is teaching me or processing the situations He leading me through."

It is apparent from the data participants view their educational experience as one which endeavours to develop the whole person, in light of integral models of spiritual and academic formation. This is chiefly represented in the collection of spiritual types found within the participants' self-reported data, when compared to the theological and doctrinal position of their academic institution. The sample, a reflection of its greater population, maintains consistency in being able to accommodate K/M and K/H spiritual types predominately. Even though slight gravitation exists toward the apophatic axis (i.e., 5% AH and 7% AM), the school, nonetheless, seems to foster an environment aligned more so to a kataphatic type of spirituality. As one A/H participant aptly put it, "I've always wondered why I was so different from the rest of my peers!"

### 6.2    *Spiritual Disciplines Outcomes*

A subsidiary objective of this study assessed the importance and frequency of practice of spiritual disciplines. The major finding disclosed a significant level of relationship between these two factors for the total sample. In other words, participants involved in the study view the relationship between the importance of spiritual disciplines and the frequency of practice linearly interfused.

Of special interest was the study's finding concerning the rank of spiritual disciplines by spiritual type. For example, all four spiritual types (K/M, K/H, A/H, A/M) consistently ranked Prayer, Bible Study, Witness/Evangelism and Worship/Celebration as the top four spiritual disciplines, in relationship to both importance and frequency of practice. However, within the top rankings, each spiritual type ranked disciplines along uniformly held patterns found within its own type.

Taking into consideration spiritual type theory and its relation to spiritual disciplines, kataphatics would tend to view spiritual disciplines in ways more

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54      Ibid, 58.

traditionally associated with seeking God's *revelation*. This would involve for the kataphatic the following:

1. Prayer, which leads to the revelation of God's will, through insight and passion.
2. Bible study, which leads to revealed insight and wisdom concerning theology and correct doctrine.
3. Worship/Celebration, which leads to a revealed awareness of God's presence in one's life.
4. Witness/Evangelism, which leads to becoming aware of God's presence and action in human life and history.

Whereas, apophatics would tend to tend to view the disciplines in more *mystical*, transcendently oriented ways. This would involve for the apophatic the following:

1. Worship/Celebration, which leads to a communion with God and a resting in His presence through solitude, silence, and quietness.
2. Prayer, which leads to a freeing of the mind in order to occupy one's self with the transcendence and mystery of God, leading to union and action.
3. Bible study used as a means to abiding in the reality of God's reign and present purposes for life.
4. Witness/Evangelism, which leads to Abiding in the reality of God's reign.

Thus, data presented in this study fits traditional outlooks associated within the various spiritual types.

An additional discovery in the data found discrepancies between participants' self-reporting of perceived importance of a particular spiritual discipline and the actual frequency of practice of that same spiritual discipline. For example, a high level of perceived importance was reported for the discipline of Witness/Evangelism, but a significantly lower level of frequency of practice was reported for the same discipline. Conversely, a low level of perceived importance was reported for the discipline of Guidance/Direction, but a significantly higher level of frequency of practice was reported for the same discipline.

However, a caveat should be interjected at this point. Namely, any conclusions drawn regarding importance and frequency of practice among various spiritual types should be limited to the study's sample exclusively. Thus, results from the data should be limited in their broader interpretation and application.

## 7      Implications for Catechetical Models in Adolescent Faith Development

As Dean notes: "…every Christian community shares a certain amount of ecclesial DNA, which emerges in ways that are unique to every body of believers."[55] The "DNA" of catechetical approaches observed within the context of the local church's youth ministry can correspondingly be applied to the Christian academy. It is commonly understood that apart from the ministry of the church, the traditional base for training and development of Christian formation in the lives of mid-to-late adolescents happens within the walls of Christian institutions of higher learning. Historically, especially within the United States, a common design for faith formation has borrowed heavily on educational paradigms for information-processing, problem-solving, and application to broader experiences of religious life.[56]

The spiritual and theological pedagogies of Christian colleges and universities embed within their curricular endeavours ways of defining and developing the type of religious heritage they desire to pass onto their students. As Naidoo notes, "Many theology institutions are again envisioning theological education as a formational activity; an activity based on the assumption that the student's personal appropriation of theology is the most central aspect of theological education."[57] Setran and Kiesling also state, "Christian colleges move students systematically through a curriculum, educationally mapping a degree that forms a coherent worldview… establishing a clear mission and ethos, identifying a grounded theological vision of spiritual maturity."[58] Moreover, as already illustrated, these catechetical models tend to borrow heavily from ecclesiastical and denominational historical patterns, forms, and appropriations of Christian faith.

As is often the case, when a parent sends off a son or daughter to university, they hand off the responsibility for religious instruction and training to "experts," who in turn will provide opportunities for engagement, reflection, and application for a growing and sustaining faith.[59] In youth groups, we've invited adolescents into an atmosphere replete with games, activities, mission's trips, retreats, camping experiences, etc… all under the guise of youth

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55     Dean, 105.

56     Ibid, 115.

57     Martin Percy in Marilyn Naidoo. "An Empirical Study on Spiritual Formation at Protestant Theological Training Institutions in South Africa." *Religion & Theology* 18 (2011): 118.

58     Setran and Kiesling, 77–78.

59     Dean, 117.

ministry mission and purpose.[60] The expectation, on the part of youth pastors and college professors alike, is to move beyond these "fake peripherals," and advocate for a deeper and more responsible outlook on spiritual formation instead.[61]

Dean offers, however, a word of targeted warning to the academy by asserting "... the best guides for faithful reflexivity are not scholars, but mystics—contemplatives who understand the necessity of temporary apartness from society in order to become detached (decentered) from self-interest..."[62] Her advice is that, "...Christian teaching seeks *morphosis*, an epistemological transformation so profound that it changes not just what the learner knows, it also changes the learner. Transformative learning reflects the *paideia's* emphasis on wisdom and wonder more than modern education's insistence on data and deconstruction (emphases in original)."[63] This is where the value of an integrative approach to spiritual type theory helps.

A framework for assimilating spiritual type theory into catechetical models for both youth ministries and Christian colleges alike acknowledges the power of an inclusive historical approach to faith formation. As Setran and Kiesling note: "It is absolutely critical for emerging adults to learn and to use the distinct language of Christianity: the creeds, the doctrines, and the biblical vocabulary that shape the contours of the faith community."[64] Utilising spiritual type theory, broadening catechetical perspectives to include *all* of Christian history's approaches to faith formation's practices, therein becomes imperative. One cannot expect to accomplish the task of helping mid-to-late adolescents' spiritual faith formation without acknowledging, learning from, and incorporating the dynamics of both kataphatic and apophatic approaches to spiritual growth.

Individuals attending both youth group Bible studies or classes at the Christian university "...may feel that their spiritual health is ensured simply by virtue of having 'accepted Christ' and prayed a prayer for salvation and the forgiveness of sins."[65] We must, out of necessity, "...develop a posture of formation that attends to both the external challenges posed by cultural shifts and the internal theological challenges posed by false gospel and the imposter

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60 Ibid, 145.

61 Ibid, 145.

62 Ibid, 165.

63 Ibid, 172. *Paideia* being the prototype for the church's earliest forms of education, according to Dean.

64 Setran and Kiesling, 78.

65 Ibid, 26.

religion of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism."[66] As Smith affirms, "In trinitarian [sic] teaching we are reminded that we are deeply dependent on the ancient creeds to provide the contours or, one might say, the grammar, the architecture for our catechesis and thus for our growth in wisdom... We long for transformational teaching, teaching that leads to wisdom and thus spiritual maturity..."[67] Thus, in both catechetical models of youth ministry and Christian higher education's pedagogy, the divine objective allows a student to encounter the "opposite," in order to engage with potentialities for continuing spiritual growth. In this way kataphatic engagements set forth what can be said and should be learned and confessed by Christians propositionally, while apophatic engagements invite adolescents to fellowship with God in ways that transcend human capacities.[68]

## 8        Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, recommendations for continued research, utilising spiritual type theory, are noted. First, an investigation of catechetical curricular differences between the four spiritual types is warranted. The intention here is to use spiritual type theory in analysing preferences most commonly found in youth ministries—determining where excesses and deficiencies exist. In an effort to offer a well-round, and holistic, model of catechesis, adjusting to a balance between the extremes is a reasonable response. As this study illustrates, curricular tendencies exist in catering to more heavily kataphatic theological and biblical localities in some settings. In an effort to appropriate a "balanced" approach, apophatic engagements, curricular wise, need to be considered equally. It is assumed this dynamic also exists within current youth ministry praxis.

Second, a localised study, focusing on investigating the spiritual types of specific denominational church youth groups, is recommended. In an effort to broaden an awareness and understanding of spiritual type theory, observing, analysing and interpreting adjusted spiritual type scores of youth group participants is warranted. In this way, denominational investigation of spiritual types among youth group participants would enhance a greater understanding

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66    Ibid, 27.

67    Gordon Smith. *Called to be Saints: And Invitation to Christian Maturity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 203.

68    James Payton Jr. *Light from the Christian East: An Introduction to the Orthodox Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL IVP Academic, 2007), 77.

of adolescent faith development. This type of investigation would equally uncover the religious instruction advocated within a particular denomination and its potential strengths and deficiencies. This, in the end, is an admirable goal for youth ministries seeking to develop well-rounded and effective catechetical models.

Finally, a study of the relationship and correlation between specific spiritual disciplines and the four spiritual types is encouraged. The limitations of this study illustrate the difficulty in thoroughly investigating this kind relationship. While rankings indicate a relationship does exist, conclusions therein are difficult to generalise to specific contexts. Youth ministries, desiring to have youth engage in spiritual disciplines for lasting spiritual growth, will be more appropriately informed to meet formative goals within their ministry. Further investigation in this regard is both indispensable and necessary.

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