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THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

Running head: THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

What does the Liberal-Conservative scale measure? A study among clergy and laity in the Church of England

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THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

Abstract

The Liberal-Conservative (LIBCON) scale is a seven-point semantic differential scale that has been widely used to measure identity within the Church of England. The history of the development of liberalism in the Church of England suggests that this scale should be associated with specific beliefs and attitudes related to doctrine, moral issues and church practices. This study tests this idea among a sample of 9339 lay and ordained readers of the *Church Times* (the main newspaper of the Church of England) using twelve summated rating scales measuring a range of beliefs and attitudes. Of these twelve variables, eleven were correlated with the LIBCON scale. Discriminant function analysis produced a linear function of these variables that correctly identified 35% of respondents on the scale, and 69% to within one scale score. The best predictors were scales related to either doctrine or moral issues, and these performed consistently across traditions (Anglo-catholic, Broad church or Evangelical) and between clergy and laity. Scales related to church practices suggested 'conserving tradition' was also involved in the liberal-conservative dimension, but this was less so for clergy and for Evangelicals. The scale is commended as an empirical measure of one dimension of Church of England identities, especially if used alongside a parallel scale measuring church tradition.

Keywords: Anglo-catholic; Broad church; Church of England; conservatism; Evangelical; liberalism

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

1. Introduction

1.1 Measuring the liberal-conservative polarity in the Church of England

The complexities of identifying empirically the various traditions of the Church of England are well known to researchers, and various categorisations were used in different studies in the latter part of the twentieth century (Daniel, 1968; Davies, 1993; Francis & Lankshear, 1992, 1996; Hunt, 2000; Towler & Coxon, 1979). Kelvin Randall (2005) reviewed this literature and proposed the use of three separate scales measuring liberalism versus conservatism, catholicism versus evangelicalism, and non-charismaticism versus charismaticism. The first two dimensions were assessed on a seven-point semantic differential scale, anchored at each end by the relevant adjective and introduced by the rubric: ‘Please judge how Catholic/Evangelical and how Liberal/Conservative you are by drawing a circle round one number on each of these lines’. The charismaticism scale was introduced by ‘Have you been influenced by the Charismatic movement’ and the scale anchored by ‘Positively’ and ‘Negatively’. The three scales between them are probably the simplest way of locating individuals in terms of the wide array of traditions in the Church of England. Those who locate themselves in the middle of the scales represent the majority who would not see themselves as being particularly aligned in any direction. Whereas Randall used just those with mid scores (4) to define a ‘Central’ group, others (for example, Village & Francis, 2010) have used the mid-three scores of the church tradition scale (3-5) to identify those who are ‘Broad church’ as opposed to ‘Anglo-catholic’ (1-2) or Evangelical (6-7).

This way of defining Church of England identities inevitably involves simplifying a complex reality, and there are those who warn against the dangers of stereotyping that can artificially increase factions and divisions (Atherstone, 2016). Although this warning is important to consider, empirical theologians need heuristic tools that can be used in surveys and which must not be too unwieldy or complicated. Unless we know at least roughly how

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

people align along these polarities we are in danger of missing out on a key predictor of attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. The three-dimension system does seem to capture important information, and scores on the scale are related to a wide range of beliefs and attitudes. The church tradition scale has received the most detailed study, and Village (2012) used the 2001 *Church Times* dataset (Francis et al., 2005) to show how scale scores predicted responses to 36 of 41 different measures of religious attitudes or beliefs. Using just these measures of attitudes and beliefs it was possible to correctly predict where an individual would align on the seven-point Anglo-catholic – Evangelical scale in 70% of the 6187 cases, with the figure rising to 80% or more for those who chose the two extreme categories (scores 1 or 7). This analysis suggested that when individuals positioned themselves along such scales they did so with some care, and that where they located themselves related to the sorts of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that were expected from the particular tradition with which they identified. Closer examination showed that the church tradition scale related differently to some beliefs or attitudes, with some differentiating all three traditions (Anglo-catholic, Broad church, and Evangelical) while others distinguishing just one tradition from the other two.

The liberal-conservative scale has not received such close attention to date, but it would be useful to know how scale scores relate to the sorts of attitudes or beliefs that we might assume betoken ‘liberal’ versus ‘conservative’ stances within the Church of England. This paper attempts to do this using combined data from the 2001 and 2013 *Church Times* surveys. The aim is to better understand what it means for someone in the Church of England to identify as ‘Liberal’, ‘Conservative’ or ‘Central’. It first reviews what ‘liberalism’ or ‘conservatism’ might mean for members of the Church of England by drawing on historical and theological studies in the literature. It then uses graphical and statistical analyses to show how the liberal-conservative scale relates to twelve measures of different beliefs and attitudes among readers of the *Church Times*. These analyses first examine how the scale operates

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

across the whole sample and then whether it operates consistently within people of different church traditions or between clergy and laity.

1.2 Liberalism and conservatism in the Church of England

The Church of England embraces a complex mix of traditions that have emerged over almost 500 years since the English Reformation (Butler, 1998; Haugaard, 1998; Nichols, 1993).

Perhaps the most obvious are the Anglo-catholic and Evangelical wings that have been shaped by Catholicism and Protestantism respectively, and by reactions to each other since the late nineteenth century (Hylson-Smith, 1989, 1993). In the twentieth century, the rise of Pentecostalism added another dimension as the Charismatic Movement influenced a number of congregations, especially (but not exclusively) on the Evangelical wing of the Church (Scotland, 2003). These developments have given a distinct flavour to some congregations, but many have resisted moving too far in any particular direction, and members might refer to themselves as ‘traditional’, ‘middle of the road’ or ‘broad-church’ Anglicans. In comparisons between Anglo-catholics and Evangelicals it is sometimes easy to forget that the majority of adherents would align themselves in the middle ground, if at all.

Running alongside the evolution of these various traditions has been the rise of liberalism in the Church of England, and conservative reactions to it. Although some might trace Anglican liberalism to the Latitudinarianism of the seventeenth century (Nichols, 1993) or the writings of the Caroline divines or Hooker (Barton, 2014), it is perhaps most obviously associated with the advent of modern science and biblical historical-criticism in the early and mid-nineteenth century. Discoveries and conjecture about the origins of Scripture and the origins of life (especially human life) inevitably raised questions about the veracity and plausibility of foundational Christian narratives and doctrines. What started as the musings of a few intellectuals was soon seen as a threat to the very existence of the Church that had to be countered. The tracts produced by the early founders of the Oxford Movement were an

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

attempt to re-assert traditional beliefs in the face of a rising tide of what seemed to be damaging heresies and a move to a secular liberal State (Hylson-Smith, 1993; Nockles, 1994).

Within Anglicanism, the liberal movement was given huge impetus by *Essays and Reviews* (Parker, 1860), a collection of seven articles published a year after Darwin's *Origin of Species*. These essays, notably that by the Oxford scholar Benjamin Jowett, drew on the latest critical biblical scholarship in order to promote a more rational approach to religion and to understanding the Bible. They were widely read across the Church of England (with more copies sold in two years than *Origins* sold in ten) and provoked strong counter reactions from both Anglo-catholics and Evangelicals (Chapman, 2011; Wellings, 2003). The ideas continued to be promoted despite this opposition, and the appointment of Fredrick Temple (one of the essayists) as Archbishop of Canterbury encouraged the formation of the 'Churchmen's Union' in 1898 (Nichols, 1993). The journal *Modern Churchman* was founded in 1911 as a forum for liberal Anglican thinking and continues in that role under its current title of *Modern Believing* (Clatworthy, 2014).

Although the Oxford Movement arose as a reaction against liberalism, towards the end of the nineteenth century some Anglo-catholics were beginning to embrace more liberal theology (Ward, 1964), as exemplified by *Lux Mundi*, a collection of essays edited by Charles Gore (1889). Gore's notion of 'Liberal Catholicism' was influential through to the early twentieth century, when Randall Davidson was archbishop of Canterbury, and evolved into the more Modernist approach exemplified by the edited collection *Essays Catholic & Critical* (Selwyn, 1926). Although not all Anglo-catholics embrace liberal theology, the association between sections of Anglo-catholicism and liberalism is a persistent feature of this party within the Church of England.

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

These early explorations into trying to re-configure Christianity in rational terms have continued to the present day, despite the changing fortunes of liberalism with Church of England (Adams, 2007; Burgess, 2005). Controversies over basic doctrines such as the incarnation or resurrection have surfaced with the appointment of bishops (for example, Hensley Henson in 1917 and David Jenkins in 1984) and the publication of books such as *Honest to God* (Robinson, 1963) or *The myth of God incarnate* (Hick, 1977). This theological/doctrinal aspect of liberalism relates to beliefs about nature of God, miracles, the nature of Scripture, the afterlife, and universalism. Although the radical scepticism of the 1960s and 1970s led to a resurgence of more traditional or orthodox belief, the liberal theological movement has left the Church of England with a wide spectrum of beliefs and no clear consensus in many areas of doctrine (Hannaford, 2000).

Alongside a liberal-conservative spectrum related to doctrinal beliefs has been an equivalent spectrum related to traditional moral values, especially in areas related to sexuality. Although doctrinal and moral liberalism are not essentially linked to one another (it is possible to be liberal in one area and conservative in the other), the two often go hand in hand. The sort thinking that exposes religious doctrines to rational scrutiny, and sometimes thereby leads to them being rejected as anachronistic and unhelpful, can also lead to radical changes in attitudes to previously accepted moral norms. Furthermore, the political liberal tendency is to allow individual freedom and rights, and this has inevitably led to changing attitudes in England towards a range of behaviours such as cohabitation, divorce, and homosexuality (Mercer et al., 2013; Park & Rhead, 2013). The Church of England has wrestled with these issues no less than with the liberalisation of doctrine; those who promote more liberal attitudes being opposed by others who wish to conserve traditional values.

A third area which might shape liberal-conservative attitudes is related to changes in ecclesial and liturgical practice. The need for revision of the Book of Common Prayer was

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

apparent at the end of the nineteenth century, but the controversies over the 1928 revision showed that consensus for change was going to be difficult to achieve (Maiden, 2009). The last 40 years have seen major liturgical revision in the Church of England, with the advent of new forms of hymnody and liturgy (Earey, 2013; Papadopoulos, 2011; Perham, 2001). In addition there have been major changes in church order which are related to worship, such as the increasing use of lay people to lead services, and the ordination of women as priests and, more recently, as bishops. This sort of change might be welcomed by those who would class themselves as ‘liberal’, but resisted by those who would class themselves as ‘conservative’. In this sense ‘conservative’ points to a desire to withstand the loss of traditional forms of worship and praxis. This aspect of the liberal-conservative dimension might also relate to wider areas of individual and church practice. In terms of personal spirituality, conservatives may draw more on traditional resources such as sermons or Scripture, whereas liberals may be more open to spiritual resources that lie outside the church. One area of church practice for the Church of England is related to education and specifically the provision of church schools (Chadwick, 2001; Church_Schools_Review_Group, 2001; Worsley, 2012). Liberals have generally tended to downplay the importance of faith-based education, seeing it as divisive and exclusive (Wright, 2003), whereas conservatives tend to want to maintain religious formation within the State and independent sectors.

The above review suggests that the liberal-conservative axis in the Church of England may be associated with distinct but related areas such as doctrine, morality, liturgy, church practice, individual spirituality and religious education. The aim of this study is to see how far a simple seven-point scale might predict attitudes and beliefs in these different areas. It is possible that the scale might work slightly differently for people from different traditions, or

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

for clergy and laity, and analysis will need to test the construct validity in these different groups.

1.3 Research questions

The analyses will address three main questions:

1. To what extent can individual scores on the liberal-conservative scale be predicted from linear combinations of attitude and belief scale scores related to areas such as doctrine, morality and church practice?
2. Does the relationship between the liberal-conservative scale and its predictors vary between individuals who assignment themselves to different church traditions within the Church of England?
3. Does the relationship between the liberal-conservative scale and its predictors vary between clergy and lay people?

2. Method

2.1 Sample

The *Church Times* is the main newspaper of the Church of England, with a circulation of around 25,000. It is widely read by a cross section of the Church of England laity and clergy who tend to be mainly, but not exclusively, Broad church or Anglo-catholic. Evangelicals are probably under-represented in the readership, partly because the alternative weekly, *The Church of England Newspaper*, is aimed at this constituency. Despite this, *Church Times* readers come from across the Church of England, and range from extremely Anglo-catholic to extremely Evangelical.

Questionnaire surveys were run in the newspaper in 2001 (for details of the method and sample, see Francis et al., 2005) and in 2013 (for more details, see Village, 2016). The 2013 version included many of the items used in 2001, including the seven-point liberal-

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

conservative scale. Predictor variables were selected from Likert items that appeared in both surveys, so data from each could be pooled. It is possible that some responses in 2013 were from the same people who completed the survey in 2001: an item in the 2013 survey asked this question and less than ten per cent indicated that they had completed the first survey. Given the small number, and length of time between surveys, these respondents were included in the analysis even though they may not have been strictly statistically independent. Including them made no appreciable difference to the overall results and conclusions.

Analysis was restricted to Anglicans who resided in England and attended services at least twice a month. After allowing for missing data in some items, the final sample included 6120 responses from 2001 and 3273 responses from 2013 (Table 1). The profiles of the two surveys differed slightly, so multivariate analyses controlled for sex and survey.

[Table 1 about here]

2.2 Instruments

2.2.1 *The liberal-conservative (LIBCON) scale* followed Randall (2005) and was presented with the church tradition scale using the following rubric:

How would you describe your church-tradition preference on the following scale? (Circle one number on each line. For example, if, choosing between Catholic and Evangelical, you consider yourself to be very Catholic, circle the 4 near Catholic)

Catholic	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	Evangelical
Liberal	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	Conservative

Scales were recoded 1 to 7 so that high scores represent the most conservative and most Evangelical responses respectively. The LIBCON scale was treated as a seven-point scale for the purposes of most analyses. When necessary it was categorised such that 1-2 = 'Liberal',

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

3-5 = 'Central', and 6-7 = 'Conservative'. Church tradition was categorised such that 1-2 = 'Anglo-catholic', 3-5 = 'Broad church' and 5-7 = 'Evangelical'.

2.2.2 Predictor scales. A total of twelve different scales were used as predictors of LIBCON scores. These were based on Likert items with a five-point response scale ranging from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly disagree'. Items related to the same topic were used to create summated rating scales, based on two to five items each. Details of items used in each scale are given in Appendix 1. The twelve scales related to three main areas, with high scores denoting the most conservative or traditional positions:

1. Doctrine: Traditional Beliefs, Conservative Bible Beliefs, Against (religious) Pluralism;
2. Morality: Against Homosexuality, Against Cohabitation, Against Remarriage after Divorce
3. Church and individual praxis: Against Lay Ministry, Against Women's Ordination, Traditional Worship (and ritual), Church Spirituality, Value Church Authorities, For Church Schools.

The 'Church Spirituality' scale was based on items headed 'Sources of spiritual help' and included those related to traditional sources such as the Bible, sermons, prayer groups and retreats. The Value Church Authorities scale was included to test if liberals or conservatives were less trusting of national or diocesan authorities, and items were headed by 'I have confidence in the leadership given by:'. Eleven of the scales had Cronbach Alpha values at or above the acceptable minimum of .65 (DeVellis, 2003); the exception was the Against Pluralism scale (.57), which was based on only two items.

2.2.3 Analysis

The data were examined using a range of graphical and statistical analyses, which were applied in three main stages:

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

1. *Initial examination of the overall sample.* The relationship of the LIBCON scale to the twelve predictors was first examined graphically and by correlation analysis to identify predictors that showed a more or less linear relationship and those where the relationship was curvilinear. The latter may occur if the predictor distinguishes respondents at some, but not all, points in the scale.
2. *Discriminant function analysis.* Graphical analysis was followed by a discriminant function analysis (Huberty & Olejnik, 2006) using all twelve predictor variables, which tested their ability to correctly identify where individuals would locate themselves on the LIBCON scale. To identify the best predictors, LIBCON was first treated as a whole seven-point scale and predictors were entered into the model using a forward stepwise procedure, with criteria for entry set at a parsimonious level of $p < .001$ due to the high sample size. This procedure calculates the functions that are combinations of linear predictors of scales on the LIBCON scale, and the proportion of cases where these functions would predict the actual score. This procedure was then repeated for dummy variables created from the LIBCON scale that compared individuals with a particular score with all others in the sample. This allowed for the fact that for some predictors it was those in the middle of the scale who were different from those at either end.
3. *Variation in response between groups.* The correlations between the LIBCON scale and predictor variables were repeated separately for laity and clergy within the three main church traditions groups (Anglo-catholic, Broad church, and Evangelical). This allowed identification of those groups where a particular predictor did not align closely with the LIBCON scale. To examine these differences in more detail, each of the twelve predictor variables was used as the dependent variable in separate multivariate-regression models that included

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

ordination status, church tradition (Anglo-catholic and Evangelical as dummy variables), and the LIBCON scale (using standardised Z-scores) as independent variables. Interactions of LIBCON with ordination and tradition were used to test for differences in response between these groups, and example interactions were displayed graphically.

3. Results

3.1 Initial examination

Of the twelve predictors, eleven were significantly correlated with the LIBCON scale at the 0.1% level or less (Table 2); the exception was the Value Church Authorities scale.

[Table 2 about here]

For seven of the predictors, mean scores increased significantly with each increase in the LIBCON score, and these were categorised as ‘ALL’ for Distinct group (Table 2, and Figure 1a as an example). In the remaining five there were differences across the scale, but these were not linear, and only extreme scores were distinctly different from the rest of the sample. For example, in the case of the Against Lay Ministry scale, extreme conservatives scored higher than the rest of the sample (Figure 1b) and there was a similar trend for Traditional Worship, where means in the top two categories of the LIBCON were significantly higher than among other categories, where there was no difference in means. For Church Spirituality, it was the two most liberal points on the scale that scored significantly lower than the rest (Figure 1c), while for Value Church Authorities it was the two extremes of the scale, liberal and conservative, that were lower than the rest (Figure 1d). The variables that showed the most consistent relationship with the LIBCON scale were those related to doctrinal issues (Traditional Beliefs, Conservative Bible Beliefs, and Against Pluralism) and moral issues (Against Homosexuality, Cohabitation, and Remarriage after Divorce). Most issues related to

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

church practice were related to the LIBCON scale, but mean scores did not increase consistently across the scale, apart from Against the Ordination of Women scale.

[Figure 1 about here]

3.2 Discriminant function analyses

Discriminant function analysis of the whole scale identified Against Homosexuality as the best single predictor of LIBCON score, followed by Against Ordination of Women, Conservative Bible Beliefs and Traditional Beliefs (Table 3). When treating each LIBCON score as a dummy variable (and predicting having this score versus all other possible scores), Against Homosexuality also emerged as the best single predictor in five of the seven analyses. Using the whole scale, average success for a particular score was a modest 35%, but this rose to 69% for predicting the original score or the nearest score either side. In general it was easiest to predict those who scored at either end of the scale than those who scored in the middle, where few variables discriminated scores from those close by on the scale.

[Table 3 about here]

3.3 Testing by church tradition and ordination status

One reason why some predictors of LIBCON scores worked less well than others may have been because they operated differently between traditions or between clergy and laity.

Multiple linear regressions showed there were significant interactions in most cases tested, though effect sizes were small and statistical significance reflected the high sample sizes (Table 4).

[Table 4 about here]

Nonetheless, many of these interactions may have reflected genuine differences between traditions or between clergy and laity. For example, higher LIBCON score (i.e. more conservatism) indicated higher Against Lay Ministry scores in both clergy and laity, but the response for laity was greater (Figure 2a). For traditions, the effect of LIBCON score on

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

Against Lay Ministry scores was greater among Anglo-catholics than among Evangelicals, with Broad-church falling between these two groups (Figure 2b). For Traditional Worship, laity again showed a stronger effect than clergy (Figure 3a), while Anglo-catholics and Broad church showed correlations with the LIBCON scale, but Evangelicals did not (Figure 3b).

[Figures 2 and 3 about here]

Separate correlations for clergy and laity within tradition groups (Table 5) were in line these results, showing that correlations were consistent for scales related to doctrinal and moral issues, but less so for matters of church practice. For Anglo-catholics and Broad-church laity, high scores on the LIBCON scale indicated stronger opposition to lay people taking services, but this was not so for Broad-church clergy or Evangelicals. More conservative laity in all traditions were more likely than liberal laity to favour traditional worship, but for clergy this was true only for Anglo-catholics because there was widespread acceptance of this practice among other clergy.

[Table 5 about here]

4. Discussion

The analyses of the LIBCON scale reported here suggest that when readers of the *Church Times* rated themselves along the liberal-conservative axis they were likely to be basing this on a combination of attitudes and beliefs related to different areas. This scale was most consistently related to two main areas: doctrinal beliefs and moral attitudes. This is what we would expect given the history of the term ‘liberalism’ within the Church of England. Those who consider themselves more liberal tended to reject what might be seen as core traditional beliefs of Christianity, such as the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection, life after death, heaven and hell. Those who consider themselves more conservative tended to uphold such beliefs. Allied to these doctrinal statements were beliefs related to the Bible. The scale used here consisted of four items that were present in both the 2001 and 2013 surveys. In 2013 there

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

was a much more detailed set of items from the Village Bible scale (Village, 2016), which were correlated to the LIBCON scale in a similar fashion, supporting the idea that the LIBCON scale is partly a measure of biblical liberalism versus conservatism.

Liberalism among this sample was also about moral issues related to sexuality and marriage. The closest correlation with the LIBCON scale was with the measure of attitudes towards homosexuality, which probably reflects the prominence of this issue in the Church of England when the surveys were held. It seems likely that the moral issues that most easily distinguish liberals from conservatives will vary over time as society (and subsequently the Church of England) becomes more accepting of particular attitudes or behaviours. Issues that were divisive in the past, such as cohabitation before marriage or remarriage of divorcees, are now more widely accepted across the Church of England, and therefore there is greater consensus between liberals and conservatives. Although scales related to these particular issues were correlated with the LIBCON scale, showing that these are still part of what is means to liberal or conservative, there was less variation in response between groups than for homosexuality (evidenced by the interaction terms in Table 4). This implies a greater consistency in linking liberal-conservative identity with this issue than those that are no longer at the forefront of debate in the church. It seems likely that in the future the LIBCON scale will continue to map onto liberal versus conservative moral stance, but the attitudes that best discriminate scale scores might vary depending on which are the contentious issues of the day.

It was more difficult to decide what the LIBCON scale pointed to when it came to areas related to worship and church practice. The scale was correlated as expected with attitudes towards traditional practices such as the role of women as priests, the role of laity in leading worship, the role of the church in education, and reliance on traditional sources of spiritual support. In each case ‘conservative’ generally denoted a preference for the

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

traditional forms, and liberalism a willingness to see them replaced by new forms or practices. The main exception to this rule was the Value Church Authorities scale, where extreme liberals and extreme conservatives were both significantly less likely to endorse items than were the rest of the sample. Both these groups may have perceived that issues they felt strongly about (notably the ordination of women or the ordination of practising homosexuals) were not supported by the Church of England hierarchy, either because the church was seen as changing too rapidly (for conservatives) or too slowly (for liberals). It was this mainly the Broad-church affiliates who were most positive about the leadership they received from bishops, synods and councils.

The general tendency for correlations between church practice variables and the LIBCON scale was not evident in all cases if clergy were examined separately from laity, or correlations tested within different church traditions. Unlike doctrinal and moral issues, where the LIBCON scale behaved consistently, with church practice this was not always so. For example, among Evangelicals ‘conservatism’ was not related to maintaining traditional forms of worship, valuing church authorities, or upholding church schools, but this was more likely to be the case for those in other traditions. This is not about the *extent* to which individuals in different traditions upheld these practices (Evangelicals scored higher than other traditions in some of these measures) but how closely these issues were related to where respondents placed themselves on the LIBCON scale. When Anglo-catholics or Broad-church members rate themselves as ‘conservative’ they may partly be relating this to their desire to resist changes in religious practice as well as liberalisation of beliefs or morals.

Given the historical association between liberalism and catholicism in the Church of England it is worth asking whether the LIBCON scale is needed at all, and whether the results reported here would have been the same had the seven-point church tradition scale, which measures the Anglo-catholic – Evangelical axis, been used instead. The two scales

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

were correlated in this sample, however the correlation coefficient was low ($r = .26$, $df = 9392$, $p < .001$) and the tradition scale explained less than 7% of the variance in the LIBCON scale. This is partly because, on average, the most liberal respondents were not those who scored 1 on the tradition scale (i.e. most Anglo-catholic) but those who scored 2 or 3. There were a number of conservative Anglo-catholics in the sample, and this undoubtedly reflects the complexity of this wing of the Church of England. Although doctrinal and moral issues can distinguish Anglo-catholic from Broad-church or Evangelical respondents, the LIBCON scale is a more direct predictor of attitudes in these areas than is the church tradition scale. The empirical evidence given here seems to support the suggestion of Randall (2005) and others that mapping church identities in the Church of England is best done by assessing these two distinct but related dimensions.

5. Conclusion

This study tested which attitudes and beliefs were mostly closely correlated with the seven-point liberal-conservative (LIBCON) semantic differential scale proposed by Kelvin Randall (2005), and how far attitude and belief scale scores could be used to predict where someone from the Church of England would locate themselves on the scale. Four main conclusions emerged from this study:

First, the LIBCON scale was most closely associated with differences in attitudes and beliefs about core Christian doctrines and with key moral issues that have been recently debated in the Church of England. This is in line with what we would expect from the historical and theological development of liberalism with Anglicanism, and conservative reactions to it. This suggests that the LIBCON scale is a useful empirical tool for assessing the liberal – conservative axis in the Church of England.

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

Second, the LIBCON scale also predicts beliefs and attitudes related to worship and church practice. In general, those who identify with the conservative end of the scale are likely to want to uphold traditional practices related to liturgy, the role of laity in worship, the role of women, and the role of the church in schools.

Third, this latter aspect of ‘conserving tradition’ is less closely related to liberal-conservative identity in some groups, notably Evangelicals, who generally do not see some of these issues in ‘liberal versus conservative’ terms. This suggests that analyses using the LIBCON scale in the Church of England might benefit from controlling for variations between traditions or between clergy and laity.

Fourth, the LIBCON scale is sufficiently independent of the related church tradition scale to make it worthwhile using both of them when trying to empirically assess identities within the Church of England. Some extreme Anglo-catholics share conservative beliefs with those who locate in the Evangelical wing of the church, and the LIBCON scale is a more direct measure of liberalism and conservatism.

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

Table 1. Sample profile

		2001		2013	
		Lay	Clergy	Lay	Clergy
<i>N</i> =		4532	1588	1934	1339
Sex:		%	%	%	%
	Male	44.6	81.2	51.0	72.4
	Female	55.4	18.8	49.0	27.6
Age:					
	<50	21.4	29.9	14.2	13.7
	50s & 60s	54.7	49.7	45.1	55.1
	70+	23.8	20.3	40.7	31.2
Tradition:					
	Anglo-catholic	41.3	45.7	38.1	43.4
	Broad church	42.5	34.0	50.6	39.4
	Evangelical	16.2	20.3	11.3	17.2

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

Table 2. Pearson correlation coefficients for the LIBCON scale

Predictor	<i>r</i>	Distinct group	See figure
Traditional Beliefs	.44***	All	
Conservative Bible Beliefs	.50***	All	
Against Pluralism	.40***	All	
Against Homosexuality	.59***	All	1a
Against Cohabitation	.48***	All	
Against Remarriage after Divorce	.46***	All	
Against Lay Ministry	.08***	7	1b
Against Women's Ordination	.47***	All	
Traditional Worship	.11***	6-7	
Church Spirituality	.09***	1-2	1c
Value Church Authorities	.01	1 & 7	1d
For Church Schools	.21***	1 & 2, 7	

Note: Distinct group indicates which parts of the scale scored differently from the rest, based on examination of graphs of mean scores. In each case, apart from Value Church Authorities, those with higher (more conservative) scores on the LIBCON scale tended to score higher on the predictor scales. *** $p < .001$.

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

Table 3. Summary of results of stepwise discriminant function analyses of the whole LIBCON scale and each scale point.

Predictor:	Whole scale	Individual scores						
		Liberal		Central			Conservative	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Traditional Beliefs	4	2			4	2		
Conservative Bible Beliefs	3	5	3				2	2
Against Pluralism	10						5	
Against Homosexuality	1	1	1		1	1	1	6
Against Cohabitation	6	3						3
Against Remarriage after Divorce								
Against Lay Ministry	9	4						8
Against Women's Ordination	2		2	1	3		3	1
Traditional Worship	5	7						4
Church Spirituality	8						4	
Value Church Authorities	7	6			2	3		5
For Church Schools	11							7
Predicted scores based on whole scale analysis:								
Correct score	35%	44%	62%	3%	22%	12%	31%	55%
Within ± 1	69%	90%	83%	77%	33%	55%	65%	82%

Note. Numbers indicate the step at which a variable was entered into the model, using $p < .001$ as the entry criterion.

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

Table 4. Multiple linear regression of predictor variables

Parameter	Traditional Beliefs	Conservative Bible Beliefs	Against Pluralism	Against Homosexuality	Against Cohabitation	Against Remarriage	Against Lay Ministry	Against Women's Ordination	Traditional Worship	Church Spirituality	Value Church Authorities	For Church Schools
Survey 2013	.04***	.01	-.02	-.24***	-.13***	-.22***	.00	-.13***	.11***	-.02	-.03	-.01
Female	.03	.06***	-.06***	-.04***	.01	.00	.01	-.10***	-.07***	.18***	.13***	.03
Ordained (ORD)	.09***	-.04***	.08***	-.02	.07***	-.05***	.03	-.02	-.11***	.19***	.02	.00
Anglo-catholic (AC)	.01	-.05***	-.04***	-.09***	-.08***	.08***	.26***	.26***	.31***	-.05***	-.14***	.06***
Evangelical	.21***	.25***	.23***	.15***	.18***	.02	-.19***	-.01	-.26***	.18***	.06***	.04
LIBCON	.46***	.43***	.34***	.55***	.42***	.41***	.20***	.30***	.26***	.10***	.12***	.29***
ORD x LIBCON	.08***	.05***	.06***	.06***	.05***	.05***	-.05***	.03	-.07***	.04***	.01	.00
AC x LIBCON	-.10***	-.08***	-.05	-.06***	-.06***	.02	.06***	.20***	.03	-.09***	-.15***	-.05
EV x LIBCON	-.10***	.02	-.03	-.09***	-.01	-.03	-.07***	.04	-.06***	.01	-.08***	-.11***

Note. Table shows standardised beta coefficients. Significance indicated only for $p < .001$ (= ***). LIBCON = liberal - conservative seven-point scale where high score = conservative.

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

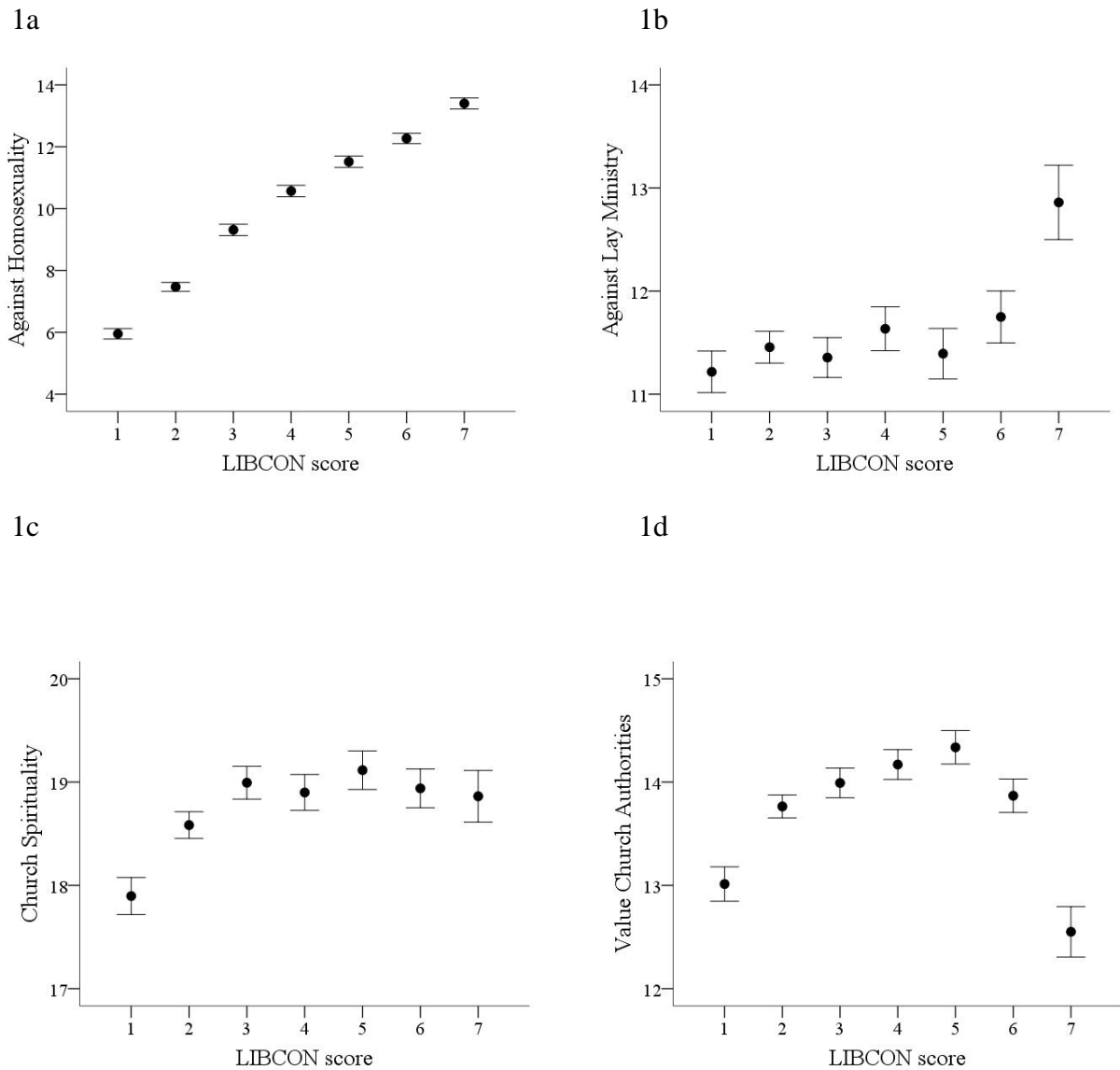
Table 5. Pearson correlation coefficients for the LIBCON scale by tradition for laity and clergy

	Anglo-catholic		Broad church		Evangelical	
	Laity	Clergy	Laity	Clergy	Laity	Clergy
<i>N</i> =	2607	1306	2905	1068	954	553
Predictors:						
Traditional Beliefs	.33***	.46***	.39***	.49***	.35***	.42***
Conservative Bible Beliefs	.40***	.44***	.40***	.50***	.38***	.50***
Against Pluralism	.29***	.45***	.31***	.40***	.37***	.34***
Against Homosexuality	.56***	.55***	.53***	.56***	.46***	.53***
Against Cohabitation	.38***	.46***	.41***	.44***	.45***	.46***
Against Remarriage after Divorce	.46***	.56***	.43***	.38***	.37***	.32***
Against Lay Ministry	.27***	.28***	.20***	.03	.05	-.05
Against Women's Ordination	.55***	.65***	.41***	.32***	.39***	.42***
Traditional Worship	.34***	.26***	.28***	.04	.14***	-.02
Church Spirituality	-.04*	.00	.04*	.23***	.10**	.22***
Value Church Authorities	-.09***	-.14***	.07***	.20***	-.06	-.10*
For Church Schools	.25***	.17***	.26***	.22***	.04	.07

Note. Predictors in bold indicate those where correlations were not consistent between traditions and/or between clergy and laity. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

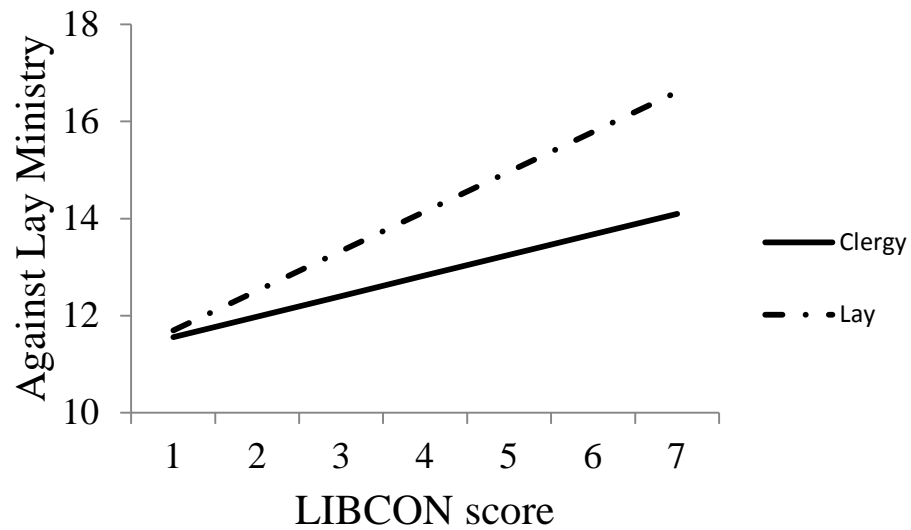
Figure 1. Examples of relationships of predictor variables to the LIBCON scale (1 = most liberal, 7 = most conservative). Error bars are 95% confidence limits of the mean.



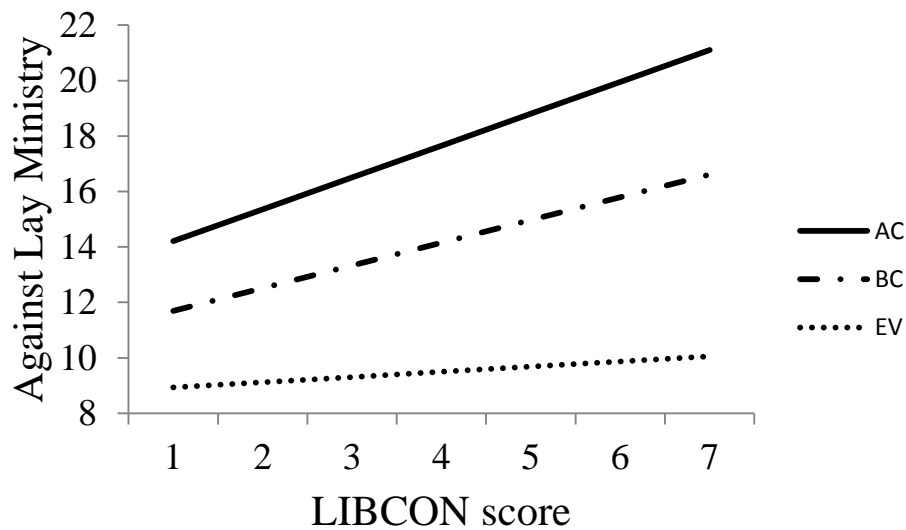
THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

Figure 2 Interaction of Against Lay Ministry scores with LIBCON scores for church traditions and ordination status. AC= Anglo-catholic; BC = Broad church; EV = Evangelical.

2a Against Lay Ministry by ordination status



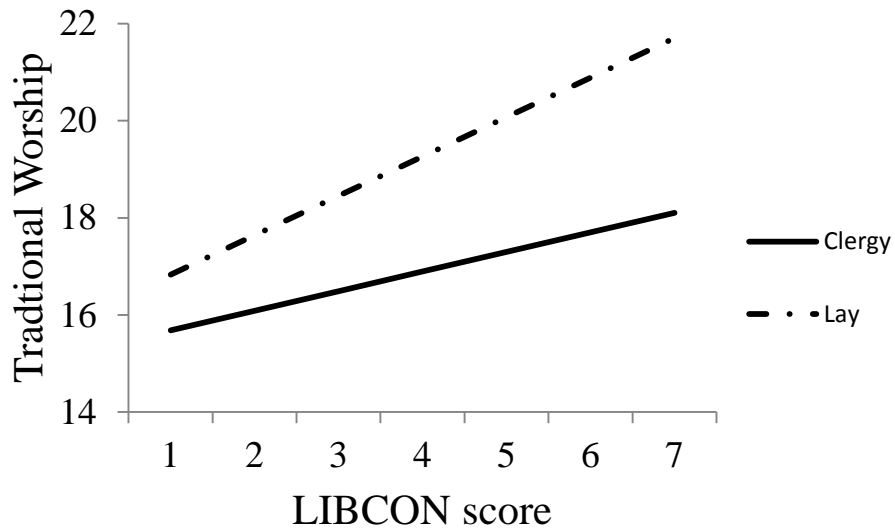
2b Against Lay Ministry by church tradition



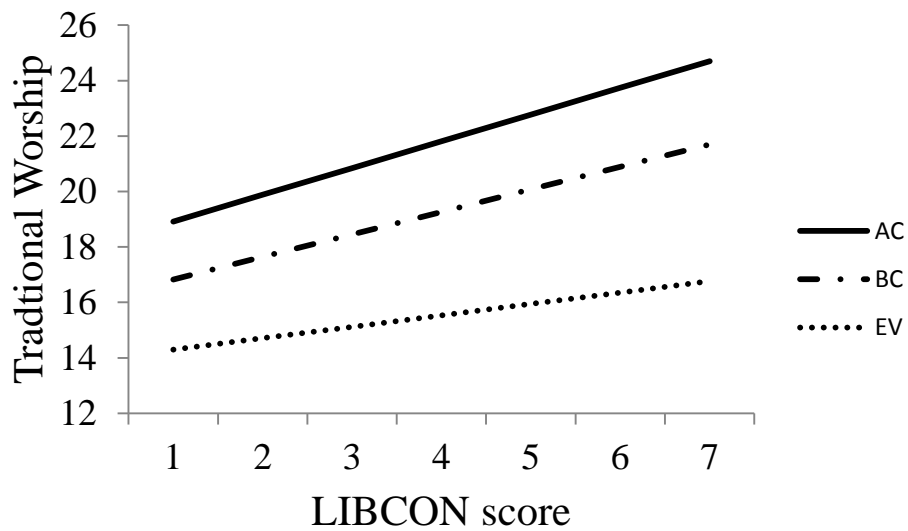
THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

Figure 3 Interaction of Traditional Worship scores with LIBCON scores for ordination status and church tradition. AC= Anglo-catholic; BC = Broad church; EV = Evangelical.

3a Traditional Worship by ordination status



3b Traditional Worship by church tradition



THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

Appendix 1. Items in predictor scales

Scale	Alpha	Items
Traditional Beliefs	.86	There is life after death Jesus rose physically from the dead Jesus birth was a virgin birth Heaven really exists Hell really exists
Conservative Bible Beliefs	.73	All living things evolved* Jesus really turned water into wine God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh The Bible contains some human errors*
Against Pluralism	.57	Christianity is the only true religion All religions are of equal value*
Against Homosexuality	.93	The ordination of practising homosexuals as priests* The ordination of practising homosexuals as bishops* It is wrong for people of the same gender to have sex
Against Cohabitation	.83	Wrong for men and women to have sex before marriage All right for a couple to live together without intending to get married* Good idea for couples who intend to get married to live together first*
Against Remarriage after Divorce	.90	Divorced and remarried priests* Divorced and remarried bishops* Divorced people being married in church*
Against Lay Ministry	.85	Laity leading morning and evening prayer* Laity preaching M & E Prayer* Laity leading first part communion* Laity preaching at communion* Laity talking the whole communion service*
Against Women's Ordination	.94	The ordination of women as bishops* The ordination of women as priests*
Traditional Worship	.64	Traditional services Traditional hymns New forms of services* New hymns/songs* Ritual in services
Church	.69	Reading the Bible

THE LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE SCALE

Spirituality		Bible Study Groups Prayer groups Listening to sermons Going on retreat
Value Church Authorities	.79	Archbishops council Archbishop of Canterbury General Synod My diocesan bishop
For Church Schools	.73	Religious education should be taught in all schools Schools should hold religious assemblies every day I am in favour state-funded church schools The CoE should fund more schools

Note. * These items were reverse coded.

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