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## **Factors predicting engagement with society among Anglicans in England**

Running head: Predictors of social engagement

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## **Abstract**

One mechanism by which religion may have public significance lies in the ways in which it shapes the extent to which religious people engage with society. This paper examines a sample of 5220 lay Anglicans from England in order to quantify their engagement with society. The aims were to quantify constructs associated with engagement with civil society and to relate them to a range of independent variables in order to assess the relative importance of individual, social, religious and congregational differences in predicting social engagement among the religiously committed. Social engagement was assessed by five dependent variables: global concern, moral concern, science concern, social conscience (willingness to pay taxes for social welfare) and the civic participation index (CPI). The results indicated that concern (and particularly global concern) was correlated with social conscience, but less so with the CPI, suggesting that engagement with society is a complex, multi-dimensional construct. Different measures of social engagement were predicted by different sets of variables in ways that were in line with theoretical predictions and previous studies. In general, individual variables such as sex, age and personality, and religious variables such as theological orientation, church tradition and frequency of prayer, were better predictors of social engagement in this sample than were variables related to socio-economic status or the nature of congregations.

Key words: social concern; social conscience; civic participation; volunteerism; personality; Eysenck; EPQ; Church of England

## **Introduction**

One way in which religion can significantly impact the public domain is by influencing the interaction of individuals with society. If religious affiliation or religious beliefs control attitudes toward society, then religious people might be expected to relate differently to society from non-religious people. Any such effect of religion is likely to be complex because some religious beliefs may be generally 'world affirming', and encourage interaction with society, while others might be 'world denying', and discourage contact with society beyond the religious in-group. An example often cited, though not necessarily supported by empirical evidence, is the notion that conservative evangelical Christians or Fundamentalists are less likely to engage with society than liberal Protestants (Ammerman 1987, Mock 1992). So even within a group of particular religious affiliates there could be considerable variation in attitudes toward, or engagement with, society beyond the boundaries of the affiliated group. The style or tradition of religious belief may thus be as important as the presence or absence of religious belief as such in shaping social engagement.

A further complexity in assessing any impact of religion is that it is likely to be one of many factors that influence the extent and nature of individual interactions with society. Individual differences in personality, gender, age or social status might also influence engagement with society, and could also in turn be related to individual differences in religiosity. Assessing the public significance of religion in this context requires that religion is set in the wider context of factors that are likely to influence orientation toward society. Is religion the overriding determinant of engagement with society for religious people, or are other factors more important?

Sociologists have examined the relationship between religion, individuals and society from a number of different perspectives. Perhaps the most widespread method over recent decades has been to view engagement in society in terms of civic participation or volunteerism, an approach that has been particularly important in North America (see, for example: Beyerlein and Hipp 2006, Ecklund and Park 2007, Loveland et al. 2005, Schwadel 2005, Smidt 2003, Wilson and Janoski 1995, Wuthnow 1999). Such studies stem from sociological analyses that have noted the importance of religious affiliation in promoting political activity or social capital (Bourdieu 1986, Coleman 1988, Lenski 1963, Putnam 2000, Smidt et al. 2003). Studies of civic participation among religious groups have recognized that this sort of

social engagement is also associated with a very wide range of individual or social factors that must be controlled for when assessing possible religious effects. In particular, civic participation and voluntary activity are often linked to ethnicity, age, education levels and family status (Smith 1994).

Studies of civic participation and religion typically involve surveys among the general population or specific religious groups that ask respondents to record the variety and or intensity of participation in voluntary activity such as charities, political organisations or local community groups. Religiosity is assessed in terms of affiliation, frequency of attendance and measures designed to assess the nature of religious belief such as biblical literalism. A large number of such studies have consistently demonstrated that religious variables are correlated with civic participation, even after controlling for other factors (Campbell and Yonish 2003, Ecklund and Park 2007, Lam 2002, Loveland et al. 2005, Schwadel 2005). Rather few of these studies have looked in detail at the possible effects of personality on civic participation (though see: Village and Francis 2010), and there is generally a dearth of studies that integrate sociological and psychological approaches to volunteerism (Smith 1994).

Participation is not the only way in which religious people might engage with society. Engagement can be conceptualized broadly in terms interest in, or concern for, society. This cognitive or affective response may not necessarily result in active engagement, but it may be a precursor for particular actions that will be expressed in the public domain. For example, among religious people, social concern might direct the focus of prayer and individual and corporate prayer may be perceived as an important aspect of engagement with society. From a religious perspective, praying for society may be as important as volunteering for social action.

Sociologists have conceptualized and operationalized social concern in a wide variety of ways, linked to the particular social sphere that they are studying. For example, Hartnett and Peterson (1968) report on the use of a questionnaire among college freshmen in the United States that included a scale measuring 'social conscience'. This included a range of items related to social inequalities, institutional injustice (unethical behaviour by government, trade unions or businesses) and moral behaviour (juvenile crime and illegitimacy). Others have used more specific definitions related to other social contexts. Hilty and Morgan (1985) employed a questionnaire among Methodists in Ohio that included six items in a social conscience scale that were all related to racial inequality. The scale was later developed to

include wider issues of social justice and civil rights (Hilty 1988). Others have used the notion of social concern in relation to the activity of businesses and corporate social responsibility: Brammer, Williams and Zinkin (2007) showed that people from a range of religious backgrounds were more likely than non-religious people to believe that businesses had a responsibility for supporting charities or helping to reduce extreme poverty.

These studies of social concern and social conscience highlight that the concepts are rather general and may embrace very different sorts of concerns. Although they are linked by all being attitudes towards some aspects of society and the way it operates, the factors shaping concern for moral values might be quite different from those shaping concern for social welfare. Furthermore, measuring social concern requires some sort of contextualization, so that items employed cover a range of issues that are likely to be relevant to a particular social group at a particular time. Although studies to date show that religion seems to play some sort of role in shaping concern for society, few studies have investigated the relative effects of religion alongside social or individual factors that might also shape the level and nature of concern.

Another, quite different, way of assessing social concern or social conscience is based on the Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) (Mitchell and Carson 1989). Rather than simply asking people if they are concerned about an issue, or in favour of a particular action, the CVM is based on asking people what they would be willing to pay to make it happen. The technique has been used to assess strength of opinion towards environmental issues, cultural projects and the medical treatments (Dranitsaris 1997, Gibb et al. 1998, Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004, Hanley et al. 1998). A common but less specific application of the method is to ask people if they are willing to pay more taxes to support various sorts of social activity such providing health, education and welfare. This sort of method has been used in a number of surveys in Britain and elsewhere that have investigated how people feel governments should prioritize the spending of tax income (Sefton 2003, Taylor-Gooby 2004, Taylor-Gooby and Hastie 2003).

In the USA, the General Social Survey (Davis and Smith 1991) has used questions that more generally measure attitudes toward government support for social welfare programmes. It is widely held that political liberalism is associated with a willingness to tax and spend on welfare programmes, whereas political conservatism

is linked to less state intervention to help the poor. Several studies have used these data to investigate the relationship between religion and willingness to fund social reforms. Pyle (1993) found that religious liberalism-conservatism did not always map directly onto political liberal-conservatism as measured by support for government economic assistance for the disadvantaged. Other factors besides religious affiliation, such as race or income, were also important. Curry, Koch and Chalfant (2004) extended this analysis by using a range of items to measure support for social spending and including a wide range of control variables. They found that religious affiliation explained a small but significant amount variation in the dependent variable, but this was not true for other measures of religious involvement such as church attendance, prayer frequency and financial giving.

Religion may thus shape a number of different interactions of individuals with society such as civic participation, voluntary activity, concern for society and social conscience. The latter two overlap and are not tightly defined: concern for society might cover a wide range of concern over social and moral issues, whereas social conscience is more specifically about an individual's willingness to act on behalf of the socially disadvantaged. These different aspects of social engagement could all be related to a single, one-dimensional construct defined as 'attitude toward society'. A positive attitude would indicate a high level of civic participation, a high level of concern for society and a willingness to make personal sacrifices for the good of society. A negative attitude would betoken little participation, little concern for society and an unwillingness to sacrifice for society at large. If this was so, we would expect measures of civic participation, social concern and social conscience to be closely correlated with each other and with the same predictor variables. An alternative model is that there is no single attitude toward society, and that engagement with society is multidimensional, with different sorts of engagement being driven by different factors. If this was so, we would expect measures of civic participation, social concern and social conscience to be poorly correlated with each other and each to be correlated with a different set of predictor variables.

This paper tests this idea by examining five different measures of social engagement among a religiously committed sample of churchgoers in the Church of England. The five measures include a measure of civic participation (the Civic Participation Index or CPI), three measures of social concern (global, moral and

science) and a measure of social conscience. In each case these dependent variables are compared with predictor variables that are classified into four groups:

*Individual variables* were those related to fundamental individual differences, such as sex, age and personality. These factors might affect a person's ability or propensity to engage with society. The well documented fall-off of civic participation with age (Smith 1994), for example, may represent the loss of ability to remain active due to infirmity; while some personality traits may encourage or discourage working with others (Bekkers 2005, Smith and Nelson 1975, Village and Francis 2010). The personality model used in this study was that developed by Hans Eysenck and colleagues (Eysenck 1960, Eysenck and Eysenck 1985, Eysenck and Eysenck 1975, 1976), who described individual differences as lying along three orthogonal dimensions: extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism. The extraversion dimension refers to the difference between extraverted people, who tend to be carefree, easy-going risk-takers who frequently interact with others, have many friends and who prefer being in groups rather than being alone, and introverts who tend to show the opposite characteristics. The neuroticism dimension refers to the difference between people who tend to be emotionally labile, anxious, depressed, tense, irrational, shy or moody, and more emotionally stable people, who tend to feel less anxious, less guilty and who have higher self-esteem. The psychoticism dimension refers to the difference between people who tend to be tough-minded, impersonal, hostile, unsympathetic, unemotional and unresponsive to others, and more tender-minded people who are likely to be empathetic, unselfish, altruistic and peaceable.

*Social variables* were those related to an individual's socio-economic status, such as education, income, family status and where they lived. These sorts of variables have often been considered to be key predictors of engagement with society because they are related to the availability of social networks in certain social locations and the ability for individuals of a particular social status to exploit them. Social capital models (Coleman 1988, Field 2003, Putnam 2000, Warburton and Stirling 2007) assume that social status both influences a person's ability to engage in society (e.g. through education or affluence) and influences the opportunities they have for such engagement (e.g. through work or school-related networks). Civic participation, for example, tends to be higher among the better-educated and among those with higher



incomes (Curtis et al. 1992, Smith 1994). Social variables are also often correlated with basic attitudes toward social moral issues (Kiecolt 1988, Scheepers et al. 2002, Woodrum 1988) and with support for the social welfare system (Blekesaune and Quadagno 2003, Hasenfeld and Rafferty 1989, Jæger 2006).

*Individual religious variables* were those related to self-reported theological orientation, church tradition and measures of religious activity. These sorts of variables might influence social engagement in a number of ways. First, belonging to a church sometimes seems to influence engagement with society beyond the congregation itself. Studies have shown that church members tend to belong to more civic groups than non-members (Campbell and Yonish 2003, Smidt 1999, Smidt et al. 2003). Second, religious activity levels may also predict engagement. Being busy in church groups has been shown to be related to higher activity outside church (Beyerlein and Hipp 2006, Lam 2002, Park and Smith 2000). Religious practice such frequency of prayer has been shown to predict civic participation (Loveland et al. 2005), but not necessarily social concern (Curry et al. 2004). This study included measures of prayer frequency, church attendance and activity among church groups. Third, the nature of belief might also shape willingness to engage and which aspects of society are likely to cause the most concern. The tendency for conservative Protestants to show less concern for social engagement has already been mentioned, though the evidence for this is rather mixed. Simple affiliation may not be a very useful predictor of different sorts of social engagement, and a more refined assessment of individual beliefs may be necessary. The Anglican Church in England has evolved through a complex history so that it now embraces a wide range of theological stances (Hylson-Smith 1989, 1993, Randall 2005, Scotland 2003). Assessing theological orientation for Anglicans in the Church of England requires a combination of scales that reflect the different historical and theological traditions in the denomination. Following Randall (2005), this study used three independent but related measures: liberal versus conservative, Anglo-catholic versus evangelical, and the extent of charismaticism. Together these measures represent a detailed and refined assessment of theological beliefs that are relevant to Anglicans and other Christian denominations.

*Congregational variables* were related to the nature of the congregations to which individuals belonged. In many cases there is likely to be a strong link between an individual's belief and the sort of congregation they attend because people tend to go to churches in which they feel at home. However, it is also possible that congregational style and character may itself encourage or discourage individuals to engage with society, over and above individual preferences. For example, Schwadel (2005) showed that congregational effects, though small in comparison to individual effects, did significantly influence individual civic participation. The present study asked respondents to rate their congregations on the same three dimensions as their own theological orientation. In some cases there was no difference, but in many instances individuals worshipped in a congregation that was from a different theological tradition to their own. Other congregation measures were an index of belonging and congregation size.

This paper is based on analysis of lay people from the Church Times survey of 2001 (Francis et al. 2005). The results for the analysis of the Civic Participation Index have been reported in detail elsewhere (Village and Francis 2010) and are given here in order to compare them with the analyses of social conscience and social concern, presented here for the first time.

## **Method**

### *Sample*

The *Church Times* is the main newspaper of the Church of England, with a circulation of around 33,000. In 2001 it published a four-page questionnaire in two editions of the paper spanning the end of March and beginning of April. The questionnaire was designed to assess a wide range of opinions, attitudes and beliefs for a cross section of English Anglicans, and the main results have been reported by Francis, Robbins and Astley (2005). This study uses responses from 5220 lay people (i.e. excluding those who were ordained) who lived in England and who attended an Anglican church at least twice a month. *Church Times* readers cover a very wide range of opinions, and a broad spectrum of traditions from across the denomination are represented in the sample.

### *Dependent variables*

The three areas of engagement with society were assessed by five different variables, three related to different areas of social concern and one each related to social conscience and civic volunteering:

*Social concern* scales were created from nine Likert items (Likert 1932) which were coded on a five-point scale so that a high score indicated greater concern. Items were selected because they related to issues that were attracting particular media attention in the months before the questionnaire was distributed. For example, items relating to concern for society included the issue of paedophiles living in the community because this had featured prominently in the news headlines in England in 2000 following the murder of eight year old Sarah Payne. Another item on genetically modified (GM) food was included because of widely reported demonstrations against trials of GM crops in Britain in 1999. Factor analysis of all nine items (principal components extraction with varimax rotation) identified three orthogonal factors which together accounted for some 60% of the variation in item scores and which were related to concern for global, moral and science issues (Table 1). Items were used to create three scales based on three items each, which has reasonable internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficients: global concern = .78; moral concern = .54; science concern = .60)

[Table 1 about here]

*Social conscience* was estimated by asking respondents about their willingness to pay taxes to support a range of social activities such as health, education and security. The questionnaire contained seven Likert-type items with a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', with a high score indicating willingness to pay tax. Factor analysis of these items (principal components extraction with varimax rotation) indicated that six of them formed a single factor (Table 2). Responses to an item relating to security forces were not strongly related to responses to the other items, so this item was dropped from the scale. Scores from the remaining six items indicated a scale with high internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient = .85) and the sum of scores was used as a measure of social conscience.

[Table 2 about here]

*Civic participation* was assessed using the Civic Participation Index (CPI) that has been described elsewhere (Village and Francis 2010). Respondents were asked whether or not they did unpaid work in 13 areas of community activity that were not necessarily connected to churches. The CPI was a binary variable that was scored zero for those who were not involved in any of the 13 areas and one for those who were involved in at least one area.

#### *Independent variables*

Independent variables were placed into four groups related to the sorts of differences that might explain levels of engagement with society among different individuals in the sample:

*Individual differences* were those related to personality, sex and age. The EPQ-A consists of six yes/no items measuring each of the three dimensions: extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism, giving three scores ranging from zero to six. Psychoticism tends to be low in normal populations leading to negative skew in EQP psychoticism scores (Ferrando 2003, Francis 1992), so these were recoded on a scale of 0-2, with 2 representing all scores greater than one. Variables indicating age and sex were included with personality scores because both these variables are known to be related to at least one of the dimensions. Respondents were asked to give their sex (0 = male, 1 = female) and age. Age was categorized by decade with 1 = < 40, 2 = 40s, 3 = 50s, 4 = 60s, 5 = 70s and 6 = > 79. Age-squared was also added as a quadratic term in the model predicting the CPI, to allow for the fall off in participation among the elderly.

*Social differences* included education (1 = degree, 0 = no degree), employment (1 = full time work, 0 = other), retirement (1 = retired, 0 = not retired), household income (categorized 0– 9, with 0 = < £5000 per annum and 9 = > £99,999 per annum), household status (1 = living with spouse or partner, 0 = living alone) and children at home (1 = yes, 0 = no). There was also an item asking for location (rural, suburban or urban), and responses to this were recoded into two dummy variables rural (1 = rural, 0 = other) and urban (1 = urban, 0 = other).

*Religious differences* included a number of variables that assessed both individual Christian inclination and individual religious activity. Respondents were asked to locate their personal orientation using three separate seven-point semantic differential scales where the poles were anchored by liberal versus conservative, catholic versus evangelical, and not charismatic versus charismatic. The liberal-conservative and catholic-evangelical scores were recoded into five-point scales by combining the two extreme scores in each case. Results for the charismatic scale suggested all scores on the 'not charismatic' end of the scale referred to the same thing, so this scale was reduced to a three-point scale with 1 = lowest charismatic ratings (1-3), 2 = intermediate charismatic ratings (4-5) and 3 = highest charismatic ratings (6-7). These three scales are referred to by their high-score indicators: conservative, evangelical and charismatic.

Church attendance was assessed on a seven-point scale, but only those who scored five (twice a month) or higher were included in the sample. Respondents were also asked to indicate involvement in a range of church activities and these were subsequently grouped into four categories: church governance, helping with young people, fellowship groups and helping with music or drama. The church activity index was the sum of the number of different areas of involvement, ranging from zero to four. Frequency of prayer was scored on a five-point scale (1 = 'never', 5 = 'nearly every day').

*Congregational differences* were based on respondents' reports of the congregations they attended. The same three scales as for individual theological orientation, church tradition and charismaticism were used to assess congregational differences. In some cases, scores on the conservative, evangelical and charismatic scales were identical between individual and congregation, indicating that individuals attended congregations that matched their own theological orientation. In other cases there was some disparity, suggesting that individuals perceived that their own position differed from the norm of their congregation. Respondents who rated themselves liberal or very liberal were particularly likely to attend a church that was more conservative than their own stance, but the converse was not true for conservatives.

Some studies have shown that civic participation may be affected by the extent of social attachments within a congregation (Schwadel 2005), so this was assessed by a Likert scale consisting of four items: 'My church is important for my social life'; 'I

feel a strong sense of belonging to my church'; 'I turn to fellow members of my church when I need help' and 'Members of my church care deeply for one another'. Each item was scored on a five-point scale, with high score indicating the importance of relationships. The items had an acceptably high internal reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .74$ ) and the sum of score was used as an index of the strength of relationships in the congregation. Size of congregation was also rated on a nine point scale with 1 = < 10 and 9 = > 300.

### *Analysis*

Linear multiple regression analysis was used to identify the variables that were significant predictors of the social concern and social conscience, after allowing for all other variables in the model. The significance level was set  $p < .001$  because of the large sample size.

To quantify the proportional contribution that different categories of predictor variables made to the overall model, the latter were added in blocks and the resulting change in adjusted  $R^2$  values were recorded. This was the change in  $R^2$  resulting from the addition of a given block of independent variables (individual, social, religious or congregational), when all other predictor variables were already in the model.

For the CPI, binary regression analysis was used rather than linear regression, and true  $R^2$  values were not available. Instead pseudo-  $R^2$  values were used (Long 1997, 104-109), specifically the Nagelkerke statistic (Nagelkerke 1991). Although this is not comparable to the  $R^2$  value from a linear regression (which is a measure of the proportion of variance of the dependent variable explained by the model), it can be used to compare the relative fit of different models applied to the same dataset. The aim in this part of the analysis was to compare the proportional effect of adding different groups of predictor variables to particular models, so the Nagelkerke statistic could be used without assuming it was a measure of the total variance explained by the model.

To quantify the *relative* importance of each block of variables in predicting a given dependent variable, the change in  $R^2$  from adding a particular block to the model was expressed as a percentage of the sum  $R^2$  changes for adding all four blocks. This was used in order to facilitate comparison between different measures of engagement with society, and is not to be confused with the proportion of the total variance explained by each block of variables, which was always much lower.

## Results

### *Socio-demography of the sample*

*Church Times* readers are not a random cross section of the Church of England, but they do represent a broad cross section of the denomination. Survey respondents most frequently rated their churches as conservative, Anglo-catholic and not charismatic, and 64% had university degrees (Table 3). Men comprised 44% of the sample, which is probably slightly more than the Church of England as a whole (Brierley 1999, Table 4.9.1). The median age category was 4, (= 60s); 50% were retired; 25% were in full-time employment and median household income was 4 (= £20k - £29k). Most respondents were living with a spouse or partner (66%), but only 17% had children living at home. Respondents from rural areas comprised 37% of the sample, compared with 38% from suburban areas and 25% from inner urban areas.

[Table 3 about here]

### *Correlations among the dependent variables*

The correlations between the various scales of social engagement were much as expected, with the strongest correlation being between the measures of social concern for global issues and social conscience as measured by willingness to pay taxes (Table 4). Although all three measures of social concern (global, moral and science) were significantly correlated with each other, the correlation between social conscience and moral concern was relatively weak. Correlations for the CPI and the other variables were also weak or not significant. Overall, these correlations indicated that although there was some linkage of social concern, social conscience and civic participation, these were not synonymous with a single attitude toward engagement with society. High concern for some aspects of society was not necessarily related to a high level of voluntary engagement. These results suggested that different factors may drive different aspects of social engagement.

[Table 4 about here]

### *Predictors of social engagement*

Results for the full model, which included all independent variables, are given in Table 5. Significance of effect for any given variable is tested after allowing for all other variables in the model. The  $R^2$  values for each block are the change in adjusted  $R^2$  values (or Nagelkerke  $R^2$  for CPI) when the block is added to a model containing all other variables in the full model i.e. block effect measured independently of other blocks. For each dependent variable the overall model explained significantly more of the variance than expected by chance, but the overall levels of  $R^2$  were low, with only around 10% of the total variance explained by the independent variables. The different measures of social engagement were predicted by slightly different variables in each case:

Global concern was higher among women than among men, among tender-minded rather than tough-minded individuals, among those with degrees, among liberals rather than conservatives, among those who prayed more often and among those with good relationships with their congregations. There was a similar pattern for social conscience (willingness to pay tax for welfare), though in that case the relationships with psychoticism and prayer frequency were less evident.

Moral concern was higher among women than among men, among the more elderly, among those who were tender-minded rather than tough-minded, among those living in lower income households, among those with children living at home, among conservatives, evangelicals and charismatics, and among those who prayed more often. This was in contrast to concern for science issues such as GM food, where concern was higher among women than among men, among younger individuals, among those with higher neuroticism scores, among those without degrees, among those living in lower income households and among those who prayed more often.

[Table 5 about here]

As reported by Village and Francis (2010) the CPI was not related to sex, but varied with age (the fact that the age and age squared variables were both significant indicated that the CPI increase with age among the young, but fell off significantly beyond middle age). It was higher among extraverts than among introverts, among the emotionally stable rather than unstable, among those with degrees, among those not



working full time, among liberals and among those who were also heavily involved in church activities.

Taken together, these results suggest that different types of social engagement are predicted by different subsets of individual, social, religious and congregational variables.

*Relative predictive power of different groups of explanatory variables*

From Table 5 it is possible to calculate the number of times independent variables in a particular block emerged as significant predictors (at  $p < .001$ ) of the five dependent variables. For variables in the 'individual' block, this was 12 out of a maximum of 25 possible occasions (excluding the age-squared predictor), or 48% of occasions.

Comparable results for the other variable blocks were: social 20%; religious 33% and congregational 8%. A slightly different way of comparing the predictive power of blocks of variables was to calculate the relative extents of changes in  $R^2$  values when a block was added to the model (Table 6). Assessing contribution in this way gave more prominence to religious variables compared with individual variables (43% versus 34%), but both were again more important than either social (19%) or congregational (4%) variables. In both methods, individual and religious variables seemed to have generally more predictive power for social engagement than social or congregational variables.

[Table 6 about here]

## **Discussion**

The engagement of religious people with society is a multidimensional and complex interaction that is governed by a wide range of factors. Although each of the models used to describe the five dependent variables reported here were highly statistically different from a random prediction, none explained more than around 12% of the variance. This low figure is not unusual in survey data, and may partly reflect the difficulty of operationalizing some of the constructs under consideration. This was a wide-ranging survey that measured a large number of variables, so some scales had to be shorter than they might otherwise have been. The benefit of using a broad survey on a large sample is that a large number of variables could be included in the

predictive model. This offered a fair test of the explanatory power of different variables related to individual, social or religious factors.

In general, the dependent variables related to cognitive or affective responses to society (concern and conscience) were more closely related to each other than to the index of civic participation. This echoes the general case for correlating attitudes and behaviour, where there is rarely a close match between the two (Ajzen 1988, Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). This may partly be because it is easier to be concerned about the ills of society than to actually do something about them, and partly because the ability to volunteer depends on other factors besides individual volition. To join a group there has to be a group to join, and some people who show high concern may have found it difficult to link with activists. Similarly, the decline of volunteering with age may reflect a loss of capacity rather than a loss of motivation. Nonetheless, this was a sample of religious affiliates who were mostly well educated and on middle-incomes, so it might be expected that opportunity and ability to participate would be higher than for most of the population.

Although the effect size of the predictor variables was small, the pattern of significance between the different dependent variables fitted well with theoretical expectations and evidence from other studies. Concern for society was clearly a multi-dimensional construct, and concern in one area was not necessarily matched by concern in another. This is evident from the different predictive profiles among the global, moral and science areas of concern. Global concern over poverty, disease and the environment was positively linked to a willingness to pay taxes for welfare provision, and both were most evident among female liberals with degrees. In these areas, theological liberalism seems to be associated with social liberalism, rather than to a strongly religious dimension. In contrast, moral concern over gambling, television violence and paedophiles in the community was highest among conservatives, evangelicals and charismatics, suggesting that concern here was more directly related to particular religious beliefs.

The predictors of moral and science concern were different in each case, but much as might be expected. Moral concern was greater among those with children living at home, which probably represented the greater concern of parents for children exposed to violence on television or neighbourhood paedophiles. Concern over science (genetics and testing products on animals) showed how non-religious variables could be more important in shaping attitudes toward a largely non-religious

issue. Of the religious variables, only more frequent prayer was associated with more concern, while concern was higher among women, the young, the less emotionally stable, the less well educated and those on lower incomes. There is some evidence from Britain and elsewhere that this profile partly matches that of those showing similar concern among the public at large, at least in terms of the greater preponderance of women (Kruse 1999, Luke 2007, Sturgis et al. 2004, Uyeki and Holland 2000). This profile might confirm some social stereotypes of the typical animal-rights protester, but it was surprising to find it in a sample of Anglican churchgoers. Clearly in this instance religious people are not necessarily being guided by their religious convictions.

The pattern for the CPI also reflected the way that this engagement with society was shaped by particular factors. The lack of any sex difference reflects the ambiguous results found in other studies that have examined the roles of men and women in civic participation and volunteering (Curtis et al. 1992, Smith 1994). The age effect, as we have seen, is in line with other studies that indicate a peak of activity in mid life. Greater activity among the educated may reflect great capacity and opportunity, and the lower activity among full-time employees undoubtedly reflects a lack of time or energy to be involved outside work. Higher involvement among those also busy in church circles is also in line with some other studies (Beyerlein and Hipp 2006, Schwadel 2005), and there was no suggestion among these Anglicans that business in church reduced engagement with society.

#### *The relative importance of different sorts of factors for social engagement*

In general, individual and religious factors emerged as the most important in shaping engagement with society in this sample. This was a sample selected to be religiously committed, at least in terms of attendance, so it would be surprising (and perhaps disappointing) if religion did not shape their engagement in some way. Given that religious commitment was fairly uniform in this sample, the factors most likely to be important were those related to the different traditions found in the Church of England. Theological liberalism rather than conservatism predicted greater concern for global issues, greater social conscience and higher levels of participation. Conservatism tended to be associated with a greater concern for the moral ills of society. These different correlations are in line with the theological perspectives that drive these different positions. Among conservative evangelicals, creation is perceived as

corrupted by human sinfulness, and evidence for this is perceived in the prevalence of immoral behaviour among some individuals or institutions in society. Concern for moral standards is driven by concern for the fallen condition of individual human beings, and saving society is primarily about saving individuals. Liberals, in contrast, may perceive sin as a structural failure of societies, and evidence for this is perceived in the failure of the human race to deal with social inequalities and injustices. Individual human fallibilities linked to moral behaviour are of less concern than fallibility of governments or multi-national corporations. Liberals look to institutions to act decisively, and concern for society is primarily concern about collective woes that require social action by believers and non-believers alike.

Frequency of prayer emerged as significant predictor of all three aspects of social concern. Church attendance was selected to be at least every two weeks, so there was less variability in this factor, which may explain why it was never a significant predictor. Higher frequency of prayer has been shown to be linked to greater civic participation in other studies (Loveland et al. 2005), but this was not the case in this sample. Among church-going Anglicans there is considerable variation in how often they pray, and those in this survey who prayed more often generally showed more concern for society. Although frequency of prayer was associated with a range of other factors such as sex, age and church tradition, the multivariate model indicated that the relationship was independent of other factors that might also be related to social concern. Whether prayer generates concern, or whether concern leads individuals to prayer, could not be told from this study, but certainly there seems to be some linkage between this religious expression and some level of cognitive or affective engagement with society.

The importance of individual, rather than religious, factors is indicated by the correlations between the five dependent variables and the three variables derived from the Eysenck personality questionnaire. Lower psychoticism scores, associated with tender-minded empathy, predicted greater global and moral concern, suggesting that those people whose personalities disposed them to concern for others were most likely to express this in terms of concern for society in these areas. Science concern, however, was positively correlated with higher neuroticism scores, associated with generally higher levels of anxiety, suggesting that concern over science issues may be driven by a fear of perceived danger to the individual, rather than concern for the well being of society at large. Civic participation was driven by a mixture of extraversion

and low neuroticism, which is much as might be expected from the nature of these different dimensions of personality (see Village and Francis (2010) for a fuller discussion).

It was difficult to quantify the relative effects of different groups of variables, partly because of variations in the accuracy of measures and partly because the number of variables available varied from block to block. Nonetheless, a fairly clear pattern emerged for religious and individual factors to have more predictive power for social engagement than social or congregational variables. Religion does seem to be an important influence on social concern, social conscience and civic participation for these people, and it may carry more weight in some cases than their educational background or social location. Church congregations may play some role in shaping individual responses, as evidenced by the greater expressions of concern among people in congregations with close social relationships, but the nature of congregations seems generally to be less important than the nature of individual belief.

The importance of individual as well as religious factors suggests that intrinsic variables such as sex, age or personality may predispose people to engage or not to engage, and remind us that religious expression is the end product of the interaction of religious beliefs with individual differences. Whatever someone believes about their faith, they may be predisposed to engagement or detachment from society at large by the kind of people they are. The results here suggest that religious and individual factors often work independently of one another. In other words, different religious stances are not wholly explained by different individual factors such as personality. Religious belief generally cuts across personality, but both may be important in determining the expression of religion in society.

### **Conclusion and theological reflection**

This paper has attempted to assess the public significance of religion in a particular sample by looking at how far religious factors shape the way people express concern for, or engage with, society at large. Given that this was a religiously committed group (at least in terms of attendance), the aim was not to measure the effect of religious belief versus non-belief, but to assess the importance of different styles of belief in shaping different sorts of engagement with society. If there had been no correlations, or religious factors had very little effect compared with social or individual differences, this would not necessarily mean that religion as such has no

significance. To test this, a different sort of study is required that includes religious and non-religious people. The fact that, even in a uniformly religious sample, religious differences emerged alongside individual differences as the most important predictors of social engagement suggests that religious style does matter in the public arena. In particular, whether individuals take a basically liberal or basically conservative theological stance will have some bearing on how they are likely to engage with society. These religious stances are not overwhelming in their effect, however, and whether or not an individual with a given theological stance from particular religious tradition shows high or low engagement may also depend on the sort of person they are: their sex, age and personality.

In theological terms, it might be argued that religious factors should emerge as the overriding predictors of the way Christians engage with society. Scripture entreats believers to ‘...love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might’ (Deut. 6:4), and Jesus urged his disciples to deny themselves in following him (Lk 9:23). In this perspective, individual differences of sex, age or personality, or social differences between people, become irrelevant factors to the expression of faith; belief tends to override or obliterate factors not directly related to itself, and every aspect of life is lived in close agreement with a particular religious stance. This expression of religious faith has some attractions in that it argues for a thorough-going consistency of attitude, belief and behaviour that is not driven by the contingencies of social or individual circumstance. The danger of this sort of perspective is that it too easily becomes prone to religious fanaticism.

There is a counter understanding of religious belief that stresses the importance of locating religious belief within the context of individual differences (Francis 2005, Francis and Jones 2005). This perspective draws on the diversity inherent in the act of creation, expressed in the creation of humans as male and female (Gen. 1:27), and argues that diversity of religious expression is in part an expression of the divinely ordained order of things. St Paul emphasises the importance of diversity of religious expression in his use of the image of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12), which recognises that a common faith may be expressed in a wide range of service and activity. This empirical study of Christians reporting their engagement with society suggests that a common faith in a common denomination (Anglicanism) can nonetheless result in a wide range of responses to different aspects of society. This is partly driven by differences in the understanding of what Christian faith is, but

also by differences that adhere closely to the individuality of believers. This diversity is not necessarily a sign that religion is of minor importance, but perhaps a sign that religion always is expressed through the diversity of human nature and experience.

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Table 1: Items in the social concern scales

	Agree <sup>a</sup>	Global <sup>b</sup>	Moral <sup>b</sup>	Science <sup>b</sup>
I am concerned about the poverty of the developing world	96%	<b>.87</b>	.05	.12
I am concerned about the spread of AIDS	96%	<b>.80</b>	.20	.02
I am concerned about environmental pollution	95%	<b>.75</b>	.08	.26
I am concerned about violence on television	83%	.22	<b>.78</b>	.06
I am concerned about paedophiles living in the community	56%	-.13	<b>.74</b>	.14
I am concerned about the National Lottery	46%	.23	<b>.59</b>	.06
I do not wish to eat genetically modified foods	52%	.07	.05	<b>.82</b>
I refuse to buy goods tested on animals	39%	.14	.01	<b>.76</b>
I am concerned about research into human genes	68%	.12	.22	<b>.60</b>

Note: <sup>a</sup> Agreeing or strongly agreeing. <sup>b</sup> Figures are rotated factor loadings obtained by principle components extraction and varimax rotation. Bold type indicates which items loaded on a particular factor.

Table 2: Items in the social conscience scale

I would pay more tax to fund:	Agree <sup>a</sup>	IRC <sup>b</sup>
health	83%	.65
schools	77%	.70
social security benefits	41%	.64
overseas aid	65%	.63
universities	45%	.62
prisons	43%	.57

Note. <sup>a</sup> Agreeing or strongly agreeing. <sup>b</sup> Item-Rest Correlations

Table 3: Summary of independent variables ( $n = 5220$ )

	Mean	S.D.	Median	Mode	Min.	Max.
<i>Individual</i>						
Sex ( female =1)	0.56	0.50	1	1	0	1
Age (1 = <40, 6 = < 79)	3.61	1.32	4	4	1	6
Extraversion	2.78	2.15	3	0	0	6
Neuroticism	1.96	1.80	2	0	0	6
Psychoticism	0.21	0.47	0	0	0	2
<i>Social</i>						
Degree (=1)	0.64	0.48	1	1	0	1
Employed full time (=1)	0.25	0.43	0	0	0	1
Retired (=1)	0.50	0.50	0	0	0	1
Income (1 = <£5k, 9 = >£100k)	3.90	1.96	4	4	0	9
Living with another (=1)	0.66	0.47	1	1	0	1
Children at home (=1)	0.17	0.38	0	0	0	1
Rural (=1)	0.37	0.48	0	0	0	1
Urban (=1)	0.25	0.44	0	0	0	1
<i>Individual religious</i>						
Conservative	2.93	1.52	3	1	1	5
Evangelical	2.40	1.47	2	1	1	5
Charismatic	1.22	0.56	1	1	1	3
Church attendance	6.28	0.53	6	6	5	7
Prayer frequency	4.71	0.76	5	5	1	5
Church involvement	1.46	0.96	1	1	0	4
<i>Congregational</i>						
Conservative	3.25	1.37	3	3	1	5
Evangelical	2.49	1.42	2	1	1	5
Charismatic	1.13	0.43	1	1	1	3
Relationships	15.65	2.94	16	17	4	20
Size (1 = < 10, 9 = > 300)	4.42	1.75	4	3	1	9

Table 4: Correlations between the dependent variables ( $n = 5220$ )

	CPI	Conscience	Science	Moral
Global	.089 <sup>***</sup>	.357 <sup>***</sup>	.305 <sup>***</sup>	.280 <sup>***</sup>
Moral	-.004	.075 <sup>***</sup>	.250 <sup>***</sup>	
Science	-.017	.125 <sup>***</sup>		
Conscience	.075 <sup>***</sup>			

Note. <sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < .001$ .

Table 5: Multiple regression of social engagement variables

	Global	Moral	Science	Conscience	CPI
<i>Individual R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>.009</i>	<i>.028</i>	<i>.044</i>	<i>.008</i>	<i>.026</i>
Sex	.08***	.13***	.20***	.08***	0.84***
Age	.03	.15***	-.10***	.05	1.86***
Age squared	-	-	-	-	0.92***
Extraversion	.00	-.01	.00	.00	1.10***
Neuroticism	.02	.03	.07***	.02	0.94***
Psychoticism	-.06***	-.07***	-.02	-.04	1.03
<i>Social R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>.002</i>	<i>.008</i>	<i>.027</i>	<i>.010</i>	<i>.020</i>
Education	.06***	-.03	-.07***	.09***	1.39***
Employed full time	-.01	-.01	.05	-.02	0.61***
Retired	-.02	.01	-.02	-.02	1.14
Income	-.02	-.08***	-.15***	-.01	1.01
Living with another	.01	.04	-.02	.03	0.93
Children at home	.02	.05***	.00	.03	1.18
Rural	-.02	.00	-.02	-.04	1.16
Urban	.02	-.01	-.02	.00	1.18
<i>Religious R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>.027</i>	<i>.022</i>	<i>.012</i>	<i>.046</i>	<i>.024</i>
Conservative	-.16***	.08***	.00	-.25***	0.90***
Evangelical	.02	.11***	-.04	.04	1.00
Charismatic	.05	.06***	.04	.03	0.91
Church attendance	.01	.03	.00	.00	0.84
Prayer frequency	.07***	.06***	.10***	.04	1.05
Church involvement	.03	.02	.00	.02	1.32***
<i>Congregational R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>.003</i>	<i>.001</i>	<i>.000</i>	<i>.006</i>	<i>.002</i>
Conservative	.02	.01	-.01	-.02	0.97
Evangelical	-.01	.02	.00	.02	0.94
Charismatic	.01	.01	-.01	-.01	1.03
Relationships	.06***	.04	.01	.07***	0.99
Size	.02	-.02	-.01	.04	0.99
F for full model	15.05***	29.50***	27.56***	25.61***	-
R <sup>2</sup> for full model	.07	.12	.12	.11	.09

Note. Figures in italics represent the change in  $R^2$  values (Nagelkerke  $R^2$  for CPI) due to variables in a given block, after allowing for all other variables in the model. Other values are standardized Beta values for linear regression (odds ratios for CPI). \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . CPI result from (Village and Francis 2010).

Table 6: Relative contribution of different blocks of predictor variables to changes in  $R^2$  when blocks added to full model

	Global	Moral	Science	Con- science	CPI	
Sum of change in adjusted $R^2$	.041	.059	.083	.070	.072	
Attributed to:	%	%	%	%	%	Mean %
Individual	22	48	53	11	36	34
Social	5	14	33	14	28	19
Religious	66	37	15	66	33	43
Congregational	7	2	0	9	3	4

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