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Debated issues in the Church of England: The roles of theology and psychology

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Abstract

This paper tests whether or not psychological type preferences predicted the extent of liberal versus conservative attitudes towards a range of controversial moral issues among 3,515 clergy and laity from the Church of England who took part in the 2013 *Church Times* survey. Summated rating scales were produced from Likert items related to four different issues: same-sex relationships, the ordination of women, divorce and remarriage, and cohabitation. After controlling for sex, age, ordination status, education, church tradition, and Charismaticism, score on the liberal-conservative (LIBCON) seven-point scale was the strongest predictor of all four moral attitudes. After allowing for general theological stance, psychological type preferences for sensing over intuition and thinking over feeling were significantly associated with more conservative attitudes. The effects of psychological type preferences on moral attitudes varied between theological liberals and theological conservatives. For theological liberals, sensing types had slightly more conservative moral attitudes, on average, than did intuitive types, but there was no difference among theological conservatives. For theological conservatives, thinking types had slightly more conservative moral attitudes, on average, than did feeling types, but there was no difference among theological liberals. Implications for churches and for the influence of psychology on liberal versus conservatism are discussed.

Keywords: Church of England, conservatism, liberalism, morality, psychological type, personality

1 Introduction

In common with many mainstream Christian denominations, the Church of England has a long history of dealing with controversies that divide opinion and threaten unity (Hastings, 2001). In past centuries the debates were often related to doctrinal or ecclesial issues, such as those sparked by the 1860s edited collection *Essays and Reviews* (Altholz, 2017; Chapman, 2011; Parker, 1860). Since the middle of the twentieth century, the main issues of controversy have emerged when changes in moral values and the place of women in English society have clashed with long-held traditional attitudes and beliefs within the Church (for an outline the history of some of these debates, see Village, 2018a). Various issues have preoccupied the Church of England at different times, notably those related to cohabitation outside marriage (Dormor, 2004), divorce and remarriage (Armstrong, 2015; House of Bishops, 1999, 2002), the ordination of women as priests and bishops (Clucas & Sharpe, 2013; Furlong, 1998; Greene & Robbins, 2015; Kuhrt, 2001; Petre, 1994), and debates around sexual orientation and gender identity (Bates, 2004; House of Bishops, 1991, 2013; Nixon, 2008).

These debates are not confined to religions and have been part of wider changes in British society and elsewhere. As such they have been studied by social scientists, psychologists, and political scientists for many years. For example, the changing attitudes towards same-sex relationship, cohabitation, and the role of women have been examined as part of the annual British Social Attitude surveys (Barlow et al., 2001; Park et al., 2013; Park & Rhead, 2013). Psychologists have long argued that belief systems, including prejudice, are at least partly shaped by personality (Adorno et al., 1950; Allport, 1954). Jost (2009) defended the idea that the left-right distinction used by politicians is a useful way of conceptualising the broad difference between those who advocate, rather than resist, social change. He further drew on a large number of studies that suggest this difference may, in part, have a psychological basis. In reporting a study on identical twins reared separately (Alford et al., 2005), which concluded that up to half of the variance in ideological opinions could be attributed to genetic factors, Jost wrote that rather than pointing to a ‘gene for political orientation’, a more likely

explanation was 'that there are basic psychological predispositions that are partially heritable and that can contribute to individuals' preferences for liberal or conservative ideas.' (Jost, 2009: 133).

If the tendency to advocate or resist change is partly determined by psychological factors, then these may have played a role among religious groups in the Church of England over the last decades when the changing values and mores of society began to influence doctrine and practice. This paper examines this hypothesis using data from the 2013 *Church Times* survey, which measured attitudes toward a range of debated issues in the Church of England, and which also assessed general theological stance and psychological type preferences. The main aim is to test if psychological type preferences predict attitudes toward controversial issues after controlling for church tradition and general liberal-conservative theological stance. A secondary aim is to test whether the effects of psychological type interact with theological stance, so that they differ between theological liberals and conservatives.

1.1 Conceptualising theological liberalism and conservatism

The most thorough analysis of the content of liberalism and conservatism in the Church of England has been based on the two *Church Times* surveys of 2001 (Francis et al., 2005) and 2013 (Village, 2018a). Both surveys contained self-report scales developed by Randall (2005) to measure overall liberal-conservative theological stance and church tradition. A study of 9,339 clergy and lay people from both surveys showed that the liberal-conservative (LIBCON) scale was closely correlated with a range items assessing attitudes towards the various controversies in the church of England, with those who rate themselves conservative taking more traditional views on a wide range of doctrinal and moral issues (Village, 2018b). The correlation with issues related to worship or ecclesial practices was less strong, especially among Evangelicals, suggesting the scale is most useful as a marker of general liberal versus conservative attitudes towards doctrine and moral values.

1.2 Psychological type and liberal-conservative religious expression

There are a large number of studies showing associations between faith expression and different aspects of the psychological-type model of personality. Carl Jung posited the notion of psychological types after his extensive survey of human personalities (Jung, 1923). The model was based on preferences for where individuals processed information, perceived information, and made judgements. A later refinement of his model added a fourth component related to preference for using the perceiving or judging processes in dealing with the outer world (Myers, 1993; Myers & Myers, 1980). The findings to date suggest that it is the two core processes of perceiving and judging that may be most important in shaping faith expressions and theological stance.

The perceiving process includes two functions: sensing and intuition. The sensing function allows information to be gathered through the senses (sights, sounds, smells etc.) whereas the intuition function perceives information imaginatively. Those who prefer to use sensing tend to be good at detailed observations and practical tasks. They value repetition, routine, and the familiar. Those who prefer to use intuition tend to be good at linking disparate information and imagining new possibilities. They tend to question the status quo and value novelty. It is likely that intuition in the perceiving process is analogous to the construct of 'openness' within the Big Five model of personality (Bayne, 1994; De Raad, 2000; Furnham et al., 2003; McCrae & Costa, 1989, 2008), though the latter focuses on presence or absence of intuition traits, rather than preference for different types of perceiving.

The judging process includes two functions: thinking and feeling. The thinking function allows decisions to be made using objective logic and the weighing of evidence, whereas the feeling function allows decisions to be made using shared values and awareness of others. Those who prefer thinking tend to be good at understanding principles and making tough-minded decisions that may not be universally popular. They value fairness and consistency. Those who prefer feeling tend to be good at empathising with others and making tender-minded decisions that reflect common values and goals. They value harmony and flexibility. It is likely that feeling in the judging process is analogous to the

construct of ‘agreeableness’ within the Big Five model of personality, though the latter tends to focus on the presence or absence of feeling traits, rather than preference for different types of judging.

Studies of the perceiving process suggest that sensing types tend to value traditional aspects of Christianity more than do intuitive types. In terms of spirituality, sensing types give more value to traditional expressions such as church attendance and personal prayer, whereas intuitive types give more value to experiential aspects of spirituality such as are found in nature (Francis & Ross, 1997). Sensing types are more likely to interpret the Bible literally than are intuitive types (Village, 2005, 2012a, 2014), and intuition is important in helping readers imagine themselves into a Bible story (Village, 2009, 2012b). In a study of 3,243 laity and clergy in the Church of England, sensing types were generally more biblically conservative and intuitive types more biblically liberal (Village, 2016).

Studies of the judging process have shown some indication that thinking types may be more strongly associated with conservative than liberal religion. In a study of 315 adult churchgoers who completed an index of conservative Christian belief together with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Christians who preferred sensing and thinking were more likely to hold traditional beliefs than Christians who preferred intuition and feeling (Francis & Jones, 1998). In the study of 3,243 laity and clergy in the Church of England mentioned above, Village (2016) found that there was no overall correlation between biblical conservatism and thinking scores. However, within traditions, there was a negative correlation for Anglo-Catholics and a positive correlation for Evangelicals. Village interpreted this as related to the propensity of thinking types to being tough-minded:

> The thinking function may influence liberal or conservative belief by engendering a resistance to going along with the majority for the sake of harmony. In conservative circles, the thinking function seemed to maintain conservative beliefs in the face of liberalising tendencies; in liberal circles, the thinking function seemed to maintain liberal beliefs in the face of conservative tendencies. (Village, 2016: 153).

The relationship of the LIBCON scale to psychological type preferences has been investigated in a sample 1,389 Church of England clergy who took part in the 2013 *Church Growth Research Programme* (Village, 2019). In this study, type theory was combined with temperament theory (Keirsey & Bates, 1978), which uses the components of the type model to identify four different temperaments. One of these, the SJ or Epimethean temperament, refers to those who prefer sensing to intuition and who also prefer to use the judging process in their outer rather than their inner world. The SJ temperament is associated with people who tend to be guardians of tradition (Francis et al., 2021; Francis & Village, 2012; Garland & Village, 2021; Muskett & Village, 2015), and it also predicted more conservative scores on the LIBCON scale among clergy. Preference for thinking rather than feeling also predicted more conservative scores on the LIBCON scale, which supports the view that it is the sensing and thinking functions that are likely to predispose people in the Church of England to more religious conservatism. If this is the case, then we would also expect a correlation between sensing or thinking and more traditional attitudes towards controversial issues such as same-sex relationships, divorce and remarriage, cohabitation before marriage, and the ordination of women. The question that needs to be addressed is whether any such correlations are because psychology disposes church people to general doctrinal conservatism and this shapes their stance to particular issues, or whether psychology might have additional effects beyond general theological stance.

1.3 Changing values in the Church of England

Attitudes towards controversial issues in the Church of England during this century have been assessed quantitatively by the two *Church Times* surveys of 2001 (Francis et al., 2005) and 2013 (Village, 2018a). These surveys have shown how attitudes vary across different parts of the Church of England and how they changed over time, largely in response to changing values in the population as a whole. Combining data from both surveys, Village (2018a) showed that more traditional views on a range of subjects were more frequent among men, among older people, among those without degrees, among the laity, and among Evangelicals rather than Anglo-Catholics. These differences persisted over time,

despite the fact that there was a relaxation of many attitudes across most cohorts between the two surveys. To demonstrate an independent effect of psychological preferences on these attitudes it is necessary to control for these known predictors of attitudes because some are likely to be correlated with psychological preferences. For example, there is a widespread and well-recorded difference between men and women in preferences for thinking versus feeling (Kendall, 1998; Myers & McCaulley, 1985), and psychological profiles differ between clergy and laity (Francis et al., 2011) and between church traditions (Village et al., 2009).

1.4 Research questions and hypotheses

The results of research to date suggest that psychological type preferences in the perceiving and judging processes may predispose people in the Church of England to a more liberal or conservative stance on a range of moral issues. This may be because of a general disposition to embrace or resist change or new innovations. Issues such as the ordination of women, allowing remarriage in church after divorce, or accepting gay priests represent a stark and sometimes sudden change in attitudes and practices that have largely been stable in the Church. They also often involve changes in doctrine and ways of interpreting the Bible that would have seemed inconceivable a few generations ago.

Resistance to such change is likely to be based mostly on specific beliefs which are fostered with communities and traditions within the Church of England. The differences between those identifying as Anglo-Catholic, Broad Church or Evangelical vary according to the issue in question. So, for example, Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals tended to have been more conservative about the ordination of women than the rest of the Church, whereas Anglo-Catholics have been more liberal than Evangelicals on matters of same-sex relationships (Village, 2012c, 2018a). Psychology is unlikely to closely predict these sorts of specific attitudes that tend to have a doctrinal basis, so any effect of psychological type on moral attitudes is likely to be small in comparison to the effects of ecclesial identities. Nonetheless, psychological factors may have some influence in promoting or reducing the acceptance of new values within these various traditions.

The most likely predictor of attitudes towards specific moral issues is identification along the liberal-conservative continuum. Although the LIBCON scale might be seen as just another way of measuring moral values, it is conceptualised here as pointing to broad underlying theological positions. Theological liberals will tend to approach any particular moral issue with attitudes shaped by the broad principles of pluralism, inclusivity, and tolerance. Conservatives may approach the issue with attitudes shaped by Church orthodox tradition and beliefs about Scripture that uphold the importance of obedience to the Word of God. It is these underlying stances that might directly shape attitudes to particular moral or values-based issues. Psychology may act to promote these underlying stances, but it might also have additive effects than could exaggerate or attenuate the influence of theological stance.

The characteristics associated with psychological type preferences suggest that a conservative stance to controversial issues would be promoted by those preferring sensing over intuition and thinking over feeling. Sensing types tend to prefer the familiar, whereas intuitive type enjoy change and new possibilities. In times when the emerging values are liberal and the familiar values are conservative, intuitives should tend to favour liberal values. Thinking types tend to be more tough-minded than feeling types, who tend to be more tender-minded. Many of the changes in the Church in recent decades have involved giving voice to groups who have felt oppressed or rejected because of long-standing doctrinal positions. Feeling types may be skilled in empathising with such groups and willing to shift their attitudes to preserve harmony and unity. Thinking types may adhere to their traditional principles and see that as more important than trying to maintain what they would see as a ‘fudged’ harmony. In times when the emerging values are liberal and the familiar values are conservative, feeling types may be more amenable to changing their position than thinking types.

The above suggests that the sensing and thinking functions may operate in a slightly different ways, and therefore interact in different ways for liberals and conservatives. Preference for sensing rather than intuition may make some liberals more conservative on moral issues, but may have less effect among conservatives, who take a conservative stance on moral issues anyway. Preference for

feeling over thinking may make some conservatives more liberal on moral issues, but may have less effect among liberals, who take a liberal stance on moral issues anyway.

Based on these arguments it seems likely that any effects of psychological type preferences on debated issues in the Church of England will be small in comparison to belonging to particular traditions or holding a general liberal or conservative theological stance. The effects should, however, be consistent across a range of different issues, with more conservative attitudes associated with greater propensity for sensing than intuition and thinking than feeling. The effects of psychological preferences might interact with general liberal-conservative tendencies, and this too should be a consistent effect across a range of issues.

3 Method

3.1 Procedure

In 2013, a four-page questionnaire was published in two editions of the *Church Times*, one in July and one in October. The newspaper is published in hard copy and online, and the questionnaire appeared in both formats. 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. The Church Times readers who responded to the current survey were likely to represent a sample of committed Anglicans spanning most of the traditions of the Church of England.

3.2 Sample profile

The overall response to the survey was 4,909, with 3,695 of these from the Church of England. Of the Church of England respondents, 3,515 completed sufficient items to be included in this analysis. The sample profile (Table 1) was similar to other surveys of the Church of England where data were collected through the *Church Times* (Francis et al., 2005; Village & Francis, 2021). Although not wholly representative of the Church at large, it did include good proportions of clergy (39%) and lay people (61%), men (58%) and women (42%), and those from the three main church traditions. There

was probably an over-sampling of clergy, and an underrepresentation of younger adults and Evangelicals, which reflects the readership of the newspaper (Village, 2018a).

- insert Table 1 about here -

3.3 Instruments

3.3.1 Attitude scales

Attitudes were assessed using five-point Likert items (Strongly disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Not certain = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly agree = 5) covering statements related to same-sex relationships, the ordination of women, divorce and remarriage, and cohabitation (Table 2). Most statements were worded in a liberal direction (e.g., 'I am in favour of the ordination of practising homosexual as priests') and these were reverse coded so that scales were scored such that a high score indicated a conservative position, and a low score a liberal position. All scales were uni-dimensional (tested by factor analysis using principal components extraction and varimax rotation) and showed very good to excellent internal reliability as measured by Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951).

- insert Table 2 about here -

3.3.2 Control variables

Variables in this set were sex (0 = male, 1 = female), age (by decade, treated as continuous variable), education (highest qualification excluding ordination training, ranging from 1 = no formal qualifications to 6 = doctorate), and ordination status (1 = ordained, 0 = lay).

3.3.3 Church tradition

Church tradition was assessed using a seven-point bipolar scale labelled 'Anglo-Catholic' at one end and 'Evangelical' at the other. It has been shown to predict well a wide range of differences in belief and practice in the Church of England (Randall, 2005; Village, 2012b) and was used to identify Anglo-Catholic (scoring 1-2), Broad Church (3-5) and Evangelical (6-7) respondents. Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical were used as dummy variables in the regression analyses, with Broad Church as the

reference category. Charismatic expression was also based on a seven-point bipolar scale, this time labelled ‘not charismatic’ at one end and ‘charismatic’ at the other. For this analysis, those scoring at the top end of the scale (6 or 7) were classed as ‘Charismatic’.

3.3.4 Theological stance

The ‘liberal – conservative’ (LIBCON) scale has been widely used in the Church of England as a general measure of preference for conservative (traditional) rather liberal (modern) views on a wide range of doctrinal and moral issues (Village, 2018b). It was measured on a seven-point semantic differential scale anchored at one end ‘liberal’ and the other ‘conservative’, and scored such that a high score indicated a conservative stance.

3.3.5 Psychological type preferences

Psychological type preferences were assessed using the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS). This is a 40-item instrument comprising four sets of ten forced-choice items related to each of the four components of psychological type: orientation (extraversion or introversion), perceiving process (sensing or intuition), judging process (thinking or feeling), and attitude toward the outer world (judging or perceiving) (Francis, 2005; Village, 2021). Previous studies have demonstrated that this instrument functions well in a range of church-related contexts (for example, see Francis et al., 2021; Francis et al., 2011; Village, 2016). In this sample, the alpha reliabilities were .83 for the EI scale, .75 for the SN scale, .73 for the TF scale, and .71 for the JP scale. For ease of interpretability, scale scores were used to identify individual type preferences in the perceiving (sensing versus intuition) and judging (feeling versus thinking) processes as suggested by Francis and Village (2022). This resulted in two binary variables: sensing (0 = preferred intuition over sensing, 1 = preferred sensing over intuition) and thinking (0 = preferred feeling over thinking, 1 = preferred thinking over feeling).

3.4 Analysis

The first stage of analysis was to use bivariate correlations to indicate how the control and predictor variables related independently to each of the four attitude scales. The second stage used multiple

regression using the Generalized Linear Models (GENLIN) procedure in SPSS 28 (IBM Corporation, 2021) to control for other variables in the model in order to see if preference for sensing or thinking retained predictive power for attitudes after allowing for general liberal-conservative stance and church tradition. All models used a normal distribution apart from the ordination of women, where a Poisson distribution and a log link fitted the distribution of the data better. Model effects were tested using the Wald statistic. A third stage was to add interaction terms between psychological variables and the LIBCON scale to test if the effects of psychological variables varied between liberals and conservatives. For this analysis the LIBCON scale was mean centred and parameter estimates were used to generate fitted regression lines. Selective interactions were illustrated graphically using the LIBCON scale on the x-axis and calculating separate regressions for psychological preferences.

4 Results

4.1 Bivariate correlations

The bivariate correlations (Table 3) indicated some consistent effects of control variables across the four attitudes: women were generally less conservative than were men, older people were more conservative than younger people, and those with higher education qualifications were less conservative than those with lower qualifications (apart from cohabitation). Clergy were more liberal than laity when it came to the ordination of women and divorce and remarriage, but more conservative over cohabitation and there was no difference over same sex relationships.

Compared with Broad Church, Anglo-Catholics were more liberal and Evangelicals more conservative when it came to same-sex relationships and cohabitation. Anglo-Catholics and Broad Church were similarly more liberal than Evangelicals on divorce and remarriage, while both Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals were more conservative than Broad Church when it came to the ordination of women. These results are in line with previous analyses of the different traditions in the Church of England, which suggest there are subtle and complex differences between them which vary from issue to issue (Francis et al., 2005; Village, 2018a). Charismatics were more conservative about same sex

relationships and cohabitation, but slightly more liberal on the ordination of women, and there was no difference when it came to divorce and remarriage.

As expected, the strongest and most consistent correlations were with the LIBCON scale, with the strongest correlation (r = .60) being for same sex relationships and the weakest (r = .37) being for the ordination of women. General theological stance was a strong predictor of liberal versus conservative attitudes to particular moral issues. The psychological type variables both predicted in the expected direction in all four dependent variables, with preference for sensing over intuition, and thinking over feeling, being associated with more conservative attitudes.

4.2 Multiple regression

Multiple regressions (Table 4) showed that psychological variables retained predictive power after allowing for church tradition and theological stance. Thinking preference, which had a weaker bivariate correlation than sensing preference across the four attitudes, was not statistically significant for the case of same-sex relationships, and marginally significant for cohabitation.

4.3 Interaction effects

Adding interactions effects (Table 5) showed that the effects of psychological type preferences in both the perceiving and judging processes varied between the liberal and conservative ends of the LIBCON scale. In each of the four attitudes there was a similar pattern, with the sensing x LIBCON interaction term being positive and the thinking x LIBCON interaction term being negative. The implications of this are illustrated in Figure 1, which uses the cohabitation scale as an example. For the perceiving process, preference for sensing over intuition was associated with more conservative views on cohabitation for those with a generally liberal theological stance but made little difference for theological conservatives. For the judging process, preference for thinking over feeling was associated with more conservative views on cohabitation for those with a generally conservative theological stance but made little difference for theological liberals. This pattern was similar in the three other variables, though the sensing x LIBCON interaction related to the ordination of women was negligible

and barely statistically significant. These results suggest that, although psychological type preferences in both the perceiving and judging process may influence attitudes towards issues of morality and the role of women, these preferences may have differential effects on theological liberals and conservatives.

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5 Discussion

This paper tests the question of whether or not psychological type preferences predicted the extent of conservative attitudes towards a range of controversial moral issues among clergy and laity from the Church of England who took part in the 2013 *Church Times* survey. Attitudes towards four issues that have been debated in the Church of England over the last few decades were used to probe this question: same-sex relationships, the ordination of women, divorce and remarriage, and cohabitation. The results for the control variables were in line with previous analyses from the Church of England. In each case, more conservative attitudes tended to be associated with men rather than women, older rather than younger people, lay people rather than clergy, those with lower rather than higher educational qualifications, Evangelicals rather than Anglo-Catholics or Broad Church, and Charismatics rather than non-Charismatics. Variations from this trend sometimes reflected particular stances taken by different traditions on particular issues, such as the more conservative approach to the ordination of women among both Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals.

As demonstrated in previous studies, the single best predictor of stance to particular moral issues was the LIBCON scale, a general measure of liberal versus conservative theological stance. Unsurprisingly, where individuals rated themselves on this scale was closely related to how liberal or conservative their scores were for the four attitudes. In addition, those with psychological type preferences for sensing over intuition and for thinking over feeling also recorded more conservative scores. Given that scores on the LIBCON scale are known to be related to psychological type preferences, the question was whether psychological preferences retained some predictive power for attitudes over and above general theological stance. The results suggest they did, especially for sensing rather than intuitive types but also, to a lesser extent, for thinking rather than feeling types.

Furthermore, these additional effects varied depending on scores on the LIBCON scale. Theological liberals who preferred sensing over intuition tended to be slightly more conservative on moral issues than those who preferred intuition over sensing, but this was not so for theological conservatives. Theological conservatives who preferred feeling over thinking tended to be slightly less conservative on moral issues than those who preferred thinking over feeling, but this was not so for theological liberals.

These results suggest that the responses of religious people towards changes in social attitudes in society are not driven entirely by the traditions to which they belong or the doctrinal beliefs to which they adhere. Psychological dispositions may play a small but significant part in shaping moral attitudes, as suggested more generally in society by some political analysts. The intuitive function, as defined in psychological-type theory, is that part of the perceiving process that is particularly related to imagining new possibilities and looking for novel ways of approaching problems that combine different ideas. The sensing function, on the other hand, is particularly related to recognising familiar patterns and drawing on more straightforward ideas. When social values are changing and raising new challenges, intuitives may find it easier to accept novel mores that fly in the face of traditional religious standards. In this dataset, this difference was apparent only among theological liberals, perhaps because, for theological conservatives, doctrinal beliefs overrode any effects of being a more intuitive perceiver.

The feeling function, as defined in psychological-type theory, is that part of the judging process that is particularly related to making decisions based on empathy, shared values, and subjectivity. The thinking function, on the other hand, is particularly related to more objective and logical decision making that is based on principles. Churches faced with the rising the demands of marginalised groups such as women, divorcees, or sexual minorities have to make decisions that balance the particular moral and theological principles related to gender, sexuality, and marriage that they have inherited, with the underlying desire to demonstrate the general Gospel principles of love and empathy. In these circumstances, feeling types may be more willing to empathize with minorities and accept their demands than are thinking types. In this dataset, the difference was apparent only among theological conservatives, perhaps because, for theological liberals, doctrinal beliefs overrode any effects of being a more thinking-type judger.

These results may suggest to empirical theologians that innate psychological dispositions can have some part to play in the fraught debates that have dogged churches in western societies over the last fifty years or more. People whose faith is based on moral and theological precepts enshrined in Scripture and long-standing ecclesial tradition are likely to find it hard to know how to balance these with the radically different perspectives of non-religious people whose social values are shaped without reference to any religious belief or tradition. The different psychological type preferences in the perceiving and judging processes may help in negotiating the process of doctrinal evolution. Churches need to recognise and value the diversity of God's people and draw, when necessary, on those who have the ability either to foster or resist change. Knowing that moral attitudes are not simply a matter of theological beliefs may help those in opposing camps to better understand what makes others believe what they do when it comes to particular heated debates.

6 Conclusions

Psychological dispositions seemed to play some role in shaping how liberal or conservative individuals were in relations to a range of social and moral attitudes that have confronted the Church of England in recent decades. Although such attitudes are largely predicted by general liberal versus conservative theological stance, psychological preferences in the perceiving process can influence the attitudes of theological liberals and psychological preferences in the judging process can influence the attitudes of theological conservatives. These results suggest that the two psychological type processes of perceiving and judging may have different mechanisms by which they shape attitudes toward debated issues in the Church of England. Further work is needed to explore in more detail the different ways in which sensing or thinking can promote conservatism and intuition and feeling can promote liberalism.

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Table 1

Profile of the Church of England participants in the survey

		%
Sex	Male	58.3
	Female	41.7
Age	<50s	13.5
	50s	17.0
	60s	29.4
	>60s	40.0
Tradition	Anglo-Catholic	41.3
	Broad church	44.4
	Evangelical	14.3
Education	School	11.7
	Undergraduate	55.7
	Postgraduate	32.6
Ordination	Lay	61.0
	Ordained	39.0

Note. N = 3,515

Table 2

Issues scales used as dependent variables

	Percentage:					
a) **Same-sex relationships** α = .93	SD	DA	NC	AG	SA	CITC
In favour of the ordination of practising homosexuals as priests*	14	13	19	23	31	.90
In favour of the ordination of practising homosexuals as bishops*	17	13	19	21	30	.90
In favour of homosexual couples being married in church*	28	20	18	15	19	.77
In favour of homosexual couples receiving a blessing in church*	11	9	12	36	33	.76
It is wrong for people of the same gender to have sex	19	34	19	14	15	.77
b) **Ordination of women** α = .95						
In favour of the ordination of women as priests*	6	2	3	17	72	.91
In favour of the ordination of women as bishops*	7	3	5	17	68	.91
c) **Divorce and remarriage** α = .90						
In favour of divorced and remarried priests*	2	5	15	45	33	.89
In favour of divorced and remarried bishops*	4	7	16	41	32	.86
In favour of divorced people being married in church*	2	6	13	45	34	.68
d) **Cohabitation** α = .81						
It is wrong for men and women to have sex before marriage	13	37	22	20	9	.65
All right for a couple to live together without intending to get married*	8	26	27	31	6	.65
Good idea for couples who intend to get married to live together first*	9	24	36	25	6	.68

Note. *N* = 3,515. α = Cronbach's alpha. SD Strongly Disagree; DA = Disagree; NC = Not Certain; AG = Agree; SA Strongly Agree. CITC = Corrected Item-Total Correlation. * These items were reverse coded.

Table 3

Bivariate correlations of issues scales and predictors

	Against:			
	Same sex relationships	Ordination of women	Divorce and remarriage	Cohabitation
Women	-.10***	-.14***	-.05**	-.06***
Age	.14***	.04*	.13***	.04*
Ordained	.00	-.04*	-.09***	.06**
Education	-.15***	-.09***	-.10***	-.03
Anglo-Catholic	-.17***	.20***	.01	-.18***
Evangelical	.35***	.05**	.13***	.34***
Charismatic	.16***	-.04*	.00	.20***
LIBCON	.60***	.37***	.42***	.44***
Sensing	.19***	.11***	.16***	.11***
Thinking	.04**	.07***	.09***	.05**

Note. N = 3,515. Correlations tested with Pearson correlation coefficient (r). * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 4

Generalized linear regression of attitude scales

		Against:			
		Same sex relationships	Ordination of women	Divorce and remarriage	Cohabitation
	df	W	W	W	W
Women	1	19.52***	55.58***	3.23	0.25
Age	3	107.91***	5.99	66.87***	48.00***
Ordained	1	11.60***	3.24	8.12**	24.84***
Education	2	20.44***	13.38**	5.25	5.16
Anglo-Catholic	1	0.04	341.53***	45.33***	5.82*
Evangelical	1	49.33***	0.02	0.03	71.60***
Charismatic	1	37.47***	3.99*	0.52	46.96***
LIBCON	1	1286.88***	698.29***	626.55***	454.76***
Sensing	1	52.75***	4.34*	18.48***	24.07***
Thinking	1	3.58	7.45**	17.37***	3.80*

Note. N = 3,515. Model effects tested using the Wald Chi-squared statistic (W). * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 5 *Generalized linear regression of attitude scales with interaction terms*

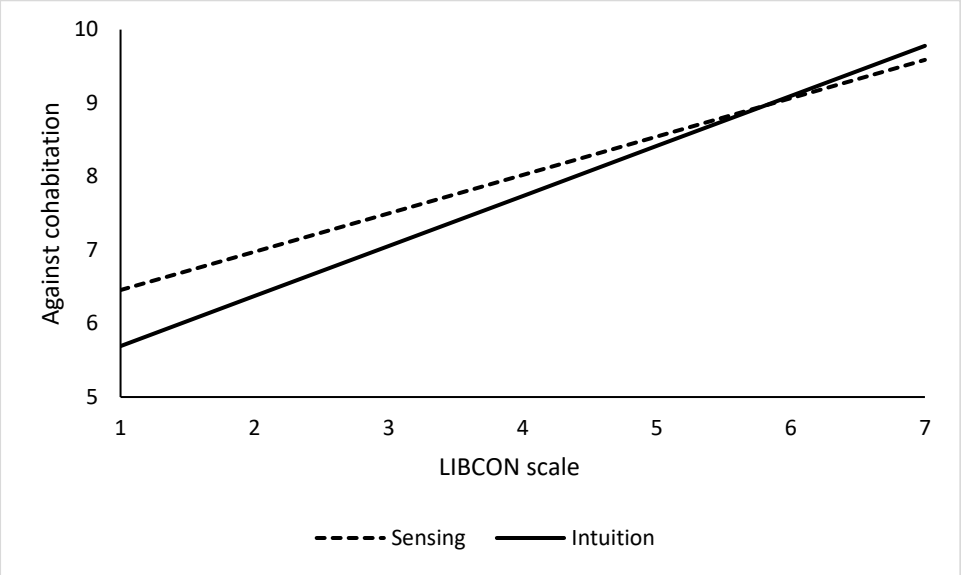
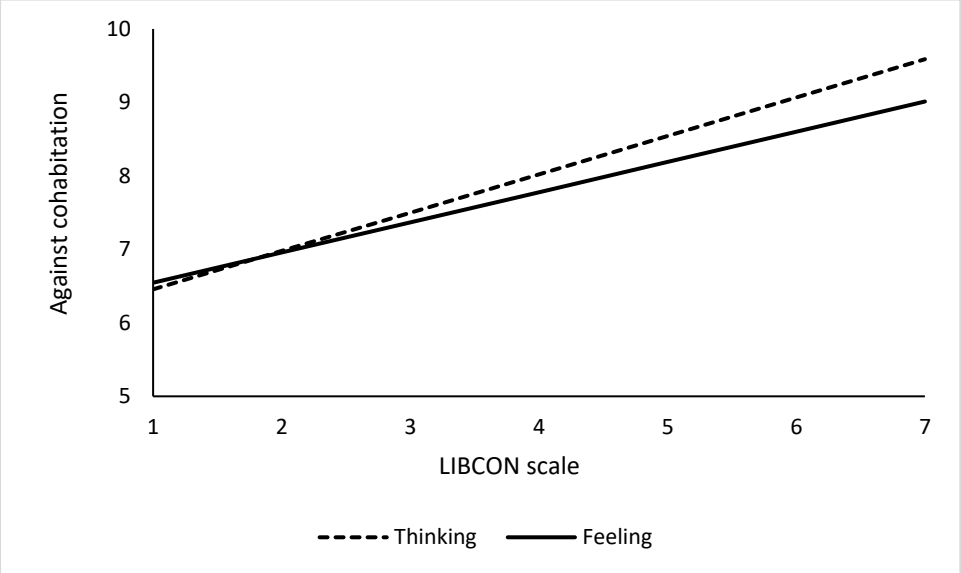
		Same sex relationships	Women's ordination	Divorce and remarriage	Cohabitation
Variable	Parameter	*B (SE)*	*B (SE)*	*B (SE)*	*B (SE)*
	Intercept	12.20 (0.37)***	1.16 (0.04)***	6.18 (0.19)***	7.61 (0.19)***
Sex (male)	Female	-0.71 (0.17)***	-0.15 (0.02)***	-0.13 (0.09)	-0.03 (0.09)
Age (<50)	>60s	2.31 (0.26)***	0.02 (0.03)	0.79 (0.13)***	0.46 (0.13)***
	60s	1.25 (0.26)***	-0.03 (0.03)	0.17 (0.13)	-0.15 (0.14)
	50s	0.37 (0.29)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.04 (0.15)	-0.18 (0.15)
Status (laity)	Ordained	0.57 (0.18)**	-0.04 (0.02)*	-0.27 (0.09)**	0.44 (0.09)***
Education (school)	Postgraduate	-1.25 (0.29)***	-0.12 (0.03)***	-0.23 (0.15)	0.14 (0.15)
	Undergraduate	-0.70 (0.26)**	-0.09 (0.03)**	-0.31 (0.13)*	-0.08 (0.14)
Tradition (Broad Church)	Anglo-Catholic	-0.05 (0.17)	0.39 (0.02)***	0.59 (0.09)***	-0.22 (0.09)*
	Evangelical	1.90 (0.27)***	0.01 (0.03)	0.03 (0.14)	1.18 (0.14)***
Charismatic (not)	Charismatic	1.85 (0.32)***	-0.08 (0.04)*	-0.14 (0.16)	1.09 (0.16)***
LIBCON (mean centred)	Conservatism	1.69 (0.07)***	0.15 (0.01)***	0.65 (0.03)***	0.52 (0.04)***
Perceiving (intuition)	Sensing	1.17 (0.17)***	0.05 (0.02)*	0.36 (0.09)***	0.41 (0.09)***
Judging (feeling)	Thinking	0.29 (0.16)	0.04 (0.02)	0.34 (0.08)***	0.16 (0.08)
Sensing x LIBCON		0.49 (0.09)***	0.02 (0.01)*	0.15 (0.05)**	0.16 (0.05)***
Thinking * LIBCON		-0.28 (0.08)***	-0.03 (0.01)***	-0.20 (0.04)***	-0.11 (0.04)*

Note. N = 3,515. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Variable reference values are in parentheses. Women's ordination model is based on a Poisson distribution. The LIBCON scale was mean centred so the effects of intuition and feeling refer to the situation when the LIBCON scale = 3.2.

Figure 1

Illustration of interaction effects for the cohabitation scale

a) Perceiving process



b) Judging process