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Psychological Temperament and Augustinian Prayer and Spirituality: A Replication Study

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Abstract

Drawing on data provided by 1476 newly ordained Anglican clergy from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales who completed the Keirseley Temperament Sorter and an 80-item battery of type-related prayer preference items, this study tested the thesis advanced by Michael and Norrisey that the Apollonian (NF) temperament is associated with a distinctive emphasis in prayer and spirituality. The analysis identified seventeen prayer preference items that were rated significantly more highly by NF participants. These items produced a revised Scale of Apollonian Prayer Preferences with an alpha of .79 (offering internal consistency reliability), recorded significantly higher scores among NF participants (offering construct validity), and resonated with characteristics of Augustinian prayer and spirituality (offering content validity). These data replicate previously reported findings in support of a link between the NF temperament and Augustinian prayer preferences. Our findings have implications for NF clergy both in their own prayers and in their ministry with others.

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psychological type, prayer, spirituality, temperament, psychometrics, clergy

Introduction

Michael and Norrisey (1984) advanced the thesis that individual differences in prayer preferences were related to differences in psychological temperament as conceptualized by Keirsey and Bates (1978). According to their thesis each of the four temperaments aligned with the differences in emphasis and perspective found among four established spiritual traditions: Ignatian, Franciscan, Thomistic, and Augustinian. Working within the same theoretical framework of temperament theory, Francis et al. (2025) provided an empirical confirmation, in a group of 207 Anglican and Methodist students preparing for ministry, that the temperament designated by Michael and Norrisey as “Apollonian” (or “NF”) was indeed associated with prayer preferences that might legitimately be designated “Augustinian.” They further pointed up the implication that, if NF religious leaders were shaping a dominant spirituality and prayer tradition for their churches in line with their own temperament preferences, they may be ignoring or overriding the natural inclinations of many participants within their congregation.

The aims of the present paper, building on the findings of Francis et al. (2025), are, first, to provide a replication study among a different sample exploring the link between Apollonian (NF) temperament and Augustinian prayer preferences and, second, to further explore the Augustinian nature of the prayer preferences of the Apollonian (NF) temperament.

Temperament Theory

Keirsey and Bates’ (1978) temperament theory has its roots in psychological type theory as originally proposed by Jung (1971) and developed and promoted by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers and McCaulley 1985). Jung had distinguished between two core cognitive processes that he styled perceiving and judging. The perceiving process is concerned with gathering information, while the judging process is concerned with evaluating information. Judging is rational, while perceiving is irrational. Jung also distinguished between two contrasting ways in which each of these two processes function. The perceiving process engages the functions of sensing (S) and intuition (N). The judging process engages the functions of thinking (T) and feeling (F). Jung also distinguished between the two orientations in which individuals employ their preferred perceiving function and their preferred judging function. Perceiving types (P) employ their preferred perceiving function (S or N) in the external world, while judging types (J) employ their preferred judging function (T or F) in the external world. The practical implications of psychological type theory are discussed in greater detail and depth by Ross and Francis (2020).

The original contribution of Keirsey and Bates (1978) involved the realignment of the component parts of psychological type theory. Temperament theory privileges the perceiving process (S and N) and distinguishes between two expressions of each of these

two functions. Sensing was distinguished by the orientation in which it was expressed: SJs were characterized as the Epimethean Temperament, and SPs as the Dionysian Temperament. Intuition was distinguished by the judging function with which it was paired: NFs were characterized as the Apollonian Temperament and NTs as the Promethean Temperament. According to Keirsey and Bates (1978) the Epimethean Temperament (SJ) characterizes people who are conscientious and who want to serve the communities to which they belong. The Dionysian Temperament (SP) characterizes people who want to be engaged, involved, and doing something new. The Promethean Temperament (NT) characterizes people who want to understand, explain, shape, and predict phenomena, and who prize their personal competence. The Apollonian Temperament (NF) characterizes people who quest for authenticity and for self-actualization, and who have great capacity for empathetic listening.

Temperament Theory and Prayer Preferences

Building on Keirsey and Bates' (1978) characterization of these four temperaments, Michael and Norrissey (1984) developed profiles of how these temperaments may be reflected in four different styles of prayer and spirituality. According to their model, the Epimethean (SJ) Temperament was reflected in the Ignatian tradition, with an emphasis on structured traditional prayer. People shaped by this temperament prefer to project themselves back into the biblical narrative or the historical setting, connecting the past events to contemporary life. The Dionysian (SP) Temperament was reflected in the Franciscan tradition, with an emphasis on going where the Spirit calls. People shaped by this temperament prefer to pray through acts of service and see the presence of God in the whole of creation. The Promethean (NT) Temperament was reflected in the Thomistic tradition with an emphasis on logical, orderly progression of thought. People shaped by this temperament prefer to pray through acts of study and striving after truth and goodness. They are future oriented. The Apollonian (NF) Temperament was reflected in the Augustinian tradition, with an emphasis on constant striving for future growth. People shaped in this tradition prefer to transpose the biblical narrative to the here and now without specific concern for the historical setting.

Testing Linkages Between Temperament and Prayer Preferences

Although Michael and Norrissey's (1984) theory has made impact on the theoretical literature concerning prayer and spirituality (see, e.g., Williams 1987), it has not been subjected to much empirical testing. In an initial empirical study, Francis et al. (2025) drew on data provided by 207 Anglican and Methodist ministry training candidates who completed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers and McCaulley 1985) alongside an 80-item battery of type-related prayer preference items. Consistent with earlier studies of the psychological type profile of Anglican clergy (see Francis, Craig, et al. 2007; Francis et al. 2010, 2011) in this sample of ordinands the most frequently occurring temperament was the Apollonian (NF) temperament ($n=88$), alongside the Epimethean (SJ) temperament ($n=57$), the Promethean (NT) temperament ($n=44$), and the Dionysian (SP) temperament ($n=18$). For this reason,

Francis et al. (2025) focused their analysis on identifying the items that best differentiated the NF temperament from the other three temperaments. This process identified the following eleven items:

- I think of prayer as losing myself in the divine
- In prayer I often feel embraced by God
- Feelings are an important part of prayer for me
- My prayer life is enhanced by using my imagination
- I like experimenting with new ways of praying
- An abstract painting fires my imagination in prayer
- When I pray I often dwell on the mystery of God
- Prayer deepens my insight into the complexity of life
- Prayer expands my visionary horizons
- For me prayer opens up new ideas and possibilities
- In prayer ideas come to me as if out of nowhere

These eleven items cohered to generate the Scale of Apollonian Prayer Preference (SAPP) with satisfactory internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .81$) and with construct validity shown by NF participants recording significantly higher scores than those recorded by the other three temperaments (NT, SJ, SP). These eleven items were deemed to reflect broadly an Augustinian style of spirituality.

Francis et al. (2025) acknowledged that a limitation with their study concerned the relatively small sample size and recommended replication among a larger group of participants.

Research Aim

It is against this background that the present study set out to replicate and to extend the analyses undertaken by Francis et al. (2025). This aim was made possible by re-visiting the dataset of 1476 newly ordained Anglican clergy reported by Francis and Robbins (2008). This dataset included the same battery of prayer preference items.

Method

Procedure

Over a six-year period (1997–2002) a survey was mailed to all clergy ordained as deacons within the Anglican Church in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, generally about a year after their ordination. From the surveys distributed a total of 1518 were returned, making a response rate of 49.9%. The present analyses were conducted on the 1476 participants who provided a full set of data across the variables examined.

Measures

Psychological type was assessed by the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey and Bates 1978). This instrument proposes seventy forced choice questions to distinguish

between the two orientations (E or I), the two perceiving functions (S or N), the two judging functions (T or F), and the two attitudes toward the outside world (J or P). Introversion and extraversion are distinguished by ten questions such as: At parties do you stay late with increasing energy (E), or leave early with decreased energy (I)? Sensing and intuition are distinguished by twenty questions such as: Are you more realistic than speculative (S), or more speculative than realistic (N)? Thinking and feeling are distinguished by twenty questions such as: Are you more inclined to be fair-minded (T), or sympathetic (F)? Judging and perceiving are distinguished by twenty questions such as: Are you more punctual (J), or leisurely (P)? A number of studies support the reliability and validity of this instrument, including Waskel and Coleman (1991), Fearn et al. (2001), and Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2007).

Prayer preferences were assessed by a battery of eighty items, with ten designed to access each of the eight constructs core to psychological type theory (Francis and Robbins 2008). These items were derived from a careful review of the literature and were critiqued, debated, and developed by four expert authorities concerned with psychological type. Each item was assessed on a five-point Likert scale: agree strongly, agree, not certain, disagree, and disagree strongly.

Participants

The 1476 participants comprised 858 men and 618 women. Of the total sample, 11.8% were under the age of 30, 26.2% were in their 30s, 28.4% were in their 40s, 26.4% were in their 50s, and 7.3% were aged 60 or over. The majority were married (75.3%), 18.8% were single, 3.9% were divorced, and 2.0% were widowed. Over half (57.0%) had been ordained to serve in stipendiary ministry, and 43% had been ordained to serve in non-stipendiary ministry.

Results

The first step in data analysis selected the items on which NFs recorded significantly higher endorsement than the other three temperaments. These items are listed in Table 1. All eleven items identified by Francis et al. (2025) appeared in this table, together with the addition of six further items:

- In prayer I share God's anguish for human pain
- I find that looking at a religious picture helps me to pray
- My prayer life is enhanced by a sense of smell
- My prayer life is shaped by my heart
- My prayers are full of compassion and emotion
- I think of prayer as a true meeting between human and divine

The data presented in Table 1 demonstrate that this revised Scale of Apollonian Prayer Preferences (SAPPR) generated a satisfactory alpha coefficient of .79 (Cronbach 1951); that each item correlated with the sum of the other sixteen items within the range of .32 to .45, indicating a consistent and broad construct; and that the item endorsements, in terms of the sum of the agree and agree strongly responses,

Table 1. Scale of Apollonian Prayer Preference Revised (SAPPR): Psychometric properties.

Prayer Preference	<i>r</i>	NF (%)	Others (%)
I think of prayer as losing myself in the divine	.45	58	48
In prayer I often feel embraced by God	.42	75	62
Feelings are an important part of prayer for me	.32	82	71
In prayer I share God's anguish for human pain	.37	74	56
My prayer life is enhanced by using my imagination	.42	77	59
I find looking at a religious picture helps me to pray	.36	50	40
I like to experiment with new ways of praying	.34	70	54
My prayer life is enhanced by the sense of smell	.40	32	22
An abstract painting fires my imagination in prayer	.42	28	15
When I pray I often dwell on the mystery of God	.45	66	50
Prayer deepens my insight into the complexity of life	.38	82	73
My prayer life is shaped by my heart	.32	76	54
Prayer expands my visionary horizons	.38	79	67
For me prayer opens up new ideas and possibilities	.43	84	71
In prayer ideas come to me as if out of nowhere	.32	80	70
My prayers are full of compassion and emotion	.32	56	34
I think of prayer as a true meeting between human and divine	.35	90	82
alpha	.79		

Note: *r* = correlation between the individual item and the sum of the other 16 items. % = sum of agree and agree strongly responses.

indicate a fair range of item discrimination among the NF participants ranging from 28% who agree that an abstract painting fires their imagination in prayer to 90% who agree that they think of prayer as a true meeting between human and divine. On these grounds the revised scale can be regarded as a reliable measure of prayer preference and spirituality endorsed by individuals recording the Apollonian (NF) Temperament.

The second step in data analysis confirmed the construct validity of the revised scale by setting out the mean scores recorded on this scale by the four temperaments: SJ, SP, NT, and NF (Table 2). For these data the F ratio does not support the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference among the four means. The post hoc tests confirmed the NF group was the outlier. On these grounds the revised scale can be regarded as a valid measure of prayer preferences and spirituality endorsed by individuals recording the Apollonian (NF) Temperament.

Discussion

Drawing on the responses of 1476 newly ordained Anglican clergy from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, this study set out to replicate and to extend the findings of Francis et al. (2025). The key finding, of a link between Michael and Norrissey's (1984) Apollonian (NF) temperament and a particular pattern of prayer preferences that may be designated as Augustinian, was upheld.

Table 2. Scores on the Scale of Apollonian Prayer Preference Revised by temperament.

Temperament	N	Mean	SD
Epimethean (SJ)	418	56.89	7.02
Dionysian (SP)	26	57.69	8.35
Promethean (NT)	230	58.85	6.69
Apollonian (NF)	805	62.32	6.18

Note: $F=67.92$, $p<.001$.

From a batch of eighty type-related prayer preference items, seventeen were identified as being significantly more highly endorsed by NFs than by the other three temperaments. The seventeen-item SAPP (Scale of Apollonian Prayer Preference) thereby derived has satisfactory properties of internal consistency reliability, in terms of the alpha coefficient, and construct validity, and in terms of mean scores that differentiate among the temperaments. As an expanded version of the eleven-item SAPP proposed by Francis et al. (2025), this revised instrument assesses a broader and richer construct. The SAPP is commended for further use.

As with the SAPP proposed by Francis et al. (2025), the SAPP is broadly consistent with Michael and Norrisey's account of the Augustinian tradition:

The key word to describe Augustinian prayer is **transposition**. In Augustinian prayer, one uses **creative imagination** to transpose the words of Sacred Scripture to the situation today. One tries to imagine (intuit) what meaning the words of Scripture would have if Jesus Christ . . . spoke them to us at this moment. (Michael and Norrisey 1984, 58)

Other key characteristics of Augustinian prayer and spirituality noted by Michael and Norrisey (1984) include: the search for fuller, richer meaning; opening oneself to creative imagination; risk and experimentation with new approaches; dialogue between God and oneself; developing a deep loving relationship with God; valuing art that will express a rich relationship with God.

As argued by Francis et al. (2025) in relation to the eleven items of the SAPP, the seventeen items of the SAPP accord well with the pattern of spirituality found in Augustine's own account, in his *Confessions*, and also with that found in the secondary literature on Augustinian spirituality. However, two items stand out as arguably unexpected:

- I find that looking at a religious picture helps me to pray
- My prayer life is enhanced by a sense of smell

At first glance, it might well be argued that these items are anomalous, and more what might have been expected from those whose preferred perceiving function is S (sensing) rather than N (intuitive). For example, Hall (2012) associates the use of pictures and incense in prayer with S (sensing) preferences on the MBTI. However, although these items discriminated between NF and other temperaments, not all subjects with

NF temperament endorsed these items and they are not typical of the NF subject group as a whole. Nonetheless, they do provide some important insights into the way in which Augustinian prayer may sometimes work.

Prayer focusing on visual images (e.g., *visio divina* (Paintner 2012, 145–156)), and prayer incorporating olfactory stimuli (e.g., the use of incense), obviously involves use of the physical senses. However, sensing (S) and intuitive (N) types equally make use of all of the sensory organs available to them, and the differences are not to do with physical (physiological) sensing. The psychological preferences, S and N, are not so much concerned with the fact that all human beings (where they are able to do so) make use of their eyes, noses, and other sensory organs, as that they psychologically perceive differently. Visual and olfactory stimuli may thus provide NF types with “seeds” for perceptual processing, or else be experienced as offering patterns and symbols that generate imaginative perceptual modes of prayer.

In his *Confessions*, for example, Augustine famously recounts a mystical experience which he shared with his mother, Monica, shortly before her death. Very briefly, he tells us of the physical, observable, circumstances of this experience:

. . . she and I stood alone leaning in a window, which looked inwards to the garden within the house where we were staying, at Ostia on the Tiber . . . (Sheed 1999, 157)

Almost immediately, Augustine moves to discussing things “which eye has not seen nor ear heard” (p. 157), and his account becomes a prayer in which the metaphors are highly visual (and affective). For example:

. . . with the mouth of our heart we panted for the high waters of Your fountain, the fountain of the life which is with You: that being sprinkled from that fountain according to our capacity, we might in some sense meditate upon so great a matter. (Sheed 1999, 157)

We might wonder, was there a fountain in the garden that had triggered this train of thought? Whether or not there was, Augustine appears to be employing a Plotinian “triple pattern” in which an initial sensory experience of beauty in the physical world becomes a point of withdrawal into inner imagination, and then to a vision of God beyond the self (McGinn 1991, 233–235). Elsewhere, Augustine classifies visionary experiences as corporeal, spiritual (or imaginative), and intellectual (free of images) (Cook 2019, 114), with the spiritual significance being successively greater from corporeal to imaginative to intellectual.

Subjects in our study may or may not have read Augustine and may or may not be aware of these elements of Augustinian spirituality. However, the findings of our study are clearly compatible with an Augustinian spirituality in which visual (or other sensory experiences) may provide a seed bed for imaginative processes of prayer, beyond which a more ineffable and image free experience of encounter with God in prayer might sometimes be an eventual outcome.

Similarly, for the 22% of our NF subjects who reported that their prayer life is enhanced by the sense of smell, we may speculate that the symbolic associations of (for example) the use of incense are an aid in an otherwise primarily imaginative and

affective experience of prayer. The use of incense is rich in cultural and symbolic associations (Kenna 2005).

The Michael and Norrissey account of Augustinian prayer as concerned with transposition emphasizes the imaginative (N) component of the temperament, but (as discussed by Francis et al. 2025), NF/Augustinian prayer is also affective (F) in nature. For example, tears and weeping play an important part in *Confessions* and are associated with Augustine's judgments about the human condition and his intimacy with God (Griffiths 2011). Although implicitly, or indirectly, addressed in various items, this feeling (F) dimension of Augustinian spirituality is explicitly reflected in only one of the items of the eleven-item SAPP:

- Feelings are an important part of prayer for me

However, it is explicitly addressed in a further three items of the SAPP:

- In prayer I share God's anguish for human pain
- My prayer life is shaped by my heart
- My prayers are full of compassion and emotion

This may make the SAPP a better instrument for future research insofar as this aspect of Augustinian spirituality is concerned.

Finally, there are practical implications of our study for the way in which Apollonian (NF) religious leaders teach and model prayer and spirituality within their religious communities. Careful examination of the seventeen items listed in Table 1 may help individual leaders to evaluate and assess their own prayer preferences and anticipate how their preferences may (or may not) resonate with others. Such assessment may operate on two levels.

First, looking at the endorsements within the NF column, we can see that there is reason to expect some considerable variations even among those clergy who share the same NF temperament. There is a core of items on which at least seven out of every ten NF leaders largely agree, namely: they think of prayer as a true meeting between human and divine (90%); for them prayer opens up new ideas and possibilities (84%); feelings are an important part of prayer for them (82%); prayer deepens their insight into the complexity of life (82%); in prayer ideas come to them as if out of nowhere (80%); prayer expands their visionary horizon (79%); their prayer life is enhanced by using their imagination (77%); their prayer life is shaped by their heart (76%); in prayer they often feel embraced by God (75%); in prayer they share God's anguish for human pain (74%); they like to experiment with new ways of prayer (70%). However, there are other items that, while still effectively differentiating NF participants from participants reporting other temperaments, receive low endorsements among NF participants. For example, NF leaders who report that their prayer life is enhanced by a sense of smell (32%) or that an abstract painting fires their imagination (28%) will discover that the majority of their NF colleagues do not share that predisposition.

Second, comparing the endorsements within the NF column with those in the other column draws attention to some quite wide differences. For example, while 76% of NFs report that their prayer life is shaped by their heart, the proportion falls to 54% among other temperaments; while 70% of NFs like to experiment with new ways of praying, the proportions fall to 54% among other temperaments. These statistics may help NF religious leaders to reflect on their practices. In order to engage with congregations within which other temperaments may well predominate, they will need to be imaginative and creative in presenting a variety of options for prayer, including those which they may find difficult themselves.

There remain two main limitations with the present study and the earlier study reported by Francis et al. (2025) considered together. The first limitation concerns the limited range of type-related prayer preference items included in the two studies. The second limitation concerns the way in which the empirical examination of the thesis endorsed by Michael and Norrisey (1984) is still limited to two samples of (mainly) Anglican clergy. These are limitations that need to be addressed by future research. It is also to be hoped that future research, in different populations, will similarly test the links between the Epimethean (SJ) temperament and Ignatian spirituality, the Dionysian (SP) Temperament and Franciscan spirituality, and the Promethean (NT) Temperament and Thomistic spirituality.

Finally, there is scope for empirical studies in other faith traditions. For example, Richardson (1996) considers the NF temperament in relation to four main religious groupings: Western, Asian-Indian, Far Eastern, and Nature-Centred. For Richardson, the spiritual path of the NF temperament is concerned (in whichever religious tradition) with a quest toward selfhood, mystical harmony, expectancy, openness to healing, social idealism, and a focus on process in relationships. It would be illuminating, in future research, to compare the expressions of Apollonian (NF) spirituality in different faith traditions.

Conclusions

Our study provides further empirical evidence that there is an association between Apollonian (NF) temperament and a spirituality which includes prayer preferences that might legitimately be described as Augustinian. We have developed a seventeen-item Scale of Apollonian Prayer Preference (the SAPPR) with satisfactory properties of internal consistency reliability, and construct validity. NF clergy, working with congregants of different temperament, will need to be mindful of the different preferences in prayer that others may have. It is also clear, however, that even within the domain of Augustinian prayer preferences there is some diversity, and that the imaginative and affective approach to prayer that those with NF temperament enjoy may potentially be accessed in different ways.

Data availability

Anonymized data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of conflicting interests

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Ethical approval

This study received ethical approval from the Religious Studies Department of the University of Wales, Lampeter (1996).

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