

BE A BETTER LEADER

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*Personality type and difference
in ministry*



Graham Osborne

SPCK

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Foreword

Christian theology and the science of psychology share a common interest and a common theme. Both are concerned with what it means to be human. As a consequence, the conversation between theology and psychology can enrich both disciplines, once they can come to agree on a shared starting point. The field of individual differences provides this.

This book is rooted in psychological type theory, and psychological type theory is rooted in the bigger field of the psychology of individual differences. The psychology of individual differences begins from the observation that people differ and that there are stable patterns in those differences. Psychological type theory identifies four such stable patterns. The theory speaks of stable differences in terms of orientation (extraversion¹ and introversion), ways of perceiving (sensing and intuition), ways of judging or evaluating (thinking and feeling) and ways of relating to the world (judging and perceiving). Psychological type theory conceives these differences as representing distinctive types and conceives each pair as equally good and equally acceptable. For example, an introvert is not a failed extravert, nor is an extravert an inadequate introvert.

The theology of individual differences looks at what it means to be human through the lens of Christian doctrine. The doctrine of creation affirms that human beings are created in the image of God (Genesis 1.27) and that God created diversity in God's creation by creating men *and* women in the divine image. According to the theology of Genesis 1.27, neither male nor female reflects less perfectly the image of

the divine creator. Christian doctrine, however, places alongside the doctrine of creation the equally important doctrines of fall and redemption. By the fall the divine image has been corrupted, and by the saving work of Christ there has been offered the path to restoration. When looking at human beings, the theology of individual differences has to disentangle those differences rooted in creation and those rooted in the fall. Taking Genesis 1.27 seriously, sex differences are clearly rooted in creation: men and women are created equally in the image of God. By extension, the theology of individual differences argues that ethnic differences reflect the intention of the divine creator: black and white are created equally in the image of God. By extension, the theology of individual differences argues that psychological type differences reflect the intention of the divine creator: introverts and extraverts are created equally in the image of God.

Working within the tradition of the theology of individual differences, Graham Osborne invites clergy to take seriously and to accept responsibly the divine image in which they have been created: male or female; black or white; introvert or extravert; sensing type or intuitive type; thinking type or feeling type; judging type or perceiving type. With such acknowledgement comes the liberating joy of working with the resource that God has entrusted to us. The introvert will not do ministry in the same way as the extravert. Extraverts and introverts will excel at different things and struggle with different things. Different aspects of ministry will bring them joy or cause them exhaustion. But what is clear for the theology of individual differences is confidence that the God who creates difference also accepts difference.

In *Be a Better Leader*, Graham Osborne takes us on a well-informed and insightful journey to see more clearly the patterns that emerge within our individual psychological type profile and within the profiles of those with whom we work

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and among whom we minister. It is a journey well worth taking seriously.

Leslie J. Francis
Professor of Religions and Education, University of Warwick
Canon Theologian, Bangor Cathedral

Introduction

My main reason for writing this book is to explore the implications of psychological type theory for understanding the performance and experience of men and women engaged in professional Christian ministry. In the course of my work as a spiritual director, mostly with ordained and lay ministers, and in working as a Myers-Briggs® practitioner with Anglican and Methodist clergy, church staff teams and parochial church councils, I have observed that there are Christian ministers of all psychological types, both lay and ordained, and that they approach their Christian ministry in distinctive ways. Not only that but also that ministers with different psychological types find certain aspects of their ministry energizing and other aspects enervating; which is which depends on their particular type.

I first encountered the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) in the late 1980s, as a management consultant using a subset as part of a change-management methodology in implementing large computer systems. I then ‘did it properly’ in my firm in preparation for partnership and subsequently, having offered for ordination in 1994, in theological college. However, it was the report from the Society of Mary and Martha, *Affirmation and Accountability*, that sowed the seeds of my research in applying the MBTI to the exercise of Christian ministry.

That report, produced in 2002, highlighted that there is an issue with clergy stress. The report’s subtitle is *The Society of Mary and Martha’s Manual of Practical Suggestions for Preventing Clergy Stress, Sickness and Ill-health Retirement*. Section 2.3.2 contains the recommendation: ‘Develop psychological profiling

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as a routine tool for cultivating self-awareness from selection onwards', and goes on to assert that psychometric tools, including the MBTI,

can help the church to use its human resources more effectively by fitting the right clergy to the kind of job where they can flourish and work most effectively. They can help to provide useful information on the particular stresses people are likely to face in ministry, and help to pinpoint areas to be usefully addressed in training and formation.¹

I was a member of the diocesan task group that sought to work out how the report's recommendations could be implemented in my then diocese, but sadly the cost of implementation meant that only a few of them made it beyond the cutting-room floor. It was not until a period of sabbatical leave in 2009 that I was able to return to the topic.

The theory of psychological types on which the MBTI is based was initially developed by Carl Gustav Jung, then further developed into a usable form by Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers. It proposes 16 complete types, each of which displays both characteristic strengths and characteristic weaknesses. When these strengths and weaknesses are projected on to the life experience and professional expectations of clergy, type theory suggests that each of the 16 types will display distinguishing characteristics.

The primary purpose of my research was to explore the implications of psychological type theory for understanding the performance and experience of men and women engaged in professional Christian ministry. The plan was to develop a profile for each of the 16 Myers-Briggs types, setting out the application of the Myers-Briggs theory to that type. In developing the shape of the profile, I asked myself four fundamental questions.

- For whom would I be developing the type profile?
- What end result was I hoping to achieve?

- If I were to develop a type profile that was ‘fit for purpose’, what would that purpose be?
- How would I measure how successful I had been in meeting that purpose?

I identified my target audience as any Christian minister exercising a public ministry, especially those in leadership. The resulting end-product would be a set of 16 documents, each containing the profile of one Myers-Briggs type – a type profile. The purpose would be to provide for a Christian minister a description of his or her type, a statement of those aspects of Christian ministry that, in theory, would be energy giving and life enhancing, those aspects that would tend to be draining and even stressful, and some strategies for avoiding, or lessening, the impact of these latter aspects. The measures of success would be, in the short term, validation by peer practitioners in the field and, in the medium term, validation by members of the target group. Longer-term validation would have to wait for the empirical field research that would be the subject of a further study.

This book is based on the research I undertook to develop these type profiles and documented in a thesis for which I was admitted by the University of Wales to the degree of Master of Philosophy. It was most affirming to have my research and its conclusions subjected to such academic rigour. My MPhil research concentrated on applying the theory; testing it would probably need to be a PhD study. As my wife spells ‘PhD’ ‘D-I-V-O-R-C-E’, I think that will have to be a retirement project.

The book is intended to enable people in Christian ministry to generate new insights into their own experience and performance, and to develop better strategies both for maximizing their strengths and for protecting themselves against inevitable consequences of recognized weaknesses.

How to use this book

The book is divided into two parts. In Part 1 I explore the thinking behind psychological type theory and its application to Christian ministry. Part 2 discusses in individual chapters the 16 detailed type profiles. For each type profile I begin with an introduction that gives the recognized characteristics of that type, and does so by setting out what are termed the type dynamics – the Dominant, Auxiliary, Tertiary and Inferior functions (these are explained in greater detail on p. 65). The second section within each profile chapter examines the ‘comfort zone’ for that type, expanding on that type’s strengths. The third section explores what happens ‘outside the comfort zone’ and draws attention to some of the difficulties experienced by the type under discussion. The fourth section examines the ‘stress response’. The fifth section discusses ‘life-giving strategies’. Each chapter then concludes with a summary profiling the type.

Most readers of this book will probably already be aware of their type. However, for those who aren’t I have included a questionnaire on p. 31. Alternatively, there are now many reliable tests available online, for example:

- <www.25quiz.com> by John Hawksley
- <www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes1.htm> by Catherine Elizabeth Valdes
- <www.41q.com/> by Chintan Pathak
- <<http://careerassessmentsite.com>> by Jimmy Mckenzie
- <www.onlinepersonalitytest.com> by Bogdan Vaida
- <www.typefocus.com> by Tara Orchard
- <<http://similarminds.com/jung.html>> by Jeff Haas
- <www.initforlife.com/home> by Sean Robert Greenhalgh
- <www.quistic.com/personali> by Cassie Boorn
- <www.16personalities.com> by Pieter-Christiaan Voorwinden.

Part 1

INTRODUCING
PSYCHOLOGICAL
TYPE THEORY



Psychological type theory

It would seem sensible to start with what psychological type is all about. If you would rather pass over the different theories and go straight to the type profiles, please feel free to go on to Part Two of this book, pausing at p. 31 if you would like to discover, or check, your own type.

The British Psychological Society defines ‘psychology’ as ‘the science of mind and behaviour’. Psychology is a very wide field and my focus in this book is on personality psychology, so how does one define ‘personality’? The definitions listed here are from both the academic world and generally available dictionaries.

- Gordon Allport, who focused his studies on psychologically healthy individuals: ‘Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought.’¹
- Robert Stephen Weinberg and Daniel Gould in *Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology*: ‘the characteristics or blend of characteristics that make a person unique.’²
- Oxford Dictionaries online: ‘The combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual’s distinctive character.’
- The *Collins English Dictionary*: ‘the sum total of all the behavioural and mental characteristics by means of which an individual is recognized as being unique.’
- Merriam-Webster online dictionary: ‘the set of emotional qualities, ways of behaving, etc., that makes a person different from other people.’

the divine creator. Christian doctrine, however, places alongside the doctrine of creation the equally important doctrines of fall and redemption. By the fall the divine image has been corrupted, and by the saving work of Christ there has been offered the path to restoration. When looking at human beings, the theology of individual differences has to disentangle those differences rooted in creation and those rooted in the fall. Taking Genesis 1.27 seriously, sex differences are clearly rooted in creation: men and women are created equally in the image of God. By extension, the theology of individual differences argues that ethnic differences reflect the intention of the divine creator: black and white are created equally in the image of God. By extension, the theology of individual differences argues that psychological type differences reflect the intention of the divine creator: introverts and extraverts are created equally in the image of God.

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