Applying psychological-type theory to faith: spirituality, prayer, worship and scripture

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Psychological type was developed by Carl Jung and expanded by Katherine Briggs and Isabel Myers into the Myers-Briggs-Type Indicator. The MBTI® is now frequently used by churches in several contexts. This article explores ways in which psychological-type theory might be applied to aspects of faith, including spirituality, prayer, worship and scripture. Each aspect of faith is considered separately and explored for those aspects which might be found valuable for those whose dominant function is sensing, intuition, thinking or feeling. These distinctive perspectives are discussed in light of the Christian doctrine of creation and the theology of individual differences.

Keywords: psychological type; spirituality; prayer; worship; scripture

Introduction

The Myers-Briggs-Type Indicator, developed from Jung’s work on psychological type and expanded by Katherine Briggs and Isabel Myers, has become a valuable instrument for understanding self and for relating to others in a variety of situations. Clarke (1983) describes Jung as “principally pursuing the science of the soul” (p. 662). Between the insights of Jung and the teachings of Jesus, Clarke (1983) claims there are significant affinities, likenesses and analogies. Psychological type has been applied to faith by many writers. Duncan (1994), Francis (1997), Goldsmith (1994) and Johnson (1995) are just a few who have suggested a possible relationship between psychological type and faith. The intention here is to look at aspects of spirituality which might appeal to sensing, intuitive, thinking and feeling types before considering features of prayer, worship and scripture which may be valued by each type in their journey of faith.

Psychological type has a significant role in the Christian church not only in the United States of America but also in the United Kingdom. It has been used with ministers at different stages of training and amongst lay people. Lloyd (2007) suggests that personality type can be used as an aid to the individual’s spiritual development. However, personality type can only be used to indicate possible ways of living the Christian faith which may be suitable for each individual. It is an approach which challenges the idea that individuals who are members of traditions as diverse as Roman Catholic and Evangelical ought to share the same spiritual journey (Lloyd, 2007). In recent years theoretical speculation...
about psychological type and faith has been supported increasingly by focused empirical studies (Fearn, Francis, & Wilcox, 2001).

**The four functions**

Psychological-type theory proposes two key psychological processes, concerned with perceiving and with judging. Each process is expressed through two contrasting functions. The two perceiving functions are sensing and intuition. The two judging functions are thinking and feeling. Jung suggests that for each individual one of these functions emerges as the dominant function. Dominant sensing shapes the practical person. Dominant intuition shapes the imaginative person. Dominant thinking shapes the logical person. Dominant feeling shapes the humane person. In each case the dominant function is supported by an auxiliary function from the other process. Thus, dominant sensing types and dominant intuitive types are supported by auxiliary thinking or auxiliary feeling. Dominant thinking types and dominant feeling types are supported by auxiliary sensing or auxiliary intuition.

**Psychological type and spirituality**

Spirituality is a broad concept that can embrace both religious and secular expressions (Francis & Robbins, 2005). Within the Christian tradition there is a broad range of expressions of “Christian Spirituality” as discussed by Sheldrake (2005), and Francis and Ross (1997) have suggested that individual preferences within the broad range may be related to psychological type. In the following sections the implications of each of the four dominant types for spirituality will be discussed in turn.

**Sensing spirituality**

Sensing spirituality can be described as a “Gospel of simplicity” (Grant, Thompson, & Clarke, 1983, p. 37). Sensing types will probably use their down to earth approach to spirituality with added characteristics from the auxiliary function, either thinking or feeling. Sensing types are usually practical people who like clarity. They read instructions, like detail and have a preference for definite and well-tried ideas. Routine and attention to detail are important; facts need to be ordered; and to see is to believe (Ross, 1986). Sensing types are likely to be concerned with the observance of specific religious roles and obedience to particular beliefs (Ross, Weiss, & Jackson, 1996). They might like precise answers to their precise questions. Sensing types may be like Thomas who had to see and touch Jesus before he believed but Jesus also challenged him to stop doubting and believe (Butler, 1999, p. 11). Ross (1986) suggests that there are aspects of what is known about Francis of Assisi, Zacchaeus and Martha to which sensing types might be able to relate. Ross, Weiss, and Jackson (1996) found that sensing types, who tend to be definite about their own religious beliefs, can be intolerant of those with religious doubts and are usually able to draw clear lines between the sacred and the secular. Sensing types tend to accept that following rules is an important aspect of religion and spirituality and may have difficulty with those who follow their own ideas. They may also place importance on religious form and structure and, therefore, be less willing to accept change. The dislike of change means that sensing types may regard religious people whose ideas change with the times as having a weak faith.
Sensing types with auxiliary thinking will use reason as well as their senses and make judgements which may lead to patient spiritual discipline (Richardson, 1996, pp. 116–117). Theology and spiritual philosophy must be simple, practical and properly reasoned; based both on present and past experiences (Richardson, 1996, p. 117). Sensing types with auxiliary feeling may need a spirituality which is both detailed and direct. It may involve expressions of love realised in relationships, and a constant remembrance of God as a friend (Richardson, 1996, p. 84). Sensing types with auxiliary feeling may wish to reflect their relationship with God in their relationship with people (Keating, 1987, p. 130).

**Intuitive spirituality**

Intuitive types are usually those who see the forest but fail to see an individual tree, whereas sensing types may see individual trees but fail to see the forest. Inspiration and motivation may give intuitive types the purpose and sense of meaning which help them function well in life. They may make links and see patterns which connect their chosen spirituality with the present situation and provide them with possibilities, modifications and insights for future spiritual growth (Johnson, 1995, p. 86). Boundaries between the sacred and the secular tend to be less transparent for intuitive types (Ross, 1992a), suggesting that they are able to discern the spiritual dimension in secular phenomena or recognise the “worldly aspects in conventionally religious phenomena” (p. 90). Consequently, they are probably less likely to idealise a particular religious form, and therefore, more accepting of change in the religious world (Ross, Weiss, & Jackson, 1996). Gerhardt (1983) suggests that it is intuitive types who have a vision either within an established religion, or provide inspiration for a new religion with the more practical aspects contributed by sensing types.

Intuitive types tend to respond to symbols, enjoying the complexity which can be found in religious belief and practice, and may have an overall vision of a faith tradition (Ross, Weiss, & Jackson, 1996). They may be interested in hearing a fresh, possibly unique message (Butler, 1999, p. 12). They may also be willing to adapt the message to the individual’s needs and concerns, and so inspire others to take the risk of faith (Butler, 1999, p. 12). Ross, Weiss, and Jackson (1996) found that intuitive types were willing to accept a level of doubt and were tolerant of complexity in religious belief. Intuitive types may suggest that there are occasions when the rules may need to be broken in order to be true to their faith. They may believe that a healthy religious life can be maintained by seeking new insights.

Intuitive types with auxiliary thinking are people for whom Jesus is real, present and active in the world (Keating, 1987, p. 52). Jesus worked to transform things into his image and intuitive types with auxiliary thinking may also value the possibility of a world transformed, to which they can contribute, as they seek God’s meaning in daily circumstances and events (Keating, 1987, p. 53). Intuitive types with auxiliary thinking may need to feel free to pursue their own insights into Jesus’ teaching (Keating, 1987, p. 55). Intuitive types with auxiliary feeling usually “need” feeling only after they have “dreamed dreams and drafted plans” (Keating, 1987, p. 56). They may find personal satisfaction in perceiving the abilities and gifts in others and use their insights into faith to help others realise their gifts and become more spiritually fulfilled (Johnson, 1995, p. 85). Formalised rigid prayer structures may make intuitive types with auxiliary feeling feel restricted, which denies them the opportunity to find creative ways to express their struggle for spiritual growth and their longing for the Lord (Keating, 1987, p. 53).
**Thinking spirituality**

The spiritual path for thinking types is often the way of justice. Issues concerning justice and righteousness are usually important to thinking types. However, the policies and laws concerning justice and righteousness are more important than the people affected by such concerns (Butler, 1999, p. 14). Thinking types will analyse and evaluate how the best in human relationships can be used to transform political and social issues both locally and globally. Decisions are likely to be made using spiritual values such as fairness, objectivity, wisdom and a just ordering of things (Ross, 1986). Thinking types’ faith will probably have integrity, and involve struggle and intellectual questioning. An inclination for logic and reasoning suggests that they may find theology very important (Repicky, 1981).

Faith is a leap beyond the reason and logic associated with thinking types. A step of faith may be taken by a means which they have found reasonable for themselves (Keating, 1987, pp. 84, 87). The “leap of faith” experience of others may also help thinking types to bridge the gap between reason and faith, particularly if they feel the person speaks with integrity. However, thinking types may need to find a way of linking the thinking and logic of theology with the emotions and relationships of spirituality (Keating, 1987, p. 90). Thinking types, more than any other psychological type, may accept that spirituality is a matter of will, undertaken because that is what is required (Keating, 1987, p. 90). They may find theology challenging and rewarding, enabling them to move logically to an integration of spirituality and reason, so that they can argue, “I understand, therefore I believe” (Keating, 1987, p. 83). For thinking types the spiritual life may be seen as a search for meaning and truth. They may consider sin as ignorance or wrong-doing; a misrepresentation of the truth, dishonesty, or a lack of personal integrity (Ross, 1992b). Grant et al. (1983, p. 11) suggest that thinking types in particular, may understand the call to holiness as identical with the will to grow towards God’s likeness because God, in Jesus, is shown as the model for human holiness. It is a spiritual growth which is attained through a sustained and disciplined shaping of life. In Matthew 5:8 Jesus tells the people that they, “must be made perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect.” Perfection is the goal of life and discipline is needed to achieve it (Ephesians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 13:10). Thinking types may appreciate this approach to spirituality as it requires characteristics associated with their type.

Thinking spirituality will be influenced by the auxiliary perceiving function, either sensing or intuition. Once something has become an established fact, thinking types with auxiliary sensing may enjoy arguing about precise details and meanings. Spiritual growth may come from the recognition of God as the source of all their gifts and the need for God’s assistance in all their endeavours (Johnson, 1995, p. 101). Thinking types with auxiliary intuition may speculate on the nature of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, how God rested on the seventh day, or what exactly happened when, according to the Creed, Jesus descended into hell (Osborne & Osborne, 1991, p. 90). Importance may be placed on the principles of Jesus’ teaching and the relevance of the Gospel, which may form the basis of a reasoned argument to convince others of the importance of particular issues (Osborne & Osborne, 1991, p. 90).

**Feeling spirituality**

Ross (1992b) suggests that feeling types approach religion in terms of the relationship it has to the values which are important to them. Faith is a matter of the heart, which may have reasons which the mind may not recognise (Goldsmith, 1994, p. 67). Feeling types’
concern with values, subjectivity and relatedness, suggest that they may see immediate human relationships as the place where religion should be expressed and revealed. Feeling types’ values may be shaped in and through their experience of the love and goodness of people who embody such values. Moral conduct is an important element in most religions and feeling types give priority to values that promote immediate harmonious human contact. This means that harmony and sensitivity are given precedence over objectivity. Ross, Weiss, and Jackson (1996) found that feeling types were agitated by interpersonal conflict and insensitivity shown by others. They may also suffer stress and inner conflict in situations involving issues of social justice where opposing parties or interests cannot be easily reconciled. If they choose to support one group it involves breaking any harmony with the other party (Ross, 1992b).

Feeling types may need an accepting and sustaining relationship with others and with God (Goldsmith, 1994, p. 8). They are usually interested in other people’s faith stories and social action concerning people (Butler, 1999, p. 14). While accepting encouragement from others, feeling types’ own individual search for meaning and acceptance may be more important. Extraverted feeling types, in particular, may believe that it is not possible to be a Christian alone (Johnson, 1995, p. 126). Feeling types’ spiritual lives are often nurtured through sharing relationships with other Christians in many different ways. Compassion may result in helping the stranger, who may be the Lord or one of the Lord’s angels in disguise (Matthew 25:40).

Feeling types’ spirituality will also be influenced by the characteristics associated with the auxiliary function, either sensing or intuition. Feeling types with auxiliary sensing will probably value a respect for tradition, shown in a love of reflecting on memories which concern people (Grant et al., 1983, p. 111). They may also value those stories which show Jesus being moved with compassion for the crowds (Matthew 15:32–39). Many who had some form of contact with Jesus found their lives transformed and feeling types with auxiliary sensing may respond similarly in their relationship with Jesus. They may find feeling type prayer a liberating experience which can take the form of friendship which then supports action (Goldsmith & Wharton, 1993, p. 172). Feeling types with auxiliary intuition, particularly if feeling is extraverted, tend to be natural leaders with others looking to them for guidance and support (Goldsmith & Wharton, 1993, p. 178). They may be able to combine social activism and concern for the world with a sense of detachment, but with an awareness of God’s presence and healing power. Feeling types with auxiliary intuition may feel dissatisfied with group prayer, preferring less restricted personal prayer. The promise that all creation can be made new (Revelation 21:5) may inspire feeling types with auxiliary intuition to work to create a more loving, open and redeemed society (Keating, 1987, p. 73).

**Psychological type and prayer**

Prayer is a central component of Christian spirituality in which the individual expresses those things which are of paramount importance in their spiritual life and their daily life of family, work and worldly concerns (Francis & Astley, 2001). Repicky (1981) believes that for Christians knowledge of psychological type can be important. This means that prayer, which leads to a growing awareness of God’s presence, may be expressed in ways which are influenced by characteristics associated their dominant function, sensing, intuition, thinking or feeling, as well as educational background and cultural heritage.
Christian prayer will be personal as well as communal and both could cause difficulties if there is little recognition of individual differences.

**Sensing and prayer**

An awareness of all that comes through the senses may enable sensing types to keep in touch with reality and the word of God is related to their reality (Keating, 1987, pp. 70–71). Sensing types bring a simplicity of lifestyle (Repicky, 1981). They will probably prefer prayer which pays attention to the present reality, using their five external senses. Prayer may include reciting the psalms or the rosary, using an attentive posture and becoming at ease as each phrase is spoken, either aloud or silently. Sensing types may also use objects for devotion; a picture, a book, faces in a crowd or the beauty of nature (Clarke, 1983). Grant et al. (1983, p. 29) suggest that sensing types tend to have the “gift to be simple”, and are attentive and expectant. They may appreciate prayers which have become familiar through long usage and which do not require excessive use of the imagination, reasoning or undue emotion (Grant et al., 1983, pp. 55–56). Francis and Robbins (2008) found that for sensing type clergy, prayer was characterised by focusing on particular aspects of life, on one aspect of God, traditional prayers and also drawing on aspects related to the senses. This approach is the sensing prayer of simplicity.

Daily prayer can be used by sensing types as a way of discovering the reality of God’s presence. They may also pray through their experiences which will enable them to recognise God’s grace at work in their life and in the lives of others, so helping to confirm the relationship between worship and action (Johnson, 1995, p. 52). The simplicity and routine of reciting litanies and the daily office enables a group to meet God and one another. Group prayer services might include music, kissing or touching a crucifix, the handshake of peace, incense, the scent of flowers or lighting a candle. Such sensing activities unite the group in simplicity, with a quiet awareness of God, one another, and the environment (Clarke, 1983). Sensing faith is nourished and solidarity is deepened in liturgical celebrations which evoke all the senses (Clarke, 1983).

**Intuition and prayer**

Clarke (1983) suggests that intuitive prayer may be described as contemplative prayer, drawing on fantasy and imagination, but also including the prayer of emptiness. The Jungian tradition uses the term “active imagination” to describe those behaviours in which images and symbols emerge from the unconscious (Clarke, 1983). The intuitive type’s posture is one of receptivity; the stress is on what might be, or to futures dreamed of rather than planned. If the intuitive type is practising the prayer of emptiness the mind is not occupied by thoughts and there are no images or symbols (Clarke, 1983). Intuitive types may also use centring prayers which use a word for the journey to the centre, but the word also functions as a carrier of the spirit to the beyond (Clarke, 1983). Contemplation of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola, the mysteries of the life of Jesus, or the rosary are all occasions when the imagination can be freely used to recreate a scene which contains deep Christian values in symbolic form. Intuitive types may dislike prayer which has become too familiar or is too focused on present realities. They usually prefer prayer about generalisations rather than specifics, so that, asked to pray for an individual or particular concern, they may pray for all with similar needs or related issues (Goldsmith, 1994, p. 59). The journey, the cross, the city, the tree are all symbolic possibilities for prayer, as is John’s
Gospel and the book of Revelation which contain abundant Christian symbols, which can be explored in prayer. Many of these approaches to prayer, which are often valued by intuitive types, can also be used in small groups as they prayerfully reflect together, with each member contributing something symbolic to share.

The language of the liturgy and hymns which are rich in symbols, take the intuitive type beyond the present moment, and bring an eschatological quality to the words (Clarke, 1983). The complexity of ritual gestures and symbols invite intuitive types to imagine and dream; to be open to the limitless future which is God. The congregation shares in joyful hope, the expectation of future blessing which may be expressed within the readings of the celebration. Intuitive types may value some, if not all, the forms of prayer described, as they contain characteristics associated with their type.

**Thinking and prayer**

Jung’s (1971) understanding of the thinking function is that it is objective when examining information. Ross, Weiss, and Jackson (1996) found that thinking types acknowledged a greater difficulty with praying to a higher being, but were, surprisingly, more disposed to meditation than feeling types. Clarke (1983) suggests that thinking prayer is often neglected or even disparaged, but goes on to argue that the mind is as important a part of God’s image in individuals as sensing, feeling and intuition. Osiek (1985) argues that much spirituality today is about the heart, whereas thinking types place more emphasis on the intellect. Osborne and Osborne (1991, p. 64) also suggest that thinking prayer has been neglected, particularly where feeling types make up the largest psychological type in a congregation or the clergy are feeling types. To imply that prayer is only about the heart suggests that the thinking type’s experience of God is not valid. However, thinking types may experience prayer as an act of love, in the sense that it is an unemotional act of the will, disciplined, and offered because it is “meet and right so to do” (Osborne & Osborne, 1991).

Among clergy, thinking prayer was found to be characterised by logical and well-thought-out ideas, theological reflection, analysing faith in God, seeking theological coherence, using the mind, praying for fairness, and resisting emotion (Francis & Robbins, 2008). These aspects are all associated with thinking types. They may value the great truths of the Nicene Creed or the logic of “Principle and Foundation” at the beginning of Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises (Bunker, 1991). They may also appreciate using the Bible with a good commentary which enables them to seek a deeper understanding of God’s word. Their reflections are then shared with God in prayer (Clarke, 1983). After reflecting on the truth, thinking types may examine their life to see where there is order or the lack of it, and knowing that they need God’s help, will then ask for it. Reflection on Bible passages may lead to the question, “What does God mean and say to me now?” (Bunker, 1991). Thinking types may write down a set of principles by which they wish to live, such as, “Every person I meet is worthy of my respect.” Regularly reviewing their principles is also a form of prayer for thinking types, and it is a way of evaluating and improving faithfulness to God (Clarke, 1983). Thinking types may also draw up a plan of life, which might include a schedule for prayer, reading, work, and their attitude to money, such as tithing or regular charitable giving (Clarke, 1983). When love, anger or other emotions are acknowledged before God, they are likely to be analysed so that prayer becomes more like a reasoned discourse (Duncan, 1994, p. 114).
Thinking types may include the recitation of the daily office or other prayer used by the church with others. In liturgical prayer there may be a need to relate to those outside the circle of familiar friends. This will require different conventions, etiquette and structures, which provide supports and safeguards when relating to larger and more anonymous groups of people (Clarke, 1983). Whilst these characteristics were once very much part of public liturgy in church services, there has been a movement away from them towards a more informal approach. As changes occur, what is being replaced is often dismissed in total rather than there being an acknowledgement that, for thinking types, structured liturgy, with its ritual gesture and challenging sermons, is necessary to the practice and growth of their faith.

Feeling and prayer

The prayer of feeling types is often concerned with relationships and is able to be passionate as well as gentle. Feelings of gratitude, love, trust, praise, penitence or sorrow may be shared with God who is someone with whom the believer has a relationship. The sense of relationship leads to a more conversational type of prayer. God is a friend to whom feeling types are able to pour out all their feelings (Johnson, 1995, p. 140). The dialogue between Peter and Jesus (Matthew 16:13–20) might be an expression of the feeling type’s relationship with God. They might want to ask, “Lord what is your name for me?” Peter denying Christ (Luke 22:62) and Jesus asking if Peter loves him, (John 21:15–19) are two more stories which reflect this conversational relationship with God in prayer and feeling types may use them to bring their own story to God, their own regrets and memories of unfaithfulness, and then seek God’s healing.

Feeling types may place importance on petitioning prayer, asking help for others as well as themselves, as a way of showing concern for those in need (Ross, 1992b). This type of prayer is part of the feeling type’s emphasis on the importance of human relationships, part of their type description, but extending into and becoming part of practising their religion and spirituality. Prayer may also involve a great deal of praise and thanksgiving, penitence and supplication to a God who speaks to the individual’s unique personal situation. This is not a distant God but one who has counted the hairs of each person’s head and is concerned even for the sparrows (Luke 12:6–7). Feeling type’s prayer may also be characterised by affection, intimacy and the “devout movement of the heart” (Clarke, 1983). Remembering with gratitude in prayer, brings feeling types back to the Gospels from which their values are derived, or to the sources in their own personal life through which the gift of faith came to them. The “Jesus Prayer” may be used as a way of engaging the affections of feeling types. Their prayers may also take the form of a wander “down memory lane” recalling people and events that have influenced their growth in faith (Bunker, 1991). Psalm 126:3, “The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad,” may be the response of feeling types to such reflection. Music may also have the power to move the heart to praise, and feeling types may enjoy singing favourite hymns and songs as prayers. These may have special memories attached to them; of occasions where faith was deepened or when words are found particularly moving. Prayer directed towards the heart in a group is dependent on how well members know each other and a willingness, ability and desire to share their feelings in common prayer. Music and song is an easy way to express feelings as is story-telling, and the sharing of personal history which may contribute to the faith life of the group (Clarke, 1983).
Psychological type and worship

Jesus’ call to, “Follow me” (Matthew 4:19) requires a leap of faith that moves beyond sensing, intuitive, thinking or feeling. Once that response is made, each type may demonstrate a preference for responding to God in prayer, worship and reading the scriptures in ways which reflect their personalities (Bunker, 1991). Worship is an important aspect in any religion and needs to have within its structure aspects which might particularly be valued by each psychological type. If this does not happen the individual may go away feeling spiritually empty and dry or permanently leave that worshipping group.

Sensing and worship

Sensing types, who tend to prefer the present and enjoy sacramental immediacy (Jones, 1991), may appreciate familiar and comfortable surroundings. Posture, body language and predictable actions may be more expressive for them than words (Jones, 1991). Liturgy and the worshipping environment will have a clear structure which enables sensing types to concentrate better. Their preferred liturgy will probably be traditional and familiar from frequent use. Consequently they may dislike change for its own sake. It is sensing types who have given traditions their staying power through the generations (Richardson, 1996, p. 102). Seasonal liturgical colours, stained glass windows, the observance of festivals and feast days may all be valued by sensing types. They will appreciate them in and of themselves, unlike intuitive types who will usually look for associations (Bunker, 1991). What is experienced in the here and now is probably the sensing type’s reality. Liturgical worship for sensing types must draw on all five senses at least on special occasions. As well as the surroundings of the building and the atmosphere, flowers, banners and incense may be valued. The eucharist celebrates the real presence of Christ, with a simple attentiveness to the sacramental presence of the risen Saviour (Grant et al., 1983, pp. 50–51). There will also be some moments, especially after communion, for the individual’s gaze to be directed inwards or outwards, with an awareness of posture and a silent awareness of the gift received (Grant et al., 1983, p. 51).

Intuitive worship

Unlike sensing types, intuitive types may prefer new, unusual or experimental forms of worship. Intuitive types’ imagination is stimulated by the many meanings which are generated by symbolic objects. They may prefer an open-ended and less structured liturgy which allows opportunities for consideration of meanings and possibilities (Ross, 1992a). Intuitive types may appreciate creativity in worship which may include dance, drama, music and art, all of which may lead to new insights into God, who is full of surprises. The word in liturgy has power but intuitive types may dislike too many words and an excessive intellectual approach. They need opportunities to ascend to God (Grant et al., 1983, p. 175). Complexities of religious belief and mysteries must not be oversimplified and space must be left for creative reflection. Religious images containing intellectual, conceptual, abstract and philosophical symbolism with many possible meanings may enrich and deepen the intuitive type’s faith.
**Thinking worship**

The disciples devoted themselves to prayer, the breaking of bread and teaching (Acts 2:42). When thinking types take part in worship they may emphasise the involvement of the head and mind rather than the heart and feelings. Worship is God’s due and thinking types may need to be able to detect order in the different parts of the liturgy which then gives meaning to the whole (Jones, 1991). Thinking types prefer coherence, order and discipline in their devotional life (Goldsmith & Wharton, 1993, p. 163). They usually have a strong desire to understand what is said and done in worship. Thinking types may relate to different forms of worship and prayer which contain rigour and truth (Ross, Weiss, & Jackson, 1996). Prayer, liturgy and sermons should all stretch the individual’s mind and faith. Objectivity, decency and orderliness in the conducting of worship, with proper respect and appropriate observance of form and rites, may help thinking types experience more deeply the transcendent majesty of God (Grant et al., 1983, p. 104). Hymns and prayers may be checked for acceptable theology and the language used for consistency and logic (Johnson, 1995, p. 114). Attendance at the eucharist may be accepted as an act of obedience by thinking types (1 Corinthians 11:24–25). It is a right response to God’s faithfulness, which may elicit a response from thinking types to be obedient and faithful in return (Jones, 1991). They may appreciate sermons which are well thought out, with good theological development, and containing teaching which can be used to reflect on doctrinal truths, moral principles or on the order or disorder of the individual’s life. Thinking types are often in the minority in most congregations and may feel uncomfortable in many religious communities and denominations where the feeling function predominates and influences most aspects of worship. There is a need for others to recognise that the spiritual needs of thinking types are as valid as the spiritual needs of feeling types (Bunker, 1991).

**Feeling worship**

People are usually important to feeling types who may want the Church to be seen as a welcoming and serving community; one which will encourage and sustain its members and offer the hand of friendship to those outside. Sharing and joy should be seen as obvious characteristics of the worshipping community (Goldsmith & Wharton, 1993, p. 165). Feeling types' concern for all people suggests that they may urge church members to find ways of looking outwards to serve those outside the church. Worship, liturgy and prayers will reflect some of this, as a reminder of the Church’s role of being the servant of others as Christ was the servant of all (Philippians 2:6–8). It is important to feeling types that those inside and outside the church should experience it caring for all people. Feeling types may appreciate worship which emphasises love and acceptance, forgiveness and reconciliation, seeing these values as being at the heart of the Gospel (Goldsmith, 1994, p. 70). The importance of harmony for feeling types may mean that they find it difficult to worship in situations where there is conflict between other members of the worshipping community. This sensitivity can give feeling types an instinctive feel for congregations, enabling them to be sympathetic and sensitive leaders of worship. However, the need for harmony may mean that there is an unwillingness to deal with conflict. Repicky (1981) emphasises that good communal worship will, if the different personality types are remembered, include a variety of symbols so that each can find something to relate to. There must be something to do for sensing types, some vision for intuitive types, something to understand for thinking types and a harmonious atmosphere for feeling types.
Psychological type and scripture

If it is recognised that psychological type influences individuals’ preference for different forms of spirituality, ways of praying, and styles of worship, it is also possible that sensing, intuitive, thinking and feeling types might also show preferences in the scriptures. The scriptures are a collection of writings whose authors had no knowledge of psychological type theory. However, for example, each of the gospel writers emphasised those aspects of the passion of Christ which were important to them. Many Christians have their favourite scripture passages, bible stories or Gospels. These different preferences are likely to reflect characteristics associated with their preferred function.

Sensing and scripture

When reading scripture, understanding for sensing types may come through the use of all the senses. The life-giving water Jesus offers the woman at the well (John 4:10–14) may conjure up the sound of running water; its coolness, clearness and refreshing taste. Sensing types may also be attracted by specific details and the sense of immediacy and relevance found in many bible stories. They may value the historical aspects of the Gospels which show them how faith makes sense and how Christianity can be lived out in daily life (Butler, 1999, p.11). They will probably read and understand scripture in a direct and literal way and the pace and directness of Mark’s Gospel, which also has many sensing characteristics, may appeal to sensing types. Small details, such as Jesus being asleep in the stern of the boat with his head on a cushion (Mark 4:38); the description of how Jesus felt when touched by the woman with a haemorrhage (Mark 5:30); being told that Jesus touched the children who came to him (Mark 10:16); Jesus telling the people to sit on the green grass (Mark 6:39); all provide sensing types with the kind of details they usually appreciate. This simple, factual and realistic story telling brings meaning for sensing types. These approaches to scripture contain many characteristics associated with sensing types.

Intuition and scripture

Intuitive types are likely to be imaginative in their approach to scripture, placing an emphasis on the overall meaning, or making associations with similar stories in scripture, fiction, or real life. Intuitive types may put themselves in the story, reliving it as if they were there and speculating on their own response. Goldsmith (1994, p. 61) suggests that intuitive types value stories in the Gospels when they can make connections with contemporary situations. This enables them to bring gospel values into decisions concerning present day situations. Story, parable, symbol and imagery may all be important and their imagination stimulated when meditating on the context of a passage. Johnson (1995, p. 81) suggests that there are many aspects of John’s Gospel with its depth and artistry, insight, promise and vision, which may appeal to intuitive types. The author of John’s Gospel uses artistic creativity to present Jesus’ teachings as insights and truths with many layers of meaning. The seven “I am” sayings each show a different aspect of Jesus’ nature (Johnson, 1995, p. 83). There is also an emphasis on eschatology and seeing the future in the light of the present. While sensing types may see Jesus’ miracles as concrete examples of his power and a sign of his divinity, intuitive types have a more complex understanding which may seem to deny the literal truth of Scripture (Goldsmith, 1994, p. 65). When Jesus walks on water (John 6:16–21), intuitive types may associate the water with chaos in Genesis 1, with Jesus seen as overcoming the power of chaos.
They may suggest that Jesus walking on water shows Jesus’ power over nature (Grant et al., 1983, p. 164). The dreams of the prophets for liberation, the prosperity of the messianic age such as Isaiah 60–62, and the apocalyptic passages in Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah and Revelation with their metaphors, symbolism and cosmic dimensions may appeal to creative and imaginative intuitive types (Butler, 1999, p. 12). Ross (1992a) suggests that intuitive types may look at the principles underlying scriptural prescriptions or prohibitions and seek the abstract universal issues which may be raised by the text. Intuitive types may also believe that each generation must re-interpret scripture in the light of the history and knowledge of their time.

Thinking and scripture
Thinking types who prefer logic, analytical approaches and truth may find Bible study helpful for faith development, regarding it as a form of prayer. They may use a particular principle of interpretation, such as critical historical scholarship or testing for truth, when reading scripture (Ross, 1992b). In their intellectual approach to scripture, thinking types may read the Bible in a careful and systematic way, possibly with the help of a commentary or concordance. They may also want to take their time in their search for a deeper understanding of God’s word, analysing the book they are reading, learning about its cultural context and establishing the meaning of the terms used (Osborne & Osborne, 1991, p. 64). Objective detachment may be used when thinking types discuss scripture with others. The knowledge which thinking types acquire in this way from scripture can then be applied in trying to comprehend the world created by God. God’s rule and God’s laws, as understood in scripture, may encourage thinking types to work for God’s laws and justice in society. Matthew, who comes from a Judaic legalistic background, sets out to prove in a logical and analytical way that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah in the line of David. In his Letter to the Romans, Paul uses both thinking and intuition to wrestle with and analyse theological concepts and reach conclusions. The result may appeal to the thinking type’s need for historical evidence and intellectual rigour. Whilst John’s Gospel has much in it which might appeal to intuitive types, it is also the gospel in which Jesus is Word, Truth and Light (Osiek, 1985). John’s Gospel shows Jesus’ theology as the Word incarnate, the Wisdom of God, the perfect icon of God. “You will know the truth and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32). Knowledge of the truth brings liberation; the pursuit of the truth is a fundamental thirst and lifelong search. Reason is usually important to thinking types and an important means of them attaining to that truth which is recognised by them as a gift of God.

Feeling and scripture
Duncan (1994, p. 66) suggests that there are many aspects of Luke’s Gospel which feeling types might appreciate. Intimacy, gratitude, empathy, healing and harmony are all found in many of the stories which Luke includes and these themes may also be valued by feeling types. To emphasise that no one is excluded, a genealogy is included which traces the human race back to Adam. There is a special concern for the poor, the outcast, the downtrodden and the oppressed. The Good News breaks down the barriers between man and woman, Jew and Gentile, and shows God’s love and salvation extended to Gentiles, women, foreigners, social outcasts, sinners, the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind and all who had little status in the society of Jesus’ time: no one is excluded. Only Luke’s
Gospel includes Jesus on the cross promising paradise to the repentant thief. The parable of the lost son, the Good Samaritan, the Pharisee and the publican, and the rich fool are all stories included in Luke’s Gospel which Duncan (1994, p. 67) suggests may appeal to feeling types. Each is concerned with God’s love for all people, and feeling types, too, may want to share God’s love with all those around them and encourage others to do the same. The value of personal relationships is usually important to feeling types, who may empathise with the feelings of the elder son (Luke, 15:28–30), the good and faithful shepherd and the woman who is suffering from severe bleeding (Luke 8:40–53). The intimacy, remembrance, poignant sadness and touching joy of reunion in the Emmaus story (Luke 24:13–33) may also appeal to feeling types as this story contains those characteristics associated with their type. Feeling types may also look for those texts which provide guidance as to how people should relate to each other (Ross, 1992b). Personal relationships, and values and concern for all people are all characteristics which tend to appeal to feeling types.

Conclusion

If it is accepted that individuals show preferences for responding to people and situations which are different from others’ responses and that God has made each person unique, then it seems natural to recognise that in the faith journey, while all travel the same road, they may do so in somewhat different ways. Different people may emphasise those aspects of spirituality which reflect characteristics associated with their preferred psychological type. They may also look for forms of prayer and worship which meet their spiritual needs. They do not deny the presence of the other aspects but may not find them as helpful in their own faith journey. If God has made each person unique, then the relationship between God and each individual will be unique. As the journey progresses there may be a willingness to explore less preferred aspects of spirituality, prayer and worship, which then become areas for spiritual growth and areas which can bring a greater understanding of other Christians. Preferring a sensing, intuitive, thinking or feeling approach to aspects of faith does not preclude exploring features which are more associated with other type preferences. People use each function at different times, though they tend to use the less preferred functions less easily.

References


