Sanctification in Adolescence: How Karl Barth’s Two-Fold Critique of the Church Could Influence Youth Ministry Practices Today

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SANCTIFICATION IN ADOLESCENCE:
HOW KARL BARTH’S TWO-FOLD CRITIQUE OF THE CHURCH
COULD INFLUENCE YOUTH MINISTRY PRACTICES TODAY

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Luther Seminary
In Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF THEOLOGY

THESIS ADVISER: DR. ANDREW ROOT

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

2016

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A project like this could never have been accomplished without some help. Setting aside the time and effort to succeed are achieved because of the support systems that are offered. One of the huge support systems I found was in the church my family has been attending, Christ the King Lutheran Church in New Brighton, MN. Thank you for your words of encouragement, for a space to study and write, and most of all for sustaining me through worship and sacrament.

Thank you also to my adviser Andy, whose patience, enthusiasm and encouragement enabled me to see the project through to its completion. I appreciate your words of wisdom on how best to convey my thoughts on this important topic. Thanks also to my readers Amy and Eric. Amy, for first introducing me to the theology of Karl Barth which gave me the inspiration for this project. And thank you Eric for pushing me by asking difficult questions, which encouraged me to think and see the world differently.

I would also like to thank the library support staff at Luther Seminary, who helped me find resources quickly, and track down loose quotes. Especially, I want to thank Jennie for her guidance to ensure the citations are correct. And Peter’s editorial feedback has been greatly appreciated in fine-tuning each chapter.

Thank you also to my mom and mother-in-law, who flew out to Minnesota on several occasions to look after our kids, Sam and Sybil, in order for me to take the time needed to achieve this goal. I want to especially thank my wife Amanda, who sacrificed
so much in order for me to go back to school. Even though she keeps saying, “We are a
team.” She has been carrying more than her share of the “load” these last two years.

Most of all, I see this thesis as a yearlong act of worship, seeking to glorify the
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I realized throughout this process, the work of the Holy
Spirit, who was transforming me more and more into the image of Christ who unites
himself to me in order that I may be reconciled to the Father. It is to the Holy Trinity that
I dedicate this work to. “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they
may see your works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” (Matt 5:16)
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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION: THE ADVANTAGE OF SANCTIFICATION

When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. ~Romans 6:20-23

“Can I buy you a beer?” Ryan asked.

“Sure,” I said eagerly, “I never turn down a free drink.”

Together we walked up the steps towards the refreshment stand at Dozer Park, home to the Peoria Chiefs, a class “A” affiliate of the St. Louis Cardinals. I had two weeks left in my first call as an Associate Pastor of Youth and Young Adults at Northminster Presbyterian Church in Peoria, IL. Thirteen men from the church had come out to celebrate my time ministering with and to them and their families by watching a baseball game. With Leinenkugel Summer Shandys in hand, Ryan said to me,

Joel, I’m not one to write thank you notes. So instead I’ll tell you what I would have written on one. Thank you for being our pastor. I know that we will miss you greatly, and that Marcelo will especially miss you. When I think of where Marcelo was five years ago, to where he is today in his faith, I know you played a huge role in that. Even in my own life, listening to your sermons, serving with you on The Great Banquet [retreats] I have grown a lot too.

Then raising his cup, as if it were a toast, he concluded, “Thank you.”

Over the following two weeks, these were the types of conversations that continually came up, parents reflecting with me on the spiritual growth and maturity they

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1 All Scripture quotes are from the NRSV, unless otherwise noted.
had witnessed in their children. Thinking on my own experience, and living in the midst of that community of faith, it became apparent that something special was happening among us. Together, we felt as if we were a part of something bigger than ourselves. The youth of Northminster were growing by leaps and bounds; intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. The majority of the congregation seemed to have a deep desire to not only experience God’s grace as the forgiveness of their sins, but also to experience God’s grace as a power that could transform them more into the likeness of Christ. This ethos permeated throughout the whole congregation across generations. So that, when it came to adolescent faith formation—though the parents may not have articulated it this way—the focus was centered on an experience of double grace as justification and sanctification, leading towards a special call in the world to serve others.

Borrowing from John Calvin, double grace means that

Christ was given to us by God’s generosity to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ’s blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father [that is justification]; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ’s spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.²

According to Calvin, this state of blamelessness is already possessed by the believer through Christ uniting himself to us by the power of the Holy Spirit, (justification). Likewise, at the same time, blamelessness is being “cultivated” in the believer through the power of Christ’s spirit to set one apart in “purity of life,” (sanctification). Therefore, in Calvin’s teaching, grace consists of two elements: one is a forensic justification in which the believer is already seen as one who is not condemned, but is redeemed. And secondly, this grace offered to the believer molds, shapes,

transforms and sanctifies the believer into the likeness of Christ. That is to say, justification and sanctification are like two sides of the same coin, a double grace. Therefore, the advantage that sanctification brings one is to live in the present no longer as if “sin” were our master, (who, as Paul says above pays only in death, Rom 6:23), but rather, to live as one who is enslaved to God, who pays in eternal life through the gift of Jesus Christ. Hence, this thesis is primarily concerned with grace as expressed in sanctification lived out in the lives of adolescents.

But what does Calvin mean by living in “purity of life?” Is he referring to a strict, rigid adherence to rules? If that were the case, sanctification for the adolescent would be centered on moral behavior like not drinking, doing drugs, having sex, etc. Certainly, obedience is involved when it comes to sanctification. Yet, if sanctification is only about obedience, then their salvation would be dependent upon how well they are able to obey, exemplifying, what Martin Luther would call, *theologia gloriae*, a salvation based on works instead of faith. With this in mind, adolescent faith formation becomes centered on the goal of getting adolescents to adhere to a list of rules. Regularly I would encourage parents to wrestle with this deeper meaning of what Calvin meant by “purity of life.” Sometimes we would work together to discern how best to balance obedience to Christ, without it becoming a “works righteousness” faith. In this context, it was helpful to invite parents to reflect on questions such as: What happens when your youth messes up? Is their salvation at stake? Do you consider it a failure on your part, the youth worker, or the Sunday school teacher? Or, is there more to sanctification than acts of obedience? If so, what? And how does that influence faith formation?
Calvin also uses the language of “sacrifice to describe his doctrine of “double grace,” especially with regard to the role of human agency. In Book IV of his *Institutes*, Calvin differentiates between two different kinds, or two “classes” of sacrifice. One type of sacrifice is offered to make atonement for the guilt of sin, while the other is offered in gratitude, thanksgiving and supplication, “to ask God’s favor.”

This second class of sacrifice could be seen as the role of human agency within one’s greater salvation narrative. Therefore, as Calvin argues, this second class of sacrifice is dependent upon the first class, that of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. He says,

All these things finally depend upon the greater sacrifice, by which we are consecrated in soul and body to be a holy temple to the Lord [I Cor 3:16, etc.]… . This kind of sacrifice, [that is the second class] has nothing to do with appeasing God’s wrath, with obtaining forgiveness of sins, or with merit righteousness; but is concerned solely with magnifying and exalting God.

By identifying the outward signs of sanctification as “sacrifice,” Calvin is able to encompass the whole spectrum of human emotion through the supplications one makes, along with the acclamations of praise and thanksgiving in the context of worship.

With Calvin’s understanding of double grace as both justification and sanctification as the foundation, I will now define sanctification from the modern Reformed perspective.

**What is Sanctification from a Modern Reformed Perspective?**

Writing from the perspective of the Reformed view on sanctification, Sinclair B. Ferguson succinctly states that, “Two features are central to sanctification: Jesus Christ himself is our sanctification or holiness (1 Cor 1:30); and it is through union with Christ

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3 Ibid., 4.18.13, 1441.

4 Ibid., 4.18.16, 1444.
that sanctification is accomplished in us.” Therefore, within the Reformed tradition, sanctification is often seen as a progressive movement within the life of a believer as Christ unites himself to the believer. This also means that one participates with Christ, instead of imitating Christ.

Karl Barth, in his *Church Dogmatics* IV/2 §66.2—primarily building off of Calvin’s *Institutes*—emphasizes sanctification as participatio Christi, asserting that Jesus Christ alone is the Holy One. As Daniel Migliore explains, “The saints are holy not in themselves but only by virtue of their participation in the Holy One.” As Barth says, “In the original and proper sense of the term, the Holy One who is the active subject of sanctification, and who constitutes the saints in this action, exists only in the singular as the saints do only in the plural.” For Barth, the active subject in his *Church Dogmatics* is always God; therefore in his deliberation on the doctrine of sanctification, he emphasizes an objective view over the subjective view, meaning that he urges the Church to think of their sanctification from above, as God sees them, rather than how they think they are experiencing the process of sanctification from below.

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5 *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*, edited by Donald Alexander (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 48. Though beyond the scope of this paper, this is a helpful resource in differentiating between five different theological traditions and their nuances on the doctrine of sanctification. The other views come from: Lutheran, Wesleyan, Pentecostal and Contemplative traditions.


The second distinction made by Ferguson is that sanctification happens as a result of union with Christ; this refers to the believer’s new identity found within Christ. This is an ontological shift that takes place. The very core of one’s being, or, to put it another way, one’s identity, is no longer their own, but they join Christ’s being, Christ’s identity. Constantine Campbell, in his book *Paul and Union with Christ*, differentiates union with Christ to mean “. . . the believer’s relationship to Christ as not merely ethical.”

Borrowing from Catholic theologian Alfred Wikenhauser, he contends that union with Christ “is ontological. . . The man who ‘puts on Christ’ gains a share in Christ’s being.”9 Therefore, sanctification, when it is properly understood, is not just about doing good works, nor should it be reduced to a code of morality. Instead, sanctification seems to be more like a gradual discovering, or perhaps a growing realization, of seeing oneself as God sees them, that is, as set apart in this world through being joined to Christ.

This concept of a progressive movement in the doctrine of sanctification is not new to the Reformed tradition, however. As Rosalene Bradbury points out, Martin Luther had a similar inclination: “Temporally considered however this moment is ongoing; Luther for example states that Christ has won forgiveness ‘once and for all on the cross [, but] the distribution takes place continuously.”10

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Sanctification Misunderstood

In his Church Dogmatics, Barth maintains that there are two forms of decay in the church, “secularization” and “self-glorification.” He connects these two forms of decay with a misunderstanding of the doctrine of sanctification. Rather than understanding it as something that Christ does to the believer, making her holy, as the Holy Spirit unites the believer to Christ, one misunderstands sanctification as a way for them to make themselves holy. For Barth, “Secularisation is the process by which the salt loses its savour (Mt. 5:13).”¹¹ He likens the experience of secularization to the story of the Good Shepherd told by Jesus in John 10. However, in Barth’s version, the sheep listen to the voice of the stranger, rather than listening to the voice of the Good Shepherd.¹²

Likewise, Barth identifies self-glorification as when

[The Church] rejoices and boasts in its own vital and constructive power, in its own being as the incomparable communio [communion]: the communio [communion] of the sancti [saints] in their relationship to the sancta [sacred things]; the civitas Dei [city of God] on earth, which cannot be confused with any other society, but towers over them as once cathedrals did over the little towns clustering round about them.¹³

Therefore, the self-glorification of the church is the assumption that the world needs the “communion of saints” in order to be saved, thereby placing the church in a position of power and authority, instead of humility and servitude. Barth goes on to describe self-glorification as “sacralisation” to mean a self-imposed propping up of the church.¹⁴ Today, in the U.S., one witnesses this trend of self-glorification or sacralisation

¹¹ Barth, CD, IV/2 §67, 668.
¹² Ibid., IV/2 §67, 667-8.
¹³ Ibid., IV/2 §67, 669. Italics original.
¹⁴ Cf. Ibid., IV/2 §67, 669-70.
through the inherent competitive nature of churches. As a recent Pew Study has revealed, the Christian church continues to be in decline in the U.S. Generally speaking, with this smaller “market share,” churches attempt to “brand” themselves as witnessed through the advertisements boasting their programs. Or they “market” themselves as meeting a certain niche within the marketplace catering to a specific demographic. For example, for several months in Kalamazoo, MI, there was a billboard with the picture of a pastor, bald, with pierced ears, a beard, sleeves rolled up, showing tattoos, squatting next to his Newfoundland dog. Next to this picture was the catch line, “You got issues? So do we. Let’s talk. The River.” While this inner city missional church, does incredible acts of ministry through reaching out and impacting their immediate community, the presence of this type of advertising seems to lend itself in the direction of self-glorification.

Reformed theologian, J. Todd Billings says that, according to Calvin, “. . . double grace is not a set of abstract benefits acquired in this themselves. This double grace is acquired as part of an intimate union with Christ.” More specifically, as Mark Garcia notes, in John Calvin’s commentary on Romans from 1556, he opens his comments discussing Romans chapter 6 by passionately asserting that, “Throughout this chapter the apostle maintains that those who imagine that Christ bestows free justification upon us

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15 “America's Changing Religious Landscape: Christians Decline Sharply as Share of Population; Unaffiliated and Other Faiths Grow,” Pew Research Center, 2015, http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/ (accessed 18 June 2015). According to this study, in the U.S., there was nearly an 8% drop from those identifying themselves as Christians from 2007 at 78.4% to 70.6% in 2014.

without newness of life shamefully rend Christ asunder (*Christum discerpere*).”¹⁷ This tearing of Christ, from Calvin’s perspective, is rooted in the Chalcedonian Christology as applied to his doctrine of double grace (justification and sanctification) as union with Christ. While serving in predominately middle-class, white, Mid-West American congregations, this “tearing of Christ” captures the essence of the anemic faith described in the lives of many of the youth I worked with. Not all of my experiences working with youth were like that of Marcelo, and his dad Ryan, mentioned above. I discovered that within the modern Reformed tradition, the doctrine of sanctification is frequently referred to, but when applied to the lives of those sitting in the pews, sanctification generated itself in a different way. Often, what is called “sanctification” is, in reality, more like a “sanctified civility” or “morality,” rather than Christ alone being the believer’s holiness and one being united to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

With this in mind, this thesis seeks to answer the question: How can a more robust understanding of sanctification by adolescents help the church to combat these forms of decay of secularization and self-glorification?

**Sanctification in Adolescence**

The Heidelberg Catechism begins its third and final section, entitled “Gratitude,” with question and answer #86:

**Q:** Since we have been delivered from our misery by grace through Christ without any merit of our own, why then should we do good works?

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A: Because Christ, having redeemed us by this blood is also restoring us by his Spirit into his image, so that with our whole lives we may show that we are thankful to God for his benefits, so that he may be praised through us, so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits, and so that by our godly living our neighbors may be won over to Christ.

This question echoes what many youth in our churches wonder about today: “If Jesus has already saved me, why should I do good works? What’s in it for me?” This 16th-century confession speaks directly to the youth of today by reframing the question outside of Western consumerist tendencies. Billings adds that

The next question [in the Heidelberg Catechism] clarifies that sanctification is not an optional “extra” to salvation but a necessary part of it; the following questions and answers define this “genuine repentance” or “conversion” in terms of dying to the old self and coming to life in the new self.¹⁸

Therefore, sanctification is a part of salvation, as the Spirit works to bond the believer more to the likeness of Christ. Billings states that sanctification is a “necessary part” of salvation, bringing about in the believer, the death of the old self, “and coming to life in the new self.” Therefore, from a subjective perspective, sanctification is progressive, meaning that the believer progresses more and more throughout her/his lifetime towards a greater likeness of Christ.

Put forth another way, in addressing the Gentile Christians in Rome, the Apostle Paul emphasizes the rite of baptism as a symbol of the old Adamic-self being buried with Christ, and coming alive again to walk in the newness of life, freeing one to live a life of obedience to God, no longer enslaved by the power of sin (Rom 6:4 & 6). Therefore, the acts of doing good works—from a Reformed perspective—are not a method of earning salvation, but rather, are done in gratitude for this free gift of salvation. In performing

these good works in obedience to God, the believer lives their life as God intends, living into the “new-self” through participation with Christ.

In his sermon to a small group of confirmation students in 1932, Dietrich Bonhoeffer gets at the heart of this anemic faith that is often seen in adolescents—especially when Confirmation is experienced like a “graduation ceremony” from the church. Bonhoeffer preaches, “One cannot just casually enter into the promised land. Likewise, one cannot just casually become a member of the Christian church—that is, by going to confirmation. Why not? Because God steps into the path and guards his land and keeps it holy and does not want us to enter into it unholy.”19 Therefore, sanctification in adolescence is an ongoing journey towards holiness, which does not culminate in the rite of confirmation, but involves a continual life-long process of being united to Christ.

Outline of the Thesis

I will use Richard Osmer’s four core tasks of Practical Theology as outlined in his book *Practical Theology.*20 In his book, Osmer identifies these tasks as: descriptive/empirical, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic. This interdisciplinary approach seeks to answer the following questions: 1) What is going on?, 2) Why is this going on?, 3) What ought to be going on?, and 4) How might we respond? Therefore, the “descriptive/empirical task” uses personal narratives as a way to gather information in order to help “discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or

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The “interpretive task” uses “theories of the arts and sciences” in order to better explain why this is happening. Meanwhile, the “normative task” seeks to use the biblical narrative and theological lens to help navigate one towards an appropriate response to the situation, thereby laying the groundwork for the final task. Lastly, the “pragmatic task” develops “strategies of action” that enable one to put into practice the changes needed to embody a new desired outcome, as derived from the knowledge gained from the other core tasks. While exploring the four core tasks, one needs to keep in mind that these tasks may not always be accomplished in a linear form. Rather, throughout the process, there is a symbiotic relationship between the four tasks, as they are interdependent of each other. With this in mind, while each chapter of this thesis will focus on one of the core tasks as its primary lens, elements from the other core tasks will “creep in,” influencing the development of the primary task in each chapter.

Therefore, this thesis is laid out as follows: each chapter will be devoted to one of the core tasks—with the exception of the normative task, which has two chapters devoted to it. Chapter two begins with looking at the “Anemic Faith in Adolescence.” Using the descriptive/empirical task as the primary guide, I will draw on previous experiences of doing youth ministry to illustrate this anemic faith. Then borrowing from James K. A. Smith’s summary of Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age* I will outline the philosophical

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21 Ibid., 4. While the four core tasks are not a methodology for doing practical theology, they are rather, a consensus model, I am using them as a framework for my argument on the importance of sanctification when it comes to adolescent faith formation. At the beginning of each chapter I will highlight one or two aspects of Osmer’s understandings as a way to articulate the purpose behind using them to interpret this multi-faceted issue.

22 Ibid. This framework helpfully integrates an interdisciplinary approach by asking a variety of questions, which require the use of many academic disciplines in order to satisfy the answer. The variety of disciplines from which I draw from, allow me to formulate a more well rounded argument of sanctification being one way to address the issues of secularization and self-glorification facing the church.
background in order to paint a picture of some of the struggles youth workers may have when it comes to adolescent faith development. I then consider and critique two similar and popular methodologies: *Sticky Faith* and *Think Orange*, which suggest ways that the church ought to respond to this struggle.

In chapter three I will use the interpretative task, to answer the question, “Why is this happening?” This chapter will continue with Taylor’s work via Smith to explore more deeply what Taylor labels as the “buffered self.” I will conclude the chapter with Daniel Siegel’s work on brain development in adolescence, illustrating the science of personal transformation examining the mirror neuron system and its relationship to the feeling of empathy.

In order to dig more deeply into the overall topic of sanctification, the normative task is broken up into two chapters: first, I will consider sanctification from a biblical point of view, and secondly I will look at sanctification through a theological lens. In order to accomplish this task, I will delve deeply into the exegesis of the Apostle Paul’s work on sanctification as found in Romans 6:1-11. Regarding the prominence of Romans 6:1-11 in the conversation of sanctification, Lutheran theologian Gerhard Forde affirms, “Actually, all evangelical treatment of sanctification should be little more than comment on this passage.”

Chapter five will conclude the discussion using the normative task as I expound on Karl Barth’s doctrine of sanctification. While it is not possible to comment on all of what Barth wrote on the subject, this chapter specifically looks at what he wrote in Volume 4 §66 and §67 of his *Church Dogmatics*. As already alluded to, Barth

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emphasizes an objective view of sanctification over a subjective view and asserts two main critiques of the church: secularization and self-glorification. In this chapter, I will consider these two main critiques of the church and begin to develop preliminary ways in which the church might mitigate these issues. Primarily, for Barth, it is through the actions of simple obedience in following the person of Jesus Christ that one is able to resist the temptation of secularization. And it is through the practice of participatio Christi in self-denial that one is able to resist self-glorification.

My project will conclude with the pragmatic task, answering the question, “What should we do now?” If Barth is correct by following the person of Christ and living a life of obedience are keys to living a sanctified life. This begs the question: how can the church help adolescents pursue these elements? One of the most practical ways in which to live into these two keys is through practicing the spiritual disciplines of confession and fasting. In his book Celebration of Discipline Richard Foster notes, “By themselves Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done. They are God’s means of grace.”24 With this proper view of the practice of spiritual disciplines, the practice of confession and fasting will help adolescents come to a place where the Holy Spirit can provide the means of grace as experienced in sanctification.

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CHAPTER 2
ANEMIC FAITH IN ADOLESCENTS

Richard Osmer asserts that, “Ultimately, the descriptive-empirical task of practical theological interpretation is grounded in a spirituality of presence. It is a matter of attending to what is going on in the lives of individuals, families, and communities.”¹ Before establishing the philosophical and historical framework laid out by Charles Taylor, and critiquing the Sticky Faith and Think Orange methodologies of youth ministry, I will first practice the “spirituality of presence,” by attending to two individual youth, through telling their stories. The first is an example of this anemic faith as expressed in Justin’s story. The second is an example of a more robust expression of faith considering sanctification through participatio Christi as shared in Olive’s story.

Justin²

“Hey Joel,” Danny, the high school youth director began. “Have you read Justin’s Facebook post?”

“No, I haven’t had a chance to go online lately. What did he say?”

“Basically, he blames himself for his mom getting breast cancer,” Danny replied.

“What are you going to say to him?” I asked.

Pausing to think a moment, Danny shrugged his shoulders, “I’m not sure, yet.”

¹ Osmer, Practical Theology, 34.

² I have changed some of the details of these stories to protect anonymity.
Justin’s mom, Debra, had just found out that she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Debra was an elementary school teacher, and a mother of four. Their family had been long-time members of our church. Her oldest son, Justin, was a junior in high school, while her youngest daughter was in 3rd grade. It was a tragic situation. As staff, we were attempting to come up with pastoral care plan to assist the family through this process of grief.

Justin was a point guard on his high school varsity defending state champion basketball team. He had dreams of making it into the NBA. His life appeared to be consumed by practicing basketball to reach this goal. On the one hand, Justin was good enough to be on the varsity team. Yet, he often sat the bench, not being good enough to start. However, this setback never seemed to daunt him and his aspirations of playing in the NBA. For example, whenever someone pointed this out to him, he would retort, “Well, Michael Jordan didn’t even make it on to his high school basketball team.”

Justin also had a girlfriend named Angie who was also a junior. This relationship is ultimately what led to his post on Facebook about feeling responsible for his mom’s diagnosis of breast cancer. Around the same time that Debra found out she had breast cancer, Angie found out that she was pregnant. In Justin’s post, he blamed himself for his mom’s diagnosis believing that it was how God was punishing him for having premarital sex. This was how Justin was grieving over the knowledge that soon his mom would no longer be with him. His working theology was based on seeing God as a God of retribution.

Although this may be an extreme example of this type of theology, it is a common experience, perhaps even reached as a logical conclusion to two of the underlying
principles of the Moralistic Therapeutic Deism creed as outlined by Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton in *Soul Searching*. The two specific principles are: the belief that “God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.” And “The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.” Since at this point in Justin’s life, he does not feel happy, nor does he feel good about himself, he likely believes that he has broken the principle, that “God wants people to be good.” For Justin, his faith is dependent upon obeying the rules that God has laid out for him in the Bible. When he sins, he knows that there are consequences to it, therefore in his mind the consequence of having premarital sex is God giving his mom cancer. Inevitably, over the next few weeks Justin would continue in this line of thinking, and come to the conclusion that by living a life of absolute obedience to God, through prayer, attending church, participating in youth group and reading his Bible, that God would spare his mom. His plan was demonstrated to us as we witnessed a dramatic increase in Justin’s attendance at youth group events over the next few weeks. Also, there was an earnestness and sincerity in the way he sang the songs in worship.

In his book *Rejoicing in Lament*, J. Todd Billings intimately shares his own experience of being diagnosed with multiple myeloma. At one point, he recounts a story of when he went into his pastor’s office to receive counseling about his feelings of guilt over the prayers that people prayed pleading with God for complete healing. In the midst of it, he has a profound realization that the theology underlying these prayers was one of retribution. Billings explains

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Here is the theology of retribution again from the book of Job... This is a poisonous variation on the mechanistic retribution theology of Job’s friends: faith is rewarded with healing, while the lack of healing is (retrospectively) a sign of a lack of faith. I was tempted—not out of trust but out of servile fear—to wager that God was predictable, able to be manipulated, rather than a God of his word. In this situation, trust in God meant continuing to petition, to trust—but not as a wager based on what I would get out of it. To fear the God of the health-and-wealth gospel is to fear God for my own gain rather than fear God “for nothing” in return (in the words of Job 1:9). Indeed, this would be trusting in God as a vending machine which is not really trusting God at all.4

Similarly, Justin was praying to the “God of the health-and-wealth gospel,” “trusting in God as a vending machine,” rather than trusting in the promises of God revealed in Scripture. Israel is reminded that although future generations will be forced to leave the Promised Land and worship other gods the LORD will always keep his promises.5 It was not wrong for Justin to pray or lament to God for his mom. However, his underlying motivation of seeing “God as a vending machine” demonstrates an anemic faith that was primarily focused on trusting in his own abilities to manipulate God for this own purpose, rather than trusting God not to abandon him, his mother, his girlfriend and their soon-to-be daughter.

Olive

One hot afternoon, on a high school mission trip in Nashville, TN, our youth mission team split up into groups of four or five and walked around downtown handing out water bottles to people. Olive, an upcoming junior, was in my small group and had a transformative experience through this act of ministry. Quickly, we went to a coffee shop to pause and reflect on what the Holy Spirit was doing in and through her.

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5 I.e., the promise to never abandon the people of God, (cf. Deut 4:30-31).
“It just doesn’t seem right,” she began as we sat down. “I mean . . . here I am carrying around this bottle of water . . . water that I can have any time I want, and these people are struggling in the heat. It just doesn’t seem right.”

“Tell me more,” I urged, taking a sip of my iced mocha.

“Well, I mean, like when I go home, I have all these nice things, all these clothes and food and stuff. But these people, all they want is water, something so simple that I take it for granted.”

This was coming from the same girl who was elated that our mission trip T-shirts had an “American Apparel” tag, instead of “Hanes.” Olive was articulating the encounter she had with the suffering of another person. Through this experience she was beginning to recognize that in a different reality she was coming face-to-face with the suffering Jesus on the cross. Throughout our conversation, she was able to recognize that this act of ministry was not just about “copying” what Jesus did, but more truly, it was seeing the face of Jesus in those that we sat down and drank water with.6

I asked her if she saw homeless people in her hometown in Illinois. Although she did, she never considered helping them. Even in her school, she knew of classmates who did not have much money, yet she did not know how to help them. “Would more money solve their problems? Would nicer clothes, or a more expensive cell phone change things for them?” She wondered out loud. As we wrestled with these questions, in the back of

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6 Kenda Creasy Dean says, “The point is that ‘the imitation of Christ’ is a theological, not a sociological, literary, or historical, move. Our identification with Jesus depends not on what we do to “copy” Jesus, but on what God did to identify with us.” Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub., 2004), 47. Italics original. Billings adds another layer to this “identification with Jesus,” saying, “It is not that Christians are continually called to imitate the act of becoming incarnate, but they are continually called to imitate—or better, to participate in the life and way of—the suffering servant, Jesus Christ.” Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 147. Italics original.
my mind I thought, “Olive, what’s going to happen when we go back? Will you remember this act of ministry as encountering the personhood of Jesus Christ?”

According to Kenda Creasy Dean, for Jürgen Moltmann, Christ’s Passion is an invitation by God for us to participate in the Trinity, “not by analogy, but by real incorporation into the life of God. Adolescents, therefore, participate in the Passion of Christ wherever they take up their crosses.”7 Dean continues, “Practices of Christian caretaking create communities of mutual exhortation in part because the encounter with ‘otherness’ holds a mirror up to the developing self, exposing once-hidden seams in the adolescent’s sense of identity.”8 Through this experience, the “once-hidden seams” were exposed to Olive, specifically, her consumerist-driven tendencies.

As we sat in the coffee shop, Olive and I began to realize just how counter-cultural her statements were. It was both exciting and terrifying at the same time. Later that night, as a large group, we reflected together on Matthew 25:31-46.9 In that safe place—though Olive may not have said these exact words—she shared how she no longer desired to live in her “consumerist-driven” world, but wanted to participate in the in-breaking Reign of God.10 In that moment Olive was confessing to us how a part of her identity was dying, and that she was discovering her new life. Andrew Root, in his book


8 Dean, Practicing Passion, 194


10 Again, borrowing from Dean, “Consumer culture depends upon ideologies of self-fulfillment, and upon the electronic media’s ability to convince teenagers to buy into them (literally). But young people who identify with Christ’s Passion enact self-giving love, the kryptonite that undoes ideologies of self-fulfillment.” Practicing Passion, 34. Italics original.
Christopraxis, refers to Bonhoeffer’s understanding of what was happening spiritually to Olive in that moment, saying, “Bonhoeffer’s perspective of discipleship is constructed fully on a theologica crucis, which grows from the soil of justification. We come and die because none of our own actions (practices) can save us.” Olive realized that her “consumerism” was not going to save her, just as participating in this mission trip and doing acts of service would not save her. The only thing that would bring her life was to die to herself, pick up her cross, and follow Jesus (cf. Mark 8:34).

Speaking on Mark 8:34, Douglas John Hall sees how both mission and ethics are intertwined with one another. He writes, “It would be difficult to imagine a less detached theology. ‘Take up your cross, and follow me’ (Mark 8:34)—a command that, given the actual journey of the speaker, is virtually limitless in its demand for involvement.” For Olive, the moment of transformation began in a twofold revelation of Christ. Through reflecting on the encounter of suffering of another person, she recognized the suffering of Christ, and secondly, she participated with Christ in an act of service as she entered into their suffering through conversation and giving them a bottle of water to drink. Root explains, “This participatio Christi allows us to articulate a mystical union through personhood—that is, through ministry—that binds the divine and human both in time and eternity. Ministry is the event in which time and eternity come together.”

We will return to this concept of ministry binding the “divine and human together” using Charles Taylor’s example of the cross-pressures of “transcendence and


13 Root, Christopraxis, 81. Italics original.
immanence” penetrating “the buffered self” in chapter three. For now, I will turn my attention to the word “secular” and its historical three-fold understanding laid out in Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*, followed by a brief overview of two popular youth ministry methodologies: *Sticky Faith* and *Think Orange*. I will conclude by using Taylor’s interpretation of the word “secular” to critique these two methodologies.

*A Secular Age in Contention with Sticky Faith & Think Orange*¹⁴

Another important aspect of the descriptive-empirical task is to evaluate current ministry practices. In order to do so, I will first consider the philosophical and historical framework of the current age. The philosopher Charles Taylor lays out an extensive history of the meaning behind the word “secular” in his tome *A Secular Age*.¹⁵ James K.A. Smith condenses Taylor’s work into a 140-page book summarizing his main points and helping readers to apply some of the lessons learned in order to more successfully minister to those in the Western world.

Secular theorists posit that the western world is heading away from religion and spirituality towards secularism. However, Taylor (and Smith) contends that one’s identity is not completely secular, nor is one’s spiritual experience dominated by religious fundamentalism. Rather, one lives somewhere in the middle, embodying the ambiguity and paradox—what Taylor labels as “cross-pressures”—found between the two

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extremes. Public theologian Elaine Graham agrees, saying, “In truth, the categories of ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ co-exist in complex inter-relationship. . ..” This “complex inter-relationship” is the one in which youth ministry often finds itself wading through when it comes to adolescent faith formation. Using Charles Taylor (via James K. A. Smith) will help shed some light on how the Western world arrived at this point in history. In addition, I will also briefly consider two popular methodologies, Sticky Faith and Think Orange. Both are currently used in children and youth ministries that attempt to help wade through these waters, yet, ultimately fall short of a more robust understanding of sanctification. First, I begin by considering Taylor’s definitions of “secular.”

A Secular Age

According to Taylor, throughout the last five centuries the Western world has seen a major shift in the way that “secular” is defined. He asks, “Why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable?” This question is what drives Taylor to understand how this shift happened in the minds and experience of those in the Western world.

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18 Smith, How (Not) to Be Secular, 19. Citing Taylor, A Secular Age, 25. Taylor covers too much ground in his tome, A Secular Age, for me to address every major claim he makes. Therefore, in this chapter I will focus on his redefinition of the word “secular” to critique Sticky Faith and Think Orange. The next chapter will focus on the “immanent frame,” and the “modern buffered self” to help interpret why those in the West have become disenchanted with the spiritual world and struggle with a belief in God.
In order to explain this phenomenon Taylor chronicles three different definitions of “secular” throughout the last 500 years. According to Smith, Taylor defines “secular,” as a “temporal” realm, like that of “earthly ‘politics’ or of ‘mundane’ vocations.” This understanding of “secular” was present around the time of the Reformation. “The priest, for instance, pursues a ‘sacred’ vocation, while the butcher, baker, and candlestick maker are engaged in ‘secular’ pursuits.”

In modernity, the meaning of “secular” shifted from the temporal sense to a spatial sense. Smith explains, “The public square is ‘secular’ insofar as it is (allegedly nonreligious; schools are ‘secular’ when they are no longer ‘parochial’—hence ‘public’ schools are thought to be ‘secular’ schools.” Taylor calls this “secular₂.” According to Smith, this is the definition of “secular” that “secularism theorists” proclaim is taking hold of the Western world. Graham gives this helpful definition of sociological secularization theory: “. . . the theory which posits a process by which religion gradually ceases to be the primary authority for individuals and societies.” As a result, many Christians hold on to this definition and even interpret it as a “call to arms” against the war on secularism. Perhaps a more fruitful way forward would be to follow someone like British historian Callum Brown, who acknowledges that while “[s]ecularisation is happening,” at the same time, adds, “. . . secularisation theory is wrong.” As we will see

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19 Smith, How (Not) to Be Secular, 20.

20 Ibid., 20-1.

21 Ibid., 21.

22 Graham, Between a Rock and a Hard Place, 35.

below, this is the place where *Sticky Faith* and *Think Orange* derive their motivations for change within the church.

A society that has adopted what Taylor calls “secular₃” as its definition is described as, “A society is secular₃ insofar as religious belief or belief in God is understood to be one option among others, and thus contestable (and contested). At issue here is a shift in ‘conditions of belief.’”²⁴ Therefore, unlike secular₁, which separated “secular” and “sacred” in a “temporal” sense, and unlike secular₂, which separated “secular” and “sacred” in a “spatial” sense, secular₃ is based on “conditions of belief” and is therefore experienced ontologically, or within one’s core being or core self. This is the secular age in which the Western world finds itself.

Mainly drawing from Taylor’s earlier work *Sources of the Self*,²⁵ Fergus Kerr reiterates one of the most common critiques of Taylor, “That his philosophical analysis is slanted regrettably in favour of Christian theism.”²⁶ With this critique in mind, one must cautiously consider whether or not Taylor is right in assessing that Western society has moved beyond the “secular₂” as posited by the secularization theory, and has reached “[a] Secular₃ Age.” Yet, Kerr also acknowledges that, “Philosophers find it hard to refrain from slanting their accounts of differing views, to the extent even of offering guidance for a better life.”²⁷ As a devout Catholic, Taylor seems to be “offering guidance for a

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²⁴ Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 22.


²⁷ Ibid., 333.
With this in mind, we proceed to considering two popular and similar methodological approaches to doing children, youth and family ministries.

**Sticky Faith**

Drawing from two extensive research projects, Kara Powell and Chap Clark present their findings in an easy-to-read parent guide for faith formation in adolescents. In Powell’s project, called “The College Transition Project,” she followed 500 graduating seniors into their first three years of college. The second was drawn from Clark’s anthropological study, when he spent a year as a substitute teacher in a high school in Los Angeles. Powell and Clark seek to equip churches and parents to stymy recent trends in which 40-50% of adolescents leave the American church upon graduating high school. This motivation works from a worldview related closer to “secular” than “secular.”

According to Powell and Clark *Sticky Faith* is: 1) both internal and external, 2) both personal and communal, and 3) both mature and maturing. They draw from a three-fold translation of the Greek word πίστευω to define “faith.” This includes “faith,” “belief,” and “trust.” Hence, *Sticky Faith* is “a faith that trusts in God and that understands that obedience is a *response* to that trust, in everything.”

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28 Ibid.

29 For a more detailed account of Clark’s findings, see Chap Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today’s Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).


31 Ibid., 34. Italics original. Reggie Joiner lays out a similar focus on faith formation centered around one learning to trust God. Cf. *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009), 39.
... trusting God requires an *internal*, *personal*, and *mature* commitment to be made. At the same time, out of this trust comes that “response” to “obedience” in trusting God in everything. Such acts of obedience become an *external* demonstration of faith that happen either in *personal* or *communal* contexts, and it continues to evolve and grow as the people are *maturing* in their faith in God.

Yet, what is missing from this definition of faith is language about the dying of the “old-Adamic” self. This is why for Olive, defining faith this way was found to be insufficient. As we will see in the next chapter, without the language of “dying to the self” Olive was hitting a brick wall when it came to her faith formation. From a practical standpoint she realized her need to die to her materialistic self in order to take up Christ’s cross and follow him, theologically, her faith took a turn as she sought out new ways to be more like Christ.

Borrowing from the Apostle Paul, Michael Gorman gives this definition of faith

Paul’s understanding of faith is complex. Faith is a total response of obedience to the gospel (Rom 1:5; 16:26). It is also, as we have seen, a *death experience* in which one enters into the experience of Jesus’ crucifixion. Paradoxically, this death experience called faith results in life, both present and future.

Certainly, Paul’s understanding of the “self” is very different from the 21st century notion of “self.” Nonetheless, Paul contends that those who follow Christ have already been buried with Christ through their baptism, in order to rise again into new life (Rom 6:1-4). Bonhoeffer, interpreting Paul, says, “Those who live out of their baptism live out of their death. Christ marks the life of his own with their daily dying in the struggle of the spirit against the flesh, and with their daily suffering the pains of death.

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which the devil inflicts on Christians.”34 In the weeks following our trip to Nashville, Olive and I routinely met to reflect on her experience and how she was being formed more and more into the likeness of Christ.

One of the hallmarks of *Sticky Faith* is the ability for parents and churches to invert the adult-to-youth ratio, meaning that typically when a church has an event or activity, the ideal adult to youth ratio is 1 adult for every 5 youth. Based on their research, Powell and Clark believe that this ratio should be inverted so that every youth is able to identify five adults in their life who are invested in their spiritual formation. This can take many different forms, including Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, neighbors, etc.

By far, the number one way that churches made the teens in our survey feel welcomed and valued was when adults in the congregation showed an interest in them. More than any single program or event, adults’ making the effort to get to know the kids was far more likely to make the kids feel like a significant part of their church.35

Likewise, this is also the primary reason given for why youth (and children) should worship alongside of adults on Sunday mornings. They contend that, worshiping in an intergenerational setting, youth and children will not only learn the liturgy of the worship service, but more importantly, will have an opportunity to come into contact with more adults interested in their faith formation. However, this argument neglects one of the primary purposes of worship; for believers to gather together and connect with the transcendent Tri-une God, through singing, praying, and receiving the Good News as proclaimed through the Word and sacrament. At the time of his crisis, Justin was not attending worship in order to meet new adults. His spirit was awakened by the deeper

need to transcend his present situation and be in the presence of God. Justin was
convinced that only God could give him what he truly needed.

*Think Orange*

Similar to Powell and Clark, Reggie Joiner in *Think Orange* seeks to equip church
leaders to change the tide of the mass exodus of youth leaving the church. Joiner
estimates higher than Powell and Clark, putting the dropout rate at 70-80%. He also
expands the vision of who his philosophy of ministry will impact. Once a man expressed
to Joiner his fear over the future of his denomination because most of its members were
over sixty, and that within the next ten years, if these trends continue, nearly half of his
denomination will literally die off. Joiner summarizes these startling realizations, saying,
“The bottom line is that the church is losing its influence with two entire generations.
This is a pivotal time in history when the church needs to refocus its mission.” Though,
in reality, the example given by Joiner does not mean that the church is losing influence
in the 60+ generations: instead, the church still has a great deal of influence in these older
generations. In my experience, the reverse seems to be more true, that these older
generations seem to be the ones wielding influence over the local church, thereby, at
times neglecting the younger generations commonly called “X,” “Y,” and “Z.”

While Joiner was the director of family ministries at Northpoint Community
Church outside of Atlanta, GA, he and his staff considered the amount of time that they
had with the children and youth in their programs each year. They roughly estimated that
the average child or youth would spend about 40 hours a year in their program.

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37 Ibid., 39.
Meanwhile, they estimated that parents would spend 3,000 hours a year with their child.\textsuperscript{38} When Joiner saw this statistic, he had an epiphany, “. . . two combined influences make a greater impact than just two influences.”\textsuperscript{39} In order to simplify his message, he labels the church with the color “yellow,” because it is the light of the world. Likewise since parents love their children with “warm hearts,” they are labeled with the color “red.” Combining the two influences makes “orange.” Therefore, his call to action for church leaders is to “Think Orange.”

There are five main principles that undergird Joiner’s philosophy for ministry.

- Nothing is more important than someone’s relationship with God.
- No one has more potential to influence a child’s relationship with God than a parent.
- No one has more potential to influence the parent than the church.
- The church’s potential to influence a child dramatically increases when it partners with a parent.
- The parent’s potential to influence a child dramatically increases when that parent partners with the church.\textsuperscript{40}

Joiner’s framework of faith formation from preschool through adolescence is a progressive movement through developing a sense of \textit{wonder} in preschool, invigorating a desire for \textit{discovery} in children, and culminating into a \textit{passion} to serve God and neighbor in adolescence.\textsuperscript{41} Within this context, Joiner emphasizes the importance of service for youth faith formation, saying, “It’s important to understand how closely

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 85.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 23.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 82.

\textsuperscript{41} See his table “Progression of Basic Truths,” ibid., 154. Many of the suggestions, such as this progressive faith formation model, and the recognition of the crazy busy schedules families have (cf. 83) suggest that perhaps Joiner borrows a lot his strategic planning framework from Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger’s \textit{Simple Church: Returning to God’s Process of Making Disciples} (Nashville, TN: B & H Group Publishing, 2006).
spiritual formation is connected to the act of serving. If we fail to help kids make a practical investment of their time and energy in serving others, their hearts will never mature to care for others.”

I whole-heartedly agree with this statement. Drawing from Bonhoeffer’s *Discipleship* and his expression of “costly grace,” Root says, “Grace is costly because Jesus ministers to the world through his person, and to follow Jesus’s person is for us to be moved through our own person into ministry, into action.”

Unfortunately, the examples given by Joiner are centered on the propagation of programs, like having youth lead small groups for younger children. Granted, the success of programs like this require a lot of volunteers, and giving youth prominent leadership opportunities can play a crucial role in adolescent faith formation. However, by limiting these examples of “service” to only occurring in the context of the propagation of the local church, unwittingly the church could fall into the trap of “self-glorification” as it seeks to impose its own ministries as more important than other experiences of “service” to the neighbor.

As Olive sought out ways to serve when we returned from Nashville, I encouraged her to look outside of the walls of the church to serve. She had already been heavily involved in our children’s program helping out with Vacation Bible School, and working in the nursery. While these are worthwhile places to serve, for Olive, her transformative moment did not happen within the walls of the church, but rather, in seeing the poor as her neighbor. As she continued in this trend, she became more open to

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an experience of immanence as she came face to face with those in need. More will be said on this concept of being “open” to the experience of God in the next chapter.

Joiner sums up his vision for family ministries with three words: wonder, discovery, and passion. He believes that if adolescents are able to believe the following statements the church will be considered successful:

*Wonder:* I am created to pursue an authentic relationship with my Creator.  
*Discovery:* I belong to Jesus Christ and define who I am by what He says.  
*Passion:* I exist every day to demonstrate God’s love to a broken world. If children believe this by the time they leave home, the family wins. If these three things become a reality, we as a church have done our job. 

At first glance, these statements seem like a great vision for the church to have when it comes to child and adolescent faith formation. However, the anthropocentric focus of these statements reveals two undercurrent themes felt throughout the book, the themes of *theologia gloriae*, and the decay of self-glorification. Within this paradigm, very little of the work of salvation is dependent upon the work of Christ. Rather, most of the work is dependent upon the believer attaining levels of maturity through “wondering,” “discovery,” and “passion” in order to pursue their own relationship with God. Billings contrasts *theologia gloriae* with *theologia crucis*, saying, “A theology of glory seeks to divide the agency and honor for salvation between God and human beings—for God would surely make righteousness accessible to those who do their best, right?”

This vision is also another form of “self-glorification,” as described by Barth, in that, the church is the one who has “done their job.” Implicitly, the church is the one who

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44 Joiner, *Think Orange*, 211.  
45 Billings, *Union with Christ*, 52.
receives praise for being responsible for this success. Therefore, faith formation is defined as assimilation to an idea or completing a program, rather than faith formation being primarily about following the person of Jesus Christ.

In contrast, Eberhard Bethge notes that in Bonhoeffer’s seminal work on sanctification, *Discipleship*,

[Bonhoeffer] drew a sharp distinction between discipleship and an ideal. The call of Jesus cannot be turned into a program or an ideology; indeed, that would mean a failure of discipleship. Ideals and programs lead to a craving for casuistic realization; this was the very opposite of the step into discipleship, for discipleship means breaking away from casuistic and legalistic programs. To be called, to go, and to follow—this is a true Christology.46

Near the beginning of the book, another example of “self-glorification” can be seen: “In the midst of millions of unchurched people, the greatest thing we can do to rebrand the image of the church is to restore it to its original purpose. If we want the church to have influence in our communities, we must become a bright yellow light—a golden lampstand.”47 The language of “rebranding” sounds as if the crisis for the church is that the product for sale has caused bodily harm, or has lied to the consumer about something, similar to the recent Volkswagen scandal regarding cheating emissions standards.48 For Joiner, restoring the church to its original purpose is to “Think Orange.” Here one can see how Joiner agrees with the secularization theory that there is “a zero-sum game between the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular,’ as if they were incapable of co-existing, or even that elements of one might not suffuse the other.” Elaine Graham goes


on to critique those who believe this, saying, “However, these fail to capture the complexity of social and cultural developments in which significant marks of religion and irreligion are evident, and actively shape our everyday life in varied and sometimes unexpected ways.”

Conclusion

In conclusion, using the descriptive-empirical lens has revealed what is going on when it comes to sanctification and faith formation. The example of Justin shows a common trend found in faith formation in adolescents (and many adults) of how the creed of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism can lead to seeing God as a “vending machine.” Meanwhile, the example of Olive demonstrates how, in ministering to one’s neighbor, the self is exposed, showing places where growth and transformation can take place. In *A Secular Age*, I identified the difference between “secularism” as defined by the secularization theory in contrast with the more complex reality of “secular3” that the Western world is currently experiencing. I used this definition to critique the methodological approaches presented by *Sticky Faith* and *Think Orange*, both of which are insufficient pragmatically when it comes of faith formation for adolescents like Olive and Justin. Therefore, revealing also how they are also insufficient theologically. In the next chapter, I will explore the interpretive task in order to better understand why this more robust understanding of double grace is imperative to adolescent faith formation. First, I will continue the conversation with Charles Taylor, specifically considering his work on the “immanent frame” and the “buffered self.” And secondly, I will use the work

49 Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, 62. Italics original.
of neuro-biologist and psychotherapist, Daniel Siegel, looking specifically at the “mirror neuron system” and how it helps one form empathy.
CHAPTER 3
WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

Introduction to Wisdom

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight” (Prov 9:10).

Osmer links the interpretive task with Christ’s royal office as a wise sage, akin to King Solomon. Osmer continues throughout his chapter on “The Interpretive Task” to illustrate the role wisdom plays in the context of practicing practical theology. There is a spectrum within the interpretive task between thoughtfulness and theoretical interpretation, with wise judgment found somewhere between the two poles. Osmer emphasizes the importance of wise judgment in his book, because pastors, his primary audience, are most in need of using this quality for pastoral work. However, I will emphasize the quality of theoretical interpretation, because it lends itself to the academic nature of my project. Since the topic of adolescent faith formation seen through the lens of Reformed sanctification is multidimensional, it will require the use of several disciplines within the interpretive task, specifically the disciplines of philosophy, neuroscience and psychotherapy. Therefore, I will continue where I left off in chapter two with

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1 Cf. Osmer, Practical Theology, 86, and 97.

2 Ibid., 82. Although Osmer does lead his readers through a helpful example of how to go about theoretical interpretation considering the topic of alcoholism, he also provides a brief overview of how to discern the reasoning behind an argument being made in order to evaluate whether or not a particular discipline will be most helpful in a given situation.
Charles Taylor’s work in *A Secular Age* specifically considering his development of the *immanent frame* and the *buffered self*. After establishing the philosophical foundation of the modern person, I will use the work of Daniel Siegel to demonstrate how neuroscience and psychotherapy work together for adolescent brain development and how the mind can be used to contribute to not only a physical transformation in the brain, (e.g., the growth of synapses in the brain), but also can lead to a transformation of the self. Specifically, looking at the “mirror neuron system,” since it is believed to be the place where the feeling of empathy is derived from. In addition, this also has the potential to lead the adolescent into a newfound knowledge of the self, which, ultimately, is initiated through the work of Christ bringing about the transformative experience of sanctification.

**Charles Taylor: The Immanent Frame and the Buffered Self**

In chapter two, I considered Charles Taylor’s work in *A Secular Age*, focusing on the differences between his definitions of secular\(^1\), secular\(^2\), and secular\(^3\). Additionally, I argued how two current methodological approaches to adolescent faith formation, *Sticky Faith* and *Think Orange*, are inadequate because of their philosophical framework behind the problem they seek to address, which is grounded on interpreting *secular* as secular\(^2\) rather than secular\(^3\). However, for Taylor, defining secular in a *spatial sense* instead of the *ontological sense* allows him to claim, that in the Western mind, the question of the existence of God is no longer one being asked. James K.A. Smith explains:

> Your neighbors inhabit what Charles Taylor calls an “immanent frame”; they are no longer bothered by “the God question” as a question because they are devotees of “exclusive humanism”—a way of being-in-the-world that offers significance without transcendence. They don’t feel like anything is missing.\(^3\)

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\(^3\) Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, viii. Italics original.
The “immanent frame” is found in part five of Taylor’s book *A Secular Age*. It is created within the social arena that delineates our lives based entirely on the natural order of things as opposed to the supernatural order. As a result it obviates transcendence from the modern social imaginary. Taylor contends that it is a common experience of all within the Western world to inhabit this *immanent frame*. He argues, that one ought to focus on “how” one inhabits the immanent frame, rather than whether or not one is found in it. In general, there are two ways in which people inhabit the immanent frame. Some find themselves within a closed system of beliefs that does not allow for transcendence to break in, whereas others are more open to the possibility of experiences of transcendence through religion.

Both Justin and Olive inhabited the immanent frame within their core beings. Likewise, both were open to the possibility of transcendence through religious experiences. For example, Justin began to seek for a transcendental experience of God as demonstrated in his increased worship attendance. Similarly, Olive experienced a moment of transcendence in serving “the other” through encountering the pain experienced in poverty. These are both indications of what Taylor would label as *cross pressures*, which penetrate the *buffered self*.

Related to the immanent frame is what Taylor calls the *buffered self*. This is connected to the shift that the Western world made in secular, where the “self” becomes insulated in the mind, so that one no longer believes in demonic forces and is thus disenchanted with the spiritual world. Additionally, one may rationalize a transcendent

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4 Adapted from Smith's glossary of terms created by Taylor in ibid., 141.

experience, thereby dismissing the belief in God and perhaps holding to the religion of extreme humanism. While the buffered self is present in the minds of those in the Western world, there is also a deep-seeded desire within the human experience to find meaning, or significance, or fullness, creating a *nova effect* for people to pursue seemingly countless options.

[Therefore] we find ourselves caught between myriad options for pursuing meaning significance, and fullness. The “nova effect” names this fragmentation., pluralization., and fragilization of our visions of the good life and human flourishing: pluralized because of the sheer array of options; fragilized because of the proximity and frequency.

With this plethora of options to find meaning, significance, and fullness, *cross-presures* can penetrate the buffered self, and leave one open to the possibility of belief in God. These cross-presures include immanence and transcendence, or enchantment and disenchantment.

Consider Justin’s example, specifically his lapse of moral judgment in having sex with his girlfriend before marriage. Perhaps one reason why this came about was the result of his disenchantment with the spiritual world. Justin may have believed that there would be no immediate consequences to his actions. However, when his mom was

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6 For a hypothetical example of what this may look like see James Loder’s parable about a man getting his leg stuck between a train and the platform and his initial cry out to God for help, and then later rationalizing the experience in his own mind while recovering in the hospital. See, *The Transforming Moment*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1989), 15-6.

7 Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 62.

8 Smith says, “All sorts of people feel themselves caught in these ‘cross-presures’—pushed by the immanence of disenchantment on one side, but also pushed by a sense of significance and transcendence on another side, even if it might be a lost transcendence.” Ibid., 63. Even Evangelicals are not immune to the disenchantment of world. Anthropologist T.M. Luhrman notes that there is a shift that was made from The Great Awakening pastors like Jonathan Edwards and his sermons, such as “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” to a lack of discussion about the experience of hell today, saying, “There is no threat of a fiery damnation.” *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 105.
diagnosed with breast cancer, the cross-pressure of a cosmic force, such as the belief in a God of retribution, penetrated his buffered self, creating a crisis of belief within his immanent framework as he sought out the meaning behind his mother’s prognosis. This crisis of belief provided a felt need for an experience of transcendence. Initially, this was expressed in his comment on Facebook, and his belief that his mother’s cancer was the result of his indiscretion. Justin’s transcendental longing continued, as seen through his reaching out to God in increased worship attendance, and a genuine sincerity with which he expressed his faith. Granted, at the time, Justin’s articulation of faith may have been more closely aligned with the doctrines of *Moralistic Therapeutic Deism* as outlined above in chapter one. Nonetheless, Smith reiterates that, according to Taylor, while these cross-pressures are not universally experienced in the Western world, neither are they limited to orthodox Christian believers.⁹

Paradoxically, while Justin may have desired the transcendent nature of God, even more so, he wanted to know that God’s presence was near, or immanent within his personal self. According to Elsa Tamez, theologically, the reason for this is because

The redemption of Jesus Christ cannot be reduced to his death. His redemptive work appears already in the incarnation. All of his life is salvific, including his death and resurrection... It would betray the intention for Paul to affirm that the event of the crucifixion of Christ by itself—in abstraction from his life—was necessary for justification, salvation, or forgiveness. All Jesus’ life forms a part of the redemption.¹⁰

Following Christ then leads one towards an incarnational approach to ministry. While the incarnation is historically a one-time distinct act of the Word becoming flesh—

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that the second person of the Trinity unites himself to the human experience through the 
person of Jesus Christ—at the same time, believers who are called to follow Christ 
become incarnational (albeit imperfectly) in their actions as they participate with Christ 
in service to others. This incarnational act then becomes a way to point back to Christ 
who is seeking to reconcile humanity to the Father, as they seek to live out his command: 
“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good 
works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Mat 5:16).

Perhaps this is the main difference between Justin and Olive. As a product of a 
faith formation focused on justification alone, Justin’s framework of faith was dependent 
upon his conception of God that was more like a vending machine. He believed that if he 
did the right thing, he would get what he wanted. In contrast, Olive’s framework of faith 
encompassed a double grace of both justification and sanctification, in which 
transformation was taking place in all aspects of her life, forming a plural self.\(^\text{11}\)

Drawing from Karl Barth’s \textit{Church Dogmatics}, specifically his section on “The 
Awakening to Conversion,”\(^\text{12}\) James Loder names the transformative moment of 
conversion as the “awakening into sanctification” or “being shocked into metanoia.”\(^\text{13}\) 
This fundamental change in character internally may happen instantly, yet it takes a 
lifetime of continual small repentances or changes as demonstrated in the acts of the one 
converted to live into this transformative moment. The \textit{jolt} or \textit{awakening}, as described by

\(^{11}\) Dean asserts that in our postmodern society adolescents are a \textit{plural self} rather than a 
\textit{patchwork self}. Theologically this means that just as the Tri-une God is able to “dance around” 
(perichoresis) maintaining both unity and differentiation between the three persons, so too the plural self of 
the adolescent is capable of “dancing around,” maintaining the flexibility needed in postmodernity that is 
centered on the fidelity of Christ. \textit{Practicing Passion}, 89.


\(^{13}\) Loder, \textit{The Transforming Moment}, 116-7.
Barth and Loder, is the penetration of the buffered self initiated by God through either a transcendental experience, like worship, or through an experience of immanence of God as seen in the face of the one who is being served. Either way, as Loder contends, it takes place through “a personal instance of the Word of God under the agency and initiative of God.”

For Olive, ministering to people through the incarnational act of handing them a bottle of water, sitting with them, and connecting with them in a humane way, is an example of what Elaine Graham would call an “Apologetic of Presence.” She builds off of Taylor’s “characterization of modern consciousness as framed by reflexivity in the face of pluralism.” This is similar to the nova effect of pursuing a plethora of options to find meaning, significance and fullness. Graham argues that the future of public theology ought to be centered on actions instead of words, working in collaboration with society on mutually agreed upon morals. For example, giving clean drinking water to those who are thirsty. Granted, Graham is speaking directly about the future role of public theology in a post-secular society. Nonetheless, youth workers seeking to engage in the faith

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14 Ibid., 117.

15 See Ch. 7 of Graham, Between a Rock and a Hard Place, 210-33. Dean says, “Adolescents, therefore, participate in the Passion of Christ wherever they take up their crosses... In other words, young people take part in God’s ‘being there’ for them whenever they are ‘there’ for others, making Christ’s fidelity visible in the practices of suffering love.” Practicing Passion, 88.

16 Graham, Between a Rock and a Hard Place, 214-5. Although Graham’s model of practical theology for cross-disciplinary dialogue is the revised praxis method of correlation, in which she first emphasizes the importance of dialogue between the praxis of social movements and the praxis of the Christian community working together to solve concrete social problems, such as providing clean drinking water. As the example above demonstrates, she makes a concession to the immanent frame, demonstrating a mutual influence between the fields of philosophy and practical theology. Whereas, the model of practical theology for cross-disciplinary dialogue used in this thesis more closely identifies with the Chalcedonian transformational model in which one learns and listens from other fields (i.e., philosophy or as seen below, neuroscience) gaining insights, it then transforms these insights into a theological grammar. For more on these different models of cross-disciplinary dialogue within the field of practical theology see, Osmer, Practical Theology, 160-172, specifically pp. 167-9.
formation of adolescents ought to consider the benefits of emphasizing orthopraxy over orthodoxy. Graham believes that public theologians should make a similar move, saying, “The primary expression of public theology, then, will be in practical demonstrations that authentic faith leads to transformation, as a matter not just of interpreting the world but changing it.” While Graham is on to something about the future of public theology, one ought to be cautious when applying this same principle when it comes to adolescent faith formation. One problem that could arise out of this practice is confusing sanctification with civility.

Smith explains, that according to Taylor,

Civility becomes a sort of naturalized, secularized sanctification. “Civility was not something you attained at a certain stage in history, and then relaxed into”; rather, “civility requires working on yourself, not just leaving things as they are, but making them over. It involves a struggle to reshape ourselves.”

With this definition in mind, “secularized sanctification” seeps into the consciousness of Christian parents and is expressed as a desire for their children to lead moral lives. This is why it is so crucial for youth workers to highlight that God is the one who initiates this “jolt” or “awakening into sanctification.” Otherwise, the success (or failure) of a youth worker becomes defined by how “moral” of a life their children live. On the one hand, having moral, well-behaved children, who act as good citizens is good. However, properly understood, this is not the purpose of sanctification. So then, how did civility come to replace sanctification in the consciousness of the Western world?

This question is very complex, one that I will not be able to answer fully. Nonetheless, one aspect that answers this question is the mediatization of religion and


religious experiences. For example, the Danish sociologist Stig Hjarvard notes that Western society is no longer experiencing enchantment through religious practices. Rather, the media is the primary source of enchantment. Therefore, the media has influenced the social consciousness of the people who consume its content. With this in mind, it is not enough to say that those of us in the West are “disenchanted” with the world—although, there is evidence to support this claim. Instead, it is more accurate to say that religious practices are no longer the only source of experiences of enchantment.

As illustrated above, the stories of Justin and Olivia, and the philosophical framework teased out of Charles Taylor, lead us to a more in-depth analysis of the mind through the lenses of psychotherapy and neuroscience. Daniel Siegel contends, “There is a place deep within us that is observant, objective, and open. This is the receptive hub of the mind, the tranquil depth of the mental sea.” It is to this “tranquil depth of the mental sea” we turn attention to.

**Daniel Siegel: Mirror Neuron System**

In contrast with the pre-modern porous self, the modern Western buffered self makes a distinction between the internal world of the mind and the external world of the

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20 Hjarvard says, “The media as cultural environments have taken over many of the social functions of the institutionalized religions, providing both moral and spiritual guidance and a sense of community. Consequently, institutionalized religion in modern, western societies plays a less prominent role in the communication of religious beliefs and, instead, the banal religious elements of the media move to the fore of society’s religious imagination.” “The Mediatization of Religion,” 24.

body. According to Taylor, “Modern Westerners have a clear boundary between mind and world, even mind and body. Moral and other meanings are ‘in the mind.’ They cannot reside outside, and thus the boundary is firm.”22 If this is the case, how does one resolve the tension of this firm boundary delineating the mind and the body, with the claim that sanctification is—from a Reformed perspective—Christ uniting himself to the believer, and the believer participating with Christ?

On the one hand, Taylor is right, claiming that those in the Western world do make a conscious boundary between the mind and the world, and between the mind and the body. This allows for the creation of the immanent frame, referenced above. Taylor concludes that the main difference between the porous self and the buffered self are the different explanations of where feelings are derived from. For example, to the pre-modern porous self, melancholy was black bile. Therefore, the emotional self did not exist in the interior mind, but was open to demonic forces that were believed to cause melancholy. In contrast, for the modern buffered self, melancholy is now identified as being the result of a bodily experience such as a chemical imbalance, or being hungry. For the modern buffered self, discovering that these feelings are a result of a “causal reaction utterly unrelated to the meanings of things”23 reinforces disenchantment with the spiritual world, and the mind becomes further distanced from the experience of the body. However, is this boundary between the mind and the body as distinct as Taylor claims it is? Psychotherapist Daniel Siegel would disagree.

23 Ibid.
According to Siegel’s clinical practice, as told in his book *Mindsight*, he repeatedly notes how the body and the mind are interconnected. For example, when his clients perform a “body scan,” in which they use their mind to internally assess and map every part of the body, they often are able to sense tension or pain from a specific area or body part. Others experience anxiety or stress related to past experiences that have been embedded in their subconscious. This connection between bodily experience and the mind, as explained through neuroscience and psychotherapy practices, can help to explain how the adolescent has an open immanent frame and welcomes an experience of God, through spiritual practices in the process of progressive sanctification.

In 1992, Daniel Siegel brought together forty different scientists from a wide range of disciplines at UCLA. This inter-departmental group began to use their expertise and resources to better understand how the physical nature of the brain and the subjective nature of the mind were connected. Later on, they would create a whole new field of study called “interpersonal neurobiology.” Siegel’s work on the brain and mind as a psychotherapist is crucial to understanding what happens to humans during adolescence and how this relates to the transformation of the self that takes place in sanctification.

One of the most compelling arguments Siegel makes in regards to the connection between our minds, brains and bodies is known as the *mirror neuron system*, located in the parietal and frontal areas of the brain. Siegel explains that the pre-frontal cortex

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24 For example, see his story about Anne in the section called, "The Wisdom of the Body" in Siegel, *Mindsight*, 140-2. See also the story of Elaine, ibid., pp. 163-5. Taylor concedes this point saying, “These images can also be seen as coded manifestations of inner depths, repressed thoughts and feelings.” See “Buffered and Porous Selves.”


26 Ibid., see his helpful diagram of the brain on p. 60.
allows us to map out the minds of others. Using sensory information, we have the ability to portray what others are thinking, therefore, it is believed that the “mirror neuron system” is the root of empathy. Siegel says, “The key is that mirror neurons respond only to an act with intention, with a predictable sequence or sense of purpose.” A negative example of this is taken from the movie *Elf*. Buddy the Elf sees a man waving his hand in the middle of New York City. Since we are familiar with the context, our sensory information tells us that the man is hailing a cab. However, for Buddy, being from the North Pole, he does not have the same sensory memory, and mistakenly believes the man is greeting him. Siegel explains,

> If I simply lift up my hand and wave it randomly, your mirror neurons will not respond. But if I carry out any act you can predict from experience your mirror neurons will “figure out” what I intend to do before I do it... At the most complex level, mirror neurons help us understand the nature of culture and how our shared behaviors bind us together, mind-to-mind.

In the case of Buddy the Elf, he was not able to predict what the man was actually doing, and was therefore not connecting with the man “mind to mind,” as he assumed. Nonetheless, the example still demonstrates the innate human desire to connect relationally with another. The binding of “mind to mind” demonstrates why the mirror neuron system is also the place where feelings of empathy are most likely derived from. The sensory inputs that Olive noticed in her experience of giving bottles of water to those in need opened her up to the emotional states of those she was serving. Through this, she was able to empathize with the derelict of Nashville. Doing so caused a tension to surface

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27 Ibid.


30 Ibid., 59.
within her between her Christian identity by serving others and her materialistic identity. Siegel’s claims on the mirroring of the self, uses neuroscience to reinforce Kenda Creasy Dean’s claim, as mentioned above, that “Practices of Christian caretaking create communities of mutual exhortation in part because the encounter with ‘otherness’ holds a mirror up to the developing self, exposing once-hidden seams in the adolescent’s sense of identity.”

For Olive, from the neuro-scientific level, her mirror neuron system was firing synapses connecting the prefrontal cortex with the limbic areas of her brain, which sent messages to her brainstem and throughout her entire body. Therefore, creating the physiological experience of emotional pain as expressed in her face becoming flushed and weeping, as she empathized with those she gave the bottles of water to. What she knew about herself and who she wanted to be were in conflict with one another, creating a transformational experience. This transformational experience was infused with the power of the Holy Spirit as Christ united himself to Olive, calling her to deeper sense of vocation in serving those who were thirsty as she answered the call to follow him.

Over the next several months, as Olive and I continued our conversation about her experience in Nashville, she began to articulate a new way of knowing herself, brought about by reflecting on both Scripture and her new experiences in serving the poor through youth group service opportunities. She was beginning to make a conscious effort in the way she lived her life as these experiences impacted her. Siegel notes how this new kind

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31 Dean, *Practicing Passion*, 194

32 Siegel says, “Based on these sensory inputs, we can mirror not only the behavioral intentions of others, but also their emotional states. In other words, this is the way we not only imitate others’ behaviors but actually come to resonate with their feelings—the internal mental flow of their minds. We sense not only what action is coming next, but also the emotional energy that underlies the behavior.” *Mindsight*, 61.
of *knowing* is even reflected in our species name and relates it directly to what is happening in the adolescent brain:

Our species name is *Homo sapiens sapiens*. *Sapiens* means “knowing.” So with the double knowing we are the ones who not only know, but *know* we know. And this knowing we know emerges first in adolescence. Creative conscious exploration of conceptual thinking and abstract reasoning enable the brain to approach old problems in new ways.  

The result of this *knowing* has also been seen in sociological studies on the religious experience in adolescents. Lisa Pearce and Melinda Lundquist Denton observe an inherent paradox of the religious practices with the youth they spoke to, and the adolescents’ own personal perception that they were being more religious. They claim that while participation in religious activities—such as, attending worship services—for many adolescents declined in the U.S. between the years of 2002 and 2005, many adolescents reported that they *knew* God better and therefore reported having a deeper relationship with God. For these adolescents, the evidence of their faith was not based on the external evidence of attending church functions. Rather, this study shows that adolescents define their faith based on knowing more about their religious beliefs and knowing more about God. However, there is a distinction to be made between knowing *about* God and *knowing* God. The former gives the control of the knowing event to the adolescent, whereas the latter is centered on the knowing event being initiated by God, as emphasized above by Loder and Barth above.

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Consider this historical example from the seventeenth century. Anna Maria van Schurman, the famous Dutch theologian, wrote a book entitled *Eukleria*, in defense of her controversial decision to leave academia and follow the Labadie movement. Bo Karen Lee expounds on the different types of knowledge that van Schurman differentiates between in *Eukleria*:

Behind the perceived inadequacy of both theological and linguistic sophistication lay a fundamental opposition in van Schurman’s mind between two kinds of “knowing.” In the *Eukleria*, she contrasts *scientia* (a “knowledge so dry and superficial regarding divine matters”) with *notitia* (“true, innermost, and salutary knowledge of God and his glory”). While *scientia* connotes knowledge, skill, and expertise of a more formal and academic sort, *notitia* (from *nosco*) is consistently qualified by van Schurman as true, health-giving, and *intima* (intimate or innermost).  

For van Schurman, the “better thing” was a deep intimate knowledge of God, (*intima notitia*) which came about through an experiential knowledge. The adolescents interviewed by Pearce and Denton emphasized the *scientia* knowledge over this *intima notitia* knowledge of God. Granted, these adolescents most likely have not achieved the same level of academic knowledge that van Schurman reached; nonetheless, the type of knowledge described by Pearce and Denton would fall under *scientia* knowledge. Why is this bad? As Loder warns, “Thus, some people prefer a familiar conflict to a new and unfamiliar resolution. Receptivity to convictional insight depends on a willingness to embrace the unexpected. Because of this and the inherent ambivalence toward the Holy, people may dismiss the resolutions to which they have been led.”  

Thankfully, Olive did not dismiss the resolutions that God had led her to make, but embraced them.

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Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I primarily drew from the fields of philosophy and neuroscience and psychotherapy, along with sociology, theology and anthropology, I have sought to answer the question of why sanctification is neglected in the faith formation of adolescents. Charles Taylor’s work on the immanent frame and the buffered self explains why modern adolescents (and adults) in the West find themselves disenchanted with the spiritual world. Yet, he leaves room for the possibility of the in-breaking of God’s actions through cross-pressures felt by transcendence and immanence and disenchantment and enchantment creating a plethora of options for one to pursue creating a nova effect. As illustrated through the story of Olive, the experience of the immanence of God, as seen in the face of those she served in Nashville, created a crisis of identity within herself. Within her brain, her mirror-neuron system fired countless synapses between her prefrontal cortex and the limbic areas of her brain, sending messages to her brainstem and throughout her body. As she connected “mind to mind” in these moments, she was “jolted” out of her materialistic self and began to wrestle with what it meant for her identity to be a Christian.

This new knowledge of herself, initiated by the work of Christ, led her on a path of seeking a deeper intimate relationship with Christ. As we will see in the next chapter, throughout Romans 6:1-11, Paul consistently calls the Gentile Christians in Rome to remember what they already know about their relationship with Christ. In chapter four I will begin first part of the “normative task,” considering the biblical foundations of sanctification. I will conclude the “normative task” in chapter five by considering sanctification as outlined by Karl Barth in his *Church Dogmatics*. 
CHAPTER 4
SANCTIFICATION FROM A BIBLICAL LENS

The Normative Task Part I

In the early 17th century Anna Maria van Schurman was known as the “star of Utrecht” being the first female admitted to the University of Utrecht. She was a polyglot, mastering 12 different languages. She had a deep passion for exegesis and therefore knew Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, Aramaic, Latin and German. Then, in the 1660s as she was serving those in the poorest of situations she, like the Apostle Paul (Phil 3:8), she had an epiphany, and counted all of her knowledge as a loss, without the knowledge of Christ. Out of this epiphany she began to emphasize intima notitia (intimate knowledge) of God over scientia (academic/scientific) knowledge of God in her own life and practice.\(^1\)

For the next two chapters, with the guidance of the normative task, I will seek to answer the question, “What ought to be going on?” To do so I will be using the academic tools of exegesis and systematic theology in order to gain a deeper understanding of what sanctification is. Through this two things will be happening simultaneously. First, by opening myself up, through the spiritual practices of prayer and meditation, the cross pressures of transcendence and immanence will allow for intima notitia to influence the scientia of the work of exegesis and theological reflection. Likewise, in using these

\(^1\) Cf. Lee, *Sacrifice and Delight in the Mystical Theologies of Anna Maria van Schurman and Madame Jeanne Guyon*, 27.
academic tools the *scientia* will lead towards a more *intima notitia*. These next two chapters will affirm the Reformed perspective of sanctification, through gaining a deeper insight into who Christ is as our sanctification or holiness, and revealing how Christ unites himself to us through the waters of baptism. While Osmer notes three approaches to performing the normative task: (“Theological Interpretation,” “Ethical Reflection,” and “Good Practice”), I will primarily approach the normative task through Theological Interpretation. First through the exegesis of Romans 6:1-11 in this chapter, then in the following chapter, draw from the theology of Karl Barth.

**Double Grace: Justification and Sanctification**

O, Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants. For what good is it to us, if an immortal time has been promised to us, but we have done deeds, which bring death? What good is it that an everlasting hope has been promised to us, but we have miserably failed? (2 Esdras 7:118-120)

A lament like this may have been on Paul’s mind as he wrote to the Gentile Christians in Rome. Paul seeks to answer questions like these in Romans 5 and 6. In Romans 5, Paul defines grace as justification, essentially that believers are no longer enemies of God (5:10), but through the death of Jesus Christ believers have “obtained access to his grace” (5:2). Paul goes on to explain how “Just as sin entered into the world through one man,” (5:12) “... so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all” (5:18). As previously mentioned, John Calvin believes that we receive grace in two ways, what he calls a “double grace” including justification and sanctification. If Romans 5 defines grace as justification, Romans 6 defines grace as sanctification.

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2 Cf. Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 161. For examples of how all three are used see ibid., 139-160.

3 See the introduction of this thesis. Calvin, *Inst.*, 3.11.1, 725.
Michael Gorman puts it this way: “Grace... is not merely about forgiveness but about transformation—‘becoming the righteousness of God’ in Christ (2 Cor 5:21).”4 In Romans 5, Paul explains how forgiveness justifies the believer and reconciles one to God. Then, in Romans 6, Paul expounds on “transformation.” How does this transformation take place? What are the Gentile Christians being transformed into? These are the questions Paul addresses in Romans 6.

However, Paul is fighting an uphill battle,5 one example of this can be seen in Romans 1:18-32 where he shares the stereotypical behavior of Gentiles from the perspective of how Jews viewed them.6 Later, using a fictive first-person voice in 7:15, he acknowledges the hold that sin has over the life of the believer. With this in mind, what theological or rhetorical tools can Paul use to exhort his audience to live their lives toward God “as instruments of righteousness” instead of “instruments of wickedness” (6:13)? In order to fight against this uphill battle, Paul urges the Gentile Christians to gain a new understanding or as discussed above in chapter 2, the intima notitia of being united to Christ through their baptism in order to lead them into living sanctified lives to God.

More explicitly, this new understanding is for the Gentile Christians in Rome to see themselves as “dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (6:11). As I argue below, sanctification is found within this paradox of grace, in which grace is a completely free gift given by God, yet at the same time it costs everything, as one dies to the old self.

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4 Michael J. Gorman, Reading Paul (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 172.

5 As Richard Ascough points out, a Roman person living in the 1st century, “did not look to the gods to provide moral guidance—that was the purview of the philosophers.” Lydia: Paul’s Cosmopolitan Hostess (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 91.

Furthermore, according to Paul, sanctification is not meant to be experienced individually but rather is interconnected with other believers in a community.

**Sanctification**

One of the rhetorical tools that Paul uses throughout Romans is the diatribe, a sharp denunciation. Building off of his discussion of grace as justification in chapter 5 he now turns to the topic of “sanctification” in chapter 6—using rhetorical questions: Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, ἢν ἡ χάρις πλεονάσῃ;7 (Therefore, what are we to say? Should we remain in sin; in order that grace may increase?)8 Paul uses the verb πλεονάζω here in order to connect this pericope with what he says at the end of chapter 5. In 5:20, he uses the same verb twice to talk about the increase of sin. νόμος δὲ παρεισῆλθεν, ἢν πλεονάσῃ τὸ παράπτωμα· οὗ δὲ ἐπλεόνασεν ἡ ἁμαρτία, ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν ἡ χάρις, (But law came in, with the result that trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.)

Additionally, the use of πλεονάζω allows Paul to personify ἁμαρτίᾳ.9 We see a similar thing in I Esdras, a text Paul would have been familiar with. The writer uses πλεονάζω in reference to sins that have been multiplied (I Esdras 8:68-90). For example, Ezra gives this prayer of confession in the temple: “O Lord, I am ashamed and confused

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8 Throughout this chapter Romans 6:1-11 is a personal translation. See Appendix A for entire passage.

9 In addition the added article in 6:1 is a continuation of the personified form as seen in chapter 5. Although he does not use the definite article every time he uses ἁμαρτίᾳ or θάνατος in these chapters, nonetheless, the definite article is used enough to warrant mention as it personifies the words: e.g., 5:12, 20, 21; 6:1, 2, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 20, 22, and 23. Similarly with θάνατος: e.g., 5:17; 6:3, 4, 5, and 23.
before your face. For our sins have risen higher than our heads, and our mistakes have mounted up to heaven” (74b-75). Ezra tears his garments and holy mantle, rips out his hair on his head and beard, fasts and pleads with God over the sins that Israel has committed. In this passage, Ezra illustrates how a penitent “dying to the self” can be found in Paul’s rich Jewish ancestry demonstrating a desire to be reconciled with God. Although this may not be the full extent of the response that Paul is going for, there is this sense in Romans 6:1 that, like Ezra, Paul is grieving over this state of sin that the Roman Gentiles are in.

This grief found in chapter 6 comes out of Paul’s concrete experience of the injustices that occurred to him under Roman law. In Romans 1 and 2 Paul uses ἁµαρτία to express this overarching theme of “sin.” The NRSV translates ἁµαρτία in the first two chapters as “wickedness” (e.g. Rom 1:18, 29; 2:8, & 6:13), perhaps though more literally it means “injustice” (e.g. Rom 3:5; 9:14) or “unrighteousness.” Although the word ἁµαρτία is related to ἁδικία, they are not the same. Elsa Tamez helps to differentiate between the two, saying:

Interpreters often overlook the fact that the first two chapters of Romans, where the sinful situation of the society is described speak of ἁδικία and not of ἁµαρτία. The two words are not interchangeable synonyms but rather the former “constitutes the qualitative characterization of what Paul understands by ἁµαρτία [‘sin’] in the whole rest of the letter.”

Nevertheless, Tamez affirms that Paul personifies ἁµαρτία beginning in Romans 3 and throughout the rest of his letter. The personified form of ἁµαρτία in opposition to

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10 The NRSV translates ἁδικία as “unrighteousness” in 2 Thess 2:12.


12 Tamez, The Amnesty of Grace, 104.
God’s grace illustrates that “sin” in this context may also be described as a “territory” where humans reside. Lutheran theologian Gerhard Forde succinctly says, “It is not that sin is taken away from us, but rather that we are to be taken away from sin—heart, soul and mind, as Luther put it.”

Suffice to say, in Romans 6, Paul personifies ἁμαρτία (and θάνατος) as a way to show that through baptism believers have died to their old selves and to sin as their master, (cf. v. 6) and have been given new life in which God is their master.

Verse 2 begins with Paul’s iterative response to these rhetorical questions: μη γένοιτο. (By no means!) Followed by another rhetorical question: οίτινες ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτία, πῶς ἐν αὐτῇ; (How can we who have died to sin, still be living in it?) He answers the questions in verse 1 by asking a question in verse 2. It seems illogical to Paul that those who have died to sin would still be living in it. Ἀπεθάνομεν is in the aorist subjunctive and translated as “we have died,” giving the sense of completion.

Critiquing C. E. B. Cranfield’s commentary on Romans, Ben Witherington III and Darlene Hyatt correctly point out that Cranfield “disregard[s]…the aorist tense of the verb—Paul says ‘we have died’ not ‘we are dying’ or ‘we die daily.’ Paul is talking about the spiritual transformation that happens within the believer at conversion and that is depicted in baptism.” Therefore, Paul declares this paradox found within sanctification: on the one hand grace is completely free, however, through the waters of baptism, our mortification takes place, and costs the believer everything.

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13 Christian Spirituality, 29.
It seems ludicrous to Paul that someone would suggest that one should sin more in order for grace to increase because of the consequences that come with sin. Witherington helps to clarify what Paul means when he asks, “In what sense have believers already died to sin?” Drawing out that language of “territory” or “jurisdiction” he continues saying, “Paul surely does not mean that they are immune to temptation, but he does want to insist that sin no longer reigns in the Christians’ body and life.”\(^\text{16}\)

Two decades after publishing his commentary on Romans, Cranfield revisits Romans 6 in an essay entitled “Romans 6:1-14 Revisited,” where he highlights the paradox in this passage saying, “So this having died with Christ is a matter of God’s gracious decision about us. As far as our status with him is concerned, he has chosen to relegate our sinful life to the past.”\(^\text{17}\) He goes on to say, “God wills to see them as having died in Christ’s death and having been raised in his resurrection.”\(^\text{18}\) How is it possible for God to see them as “having died with Christ?” And if they have not been raised from the dead, what impact does this have on how they live their lives? In verses 3 and 4 Paul anticipates these questions and believes that the answer is found in baptism.

He begins in verse 3: ἢ ἀγνοεῖτε ὅτι, ὅσοι ἐβαπτίσθη ἐν ἑαυτῷ Ἰησοῦν, ἐν τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθη ἐν; (Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, have been baptized into his death?) Or, more literally, “into his death we have been baptized.” Since the most common understanding of baptism to the


\(^{18}\) Ibid., 25. Notice here he corrects his mistake using the “aorist tense,” “died” in this quote.
Gentile would likely have been one of ritual purity not death. Paul redefines for the Gentiles that their baptism “into Christ Jesus” meant they had also been “baptized into his death.” This expands their understanding of baptism to be more than a “washing” or “immersion,” but also includes the saving act of God through Christ. Albrecht Oepke in his article “βάπτω” argues that Paul’s use of εἰς makes baptism here what it is. He says, “Weakened spatial notions are present where εἰς denotes the constitutive element of a form of baptism: . . . R. 6:3 with εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ . . . ”

Christ’s death as the sacrificial lamb took away the sin of the world (John 1:29; cf. Rom 3:24-26). Therefore, if one is baptized into Christ Jesus, they are no longer bound to sin. In his commentary, Luke Timothy Johnson explains:

Paul regards the ritual of baptism as such a symbol, an event that activates within the community the experience of Jesus’ death and resurrection. The ritual probably included immersion in water... This action symbolizes the death of Jesus... The ritual of baptism, we see, is a ritual of initiation that imprints in believers a certain identity, namely, the paschal reality of the crucified and raised messiah.

Below, in verse 6, Paul will expound on this theme. In response to the personification of Sin and Death, Paul uses “baptism” to point to the Lordship of Christ.


21 Elsa Tamez points out that in Rom 3:25 Paul refers to Jesus as the ἱλαστήριον, which is difficult to translate because it refers to both “the place of sacrifice and to the victim at the same time. It thus expresses God’s expiation by God’s own deed, once and for all, of the sins of all humanity. In that way the expiatory role of the temple functionaries was annulled and with it the ritual law, and salvation was thereby extended to all nations.” The Amnesty of Grace, 109.

22 Luke Timothy Johnson, Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological commentary (New York: Crossroad Pub., 1997), 96-7; See also, Witherington III and Hyatt, Paul's Letter to the Romans, 157-8. In his footnotes, Witherington points out how Paul uses similar language commonly used in religious rites with Isis and Osiris in speaking to the Gentile Christians. See also: Dunn, Romans, 308-311.
Arguing that this Lordship is not merely vying for their allegiance, but since they have been baptized into Christ, he assumes their whole being.\textsuperscript{23} Below I will show that, the Lordship of Christ moves the Gentile Christians into living their lives in such a way that they reflect the “imprints” of Christ, thereby demonstrating that they belong “into Christ Jesus” and “into his death.”

Paul urges the Gentile Christians to “think” about their relationship with God in the right way, that is, the \textit{intima notitia}. Cranfield explains, “Baptism does not establish the relationship. It attests a relationship already established. . . . Our baptism is God’s confirmation, God’s guarantee, of the fact that Christ’s death was for us, that \textit{God sees us} as having died in his death.”\textsuperscript{24}

Verse 4 begins, $\text{συνετάφη} \mu \epsilon \eta\nu\alpha' \tauοι δια του \betaαπτισματος εις τον \thetaανατον$. (Therefore we have been co-buried with him by baptism and death.) $\text{Συνετάφη} \mu\epsilon\eta\nu$, literally means “co-buried with him,” that is, Christ. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is found in Colossians 2:12, also referring to baptism and being raised with Christ from the dead. Here, Paul continues to emphasize how in baptism Christ unites himself to the believer. Jewett explains:

Paul claims that believers “were co-buried with him,” employing the verb $\text{συνθάπτω}$, which apart from here and in Col 2:12, always refers literally to being buried in a shared grave or to participants joining together in burying the

\textsuperscript{23} Joseph A. Fitzmyer says, “Paul’s view of baptism is not just a supplement to faith, for in baptism the risen Kyrios exercises dominion over Christians who by their faith recognize his lordship and live their lives as a consequence of faith in him, acknowledging thereby their obedience to this Kyrios.” \textit{Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary} (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 430-1.

\textsuperscript{24} Cranfield, “Romans 6.1-14 Revisited,” 26. (emphasis added) Dietrich Bonhoeffer helpfully differentiates between Paul and the Synoptics saying, “What the Synoptics describe as hearing and following the call to discipleship, Paul expresses with the concept of baptism. Baptism is not something we offer to God. It is, rather, something Jesus Christ offers to us. . . . In baptism we become Christ’s possession. The name of Jesus Christ is spoken over baptismal candidates they gain a share in that name; they are baptized ‘into Jesus Christ’ (ἐις, Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; Matt. 28:19).” \textit{Discipleship}, 207.
deceased. Although Paul’s employment of the term is clearly metaphorical, it conveys the idea of a “real death,” since burial is the climactic moment in the ritual of dying, the point of no return.  

Paul continues saying, ἵνα ὡσπερ ἠγέρθη Χριστὸς ἐκ νεκρῶν. (just as Christ was raised from the dead.) According to the lexicon, ἠγέρθη refers to “enter[ing] into a state of life as a result of being raised.” Perhaps, Paul uses this language in order to contrast it with his own understanding of ἁµαρτία being “a state which embraces all humanity.” Therefore, rather than the believer being in a state of sin whose wages are death (Rom 6:23), through the waters of baptism, believers have been “co-buried with Christ” which leads to a new life to be lived for God.

This is nuanced differently than ἀναστάσεως, which Paul uses in the next verse. He wants the Gentile Christians to think about what their new life is to look like now in the territory of God’s grace, until the final resurrection. At this point—although, he will circle back to this phrase in verse 9—Paul is not referring to the bodily resurrection, but rather, to the new life they have discovered as a result of the death of the Adamic-self. Later, in 7:4, Paul uses the phrase again to emphasize that they have been raised from the dead in order to bear fruit for God.

Gorman explains the shift Paul makes from the ontological realization of being baptized and possessed by Christ to the pragmatic advice of how then, one ought to live. He says, “Verse 4 explains the principle of inconsistency between life in sin and baptism,

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showing that in baptism believers experienced the death of Christ and are set free to participate in a new life with Christ.”

This leads to the last part of this verse, ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν. (we are to walk in the newness of life.) Paul uses the common language of “walking” to explain that something extraordinary happens when one who was possessed by Sin is baptized and marked as Christ’s possession. The verb περιπατέω means more than just “walking,” in the New Testament and the Greco-Roman world. For example, it was common to see people walking with philosophers or Rabbis, following them from place to place in order to receive their teaching. After all, Jesus’ own call to discipleship illustrates this when he repeatedly says, “follow me” to his disciples or to those who would desire to be near him. Therefore, it could be similar to the intima notitia in that as you were walking with the Rabbi you would know them intimately. This is the kind of knowledge, or understanding that Paul desires of the Gentile Christians to have with Christ. Not just live morally right lives, but to be intimately in relationship with Christ, which leads one to be a witness for what Christ has done for them, and to live a life of service to one’s neighbor.

Similar to how the personified form of ἁμαρτία illustrates one living in the “territory” of sin; περιπατέω in contrast refers to the sphere in which one is supposed to be living their life now that they are Christ’s possession. In other places in the New Testament and the Greco-Roman world, for example, it was common to see people walking with philosophers or Rabbis, following them from place to place in order to receive their teaching. After all, Jesus’ own call to discipleship illustrates this when he repeatedly says, “follow me” to his disciples or to those who would desire to be near him. Therefore, it could be similar to the intima notitia in that as you were walking with the Rabbi you would know them intimately. This is the kind of knowledge, or understanding that Paul desires of the Gentile Christians to have with Christ. Not just live morally right lives, but to be intimately in relationship with Christ, which leads one to be a witness for what Christ has done for them, and to live a life of service to one’s neighbor.

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28 Gorman, Reading Paul, 97.


30 Elsewhere in Paul’s letters this theme is made more personal and explicit. Most notably in Philippians 3:10-11, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his suffering by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.” Commenting on these verses, Tamez reiterates this point, saying, “Here it is apparent that knowledge does not have to do with a greater accumulation of information, but, as in the Hebrew Bible, with an intimate relationship or an interrelationship.” The Amnesty of Grace, 84.
Testament where the verb is used, the King James Version and the American Standard Version stick with a more literal translation of “walk” or “walking.” However, the NRSV seeks to encompass this larger theme of “sphere in which one is to live their life” by choosing to translate it as “live” or “life” (Rom 13:13; I Cor 7:17; Eph 2:10, 5:8), and “behave” (I Cor 3:3).

Romans 6:4c summarizes what Paul has written elsewhere in Colossians 3:5-11. There he names specific sins that other Gentile Christians once committed, but now that they are being sanctified, they no longer live that way. In Colossians 3:1-2, he even exhorts them, saying, “So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” This passage illustrates another place where Paul attempts to change how his recipients think, which leads toward a more intimate relationship with Christ.

In Romans 6:4, περιπατέω is in the aorist subjunctive, indicating that it is a “decisive” change in lifestyle. Although, the word may have its roots in the Hebrew word נָּ֖פּוּך, with numerous examples of Jews following ethical conduct according to the law, Paul uses the verb to connect these Gentile Christians to the larger context of the Christian community, instead of the law. A. Katherine Grieb explains:

The baptized Christian is taken out of the territory of Sin and placed in the territory of God’s grace as a result of being buried symbolically with Christ in the

31 *BDAG*, 497.

32 In his commentary on Romans, Luke Timothy Johnson points out the similarity between Colossians 2:12-3:11 and Romans 6:1-14 in order to argue that the connection between “baptism” and “death” is one that is not a new Pauline thought, but was perhaps known throughout the early church, despite only two mentions of it in the New Testament. Cf. *Reading Romans*, 95.

33 E.g., Exod 18:20; 2 Kgs 20:3; 22:2; Ps 86:11; Prov 8:20; 28:18.
deep waters of death, only to be raised from the dead with Christ “by the glory of the Father, so that we too might walk in the newness of life” (6:4). This “walking” (*halakah*) is the ethical behavior appropriate to membership in the new family of Jesus Christ.\(^{34}\)

This has important implications for sanctification in a communal context, in which as believers our journeys of faith formation continually call us into a deeper realization of Christ’s action in our lives. For example, recently after a mid-week church service a number of Latino youth were standing in front of the pictures of the staff at our church and one of them made the comment, “Look, Pastor Jackie is the only Latino up there.”

Pastor Jackie is the minister our church hired part-time to start a new Spanish speaking service. I quickly made a feeble attempt to address the situation, saying, “That’s sad, isn’t it?”

Then one of them retorted, “Some would even call it racist.”

At first I was shocked, as they walked away from me. I thought to myself, either I can continue to engage these adolescents, or I can ignore them and let it go. Even though it made me anxious, I decided to continue the conversation. As we talked I realized that the comment was not directed at me, but rather at the systemic sin that has permeated into this local congregation. Without even realizing it, these Latino adolescents were calling me into a deeper relationship with Christ, and to seek out new ways, personally and communally, to confess this sin and work towards reconciliation. As a result, over the next several months I intentionally sought out a relationship with these youth.

In verse 5 Paul points to the hope that is to come, but first begins with how those who have been baptized are united with Christ in the “likeness of his death.” He begins, εἰ γὰρ σύµφυτοι γεγόναµεν τῷ ὀµοιώµατι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ. (For if we have been united together with the likeness of his death.) The adjective σύµφυτοι could mean either “identified with” or “united with.” I prefer the translation of “united together,” because Paul is not referring to the crucifixion, since he uses ὀµοιώµατι to say that we are “united together in the likeness of his death,” instead of his actual death (see below).

Jewett emphasizes that, “The adjective σύµψυτος appears here for the only time in the NT; it is used in a wide variety of secular contexts. . . . In view of these wide-ranging references, I prefer a generic translation such as ‘joined together’ or ‘united together,’ which implies that believers share an indivisible, organic unity with Christ.”

According to Fitzmyer, σύµψυτοι can also be translated as “grown together with,” referring to being “grafted together.” This is logical move for Paul addressing a Gentile audience, since it sets up what he will discuss more in Romans 9-11 in regards to how Israel fits into the picture. Fitzmyer explains, “Paul’s bold image is derived from the idea of grafting: a young branch grafted onto a tree grows together with it in an organic unity and is nourished by its life-giving sap. So Paul expresses the communication of Christ-life to Christians.” Later on, in Romans 11:17-24 Paul uses the language of “grafted-in” referring to the people of Israel being cut-off and the Gentile Christians being grafted-in

35 Although Paul does not use this word again in the second half of this verse, it is implied when he uses the conjunctive “κατ” (see below).

36 Jewett, Romans, 399-400.

37 Fitzmyer, Romans, 435.
to the covenantal promise of God. Similarly, there he uses the language of “nourishment,” as Fitzmyer points to.38

By using the word ὀμοιόματι, Paul clarifies the death by which they are united to Christ. He uses it in the dative, to connect our “old self” or “Adamic-self” with τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ, or “the death of [Christ].” For Paul this is pointed to in the sign of baptism and later connects with what he will soon say in verse 6 “We each know that our old self was crucified with him.” (Italics added.)

Jewett expounds on the social implications and risks for Gentile converts to be “united together with the likeness of Christ”:

As Alastair Campbell points out, the “likeness of his death” also entails “social rejection” and signing a “death warrant so far as acceptance by this world is concerned” as believers sever old relationships and become part of the new, persecuted community of faith.39

By calling to mind these risks and sacrifices, Paul is able to demonstrate that, although the “old-self” dies with Christ, the “new-self” is made alive through being “united together” with Christ in his resurrection, through the power of God. Paul continues in verse 5, saying, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως ἐσόμεθα, (we shall certainly be united together with him in his resurrection.) Σύμφυτοι is implied in the second half of this verse with the conjunction “κατ’” in order to illustrate how we will be “united together” with Christ in his resurrection.40 Therefore, the Gentile Christians will experience the same resurrection that Jesus experienced, evidenced by the omission of ὀμοιόματι in this part of the verse.

38 Ibid. John Calvin says a similar thing in his theology on baptism referencing Romans 6. For more see: Inst., 4.15.5, 1307.

39 Jewett, Romans, 401.

40 Ibid.
Furthermore, Paul uses the future tense in the 2nd half in order to argue against those in the early church who believed that some followers had already been resurrected. The future tense also instructs the Gentile Christians that he is not referring to a “realized” eschatology, but rather, that there will come a day when they will be “united together” in Christ’s resurrection.41

So when does this resurrection happen? What is Paul referring to? Jewett says:

The future tense in connection with the resurrection thus should be understood with its fully eschatological dimension: while believers have already participated in the death of Christ, their joining in his resurrected state will occur at the end of time... It is God’s activity in Christ that alone legitimates believers. So regardless of whether they belong to the “weak” or the “strong,” their death with Christ and their future share of his resurrection are assured.42

Therefore, the future tense allows Paul to share with them what God has already done for them, namely, that their salvation is secured. Since God already sees them as purified and set apart, this ought to lead them to live into this reality of being sanctified in the present.

He begins verse 6 like he did in verse 3, with γινώσκω, τοῦτο γινώσκοντες (We each know.) Illustrating once again, that for Paul “knowing” that we are united to Christ through the death of the old self, leads one to live one’s life for God in witness and service to others. Though it seems that Paul prefers οἶδα when connecting “knowledge” with living one’s life to God (see below), here he uses γινώσκω.

For our purposes, the most instructive reference is Romans 7:15, δὲ γὰρ κατεργάζομαι οὐ γινώσκω: οὐ γὰρ ὁ θέλω τοῦτο πράσσω, ἀλλ’ ὁ μισῶ τοῦτο ποιῶ. (I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.) Using the first person fictive voice—perhaps, referring to what a Gentile Christian

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41 For more on, this distinction see Cranfield, “Romans 6.1-14 Revisited,” 25.

42 Jewett, Romans, 401.
would be thinking—Paul acknowledges that even believers who have been justified and baptized continue to struggle with “sin.” Yet, the future hope is found in knowing that the believer will be joined together with Christ and share in his resurrection.

Paul continues, saying, ὅτι ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος συνεσταυρώθη, (that our old self was crucified with him.) As pointed out in verse 5, this is not a literal crucifixion, but rather, a figurative one, asserting that the “old Adamic-self” was crucified with Christ. John Calvin put it this way: “. . . by our participation in it, [Christ’s] death mortifies our earthly members so that they may no longer perform their functions; and it kills the old man in us that he may not flourish and bear fruit.”43 Using the aorist tense, Paul demonstrates that this action is completed. Below, in verses 10-11, Paul will again pick up on this theme and further explain that we are united to Christ in his death to sin (cf. Gal 2:19b-20).

This is good news—as Bonhoeffer points out—because

The death of Jesus Christ is the place where God has supplied the gracious proof of God’s own righteousness, the only place from that moment on where God’s righteousness dwells. Whoever could participate in this death would thereby also participate in God’s righteousness.44 Therefore, those who have been co-crucified with Christ can also participate in God’s righteousness (cf. Rom 6:13).

Paul continues, ἵνα καταργηθῇ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας, τοῦ μη κέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ; (in order that the sinful body may be abolished, and we are no longer a slave to sin.) The passive voice in the verb καταργηθῇ emphasizes once again that although it

43 Calvin, Inst., 2.16.7, 512. Cf. Grieb says, “At the time Paul wrote Romans, resurrection of the dead was an eschatological sign like the coming of the Gentiles to worship Israel’s God.” The Story of Romans, 108.

44 Bonhoeffer, Discipleship, 255.
may cost one’s very life, it is the action of God coming to the believer through baptism, as they die to their old selves. Καταργηθῇ means “to abolish” or “to completely wipe out, so that it no longer exists.” The old body has been “abolished” and is no more. Therefore, it makes no sense for them to continue living enslaved to sin.  

Paul intentionally uses σῶμα instead of σάρκος, in order to differentiate between the two different realms in which his audience would have been thinking. Σάρκος refers to the realm of values, expectations and sanctions of the world that are put on a person. Σῶμα refers to the physical “body,” which can be abolished and done away with. Therefore, in this verse, Sin—as personified—has control over the body, or has enslaved the body (again, cf. Rom 7:15). How does Paul say that God solves this problem? God abolishes the σῶμα through their baptismal death, in order to be freed from Sin.

Continuing with this theme of enslavement in verse 7, Paul says plainly, ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας. (For anyone who has died has been set free from sin.) The verb δικαιόω is more literally translated as “justified” than “freed.” However, in this context it is difficult to get across the meaning of “justified” considering Paul’s line of thought of being enslaved by the power of Sin. Witherington says, “The verb dedikaïōtai here has sometimes been translated ‘has been justified/acquitted’

45 For more on the nuance of this word see Witherington III and Hyatt, Paul's Letter to the Romans, 159. And Jewett, Romans, 404.


47 Charles H. Talbert clarifies this even more when he quotes from Tertullian: “The ‘body of sin’ is the total personality, in its visible aspect, that is characterized by sin. Tertullian put it this way: ‘We maintain. . . that what has been abolished in Christ is not carnem peccati, ‘sinful flesh,’ but peccatum carnis, ‘sin in the flesh’—not the material thing but its condition; not the substance but its flaw.’” Romans (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 162. Italics original.

48 The article “ὁ” refers back to the noun “ἀνθρώπος” in verse 6 and is translated in verse 7 as “anyone.”
(perfect passive), but it can just as well mean ‘has been freed’\textsuperscript{49} (cf. Sir. 26.29; Acts 13.38-39; and especially 1 Cor. 6.11), and this is certainly how a largely Gentile audience was likely to see the term.\textsuperscript{50} In this context δικαιόω is not referring to the Lutheran understanding of a “change in status” of the believer before God.\textsuperscript{51} Rather it refers to, “. . . the idea of being ‘put right’ [which] seems closer to rescue or redemption from slavery than to the law-court situation.”\textsuperscript{52} This makes it difficult to create a helpful translation for English while maintaining the integrity of Paul’s argument. In the end, I believe his train of thought rules the day so that “has been set free from sin” is the more accurate translation. In addition, translating it this way allows the reader to move seamlessly from the “enslaved by sin” in verse 6 into living with Christ in verse 8.

In verse 8 Paul says, εἰ δὲ ἀπεθάνων σὺν Χριστῷ, πιστεύομεν ὅτι καὶ συζήσομεν αὐτῷ. (But if we died with Christ, we believe that we will live with him.)

Above, in verse 4, Paul mentioned that believers were buried with Christ through baptism; the old-self took on the death of Christ in the waters of baptism. How then will believers live with Christ? Is Paul referring to the resurrection? Or is he hinting at a change in moral behavior for the Gentile Christians? His flow of argument that began in verse 6, leans towards the understanding that since they have been freed from slavery to sin, they are now free to serve God. Likewise, Jewett considers verse 8 to be more about the immediate future instead of the eschatological one, (pointing towards what Paul says

\textsuperscript{49} In Romans alone, this is how the NRSV typically translates the word, e.g., Rom 2:13; 3:4, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9; 8:30, and 33. However, in our verse here the NRSV chooses “free” in keeping with the theme from verse 6.

\textsuperscript{50} Witherington III and Hyatt, \textit{Paul's Letter to the Romans}, 161.

\textsuperscript{51} Billings, \textit{Union with Christ}, 51.

\textsuperscript{52} Grieb, \textit{The Story of Romans}, 69.
in 6:11b and 13). The eschatological future implies death and rapture. Meanwhile, here it refers to the “sharing of every life and work with someone else.”

In verse 9, Paul once again returns to the theme of exhorting the Gentile Christians to have the right knowledge, which leads to Christ uniting himself to the believer. He begins, εἰδότες ὅτι Χριστὸς ἐγερθεὶς ἐκ νεκρῶν οὐκέτι ἀποθνῄσκει. (For we know that (since) Christ was raised from the dead he can no longer die.) In verse 9, Paul essentially says the same thing twice, but in two different ways. First he implies, that the knowledge of those who believe in Christ believe this very thing, and not just “believe” but “know.” This implies that the Gentile Christians are convicted of this knowledge, which allows them to no longer be possessed by sin and death, but instead live their lives for Christ.

Paul seems to prefer οἶδα over γινώσκω when making this argument about how “knowing” or “understanding” in the right way can lead one to recognizing Christ’s possession of them as opposed to Sin’s possession over them. In his Epistles, we see this concept over and over again. (E.g. Rom 6:9, 16, 7:18; I Cor 3:16 and especially in 6:3, 9, 15, 16 and 19; I Thess 4:2, 4 and 5.)

Why does Paul prefer οἶδα over γινώσκω when addressing the topic of sanctification? Talbert explains the importance of this verb: “The verb εἶδον refers to sense perception and often bears the sense of ‘to experience something’—in this case, the believers’ experience with the resurrected Christ. Knowing with certainty that Christ had

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53 Jewett, Romans, 404. Fitzmyer also argues for this interpretation believing that 2 Corinthians 5:17 to be the best commentary on verse 8. Paul says, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” Fitzmyer explains, “Future life with Christ is the object of faith, whereas the resurrection of Christ is the object of Christian knowledge (in v 9).” Romans, 436.
been raised from the dead, it follows that Christ’ dies no longer’ (οὐκέτι ἀποθνήσκει).”¹⁵⁴ To put it in terms used in the last chapter, like van Schurman, Paul is convinced that scientia knowledge is nothing compared to intima notitia, and expounds upon it in his discussion of the role of the law throughout Romans.

Repeating a similar theme in the first phrase of verse 9, Paul continues: θάνατος αὐτοῦ οὐκέτι κυριεύει, (no longer is death the master of him.) Just as, ἁµαρτία has been personified as being able to enslave the Gentile Christians, likewise, here Paul uses θάνατος the same way to illustrate how Christ has conquered over θάνατος and is no longer enslaved by it. It can be easy to overlook the significance of this statement. Paul is arguing that the God of the universe, the God who created all that there is, allowed Himself to die. Allowing θάνατος to be his master means that Christ united himself so completely to humanity, even to the point of experiencing death. Yet, as Paul points out, death is no longer the master of Christ.

By using the relative pronoun ὃ (which refers directly back to θάνατος from verse 9), Paul connects verses 8-11 together. In verse 10, Paul writes, ὃ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν, τῇ ἁµαρτίᾳ ἀπέθανεν ἐφάπαξ· ὃ δὲ ζῇ, ζῇ τῷ θεῷ. (For the death he died to sin he died once for all. But the life he lives, he lives to God.) Paul summarizes what he said in Romans 5:12-21 by speaking of justification, affirming, once again, the efficacy of Christ’s death as sufficient to forgive all sin.

In a diatribe fashion, Paul declares the significance of Christ’s death, which leads to Christ living a life to God who raised him from the dead. Christ allowed ἁµαρτία and θάνατος to be the masters over him in order to bring about the justification of humanity.

¹⁵⁴ Talbert, Romans, 163.
Now that this justification has taken place, he is no longer enslaved by ἁµαρτία and θάνατος and is free to “live his life to God.” This is the example that Paul gives to the Gentile Christians on how they should live as well.

By using the word ἐφάπαξ to conclude the first phrase, Paul refers to the crucifixion as being an unrepeatable moment.55 It has happened, and now Christ “lives to God.” As believers, the Gentile Christians share in this same reality: they, too, have been co-crucified with Christ as accomplished in their baptism and now are to live lives to God just as Jesus does.56 With this statement, Paul connects his argument to verse 11.

Paul concludes this pericope saying, οὕτως καὶ ὑµεῖς λογίζεσθε ἑαυτοὺς [εἶναι] νεκροὺς μὲν τῇ ἁµαρτίᾳ ζῶντας δὲ τῷ θεῷ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. (So, consider yourselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus.) In using the 2nd person plural pronoun—which he will keep until verse 23—Paul directly addresses the Gentile Christians, exhorting them to imitate or participate with Christ, not only in dying to the old-Adamic self, but also through living as their new self, free from the enslavement of ἁµαρτία and θάνατος and united to Christ to live lives of righteousness for the glory of God.

The word λογίζεσθε could be translated in two different ways, either in the indicative or the imperative mood. Jewett believes it should be translated as an indicative (“you should also consider yourselves”) rather than as an imperative (“consider yourselves!”) According to Jewett this follows εἰδότες (“knowing”) from verse 9, “which refers to the experience with Christ that all of the congregations share, whereas the

55 “ἐφάπαξ ‘once and for all.’ In the NT this is a technical term for the definitiveness and therefore the uniqueness or singularity of the death of Christ and the redemption thereby accomplished . . ..” Gustav Stählin “ἀπαξ” in TDNT, 1:383.

56 Jewett, Romans, 406.
imperative would imply that some congregations are falling short of proper life with Christ."\(^{57}\)

In contrast, Fitzmyer translates this word as an imperative and argues that,

It seeks to elicit the act of faith, which accepts the salvific event embodied in baptism. This is the conclusion of Paul’s argument, as he expresses his view of the problem of the integration of Christian life... It is not just that they are to imitate Christ (because he has died to sin, so you too); Christians are also to arm themselves with the mentality that they are dead to sin; for that is what happened to them in the baptismal experience. \(^{58}\)

In Romans 6:1-11 Paul uses the tool of urging the Gentile Christians to think in the right way in order to lead towards living their lives as Christ does. With this in mind, it appears to me that Paul intends this to be read in the imperative mood instead of the indicative. In 6:12-14, this tone continues, as he encourages them to not let “sin rule their mortal bodies,” but rather, “present their members as tools of righteousness to God,” because “sin is not their master.” \(^{59}\)

\(\lambda \omicron \gamma \iota \zeta \sigma \theta e\) in this form, is used only in two other places in the New Testament: John 11:50 (translated in the indicative) and used by Paul in Philippians 4:8 (translated in the imperative). Considering the other times that \(\lambda \omicron \gamma \iota \zeta \sigma \theta e\) is used in the New Testament, and given the context of Romans 6, I prefer the translation of the imperative mood. In verse 11, he is concluding an argument that he began in verse 1 and pushes the Gentile Christians towards considering how they ought to respond to the free gift they have been given. \(^{60}\)

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 406-7.

\(^{58}\) Fitzmyer, Romans, 438.

\(^{59}\) Personal translation.

\(^{60}\) Using generalizations found throughout the Pauline corpus, James Howard contends, “It seems that for Paul, it is in obedience that renewal into the image of Christ—transformation into Christ-likeness—
Conclusion

In conclusion, in Romans 6:1-11, Paul desires for the Gentile Christians in Rome to live their lives for the righteousness of God, as revealed in Paul’s thesis statement in Romans 1:16-17: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith.’” Throughout Romans 6, Paul demonstrates clearly what the “power of God” is capable of doing by using the personification of ἁµαρτία and θάνατος, which previously enslaved them. However, through baptism, they are co-crucified and co-buried with Jesus Christ. And since God has destroyed the power of ἁµαρτία and θάνατος through Christ, all who believe have the same opportunity. In this way Paul corrects their way of thinking in order to implore them to “walk in the newness of life,” (v. 4). In addition, Paul exhorts each Gentile Christian, into being “the one who is righteous” and “will live by faith.” Concluding with the hope in realizing that their ontological state has changed from being dead to Sin to being alive to God through being united to God in a more profound understanding of being baptized in Christ’s death and resurrection. This is what ought to be going on. One’s understanding of her identity as being united to Christ through the waters of baptism, leads to “walking in the newness of life.” (Rom 6:4)

occurs. The indicatives and the imperatives are inextricably bound together. This is what [Stanley] Grenz refers to as the indicative being the source of the imperative. Where as inclusion in the new humanity is a present reality, transformation into the image of Christ—the capacity for reflecting God’s glory—is a product of obedience within the context of this new humanity.” Paul, the Community, and Progressive Sanctification: An Exploration into Community-based Transformation within Pauline Theology (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 70.
Since we have used theological reflection in order to gain a more robust understanding of sanctification through being illumined by this biblical text, we continue with the normative task in Chapter five, considering Karl Barth’s systematic theological understanding of sanctification.
CHAPTER 5
SANCTIFICATION FROM A THEOLOGICAL LENS

The Normative Task Part II

I introduced the normative task in chapter four through an exercise in exegesis of Romans 6:1-11. In chapter five, I will once again use the normative task, this time through the lens of the preeminent Reformed theologian Karl Barth. As a reminder, the purpose of the normative task is to answer the question, “What ought to be going on?” Barth’s doctrine of sanctification will help to interpret the situation of this anemic faith as is expressed in adolescents through a theological lens. Since space does not allow for an exposition on all of Barth’s doctrine of sanctification, the focus of this chapter will center on the inner two-fold critique of the church, of “secularization” and “self-glorification.” These are found in §67 of volume IV/2 from his Church Dogmatics. Next, an in-depth look at the concepts of “Simple Obedience” and “Participatio Christi”—as developed in §66 of the same volume—will demonstrate two things, first how the role of human agency within the doctrine of sanctification is connected with the Reformed tenet of Christ uniting himself to the believer. Secondly, it will show how God can avail against these two forms of decay within the Church. Before proceeding with this narrow focus on Barth’s work on sanctification, a few introductory comments regarding the overall themes will be necessary. These comments will help to place him within the greater conversation of the topic of sanctification.
Barth begins this endeavor on sanctification by setting it within the framework of
the larger theme of “The Reconciliation of Man,” nestled between his exposition on the
doctrines of justification and vocation. He maintains his consistent assertion that God is
the “active Subject not only in reconciliation generally, but also in his conversion of man
to Himself.”¹ As a result, Barth prefers to see sanctification through an objective lens as
opposed to a subjective lens. That is to say, one ought to see oneself as God already sees
them, already sanctified. Barth argues that the reason for this is centered on
understanding that the efficacy of our sanctification is not dependent upon our own acts
of obedience, but rather, upon the act of Christ. Barth says, “There is no prior or
subsequent contribution that we can make to its accomplishment. As we are not asked to
justify ourselves, we are not asked to sanctify ourselves. Our sanctification consists in our
participation in His sanctification as grounded in the efficacy and revelation of the grace
of Jesus Christ.”²

This coincides with the two central features of sanctification from the Reformed
view, as asserted in chapter one: Jesus Christ being the holiness of believers and that it is
through union with Christ that sanctification is accomplished.³ While Barth holds to these
basic tenets of the Reformed view of sanctification, he does differentiate himself in one
major way—by affirming Martin Luther’s simul iustus et peccator. As a result of this

¹ Barth, CD, IV/2 §66, 500. Unfortunately, Barth does not use the same gender inclusive language
that modern scholars are used to. When quoting directly from Barth I decided to keep his language, for the
ease of the reader, but throughout the rest of the text maintain gender neutrality. See also Eberhard Busch,
The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth’s Theology, ed. Darrell L. Guder and Judith J. Guder,

² Barth, CD, IV/2 §66, 517. For more on this distinction as seen in Barth’s doctrine of
sanctification see Anderson, “The Problem of Psychologism in Karl Barth’s Doctrine of Sanctification,”
339-352.

conviction, he leans towards the belief of sanctification happening within the life of the believer again and again, rather than seeing sanctification as the progressive movement towards union with Christ. ⁴ Although much more could be said about his in-depth doctrine of sanctification, ⁵ this brief overview highlights the main themes that will be drawn on for this chapter. I continue with a look at the primary focus of this thesis taken from Barth’s doctrine of sanctification, the two-fold critique of the Church.

The External and Internal Threats the Church⁶ Faces

In his sub-section entitled “The Upholding of the Community” in §67 of his Church Dogmatics, Barth turns his attention towards what he sees as situations that threaten the Church. In the original German this section is entitled “Die Erhaltung der Gemeinde.” Die Erhaltung may also be translated as the English words “preservation,” or “maintain,” which seems to be closer to Barth’s original intention, as opposed to “upholding” the Church. I prefer the language of “preserving” the Church, in that it points back to the Act and Being of God in the work of the Church more explicitly. As before, this seems to suggest that the primary subject is always to be God, and the object, which certainly is called by God to act, is the Church. The language of preserving corresponds better with how Barth identifies the true Church: “the true Church truly is and arises and continues and lives in the twofold sense that God is at work and that there

⁴ I.e., Barth, CD, IV/2 §66, 555 & 557. For more on this distinction in Barth’s doctrine of sanctification see George Hunsinger, “A Tale of Two Simultaneities: Justification and Sanctification in Calvin and Barth,” Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie 18, no. 3 (2002): 316-338.

⁵ Daniel Migliore writes a helpful summary of Barth’s doctrine of sanctification while also locating it within his larger theme of Reconciliation in book IV of his Church Dogmatics. See Migliore, “Participatio Christi,” 286-307.

⁶ Although, the translators chose to translate Barth’s word “Gemeinde,” as “community.” I will stay consistent with the language of “Church” as laid out in chapter one of this thesis.
is a human work which He occasions and fashions.”7 Barth maintains this tension between the "twofold sense" of both God at work in humanity and the role of human agency, which ultimately, as this quote illustrates, originates in God. This human work of the Church, according to Barth, is merely the “semblance of the Church;” therefore, what one sees and speaks of when speaking of the sanctification of the Church is really not the “true Church,” but ultimately this phenomenon of essentially the “human work pretending to be something in itself.”8

The answer to these external and internal threats to the livelihood of the Church cannot be found in the actions taken by humans, but rather, the answer to these threats is found in God alone,9 who calls the Church to act on God’s behalf.

According to Barth, the Church is under constant threat, both externally and internally. In general, Barth identifies two external forces against the Church, one being pressures from the outside world, which seek to prevent the growth of the Church, due to its radical message centered on the Reign of God, which is in contention with the kingdoms of the world.10 Secondly, and perhaps even more threatening, is the threat of general torpor or apathy towards the Church from those on the outside. Barth says, “[The world] uses the most terrible weapon of intolerance—toleration. It meets [the Church]

7 Barth, CD, IV/2 §67, 616.
8 Ibid., IV/2 §67, 616-7.
9 “But we must not allow any illusions to blind us to the fact that finally and properly and incisively only one knowledge, and only one Subject of knowledge, can be of any avail against [these threats].” Ibid., IV/2 §67, 671.
10 Cf. Ibid., IV/2 §67, 662-4.
with sheer indifference.”11 While the intent here is not to comment on these external threats to the Church, it is important to acknowledge them, as they help to frame the larger context within which one finds the inward two-fold critique of the Church, which I will now elaborate on.

The two threats of secularization and self-glorification, while related to one another, are also distinct from one another. Following a brief explanation of these two inward threats to the church, I will consider how two aspects of Barth’s doctrine of sanctification, “Simple Obedience” and “Participatio Christi,” allow for an intima notitia of God, who alone has the authority and power to “avail against” these threats.

Secularization

Put simply, Barth says, “Secularisation is the process by which the salt loses its savour (Mt. 5:13).”12 How does the Church lose its influence within the world? In order to unpack that question, we must first understand more clearly what Barth means by this first form of decay within the Church. The word used to describe this first form of corruption is “Fremdhörigkeit.” Fremd is German for “foreign” or “stranger” or “alien” while “Hörigkeit” means “bondage” or “enslavement.” Literally, the word used to describe this “secularization” from within the Church is a “foreign-bondage” or “foreign-enslavement.” That is to say, the Church is under the bondage of a foreign philosophy or idea. In English it is translated as “alienation,” as in the act of turning away from Christ and towards another. Although some of the impact of the rhetoric is lost when this is

11 Ibid., IV/2 §67, 664. Interestingly, this is related to one of the main arguments that Kenda Creasy Dean makes in regards to faith in adolescents at this present time. See: Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

12 Barth, CD, IV/2 §67, 668.
translated into English, Barth goes on to explain that this takes place when the sheep no longer listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, but instead, listen to the voice of the “stranger” (Fremden in German).\textsuperscript{13} This reference to the Good Shepherd passage as found in John 10, reinterprets what is going on in the Church. The sheep turn away from the voice of the Good Shepherd and towards the voice of the stranger. Knowing the German behind the English translation of “alienation” better illuminates what Barth means when he says

Alienation takes place when [the Church] allows itself to be radically determined and established and engaged and committed and imprisoned in this respect: in its knowledge by the adoption of a particular philosophy or outlook as the norm of its understanding of the Word of God; in its ethics by the commandment of a specific tradition or historical kairos; in its attitude to existing world-relationships by a distinctive ideology or by the most respectable or novel or simply the strongest of current political and economic forces; in its proclamation by allowing itself to be determined by what seems to be the most urgent and sacred need in its Own particular environment.\textsuperscript{14}

Identifying secularization as being under foreign bondage is related to the definition of sin given in the previous chapter. Above, we considered how for Paul, in Romans 6, ἁµαρτία was to be seen more as a territory in which believers found themselves. Believers baptized into Jesus’ death (see above comments on Rom 6:3) are no longer under the bondage of ἁµαρτία (and also θάνατος), but are rather united to Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and are therefore free to live their lives as God’s “instruments of righteousness” (Rom 6:13). ἁµαρτία, in its personified form, then,

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\item\textsuperscript{14} Barth, *CD*, IV/2 §67, 667. Italics original.
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is like the stranger described in John 10, as interpreted in this section of Barth’s doctrine of sanctification.

One example of secularization as found in the adolescent faith experience today, as mentioned in the second chapter, is known as Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. Justin’s story is a primary example of how this inward threat within the church has the potential to lead some away from the voice of the Good Shepherd and toward the voice of the stranger. In Justin’s case, the voice of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism was so similar to the voice of the Good Shepherd that he was unable to differentiate between the two. Perhaps what is most alarming about this phenomenon is that Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is generated within the context of the Church. Granted, there may be external influences that help shape it, but nonetheless, the primary place in which this theology grows out of is located within the Church.

There may have been a time when Justin was more committed to being a part of the community of Christ; however, his expectations of what God should do and be for him were never met. Perhaps this is because his faith was based on a theologia gloriae instead of a theologia crucis. In the final chapter, we will consider how practicing the spiritual discipline of confession with the sacrament of the Communion can be a concrete experience of theologia crucis within a youth ministry context. Later in this chapter, I will demonstrate how “Simple Obedience” can turn one’s attention back towards the voice of the Good Shepherd instead of the voice of the stranger. That being said, we now come to the second form of decay within the Church that Barth identifies, self-glorification.
Self-glorification

In German the word for self-glorification is *der Selbstverherrlichung*.\(^\text{15}\) The German is much more straightforward in its English translation than above: *selbst* means “self” and *Verherrlichung* means “glorification.” Additionally, Barth also identifies it as “sacrilization.” These two forms of decay are certainly related to one another, and yet are also independent.\(^\text{16}\) They are related in their end goal being the church attempting to stave off its decline of influence within society. However, while the former seeks to do so by accommodating itself to the world, the latter seeks to accomplish this task by thrusting itself on the world.\(^\text{17}\)

In contrast to the example of Justin, who in some ways exemplifies the danger behind subtleness that can be found in secularization, Olive exemplifies the opposite of sacrilization or self-glorification. Her story reveals, how through the act of serving another person, she comes into contact with the concrete personhood of Christ. Furthermore, rather than glorifying herself as the one who provided their “salvation” on that sweltering day through handing out a bottle of water, she glorified Christ in recognizing that it was he who had sent her to meet the needs of her neighbors. In the final chapter, we will explore the practice of the spiritual discipline of fasting as a way to resist the temptation of self-glorification through the denying of the self and empathizing with those in need.

Barth warns of this impending internal threat against the Church saying

\(^{15}\) Cf. Barth, *KD*, IV/2 §67, 764 & 766.

\(^{16}\) Barth acknowledges as much at the beginning of this section on the inward threats of the church in a short footnote. See *CD*, IV/2 §67, 667.

\(^{17}\) Cf. Ibid., IV/2 §67, 668.
The community is not Christ, nor is it the kingdom of God. It is the very last purpose of the lordship and glory of Jesus Christ (which it has to proclaim) to exalt these little men, Christendom, above all others; to set them in the right against the world; to invest them with authority and power; to magnify them in the world. If the [Church] nevertheless permits itself this reversal, it sets itself most terribly in the wrong. It makes itself like the world. And in so doing, by trying to be important and powerful within it instead of serving, by trying to be great instead of small, by trying to make pretentious claims for itself instead of soberly advocating the claim of God, it withdraws from the world.\(^{18}\)

Just as secularization leads the Church to alienation by listening to the voice of the stranger, so too, sacrilization (self-glorification) alienates the Church from the world in which it is called to serve.\(^{19}\) With these forms of decay unpacked, we can now better answer the question asked by the normative task, “What ought to be going on?” Two main themes will be brought out of Barth’s doctrine of sanctification from §66 to respond to these internal forms of decay: Simple Obedience and *Participatio Christi*.

**Simple Obedience**

In contrast to secularization, Barth follows the work laid out by Dietrich Bonhoeffer focusing on “Simple Obedience.”\(^{20}\) Barth defines simple obedience for the believer as doing what they “are told—nothing more, nothing less, and nothing different.”\(^{21}\) Simple obedience is therefore the ability to listen to the voice of the Good

\(^{18}\) Ibid., IV/2 §67, 669.

\(^{19}\) Elaine Graham notes a similar problem facing the role of Public Theology today, saying, “I wonder, therefore, whether post-liberal theologies have succumbed to the temptation of privileging the work of the Church over the reign of God. Have they allowed their suspicion of secular liberal humanism in the name of authenticity to push them into a latter-day doctrine of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* [outside the church there is no salvation]?” *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, 224. Italics original.

\(^{20}\) It is no secret that Barth felt indebted to the work of Bonhoeffer on the doctrine of sanctification as found in *Discipleship*. Cf. Barth, *CD*, IV/2 §66, 533-4. Additionally, Barth also thought highly of Bonhoeffer’s earlier work *Sanctorum Communio* and used it to guide his conversation of what the True Church is as laid out in §67. Cf. Ibid., IV/2 §67, 641.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., IV/2 §66, 540.
Shepherd and follow his directions. “The gatekeeper opens the gate for [the Shepherd] and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” (John 10:3) The adjective in Greek used to describe the Shepherd is καλὸς, which to the original hearers would give the idea of “nobility” more so than “good.” So that one could call Jesus the “Noble Shepherd.” With this in mind, the idea of “simple obedience” is even more emphatic, because the concept of nobility also brings the idea of authority. The authority with which Jesus speaks to his followers comes from the Heavenly Father, and is exemplified in Jesus as he simply obeys what the Father asks of him. In this passage, that means to lay down his life for the sheep. For the sheep to follow the Noble Shepherd they must listen for his voice and simply obey.

Barth is also in agreement with what Paul says in Romans 6:10-11: “For the death [Christ] died to sin he died once for all. But the life he lives, he lives to God. So, consider yourselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” As mentioned above, Paul is using the imperative mood in verse 11, urging the Gentile Christians to “consider” what it means for them to be dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. The believer therefore is to “walk in the newness of life” (v. 4). And is now free from the bondage of sin, and in the case of secularization, is free from the bondage of the stranger, so that she can now follow the call of the Noble Shepherd leading her into the action of performing good works for the glory of God the Father.

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23 Though beyond the scope of this section, it is also interesting to note that this passage is the only one in which Jesus says after he lays down his life for the sheep he also is the one who has “the power/authority [ἐξουσίαν] to take it up again” (v. 18). Instead of saying that the Father is the one who raises Jesus from the dead, here Jesus makes this claim for himself.

24 Personal translation.
Yet, it is not always so easy for the believer to simply obey the call of Christ. Bonhoeffer warns against the temptation to over-analyze the believer’s call of obedience to Christ, saying, “Wherever simple obedience is fundamentally eliminated, there again the costly grace of Jesus’ call has become the cheap grace of self-justification.”

Where does one learn to follow Christ in obedience? One ought to turn their attention to Scripture and its witness to who God is. John Calvin illustrates the importance of Scripture’s witness to the true knowledge of God, saying, “all right knowledge of God is born out of obedience.” As Scripture calls the believer into obedience, one enters into the *intima notitia* of God. Barth agrees with using Scripture as the starting point to “uphold” the Church, and says, “... our safest plan is to begin with the simple fact that right up to our own day the Old and New Testament Scriptures have never been reduced to a mere letter in Christian circles, but have continually become a living voice and word, and have had and exercised power as such.” Scripture reveals God to the believer and teaches the believer how to listen to the voice of God in order to live a life of simple obedience.

Barth believes that Scripture is meant to point beyond itself to God, who is the only one capable of upholding the Church in the midst of these threats. Therefore, Scripture works not because it has a power in and of itself, but because it serves as a witness verifying the work of God in the world. This, then, becomes the approach of

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27 Barth, *CD*, IV/2 §67, 673.
28 Ibid., IV/2 §67, 675-6.
discipleship for all believers. Put differently, the knowledge of God one seeks through studying the Scriptures is not scientia, but rather, intima notitia.

In his own work on the topic of sanctification, Bonhoeffer says, “…only the believers obey, and only the obedient believe.” This means that proper belief in Jesus Christ leads one into ministry. Likewise obedience leads one to believe, because it’s not an idea that one believes in it is the personhood of Jesus Christ. The reality believers are called to live into should not be defined by an idea or concept of who Christ is, nor by the products they consume; rather, their reality becomes defined by believing on Jesus Christ and obeying him. It is through obeying that followers reflect how they believe on Jesus Christ.

One example of what this looks like can be found in Acts 16:16-32, where Paul and Timothy are in the Philippian jail. Suddenly, an earthquake causes all the doors to open and their chains to become unfastened. Their jailer is about to do the “honorable” thing and take his life, because he is in bondage to the stranger, that is, Rome. In contrast, Paul and Timothy remain where they are because they are following the person of Jesus and are not enslaved to an ideology or political system. As a result, they save the jailer’s life. Next, the jailer asks, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They answer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (vv. 30-31). The preposition used here indicates that it’s not about “Believing in an idea of Jesus” but rather believing on the concrete person of Jesus. This act of simple obedience by Paul and Timothy leads them to an act of ministry witnessing to the person of Jesus, through baptizing the jailer and his whole family. As Paul points out in Romans 6, this action of

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29 Bonhoeffer, Discipleship, 63. Italics original.
baptism, which unites the jailer to Christ’s death, also leads to a new life found in serving Christ instead of the Roman Empire.

In conversations with Justin, he routinely struggled with this concept of obedience. As mentioned in the second chapter, for Justin, obedience was centered on following rules laid out in Scripture. His approach to living out his faith, after learning about the cancer diagnosis of his mom and his girlfriend’s pregnancy, was more about following the idea of what he thought it meant to be a Christian instead of following the concrete person of Christ. He began to internalize this pressure he put on himself which led in the direction of self-righteousness or self-justification. Much like his aspirations to play in the NBA, he treated his walk of faith like that of an intense basketball workout. I wish I could say that, as his youth worker, I was aware enough of what was going on spiritually in Justin’s world to help direct him towards this deeper call of discipleship that the Apostle Paul, Barth, and Bonhoeffer are speaking of. But that was not the case.

Eventually, Justin did discover that this rigid style of obedience to the law was not possible to maintain. However, instead of adopting this more robust understanding of grace as being both justification and sanctification, he understood grace to mean God forgiving him for his sins. With this understanding of grace, sin became an action that he committed, instead of sin being more like the “territory” or “jurisdiction” from which he was drawn out through the waters of baptism as argued by Paul in Romans 6:2.30

In their book A Faith of Their Own, Lisa Pearce and Melinda Lundquist Denton place adolescents on a spectrum of how they express their faith (or lack of faith) in God.

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30 For more on this definition of “Sin,” consider the argument made above in chapter four on the exegesis of verse 2, pp. 57-8. Cf. Witherington III and Hyatt, Paul's Letter to the Romans, 156n5. See also, Jewett, Romans, 395. Grieb, The Story of Romans, 67.
They came up with five categories to help identify where adolescents can be found.

Justin’s expression of faith would likely place him in the middle of the spectrum in the category of an *assenter*. That is to say, that he believed in God, and at the time, considered God as a personal God, but his faith was not central to his everyday life. As a result, in the years that followed, Justin’s attendance in worship significantly dropped, and he began to pull away from the relationships of those in church. In speaking with his dad, Justin has not been actively pursuing another congregation to be a part of.

Reflecting on the experience of Justin, I believe that one of the main reasons he stopped going to church was because of his misunderstanding of grace leading to his anemic faith. Perhaps borrowing from Bonhoeffer, Barth oppugns that, “The call to discipleship binds a man to the One who calls him. He is not called by an idea of Christ, or a Christology, or a Christocentric system of thought, let alone the supposedly Christian conception of a Father-God. How could these call him to discipleship?” Here, Barth speaks of the importance of following the *person* of Jesus Christ, and being bound to the *person* of Christ, criticizing the trap of following an *idea* of Christ. This is the trap that Justin fell into by adopting some of the tenets of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. Contrary to this, we find the main emphasis of the Reformed doctrine of sanctification, that the concrete person of Christ unites himself to believers.

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31 Cf. Pearce and Denton, *A Faith of Their Own*, 42-5. Although Pearce and Denton note that not all “Assenters” identify God as a personal God, in the case of Justin, he does identify God as a personal God. Nonetheless, I place him in this category, because he shares many of the other common features of “Assenters” mentioned by Pearce and Denton, (e.g., his faith no longer being a central part to his everyday life). In addition, it should also be noted that, based on the two surveys completed by the “National Surveys of Youth and Religion” done in 2002 and 2005, youth labeled as “Assenters” was the most common label given, at 30% in 2002 and 31% in 2005 (34).

32 Barth, *CD*, IV/2 §66, 536. Similarly, Bonhoeffer says, “Discipleship is commitment to Christ. Because Christ exists, he must be followed. An idea about Christ, a doctrinal system, a general religious recognition of grace or forgiveness of sins does not require discipleship.” *Discipleship*, 59.
Likewise, just as the believer follows the person of Christ, the believer must also realize that alone one is incapable of conquering over sin by oneself. Barth’s doctrine of reconciliation teaches the follower, that they are a sinner. Therefore the reconciliation that takes place is not only for the *sin one commits*, as Justin assumed, but also the reconciliation of God takes place for the entire person, for that person is a sinner. In this way Christ becomes the believer’s sanctification or holiness. Yet, how might this occur?

**Participatio Christi**

*Participatio Christi* is more directly related to the Reformed feature of sanctification as Christ uniting himself to the believer. Daniel Migliore illustrates how Barth builds off of John Calvin’s main theme of *participatio Christi* in his own theology of sanctification:

“We have merely taken seriously what Calvin called *participatio Christi,*” Barth says (IV/2 [§66], 581). Just as Calvin makes this theme “the ultimate foundation of his whole doctrine of sanctification,” so too does Barth. Sanctification for Barth, as for Calvin, is essentially union with or participation in Christ, and each section of §66 should be read as contributing to the exposition of this theme.

Once again, Barth echoes some of the same themes seen in Bonhoeffer’s work, calling Christ “our Lord and Representative” or “seinen Herrn und Stellvertreter.” *Stellvertreter*, although translated into the English noun of “Representative,” quite literally means “place-sharer.” Barth continues: “As He takes our own place He takes

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35 Barth, CD, IV/2 §66, 519. Barth, KD, IV/2 §66, 588. For more on the term *Stellvertreter* as used in Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s work, see Andrew Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry: From a Strategy of Influence to a Theology of Incarnation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007). Here, Root prefers the more literal translation “place-sharer.”
also that of our fellows and brothers.” In German, he repeats the noun *Stelle*, in this sentence reiterating his point that Christ is not merely the Representative of us as individuals, but takes the *place* of the entire community of faith. Barth contends that

The knowledge of the man Jesus includes the knowledge and enclosure of our own and every other human existence in His. There are, therefore, no saints (and saints are those who know the man Jesus) to whose participation in the sanctity of this One there does not also belong a knowledge of the all-embracing character of His existence in its comprehension not only of themselves but also of the children of the world.

In sanctification, Christ unites himself fully with the believer, so that the actions of the believer are understood to be how one participates in Christ’s ministry of reconciliation to the world on behalf of the Father. But is this still known in the experience of American Christianity? To some extent, yes. As Americans we *know* that Christ’s once-and-for-all sacrifice was sufficient for all humanity. However, in the practice of faith communities, it is not always exemplified in this way, as illustrated through the church billboard advertisement in chapter one. There seems to be a hyper-individualized experience of faith that perhaps originates from our consumer culture. If the experience of one’s faith is considered to be a product that can be consumed, what happens when a better product comes on the market—whether that be another church promising to meet different needs, or even another philosophy or idea that conflicts with orthodox Christianity, such as secularism?

In chapter two, I noted that according to Kara Powell and Chap Clark in *Sticky Faith*, and Reggie Joiner in *Think Orange*, 40-50% or even as high as 80% of adolescents

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36 Barth, *CD*, IV/2 §66, 519.


38 Barth, *CD*, IV/2 §66, 519-20.
leave the church upon graduating high school. They point out that one of the reasons why this occurs is because within the church there is a problem of self-glorification. That is to say, the church props itself up as the institution which dispenses religious goods and services. Therefore, many adolescents approach their faith as they do any other product that they consume. As a result, when a new “product” comes along vying for their attention and influence, some leave the church.

Instead of focusing only on experiencing grace as the justification offered by God, a more robust understanding of double grace allows for an intimate understanding of the relationship that is offered. The believer becomes a new person as Christ unites himself more fully to the believer. Barth says, “Sanctification is a real change even in this restricted sense—the creation of a new form of existence in which man becomes the true covenant-partner of God.”39 The believer then participates with Christ through acts of service.

One of the terms Barth uses to describe the “critical character of sanctification as \( participatio\ Christi \)” in §66 is \( gestörte\ Sunder \) or disturbed sinner.40 The phrase \( gestörte\ Sunder \) best sums up how Olive felt when she was “awakened” in Nashville by the plight of homelessness. She believed she was a \( gestörte\ Sunder \), in that she felt disturbed within herself, recognizing ways in which she contributed to a system that caused this disparity between people. As a result, this led her to make an open confession in front of the group, as told in chapter two. Barth identifies a common time in which one has the experience of

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39 Ibid., IV/2 §66, 525.

40 Cf. Barth, \( KD \), IV/2 §66, 596. See also, Barth, \( CD \), IV/2 §66, 527. The other term Barth uses is “limit” as the sinful nature of the believer is limited by the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, through \( participatio\ Christi \) while the believer still commits sins, they are committed less and less as the believer is more fully united to Christ. Cf. Ibid., IV/2 §66, 530-3.
feeling disturbed happens when participating in the will of Christ. The example of Olive clearly illustrates how, in giving water to those who were thirsty, she became disturbed deep within her person. Or to use the language of Charles Taylor, her buffered self was penetrated by the cross pressure of the immanence of Christ, whom she saw in the face of those she was serving.

Barth describes this moment of disturbance as an “awakening” that the believer experiences. He goes on to say, “Awakening them as such, [God] startles them out of the peace in which they think that they can continually express their sinful being as others do. But calling them out in this way, he calls them to Himself.”41 While both Justin and Olive experienced this “awakening,” of being startled “out of the peace” in which they lived their lives, Olive’s awakening led her to make greater changes in her life as she sought new ways to obey Christ. In the months that followed her experience in Nashville, Olive and I continued our conversations, centered on seeking new ways in which she could live her life in service to God. While Olive’s experience of sanctification may not have led her to being more devoted to the religious practices of our faith community—as was witnessed in Justin’s crisis of faith—her focus became more missional as she sought out new ways to impact her local community through acts of service. In this way, Olive is a prime example of how one can live into this process of sanctification as presented in Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*. Daniel Migliore gives this brief summary statement, highlighting Barth’s significant contribution to the doctrine of Sanctification: “Barth’s doctrine of sanctification leans in the direction not of piety or mysticism or sacred ritual

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41 Ibid., IV/2 §66, 527.
but of vocation and service.”42 Olive’s story is one of vocation and service as she participated in the life of Christ through serving those in her immediate community. With this in mind, I will now directly address the question of the normative task: What ought to be going on?

What Ought to Be Going On?

Barth declares that the true Church has a direction and a goal for which it is heading. That direction and goal is the revelation of the sanctification of humankind. However, as already posited, secularization and self-glorification not only derail the Church from this goal, but also place it in opposition to the world. The role of the true Church is to point the world to the sanctification offered in Christ.43 This is similar to the role of that of John the Baptist, preparing the way of the Lord. One beautiful depiction of this can be seen in Matthias Grünewald’s Isenheim altarpiece called The Crucifixion. In the middle of the altarpiece, John the Baptist stands to the right of the cross pointing at the crucified Jesus, yet, he is looking out at the viewer. This suggests that Grünewald rightly understood John the Baptist’s role of revealing to the world that reconciliation is found only through Jesus Christ. Perhaps—since he had a copy of this painting in his office—Barth has this image in mind as he describes the direction and goal of the true Church. How then ought the believer point to Christ?

In contrast with the experience of many adolescents who grow up in the Church participating in youth ministry programs that focus primarily on identifying God’s grace as justification, one whole aspect of God’s grace is neglected. Barth contends that one of

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42 Migliore, “Participatio Christi,” 306.

43 Cf. Barth, CD, IV/2 §67, 619-23.
the reasons why conversion takes place for the believer is for sake of Christ. The believer’s secured salvation is not an end of itself, but rather, it is a springboard into a life of service. Therefore, there is a paradox inherent within the doctrine of sanctification, as demonstrated in the previous chapter from Romans 6. The paradox is this: Grace is a free gift given to all people, one that cannot be earned. And yet grace also has a great cost to the believer, in that God calls the believer to die to the self and be united most fully to the person of Jesus Christ. Put differently, Barth says

The man who wants to be converted only for his own sake and for himself rather than to God the Lord and to entry into the service of His cause on earth and as His witness in the cosmos, is not the whole man. When we convert and are renewed in the totality of our being, we cross the threshold of our private existence and move out into the open.

Moving out into the open calls the believer into a life of service and good works. These good works performed are not done to earn salvation, but rather, as a response to the salvation the believer has received. Therefore, doing good works always has a two-fold meaning behind it: first, that God is the one who praises the works as good, and secondly, that the works have the potential to bring praise to God. These both coincide with the internal decays within the church. As one listens to the voice of the Good Shepherd, one performs these works, which only God can call good, thereby allowing the “salt” to be “salty.” And secondly, these actions are done from a place of humility. Barth says, “Even the best man cannot place himself and his work in the service of the work of

44 E. Glenn Hinson puts it this way: “According to Paul, grace is free and unconditional but paradoxically, it costs everything. It costs you your life. To follow Jesus you must deny self and take up a cross. The wise must count the cost.” Christian Spirituality, 46.

45 Barth, CD, IV/2 §66, 565.

46 Ibid., IV/2 §66, 584.
God, or make his work a declaration of God's work and therefore a good work.”

This is the direction from which the church ought to be taking its lead. The good works that the church complete are for the praise of God the Father.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter continued the project through the lens of the normative task, seeking to answer the question “What ought to be going on?” Barth’s two-fold critique of the inward decay of the church set the foundation for how the doctrine of sanctification can help to curb this trend of the anemic faith found in adolescents. While these two decays are similar in their goal to prevent the decline of influence that the church has in society, they seek to achieve this goal in different ways. Secularization does so through accommodation to the voice of the world, while self-glorification does this through forcing itself on the world. As illustrated through the examples of Justin and Olive, both forms of decay are still active and present in the Church today.

In response to these two internal threats to the church, I expounded upon two of Barth’s major themes expressed throughout his explanation of the doctrine of sanctification. These themes were Simple Obedience and *participatio Christi*. Drawing from the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Barth uses Simple Obedience as a way to illustrate how the believer is meant to listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd and simply obey. Justin’s narrative illustrated, (in a negative way) how he was unable to listen to the voice.

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47 Ibid., IV/2 §66, 592. Later Barth reiterates this point, saying, “As such [the true Church] will reveal itself, or be revealed, in glory at this goal; yet only as the Church which does not try to seek and express and glorify itself, but absolutely to subordinate itself and its witness, placing itself unreservedly in the service and under the control of that which God wills for it and works within it.” Ibid., IV/2 §67, 620.
of the Good Shepherd and instead listened to the voice of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, leading towards his expression of an anemic faith.

The second theme considered was *participatio Christi*, which highlights for the believer the importance of the role of human agency as they participate in the being and action of Jesus Christ. Daniel Migliore is quick to point out that,

The often repeated claim that for Barth “God is everything and man nothing” is a total misrepresentation of his theology as a whole and of his doctrine of sanctification in particular. As we have shown, *participatio Christi* means for Barth that the saints really take part in the being and action of Jesus Christ.\(^{48}\)

The positive example of Olive, who was “awakened” in the experience of ministering to a person in need, led her on the path of deeper obedience as she sought new ways to serve Christ in her community.

All of the work thus far is culminating in the final task, the pragmatic task. Now that I have sufficiently answered the questions “What is going on?, “Why is this going on?,” and, “What ought to be going on?” through the lenses of the descriptive-empirical task, the interpretive task and the normative task, I now must answer the final question, “How might we respond?,” to which I now turn in the final chapter.

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\(^{48}\) Migliore, “Participatio Christi,” 298. Italics original.
CHAPTER 6
WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW?

The final task, the pragmatic task, asks the question, “What should we do now?” As revealed throughout this thesis, there is an anemic faith found in adolescents. Within the hearts of those who love God, and who love adolescents, this stirs us to want to see a more robust faith expressed in their lives. It generates a sense of urgency, and at the same time, recognition that the task is too large for one person alone. Therefore, the pragmatic task invites others to join in helping to reinvigorate adolescent faith formation. However, there are also limits set to answering this specific question of, “What should we do now?” These limits include the narrow focus that has been taken to respond to only one aspect of youth ministry practices. Secondly, the question is stated in such a way that it is meant to answer how the Church ought to respond to the challenges it faces today. Tomorrow, new challenges will arise, and the Church will have to ask these same questions again.

That being said, the Church can and should respond to the anemic faith found within adolescents in the Reformed tradition by reinvigorating their faith formation, focused on double grace as expressed in both justification and sanctification. Since it is affirmed within the Reformed tradition that Christ alone is our sanctification, and that sanctification occurs through Christ uniting himself to the believer, this means that it is God alone who has the power to put us on the right path. Therefore human agency plays a significant role in providing opportunities for one to listen better to the voice of God. Teaching youth how to practice spiritual disciplines is one of the best ways to provide a
space for the Holy Spirit to work in uniting Christ to the believer. As said in chapter five, confession and fasting will be suggested as two ways in which the Church can help adolescents experience this more robust understanding of double grace. These two disciplines were chosen specifically because they intentionally provide an answer to the two internal threats facing the Church as posited by Barth: secularization and self-glorification. However, before I unpack the important role that these spiritual disciplines can play, I will first summarize the findings thus far.

Summary of Findings

In the chapter one, I defined one of the main issues that faces youth ministry as a misunderstanding of grace. Generally speaking, many adolescents (and their parents) identify the grace God offers all of humanity as being understood only as justification. They believe that grace is only about the forgiveness of sins and getting into heaven. This anemic faith has led many adolescents to neglect the role that sanctification plays within their salvation story. I defined sanctification using the two Reformed features as posited by Sinclair B. Ferguson: 1) Jesus Christ is our holiness/sanctification, and 2) our sanctification occurs through Christ uniting himself to us through the power of the Holy Spirit. Additionally, in the Reformed tradition, sanctification is seen as a progressive movement as one grows more into the likeness of Christ.

Next, I introduced Karl Barth’s two-fold inward critique of the church centered on secularization and self-glorification. Although these two threats were discussed at length in chapter five, discussing them at the beginning kept them at the forefront of our minds as we worked through the different core tasks throughout this thesis.

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In chapter two, I introduced the reader to the stories of Justin and Olive. These were used throughout the following chapters as case studies, illustrating how a more robust understanding of grace can influence the faith formation of adolescents. Initially, I used the descriptive/empirical task to answer the question “What is going on?” With the help of James K. A. Smith, I quickly dove into the work of Charles Taylor, specifically focusing on his definition of the term “secular$_3$” and how it differed from “secular$_2$.” Remember that in “secular$_3$,” secular is defined as being experienced at an ontological level within one’s core self. This is different than being compartmentalized in a spatial sense, as defined in “secular$_2$.” As a result, I considered how two popular methodologies for doing children’s and youth ministries (Sticky Faith and Think Orange) are lacking in their approach, because they are approaching the issue of “secular” as if it were “secular$_2$” and not “secular$_3$.”

Once again, I returned to the work of Charles Taylor (via James K. A. Smith) in chapter three, this time taking an in-depth look at the development of the immanent frame and the buffered-self. Using Justin as a negative example, I illustrated how his buffered-self and a disenchantment with the spiritual world may have led to his lapse of moral judgment to have sex with his girlfriend, believing that there would not be any consequences from his decision.

Next, I considered the work of psychotherapist Daniel Siegel, narrowing the focus once again to the mirror neuron system. This time, I used the positive example of Olive to illustrate how the mirror neuron system could allow for one to be opened up to the experience of God as one ministers to another face-to-face (in the case of Olive, on a
spiritual level, seeing the face of Christ in the homeless people she gave bottles of water to in Nashville).

Next the normative task was split into two chapters and is the heart of this thesis. Chapter four presented an exegetical argument from Romans 6:1-11 to answer the question “What ought to be going on?” Here I explored the Apostle Paul’s focus on sanctification for the Gentiles in the Christian church in Rome. Paul personified ἁµαρτία and θανοτός to illustrate how one is delivered out of these territories through Christ uniting himself to the believer through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is signified in a new understanding of the ritual of baptism for the believer, emphasizing that through baptism the believer dies as Christ dies, and rises again, just as Christ rose again, in order to live a new life. This new life is meant to be a life of righteousness for God, instead of a life of wickedness. Similar to what Barth contends, a life of witness to what Christ has done for the believer, and a life of service to the neighbor.

The normative task was concluded in chapter five, this time using the systematic theology of Karl Barth. Barth posited two internal threats that the Church faces: secularization and self-glorification. Although both seek to achieve the same goal—that of regaining the influence the church has within the world—they do so in different ways, the former through accommodation, and the latter through imposing itself upon the world. Secularization is essentially when the church stops listening to the voice of the Good Shepherd, and instead listens to the voice of the stranger. Using Barth’s doctrine of sanctification, it was argued that one way to neutralize this threat was to adopt a practice of Simple Obedience. Rather than rationalizing one’s way out of obeying the will of Christ, one ought to listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, and then, simply act.
Self-glorification can be defined as whenever the Church makes the assumption that the world needs the Church in order to be saved. This places the Church in a position of power and authority over the world, rather than being in the place of humility and servitude. One way to help the Church properly understand its position is to consider Barth’s theme of *participatio Christi*. In this way, Barth’s doctrine of sanctification leads the believer in the direction of vocation and service.

Now that I have briefly summarized what was discovered on the topic sanctification in adolescence, paying careful attention to the current state of adolescent faith, by considering why this might be occurring, and finally presenting a suggestion of what should be done to help remedy the situation. Now, I turn our attention to how to accomplish this task, using the spiritual disciplines of confession and fasting to achieve this end.

**Why Spiritual Disciplines?**

According to Taylor, inhabiting the *immanent frame* within the Western world is a common experience, so common that, rather than determining whether or not one inhabits the immanent frame, it is better to expend our energy exploring how one inhabits the immanent frame. There are two main ways suggested by Taylor: one is within a closed system of beliefs that does not allow for experiences of transcendence to take place, and the other is an open system in which the possibility of transcendence opens one up through religious experiences.²

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² For more on this, see pp. 36-43 of this thesis. Cf. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 93. And see Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 543.
Spiritual disciplines provide an opportunity for one to experience both the transcendence and immanence of the Tri-une God. Those in the West who are open and allow the cross-pressures of transcendence and immanence to penetrate their buffered self become transformed more into the likeness of Christ, though it is important to keep in mind, as Kenda Creasy Dean points out, that it is only grace that transforms us, not the spiritual disciplines. Rather, the spiritual disciplines become a conduit of God’s grace for us to experience. In this way, practicing spiritual disciplines do not do anything in and of themselves. Rather, through them one is opened up to the possibility of experiencing God’s grace. Dean continues:

Because Christian practices do not simply enact our belief in God—rather, they help shape our belief in God—practices instill theological insight as well as enact it, for in these acts of witness God “practices” grace in us... The goal of Christian identity is sanctification, not individuation; holiness, not just conversion. And youth ministry grounded in the practices of faith stops at nothing less.

The practice of spiritual disciplines is to be done over and over again, and integrated into a regular part of one’s faith practice. From a neuro-scientific viewpoint repeatable experiences are crucial also in how they develop the brain. Daniel Siegel identifies how, whenever we experience something, neurons fire between one another. And when this action is repeated, there is an increase in the speed in which the neurons connect with one another. Therefore, the more one repeats the practice of spiritual

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3 Dean, *Practicing Passion*, 151.

4 Ibid., 161.

5 Siegel, *Mindsight*, 61. Curt Thompson praises the work of Siegel and how it relates to Christian spirituality, saying, “In his articulation of interpersonal neurobiology, Siegel sheds further light on the significance of the intersection of neuroscience and mindful spirituality. Integrating our understanding of the mind and behavioral development, along with our spirituality, is now becoming a well-accepted, necessary paradigm for engaging our interpersonal and intercultural problems.” *Anatomy of the Soul:*
disciplines, the more likely one is able to have a transcendental experience and experience God’s grace of justification and sanctification.

T. M. Luhrmann shares one example of how spiritual disciplines open one’s mind up to experiencing a more intimate relationship with God. She studied the effects of prayer on evangelicals, and hypothesized that certain types of prayer like kataphatic (imaginative) or perhaps even apophatic (e.g., via negativa) give one “. . . the capacity to use your mind in certain ways that allows you to experience an invisible God as if he were present.” Her experiment involved 128 individuals invited to participate in one of three spiritual disciplines for 30 minutes a day for a month. The spiritual disciplines included guided imagination on the Gospels (kataphatic), centering prayer (apophatic), and an intellectual exploration of the Gospels (study). At the beginning of the month, she tested the subjects’ ability to visualize images, shapes and words, either through auditory responses or prompts from a computer screen. She discovered that over the month of practicing these disciplines, those who had randomly picked the kataphatic discipline, on average, were more likely to improve in their ability to visualize images, shapes and words, than those who performed the study exercise. Unfortunately, there were too few subjects (15) who performed the apophatic exercise to say with a certainty one way or the other that their results were improved. The significance of this study illustrates that, in addition to an increased ability in their minds to be able to visualize things, those who performed the kataphatic exercise also expressed a greater sense of feeling closer to God.

Surprising Connections between Neuroscience and Spiritual Practices That Can Transform Your Life and Relationships (Carol Stream, IL: SaltRiver, 2010), 7.

6 Luhrmann, When God Talks Back, 196.

7 For a more detailed account on this test and the results, see ibid., 202-215.
As one person put it, “This was what I was hoping for in the first place, to be more in touch and more in tune with the Lord, and to hear his voice. To hear him, you know, speak to me.”

Although she was not necessarily looking for this at the beginning of her study, she did discover that those who performed the spiritual discipline of study were less likely to report that they experienced God as a person. This indicates that while the practice of study as a spiritual discipline is important, and allows for one to grow in their intellectual understanding about God, when one neglects the other types of spiritual disciplines, such as the kataphatic, one is not as likely to experience God as personal. As has already been argued, when it comes to growing one’s sense of the importance of a more robust understanding of grace as both justification and sanctification, intima notitia knowledge is the strong path to follow over scientia knowledge. With this in mind, the two spiritual disciplines that were chosen emphasize an intima notitia as one experiences the immanence of the forgiveness of sins through confession, and the transcendence of entering into the presence of God through fasting.

**Confession as Following the Person of Jesus Christ**

Following the Reformed tradition, Confession will be addressed through the lens of seeing it as a spiritual discipline, rather than as a sacrament, as our sisters and brothers

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8 Ibid., 212.

9 Ibid., 215.

10 It should be noted that the examples given below in how these spiritual disciplines could be practiced, are designed specifically for adolescents like Justin and Olive. That is to say, these examples are designed for youth ministries who are predominately white, Mid-western and middle class. Since this is the main section of the American population I have experience working with. Other contexts will require adaptations to what is recommended below.
from the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions view it. However, one can discover a lot about this discipline from these traditions. Therefore, I will consider the practice and perspective from the Orthodox tradition as presented in Jim Forest’s book *Confession: Doorway to Forgiveness*.11

As seen above in chapter five, the spiritual discipline of confession calls the believer to admit that she or he is a sinner. Just as Simple Obedience leads one to follow the person of Jesus Christ, practicing the spiritual discipline of confession forces one to acknowledge that they sin instead of rationalizing away the sins they commit. As Forest says, “So eroded is our sense of sin that even in confession it often happens that people explain what they did rather than admit they did things that urgently need God’s forgiveness.”12 Therefore, when practicing the spiritual discipline of confession, it is important to remember, as Richard Foster tells us, that, “We do not have to make God willing to forgive. In fact, it is God who is working to make us willing to seek his forgiveness.”13

Recently, at a local Lutheran church, I led their Confirmation class in the spiritual discipline of confession. The lesson was centered on the topic of *The Cross*, emphasizing that this is where we meet Jesus. We began by considering Philippians 2:6-11. In that passage, the Apostle Paul uses what was most likely a familiar hymn amongst the early church in order to emphasize how the Philippians ought to treat one another. I used the passage as a way to emphasize what this hymn teaches us about Christ. Michael Gorman,


12 Ibid., 4. Italics original.

in his book *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, argues that when Paul uses the participle ὑπάρχων in verse 6, he means that both “though” and “because” are implied here.\(^{14}\)

Therefore, when the verse is translated into English it carries both meanings with it, “though/because [Christ] was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited . . ..” After establishing this distinction, I invited the confirmands to consider what it means if both of these statements are true about Christ: “*Though* he was in the form God” and also “*Because* he was in the form of God.” In our conversation, they reflected back to me how the first emphasizes Christ’s humility, while the second conveys a sense of revealing the character of who God is. Granted, they may not have articulated it this way, but they were able to recognize these two themes.

After establishing this biblical foundation, I proceeded to share with them a picture of a picnic table I found one day while out running on a trail. The words “I am Broken and Worthless” were inscribed on it.\(^{15}\) I shared with them how I believe that many teenagers in the U.S. feel at times lonely or abandoned.\(^{16}\) Through this, I introduced them to the concept of a “dying moment.” That is to say, a “dying moment” is a time in one’s life when either one commits a sin, or experiences the effect of sin on their life. I then listed a number of examples, such as lying to our parents, gossiping on social media, being bullied at school, or even losing a loved one to cancer.

\(^{14}\) In addition to the participle being translated concessively as “though,” and causally “because” Gorman also points out that it could be translated “temporally and more neutrally ‘being’ in the form of God, or ‘while’ he was in the form of God.” *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 20. For more on Gorman’s argument about translating ὑπάρχων both concessively and causally, see ibid., 22-29.

\(^{15}\) See Appendix B.

Next, I shared a story of a middle schooler who had confessed to me how he had been physically, verbally and emotionally abused by his mother. In that experience I shared my own shortcomings in not knowing how to minister to him in the midst of his suffering. I should have pointed to Jesus on the cross, who suffers with him and laments the pain he experiences, and how he died for him only to be raised again from the dead, thereby bringing hope to a hopeless situation. I made the mistake of neglecting to mention the power of the cross, the power of Christ suffering, and only spoke to the power of Christ’s resurrection. Essentially, when considering the Philippians passage, I ignored the importance of verses 6-8 and only talked about verses 9-11. Thankfully, despite my inept attempts at ministering to him, Christ was still present and was working at reconciling this situation.

With this in mind, I showed them a picture of Matthias Grünewald’s *The Crucifixion* altarpiece in Isenheim. I then asked, “If this was the only thing you knew about Jesus, what would this teach you?” Through this part of the lesson, confirmands expressed how powerless Jesus was. They shared about the pain and agony that he was experiencing. We continued our discussion by simply reflecting with one another what we noticed and what surprised us about this depiction of the crucifixion. One of the main points I shared with them is that, in remembering the cross, as believers we follow not the idea of who we think Jesus is, but rather, the person of Jesus. When we remember

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17 In sharing this story, I was hoping to help the confirmands see how a deeper understanding of the biblical text reveals the person of Christ as he relates to us in our everyday life. Forest explains the importance of stories this way: “In moments of crisis, it isn’t ideologies or theories that guide us but our primary stories. True stories help make us capable of love and sacrifice and light up the path to the kingdom of God.” *Confession*, 44-5.

Christ’s act of obedience on the cross, we remember that Christ really physically lived on this earth, that Christ really died, that Christ rose again and that Christ will return.

Then we took Communion by intinction in a modified way. I instructed them to come up one at a time, tear off a piece of bread, and raise it up to Christ and confess, either out loud, or in their hearts, a “dying moment” that they had committed or experienced. Then they were told to put the piece of bread back on one of the two plates. After everyone had confessed their own “dying moment,” I switched the plates and invited everyone to come up once again, this time taking someone else’s “dying moment” dipping it in the cup and then partaking of the sacrament. I shared with them that in taking communion in this way, we are seeking to minister to one another by participating with Christ, who ministers to us in the sacrament, for, although we are incapable of forgiving anyone of their sins—the Godhead alone has authority to do that. Through dipping the bread in the cup, we are saying that Christ has reconciled each of us back to the Father, and also, that I am here to support you in the midst of your “dying moment” by helping to bear this burden. As the Church, we are instructed to do this very thing in Galatians 6:2: “Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

Bonhoeffer reminds us of the importance of the sacraments in the context of the worshiping community: “The word of proclamation alone is not sufficient to bring us into community with the body of Jesus Christ; the sacrament is necessary too. Baptism incorporates us as members in to the unity of the body of Christ. The Lord’s Supper keeps us in this community (κοινωνία) with Christ’s body.” Discipleship, 216. Likewise, Bonhoeffer also saw a deep connection between the practice of Confession and how it prepares one to receive the sacrament of Communion. See Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: HarperCollins, 1954), 120-122. He ends his book with this climactic statement: “As the members of the congregation are united in body and blood at the table of the Lord so will they be together in eternity. Here the community has reached its goal. Here joy in Christ and his community is complete. The life of Christ and together under the Word has reached its perfection in the sacrament.” Ibid., 122.
In this way, the confession that the youth performed was more like the confession experience of that in the Orthodox Church, as opposed to the Roman Catholic Church. As the youth came forward, they stood before the altar, which was in front of a large stained-glass window in the shape of the cross. They confessed their “dying moment” to Christ. While there was no priest there in that moment of confession to give absolution, after the youth came up a second time, I shared an assurance of forgiveness. Another reason why the practice was performed in this way was because, unlike our Orthodox and Roman Catholic sisters and brothers, confession is not considered to be a sacrament, even though the practice of confession is deeply connected to both sacraments, as found in the Lutheran and Reformed traditions.

Afterwards, the confirmands split off into their small groups and unpacked some of what they experienced and learned through the lesson. The small group leaders were given a number of reflective questions to consider based on three options: the Philippians 2 passage, the experience of communion, or The Crucifixion by Grünewald (we made sure to have enough individual copies of a picture of the altarpiece available).

One of the underlying impulses of why I chose to practice the discipline in this way, and to label “confession” as a “dying moment” comes from Calvin’s teaching on this practice. In his Institutes on Christian Religion, Calvin claims, drawing from Scripture, that there are two forms of private confession: the first is by confessing our sins, or our weaknesses to another, the second is to confess any wrongdoing we have

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20 Although in the Orthodox tradition one confesses their sin in the presence of a priest, the priest is only there as a witness to the grace offered to the penitent. Forest says, “You confess not to [the priest] but to Christ in his presence. He is the witness of your confession—you do not require and will never find a sinless person to be that witness. (The Orthodox Church tries to make this clear by having the penitent face not the priest but an icon).” Confession, 119. In the same way, we had the confirmands face the cross as they shared their “dying moment,” signifying that they were confessing to Christ and not to the youth workers or pastors who were nearby.
committed to our sister or brother that has hurt them in some way. Calvin goes on to share that pastors have a special privilege in hearing a parishioner’s confession, but also cautions pastors:

    But [the pastor] should always observe this rule: that where God prescribes nothing definite, consciences be not bound with a definite yoke. Hence, it follows that confession of this sort ought to be free so as not to be required of all, but to be commended only to those who know that they have need of it.

Therefore, adapting the practice of the spiritual discipline of confession as experienced that night in confirmation allows for the youth worker to accomplish several things. First, in using language like “dying moment” to describe the event of either the sin that was committed or the effects of that sin, one is able to teach about the two forms of private confession, as identified by Calvin above. Secondly, since these are middle adolescents who are at a different stage in their psychological development, then the adults explaining this discipline to them, they likely will not be at a place in which they can confess their sins to one another at the same level or capacity as adults.

    Additionally, confessing the “dying moment” as we did, at the foot of a stained glassed window in the shape of a cross, reminded these confirmands that they are not merely sharing this with the “idea” of who Christ is, but by feeling the bread in their hand, and later tasting the bread and sweetness of the juice, they could identify this action with the person of Jesus. As mentioned above, this was one of the main points emphasized throughout the lesson. Finally, another advantage to practicing the spiritual discipline of confession this way is that it allows for adolescents to participate with Christ

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21 Calvin, *Inst.*, 3.4.12, 636.

22 Ibid., 3.4.12, 637.
by joining Christ in ministering to one another as they symbolically carried each other’s burdens. And later when they prayed for one another in their small group time.

Through the practice of the spiritual discipline of confession, adolescents have an opportunity to experience the immanence of Christ, as they confess their sin to Christ before the altar, or in the presence of a sister or brother who is serving as a witness to the work of Christ. Therefore, the buffered self is penetrated through this experience of immanence and their immanent frame is opened up to the experience of Christ ministering to them. Additionally, by entering into this holy space, they are able to imagine a more intimate relationship with a Jesus who wants to forgive them of their sins. This enables the adolescent to be in a better position to listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, instead of the voice of the stranger, and begin to nullify the threat of secularization. Since they are now forgiven, and free from the bondage of sin, they are now free to live their lives to God, in gratitude for what God has done for them.

**Fasting as Denying the Self**

In chapter five, it was claimed that fasting was one way to refute the inward threat of self-glorification that the church faces. Self-glorification happens when the church believes that the world needs it in order to receive salvation. In contrast, practicing the spiritual discipline of fasting enables one to better empathize with the hungry, the thirsty and the poor, thereby better enabling one to enter into a relationship of servitude to the world. More importantly, fasting also provides the opportunity to have a transcendental experience of God (especially in longer fasts), as one is forced to be dependent upon God for sustenance.
Although fasting is primarily experienced on an individual basis, there are ways to adapt this discipline and practice it corporately, as is commonly done in youth ministry. The advantage of fasting more corporately is that it allows for some intentional teaching on the subject of fasting, especially for those who are new to the experience. Additionally, it allows for one to seek out spiritual direction when one encounters their own sinful nature as they encounter the presence of the Holy God.

Foster contends that, “More than any other Discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us. This is a wonderful benefit to the true disciple who longs to be transformed into the image of Christ.”\(^{23}\) That is to say, while fasting from food is often the choice made by followers, one can choose to fast from nearly anything that they feel controls their life. For example, I once fasted from watching TV for an entire year when I was in high school.

Perhaps a more extreme example will help explain this claim made by Foster. A number of years ago a friend of mine, who I will call Steven, felt God calling him to do an extended period of fasting. I saw him about half way through his fast: at that point he had lost about 20 pounds. I said, “You look good, Steven.” He said, “Yep, I’m living off the ‘fat of the land.’” In total Steven fasted from food for 40 days.

A few years after this experience, he reflected to me on the phone about how the only thing people were interested in was what was happening to him physically. It never occurred to them to ask him questions about what was happening spiritually.\(^{24}\) When

\(^{23}\) Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 55.

\(^{24}\) Thompson says a similar thing about the connection between the mind, the body and the way in which God seeks to get one’s attention. He says, “I suggest that many elements of our mind/body matrix are means by which God is trying to get our attention, but we have not had much practice reflecting on them. We . . . often don’t focus on our feelings, memories, what our bodies are telling us, or the depth and
doing a fast like this, he said that he was forced into a place of complete dependency on God. Through this spiritual discipline, he found a new way to abide in Christ. As a result of this utter dependence upon the Holy God, Steven shared how it brought up in his own life deep issues of sin, things that on the surface level he could live with, but when he came into the presence of God and experienced God’s holiness, he realized how totally and utterly depraved he was.

The spiritual discipline of fasting from food forces one to live in that tension. In performing a fast for this length of time, one has no choice but to be dependent upon the Holy One of Israel in order to survive. And yet, at the same time, when entering into the presence of God, one realizes just how unholy and unworthy one is. Perhaps this is what it was like for the prophet Isaiah when he was brought up into the God’s throne room in Isaiah 6:5. As he encountered the holiness of God, he cried out, “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

Granted, in a youth ministry context, instructing adolescents to fast from food for 40 days is completely inappropriate. Those who have experience in fasting for this length of time will tell you that they did so as a result of being called by God to do so. Additionally, it is a length of time that they have worked up to, practicing first with shorter fasts and eventually getting to the point of this extended fast. Fasting from food is not meant to be a quick way to lose weight. Therefore, if not done properly, it can have dangerous implications for adolescents who struggle with eating disorders and body meaning of our narratives. The more we pay attention to these things—what our brains are telling us—the more we are ultimately paying attention to God.” Thompson, Anatomy of the Soul, 59.
image. However, a shorter fast, such as the popular 30 Hour Famine experience, does allow for a somewhat controlled and supportive experience.

Once again, Richard Foster reminds us that, “By themselves Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done. They are God’s means of grace.” This is the proper mindset to have when it comes to undertaking any spiritual discipline, especially that of fasting. Throughout Scripture, over and over again fasting is used as a way for an individual, or for a community of people to align their will with God’s will. Fasting is never used as a way to manipulate God to the will of those who are fasting. For example, the prophet Daniel fasts a number of times throughout his book, illustrating how he desires to have the same will of God. Likewise, in Jonah 3, the citizens of Nineveh fast from food and water and even put on sackcloth and cover themselves in ashes in order to show just how penitent they are. As told in the Synoptic accounts, Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit, goes into the wilderness and fasts for 40 days before beginning his formal ministry. Though beyond the scope of this paper, these examples illustrate the purpose of performing a spiritual discipline such as fasting as seeking to draw closer to God. What might this look like in the context of youth ministry?

25 Although the primary example of fasting in this chapter is fasting from food, there can be negative consequences to encouraging only this type of fasting, especially for young women who struggle with body image, or the disease of anorexia. Other fasts can be practiced as well, such as fasting from technology, (like cell phones, or watching television), or fasting from eating out at restaurants, in order to encourage a more intentional time with family. Additionally, the money saved from some of these fasts can be donated to local mission organization, for example.


27 Foster, Celebration of Discipline, 7.
Drawing from personal experience, the congregation I was a pastor of held an annual 30 Hour Famine youth lock-in event. Combined with the usual fanfare of late-night movie watching, ridiculous youth group games and initiatives, there was also an intentional focus on worship and service. One year we used Isaiah 58:6-7 as our main theme: “Is this not the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?” Using this passage as a starting point, I emphasized the difference between feeling empathy for a person and feeling pity for a person. Since we were all fasting from food at the time, it was easier to empathize with the homeless in our community, feeling similar hunger pangs that they were experiencing.

Next, I shared a story of how once, when leading a mission trip on the south side of Chicago, our youth group was given $5 and instructed to find a person in need and use the money to help meet a need that they had. It did not take us long to find someone in need. We first found a woman at a bus stop with a boom box. We assumed that we could quickly buy her some batteries for her boom box and finish the task we had been assigned. Instead, when we asked her if we could meet a need she had, she said, “Yeah! Why don’t you dance with me!” So we did! Her need could not be met with the $5 we were given, but rather, her deeper need at that time was to be seen as human, and as one who was loved by God and meant to be loved by us.

This point was made more clearly to us in the next person we met. This time, it was guy sitting on the sidewalk. We asked him if we could do anything for him; he said
that we could buy him some soap and shampoo, because he was tired of smelling so bad.

As we continued to talk to him, one of the youth asked, “What’s the worst part about
being homeless?”

“Being anonymous,” he said. “Day after day, thousands of people walk by me,
and won’t even look me in the eye. They won’t talk to me. The worst part of being
homeless is knowing that no one cares enough about me to have a conversation with me.”

Knowing how a fast will affect you physically and spiritually is helpful, but more
important is how fasting affects one relationally. Telling these stories allowed for the
adolescents to connect the intellectual knowledge of God’s imperative as found in the
Isaiah passage, and to be open to a different way of knowing God and being known by
God. Curt Thompson notes that,

Knowledge—often understood in terms of factual information that translates into
a relational power gradient between persons—does not guarantee goodness or
courage of love. It certainly can support the emergence of those qualities, but in
and of itself it does not produce them. Ultimately, knowledge alone does not
satisfy. What does satisfy is being known.28

After sharing these two illustrations, I went on to say that “This is why God tells
the Israelites to treat the homeless and the oppressed like their kin. God wants them to
love the homeless, as He does. He doesn’t want them to be anonymous anymore.”

Following this devotional, we then performed two service projects. One was to go door to
door collecting food items for a local food pantry. Next, we returned to the church and
made something called “Manna Bags.” These were nylon bags filled with items that
would be helpful for homeless people in our community. The bags included items like
hats, mittens, scarves, a bottle of water and Gatorade, trail mix, granola bars, gum, a bus

28 Thompson, Anatomy of the Soul, 13.
ticket, bus schedule, and a list of warming shelters with their addresses. The intent of the “Manna Bags” was to help our congregational members see the many homeless people in our community as their sister or brother and empathize with them, then meet an immediate need. There was a culture within the church that was distrustful of homeless people. The stereotype led many to ignore the homeless as they stood on street corners begging for money. These “Manna Bags” provided an opportunity for the members of our congregation to meet an immediate need and draw one step closer towards seeing them as a sister or brother.

The spiritual discipline of fasting enables one to resist the temptation of self-glorification, as it places one in the position of humility relying on God for sustenance. When one enters the presence of the Holy and Righteous God, their sins and unrighteousness are brought forward for confession in order to be forgiven and reconciled to God. Additionally, fasting allows one to empathize with others who are hungry and begin to see them as God sees them. With the experience of forgiveness, one is often led into expression of gratitude for what God has done, naturally leading one to perform an act of service.

**Conclusion**

This project has been guided by the core tasks of practical theology, seeking to answer these four questions: What is going on?, Why is this happening?, What ought to be happening?, and What should we do now? I claimed that currently many churches within the Reformed tradition are forgetting Calvin’s doctrine of double grace and focusing their understanding of grace as justification, neglecting the role of sanctification in their lives. As seen in the story of Justin, this leaves our youth with an anemic faith,
which leads them to listen to the voice of the stranger instead of the voice of the Good Shepherd. As the Church recognizes its own loss of influence in culture one of the ways it responds is through self-glorification, which can lead towards marketing an idea of following Christ instead of following the person of Christ in service. Olive’s story showed how in serving others one sees the face of Christ in our sisters and brothers, and is an example of how to nullify the threat of self-glorification.

This chapter illustrated how one of the most effective ways to intentionally expand the vision of grace to include both justification and sanctification was through the practice of spiritual disciplines. Granted, the disciplines in and of themselves hold no special power, nor are they ways in which salvation can occur. However, they are unique practices that the church has turned to time and time again to open one up to the power of God in order for God to do something within the life of the believer.

As seen above, practicing the spiritual discipline of confession, as seen within the Reformed tradition, reminds the believer of the person of Christ, since God alone has the authority to forgive sins, and is in contradiction to secularization. Confessing one’s sin in front of an icon reminds one of the immanence of Christ, who wants to forgive and reconcile all back to the Father. As shown in this chapter, when confession is connected to the sacrament of Communion, it leads to an embodied experience of double grace. This sacrament unites Christ to the believer, and nourishes the believer to perform good works of grace (understood as sanctification) in gratitude for the grace offered to them (understood as justification) through Jesus Christ. In the example above, by symbolically taking on the burden of a sister or brother through the reconciling act of Christ on the cross, it provides a practical way for youth to live into this double grace.
Likewise, the spiritual discipline of fasting connects this robust understanding of double grace with the experience of empathizing with and serving those who are hungry and poor. Fasting from food, in particular, provides for the opportunity—enhanced through an experience of worship—to transcend through the power of the Holy Spirit into the presence of God, whereby one is taken out of the territory of sin and into the territory of God’s righteousness. Just as the example of confession leads one to the good works of helping to carry another’s burden, so too, in the example given here, fasting can also lead one to good works in empathizing with the poor and hungry, and expressed in an act of service.

In conclusion, while internal and external threats to the church will always be present, even as one begins to subside, another will likely threaten the church all the more. As a believer, one must remember that God alone has the power to avail against these threats and uphold the Church. Our role as believers is to witness and testify to this knowledge of God, knowledge that is not scientia, but rather, knowledge as intima notitia. The Reformed doctrine of double grace as both justification and sanctification provides the theological foundation to do so. And more importantly, when practiced within the Church, it provides the opportunity for one’s justification in Christ to be affirmed, for Christ’s sanctification to become one’s own, and to recognize the ways in which Christ unites himself through the power of the Holy Spirit to the believer, thereby, calling the believer to follow him through acts of service in the world, all for the glory of God. Youth workers who incorporate opportunities like these which teach and allow for

29 Cf. Barth, CD, IV/2 §67, 670.

30 Cf. Ibid., IV/2 §67, 675.
adolescents to experience this double grace will therefore reinvigorate their faith and provide the Church for a way to respond to Barth’s two-fold critique of the church.
APPENDIX A

Personal Translation of Romans 6:1-11

1 Therefore, what are we to say? Should we remain in sin in order that grace may increase? 2 By no means! How can we who have died to sin, still be living in it? 3 Do you not know, that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, have been baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we have been co-buried with him by baptism and death just as Christ was raised from the dead, we are to walk in the newness of life. 5 For, if we have been united together with the likeness of his death, we shall certainly be united together with him in his resurrection.

6 We each know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the sinful body may be abolished, and we are no longer a slave to sin. 7 For anyone who has died has been set free from sin. 8 But if we died with Christ, we believe that we will live with him. 9 For we know that (since) Christ was raised from the dead he can no longer die, no longer is death the master of him. 10 For the death he died to sin he died once for all. But the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 So, consider yourselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus.
APPENDIX B

Photograph of Picnic Table


