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William K. Kay Glyndwr University, w.kay@glyndwr.ac.uk

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Psychological type preferences of male British Assemblies of God Bible College students: tough-minded or tender-hearted?

The Revd Dr William K Kay,¹ The Revd Professor Leslie J Francis², and Dr Charlotte L Craig³

Address for correspondence: Leslie J Francis Welsh National Centre for Religious Education University of Wales, Bangor Normal Site Bangor Gwynedd LL57 2PZ UK

e-mail: l.j.francis@bangor.ac.uk

¹ William K. Kay (PhD, Nottingham) is Reader in Practical Theology in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at University of Wales, Bangor, United Kingdom.

² Leslie J. Francis (DD, Oxford) is Professor of Practical Theology at University of Wales, Bangor, United Kingdom and also serves as Editor of *Rural Theology* and as an Editor of *Archiv Für Religionspsychologie*.

³ Charlotte L. Craig (PhD, Wales) is Research Assistant at the Welsh National Centre for Religious Education, University of Wales, Bangor, United Kingdom and also serves as Secretary of the Network for Psychological Type and Christian Faith.

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Abstract

Psychological type theory proposes that people make decisions through using one of two dichotomous judging functions (thinking and feeling). People who prefer thinking make judgements based on impersonal logic and tend to be objective and tough-minded, while people who prefer feeling make judgements based on personal values and tend to be compassionate and tender-hearted. This study explores the notion that the judging functions are key predictors of individual differences in terms of religiosity. The psychological type preferences of a sample of 190 male Assemblies of God bible college students were assessed using Form G (Anglicised) of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. The data revealed preferences for thinking over feeling, and the implications of this finding are explored.

1.1 Introduction

In an era of interdisciplinary study it is not uncommon to see attempts to utilise psychological concepts within theological discourse or conversely to apply theological ideas in secular argumentation. Exploration of Pentecostal people by means of psychological theory is made in this paper but, at the outset, it should not be assumed that psychological theory is deterministic or in some way overrides theological insights. As will be shown below, what this theory does is to provide a framework for understanding the differences between people, a compass for navigating the psyche (Jung 1971). This framework, can be used in turn by theological commentators argue that psychological type theory helps Christians to identify and appreciate individual differences and gifting (see, for example, Osborn and Osborn 1991), that psychological type theory is useful as a tool for deepening awareness of God's gifts and grace (see, for example, Repicky 1981), and that psychological type theory may be employed to enhance religious growth and development in response to God's calling (see, for example, Duncan 1993).

Jung, a contemporary of Freud, proposed a theory by which individuals could be classified into a series of types. Initially, the theory looks crude and oversimplified. Its basis lies both in an examination of classical Graeco-Roman attempts to observe and understand human behaviour and in the presumption that human beings operate as psychosomatic unities in a social world where they have to make decisions. The existence of a social world presumes its contrary, an interior and non-social world. In this way one can posit both an *extravert* function by which individuals reach out into the flow of the society of which they are a part and an *introvert* function by which they reach into themselves. Because individuals are social beings, they entertain emotions by which human bonds are made but, because they can reflect on these bonds, they form a cognitive and objective function in the form of thought. In this way thinking and feeling functions develop. Interaction with the external world produces either a concentration upon its outer features or an apprehension of the inner meaning of these features: this produces the functions of sensing and intuition; the sensing function deals with the immediately perceived world while intuition attempts to perceive the totality of any situation and may omit its detail. Finally, human beings require some way of organising their own time and intellectual and social space and this they can done either rationally by attempting to impose an order on flux of existence or by 'going with the flow'

underlying flux of existence: this leads either to the *judging* or *perceiving* functions (Myers, McCaulley, Quenk and Hammer 1998).

Details of the theory are given by Carl Gustav Jung in 1921 (English translation in 1923; see Jung 1971) and more recently and specifically in connection with the Christian faith by Francis (2005). Having isolated basic human functions, the theory creates types by ordering them into all possible permutations. Since there are four pairs (extravert [E] or introvert [I]; thinking [T] or feeling [F]; sensing [S] or intuition [N]; judging [J] or perceiving [P]), these can be arranged in a maximum sixteen ways. So, a person could be classified as ESTJ, ISTJ, ESFJ, ISFJ, and so on. So, for example, the ESTJ is a person who is extravert, deals with the individualised detail of the world, makes decisions on the basis of rational analysis and organises his or her social and extraverted life using a judging function; and each of the types can be described by looking at these way these four functions are identified.

Jones and Francis (1999) argued that the judging functions are key predictors of individual differences in terms of religiosity. The judging functions are those functions that are termed 'rational' by Jung (1971): these are the functions concerned with reason and order and through which people make decisions and judgements. Decision-making can be based on one of two functions: thinking or feeling. On the one hand, according to the theory thinking types make judgements based on objective, impersonal logic. They value integrity and justice. They are known for their truthfulness and for their desire for fairness. They consider conforming to principles to be of more importance than cultivating harmony. They are often good at making difficult decisions, since they are able to analyse problems to reach an unbiased and reasonable solution. They may consider it to be more important to be honest and correct than to be tactful, when working with others. On the other hand, according to the theory feeling types make judgements based on subjective, personal values. They value compassion and mercy. They are known for their tactfulness and for their desire for peace. They are more concerned to promote harmony, than to adhere to abstract principles. They may be thought of as 'people-persons', as they are able to take into account other people's feelings and values in decision-making and problem-solving, ensuring they reach a solution that is intended to satisfy everyone. They may find it difficult to criticise others, even when it is necessary. They find it easy to empathise with other people and tend to be trusting and encouraging of others. The current study aims to explore how the dichotomy between thinking and feeling can inform understanding regarding the psychological type profile of individuals drawn to (and likely to remain committed to) the British Assemblies of God. Although characteristics of both of these two judging functions (thinking and feeling) can be identified within the teaching and practice of the British Assemblies of God, the study aims to examine whether one emphasis may hold dominance over the other in terms of the psychological type preferences of the adherents.

One the one hand, there may be good reasons to argue that the British Assemblies of God might attract individuals who display the feeling type preference. British Assemblies of God belonging, as it does, to the worldwide Pentecostal Movement is bound to stress the value of religious experience. The central theological distinctive of 'baptism with the Spirit' is not only a doctrine which may appeal to the mind, but an experience which may transform the heart (Kay 1990). The result of this is that ministers and members of British Assemblies of God congregations will recognise the value of the heart and feel particularly attracted to Pauline teaching concerning the 'fruits of the Spirit' (Gal. 5.22) that speak of the fundamental qualities of the Christian life as involving love, joy, and peace. Such qualities are fundamental to the personal and interpersonal values associated with the preference for feeling. Preaching, particularly at large conventions or conferences, may well seek to appeal to the personal and interpersonal values of hearers. In any case it is hardly possible to listen to a sermon about the sacrifices made by missionaries or, most of all, by Christ himself, without exploring and wishing to embrace core feeling type values such as empathy, compassion, devotion, and care for others. Moreover, any preacher who calls members of the congregation to a first-time commitment or to consecration will almost invariably speak to people's deepest values and, though the dangers of emotionalism are well understood, see tears or laughter as evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in a way that would have been understood by John Wesley or the major twentieth century evangelists.

Appeal to the personal and interpersonal values associated with the feeling function is often associated with the renewal phases that periodically sweep through the churches, for example in the 'Toronto blessing' of the early 1990s (Hilborn 2001), but can also be found more consistently in appeals for money or material goods to alleviate poverty, disaster or to help missionaries. Ordinary Sunday worship will blend appeals to the values of the human heart

into expectations of charismatic manifestations (Kay and Dyer 2004: 154-159, 118-123) and will be found in such songs as that by John Wimber⁴:

O let the Son of God enfold you with his Spirit and his love Let Him your heart and satisfy your soul... O come and sing this song with gladness As your hearts are filled with joy Lift your hands in sweet surrender to His name. O give Him all your tears and sadness, Give Him all your years of pain, And you'll enter into life in Jesus' name.

On the other hand, there may be equally good reasons to argue that the British Assemblies of God might be associated with the thinking type preference. There is an expectation that Pentecostal Christians will exercise discernment based on objective, impersonal logic, particularly in the field of spiritual gifts. For example, prophecy, which is to be found in all thriving Pentecostal congregations, is, according to New Testament precepts, to be held open to critical scrutiny and to be judged (1 Cor. 14.29). Critical judgement is a process that inevitably has its primary location in the head, even if some aspects of it make proper appeal to the heart, that is, involving both thinking and feeling. The balance between charismatic manifestation and judgement is almost exactly parallel between the heart and the head. It is not often realised that, *because* Pentecostals value feeling type tendencies such as following one's heart and being open to the leading of the spirit, they have a high regard for reason. This is why Pentecostal congregations function effectively with careful, objective verification of spiritual gifts.

On a more general level, the British Assemblies of God may appeal to a thinking preference by the stress placed on biblical principles of justice and personal ethical standards. God is holy and righteous and, therefore, God's people must reflect this holiness and righteousness in their own lives. There is a recognition that personal morality is important, and ministers are expected to adhere to a holiness code in all that they do. The British Assemblies of God expects ministers to be disciplined if they fail to live up to these standards. Such a code may well be countercultural in the sense that it will run against the norms of political correctness and postmodern fragmentation. As a result, members of the British Assemblies of God need to be tough-minded and self-disciplined in the face of misunderstanding or even ridicule. These concepts and principles are likely to appeal to thinking types, who value integrity in

⁴ Although Wimber was never a classical Pentecostal, his songs were widely sung in the UK in the 1980s and early 1990s.

both belief and action. Moreover, members of the British Assemblies of God would tend to reject the central thesis of postmodernism that there is no metanarrative; on the contrary, they would assert that the biblical metanarrative continues to provide a logical (if fideistic) framework for interpreting history, religious activity, morality and mission.

Ordinary Sunday worship will blend appeals to the principles of integrity and self-discipline and will be found in such songs as that by William Booth⁵:

Thou Christ of burning, cleansing flame, Send the fire... God of Elijah, hear our cry! Send the fire! Oh make us fit to live or die! Send the fire! To burn up every trace of sin, To bring the light and glory in, The revolution now begin Send the fire!

To summarise, from a theoretical perspective there are clearly some aspects of the teaching and practice of the British Assemblies of God which are in tune with thinking type preferences and other aspects which are in tune with feeling type preferences. The empirical question remains, therefore, regarding which of these two perspectives speak more strongly to the membership. Although no published data have been identified which examine the preferences for thinking or feeling among members of the British Assemblies of God or other Pentecostal denominations, there is extant research concerned with the psychological preferences of individuals associated with charismatic movement. Both Pentecostal and charismatic churches share similar emphases and beliefs, both being characterised by emphasis on the importance of the *charismata*. However, while the Pentecostal movement resulted in the establishment of new denominations (such as the Assemblies of God), the charismatic movement has resulted both in influencing and transforming a number of established denominations and in giving rise to a wide range of New Churches.

On the one hand, in a theoretically-based study Jones (1991) has argued that charismatics are often feeling types, although no empirical evidence is provided to support this assertion. On the other hand, two empirical studies have been undertaken to determine whether there is a

⁵ Though this hymn originated in the Salvation Army, it was included in Redemption Hymnal which was widely used until the appearance of the Overhead Projector.

relationship between charismatic experience and psychological type preferences. In the first study, Francis and Jones (1997) analysed the relationship between charismatic experience and psychological type preferences using the MBTI, among a sample of 368 participants attending courses on personality and spirituality. In this study charismatic experience was assessed by a five-item scale. Francis and Jones (1997) found that thinking type participants were more likely to report charismatic experiences than feeling type participants. In the second study, Jones, Francis and Craig (in press) analysed the relationship between charismatic experience and psychological type preferences using the MBTI, among a sample of 925 Christian adults attending workshops on personality and spirituality. In this study charismatic experience was assessed by the item, 'Would you describe yourself as being influenced by the Charismatic movement?' Three response options were provided: yes, don't know, and no. Jones, Francis and Craig (in press) found that, compared with the selfdesignated non-charismatics, the self-designated charismatic sample contained significantly higher proportions of extraverts, thinkers, and perceivers. Among the charismatics there was a significant over-representation of ESTJ types and a significant under-representation of ISFJ types. Both of these studies contradict the predictions of Jones (1991) that feeling types would be more open toward charismatic experience.

The finding that charismatic experience is related to preference for thinking is important because it is possible on this basis to hypothesise that Pentecostal Christians will share this preference for thinking. Research among Anglican congregations (Goldsmith and Wharton 1993; Craig, Francis, Bailey and Robbins 2003; Francis, Duncan, Craig and Luffman 2004), among Anglican clergy (Goldsmith and Wharton 1993; Francis, Payne and Jones 2001), among ordinands attending Anglican theological colleges (Goldsmith and Wharton 1993), and among Presbyterian clergy (Irvine 1989) have revealed preferences for feeling over thinking. Should members of Pentecostal churches demonstrate preferences for thinking, this finding would generate a clear conflict with the feeling preference found in other Christians, and may, therefore, help to account for important differences of attitude, belief, and behaviour between these churches and other denominations.

Against this background, the current study extends previous research by exploring the psychological type preferences of a Christian denomination which has not yet been profiled in terms of psychological type theory: the British Assemblies of God. It is hypothesised that the current study will support the finding that charismatic experience is associated with

preference for thinking over feeling (Francis and Jones 1997; Jones, Francis and Craig, in press).

Method

2.1 Sample

Mattersey Hall is the bible college and training centre of the British Assemblies of God. Although it functions as an interdenominational college, the emphasis is distinctly Pentecostal and charismatic. Mattersey Hall has had a continuing existence, albeit in two or three different locations in the United Kingdom and under different names, since it was founded in London in 1919. According to the current website, Mattersey Hall aims to prepare 'men and women through an education that is innovative and marked by academic excellence for productive Christian service in vocations and ministries matched to the marketplace of the 21st Century'. The research instrument was administered by one of the lecturers as part of the academic programme. The students were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Although given the option not to participate in the project, most students attending the seminars completed response forms. Data were obtained from 190 male students at the college. Of the total respondents, 4% were under the age of twenty, 50% were in their twenties, 29% were in their thirties, 13% were in their forties, and 5% were aged fifty or over.

2.2 Measure

The participants completed the 126-item Form G (Anglicised) of the MBTI (Myers and McCaulley 1985). This instrument uses a force-choice questionnaire format to indicate preferences between extraversion or introversion, sensing or intuition, thinking or feeling, and judging or perceiving. Broad support for the reliability and validity of the instrument is provided in the international psychological literature, including studies by Bayne (1995), Salter, Evans and Forney (1997), Myers, McCaulley, Quenk and Hammer (1998), and Francis and Jones (1999). In one of the recent studies, Francis and Jones (1999) reported on the scale properties of Form G (Anglicised) among 429 adult churchgoers. Reliability was supported by the following alpha coefficients: extraversion, .80; introversion, .79; sensing, .87, intuition, .82; thinking, .79; feeling, .72; judging, .85; perceiving, .86.

2.3 Analysis

The scientific literature concerned with psychological type has developed a distinctive method of presenting full type profiles through a standard 'type table', providing information about the sixteen types, the dichotomous preferences, the pairs and temperaments, the Jungian types, and the dominant types. A type table is included in the present analysis (table 1) in order to facilitate comparability with the wider scientific literature concerned with psychological type. As a means of making of comparisons between different samples the chi-square analysis is used in order to assess the statistical significance of these comparisons. The chi-square analysis compares the observed frequency of distribution of people in a crosstabulation of categories against the frequencies which would have occurred by chance, in this case the frequency of thinking and feeling types in different groups (see table 2).

An association between two variables is expressed in terms of a probability or P value. The P value is regarded as significant if the association between the two variables could only have come about by chance less often than five times in a hundred or 0.05. Thus a P value of 0.01 indicates that the observed association would only have come about one time in a hundred and the 0.001 value indicates that the relationship would have come about by chance only one time in a thousand.

3.1 Results

Table 1 presents the type distribution of the 190 male British Assemblies of God bible college students. These data demonstrate preferences for extraversion over introversion (52% compared with 48%), for sensing over intuition (74% compared with 26%), for thinking over feeling (56% compared with 44%), and for judging over perceiving (65% compared with 35%). The two predominant types are ESTJ (18%) and ISTJ (16%).

-Insert table 1 about here-

The findings of the current study support the hypothesis that male bible college students in the Pentecostal tradition will be more likely to prefer thinking than to prefer feeling. Table 2 demonstrates that the current sample of male British Assemblies of God bible college students contains higher proportions of thinking types than other samples of Christian groups such as Presbyterian clergy (Irvine 1989), Anglican clergy (Goldsmith and Wharton 1993, Francis, Payne and Jones 2001), Anglican congregations (Goldsmith and Wharton 1993;

Craig, Francis, Bailey and Robbins 2003; Francis, Duncan, Craig and Luffman 2004), theological college students, (Goldsmith and Wharton 1993) and bible college students (Francis, Penson and Jones 2001). The difference between the proportions of thinking types in the current sample differs significantly from other male Christian groups, for example, from that of male Church Scotland clergy ($\chi^2 = 20.087$, df = 1, p < .001) and male Anglican Clergy in Wales ($\chi^2 = 33.645$, df = 1, p < .001). However, table 2 also demonstrates that the current sample of male British Assemblies of God bible college students contains significantly ($\chi^2 = 5.489$, df = 1, p < .05) lower proportions of thinking types than the male United Kingdom population norms (Kendall 1998).

-Insert table 2 about here-

4.1 Discussion and Conclusion

The finding that the current sample of male British Assemblies of God bible college students prefers thinking suggests that thinking types within the Christian churches may find their preferences better nurtured and utilized among denominations like the British Assemblies of God. Put another way, the finding suggests that those attracted to the Pentecostal and charismatic movement have a disposition to utilise thinking for making decisions and organising their lives. This preference for thinking highlights a number of points of potential strength in the British Assemblies of God. Members of this denomination with well-developed thinking preferences may exercise skill in using logical judgement, for example, in the area of discerning and interpreting spiritual gifts. Likewise, thinking types within the British Assemblies of God may be able to apply objective criteria impersonally to problem-solving when dealing with moral issues. They may have the tough-minded and self-disciplined attitude which enables them to act with integrity in the face of temptation.

However, this preference for thinking also highlights a number of points of potential weakness in the British Assemblies of God. For example, it may be that thinking types may find it difficult to put themselves in the positions of others when making decisions. As a consequence, there is a danger that in the British Assemblies of God decisions may be made on the basis of objective criteria in order to adhere to principles of justice and truth, without due consideration for mercy and compassion. This has implications for the relationships of the members of the British Assemblies of God in three key areas.

First, the finding that the current sample of male British Assemblies of God bible college students prefers thinking has implications for intra-church relationships. Feeling types within the British Assemblies of God may feel their wants and values are marginalised if they are immersed within a predominantly thinking type environment. Feeling types may feel that their strengths are overlooked and that their needs are unmet. Thinking types within the British Assemblies of God may be advised to take care to balance concern for integrity and logical judgement with emphasis on the interpersonal Christian values of love, harmony, mercy, and compassion for humankind, in order to accommodate better the gifts and needs of feeling types.

Second, the finding that the current sample of male British Assemblies of God bible college students prefers thinking has implications for inter-denominational relationships. Ecumenical development may be enhanced by recognition that the predominant thinking type preference of the British Assemblies of God differs from the predominant feeling type preference found in many other Christian denominations. It may be the case that issues of debate and division between the churches may be explicable by psychological type theory. Different approaches to decision-making among Christian denominations may result in dissension and even conflict, with some churches focusing the feeling type interpersonal values of love and compassion over the thinking type principles of truth and righteousness. For example, the commitment of the British Assemblies of God to integrity may result in an appearance of dogmatism in their approach to controversial issues of belief and behaviour, as perceived by other Christian denominations. An understanding of type theory may help churches to appreciate the values of other denominations and to 'hear and speak each others' distinctive language' during inter-church dialogue.

Third, the finding that the current sample of male British Assemblies of God bible college students prefers thinking has implications for relationships with non-churchgoers. There is a danger that to feeling types outside the church the British Assemblies of God may appear single-mindedly uncompromising in their commitment to righteousness, and they may run the risk of presenting a morality which takes no account of human weakness. Feeling types outside the church may feel unwelcome in the British Assemblies of God if they perceive that there is an unwillingness to empathise with people and to meet them where they are at.

Having noted that the British Assemblies of God seems to attract a greater proportion of thinking types than other Christian denominations, it must be also noted that thinking types are represented among the current sample less frequently than among the male United Kingdom population norms. The population norms were established by Kendall (1998) and show that among 748 representative men in the United Kingdom, 65% of men prefer thinking. In contrast, among the current sample of male Assemblies of God bible college students, just 56% preferred thinking. This finding suggests that, although thinking types may be overrepresented among the British Assemblies of God prefer feeling more frequently than the wider, unchurched population.

The current study has outlined the psychological type preferences of male British Assemblies of God bible college students. On the one hand, the data have revealed clear preferences for thinking to a much greater extent than other Christian denominations. On the other hand, the data have revealed preferences for thinking to a lesser extent than among the wider male population. However, the generalisability of the current study is limited as it focuses upon one section of the British Assemblies of God, namely bible college students. Further research among churchgoers and ordained members of the Assemblies of God is now needed to explore whether these finding are consistent among both lay people and the leadership of the British Assemblies of God.

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Table 1. Type Distributionfor male Assemblies of God bible college studentsN = 190 + = 1% of N

	The Sixteen Complete Types			Dichotomous Preferences		
ISTJ n = 31 (16.3%)	ISFJ n = 22 (11.6%)	INFJ n = 5 (2.6%)	INTJ n = 4 (2.1%)	E $n = 98$ (51.6%) I $n = 92$ (48.4%)		
+++++ +++++ +	+++++ ++++++ ++	+++	++	$\begin{array}{llllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllll$		
				T $n = 106$ (55.8%) F $n = 84$ (44.2%)		
				J $n = 124$ (65.3%) P $n = 66$ (34.7%)		
ISTP $n = 11$	ISFP n = 5	INFP $n = 9$	INTP $n = 5$	Pairs and Temperaments		
(5.8%) +++++ +	(2.6%) +++	(4.7%) +++++	(2.6%) +++	IJ $n = 62$ (32.6%) IP $n = 30$ (15.8%) EP $n = 36$ (18.9%) EL $n = 62$ (22.6%)		
				EJ $n = 62$ (32.6%) ST $n = 86$ (45.3%) SF $n = 55$ (28.9%)		
ESTP n = 10	ESFP $n = 12$	ENFP $n = 8$	ENTP $n = 6$	NF $n = 29$ (15.3%) NT $n = 20$ (10.5%)		
(5.3%) +++++	(6.3%) +++	(4.2%) ++++	(3.2%) +++	SJ $n = 103$ (54.2%) SP $n = 38$ (20.0%) NP $n = 28$ (14.7%)		
				NJ $n = 21$ (11.1%) TJ $n = 74$ (38.9%)		
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ	TP $n = 32$ (16.8%) FP $n = 34$ (17.9%) FJ $n = 50$ (26.3%)		
n = 34 (17.9%) +++++	n = 16 (8.4%) +++++	n = 7 (3.7%) ++++	n = 5 (2.6%) +++	IN $n = 23$ (12.1%) EN $n = 26$ (13.7%)		
++++ +++	+++			IS $n = 69$ (36.3%) ES $n = 72$ (37.9%)		
				ET $n = 55$ (28.9%) EF $n = 43$ (22.6%) IF $n = 41$ (21.6%) IT $n = 51$ (26.8%)		
Jungian Types (E)		Types (I)	Dominant Types	01 William V V I I'- I F		
	% 20.5 I-TP 12.1 I-FP	n % 16 8.4 14 7.4	<i>n</i> Dt. T 55 Dt. F 37	 William K Kay, Leslie J Francis and Charlotte L Craig 19.5 		
	11.6 IS-J 7.4 IN-J	53 27.9 9 4.7	Dt. S 75 Dt. N 23	 39.5 Psychological types of 12.1 male AOG bible college students 		

Sample	Ν	Thinking	Feeling
		%	%
Church of England curates ¹	unknown	40	60
Church of England curates ¹	unknown	36	64
Church of England curates ¹	unknown	44	56
Church of England clergy ¹	unknown	28	72
Church of England churchgoers ¹	unknown	6	94
Church of England churchgoers ¹	unknown	30	70
Church of England churchgoers ¹	unknown	33	67
Anglican theological college students ¹	unknown	35	65
Anglican theological college students ¹	unknown	40	60
Male Church of Scotland clergy ²	147	31	69
Male Anglican Clergy in Wales ³	427	31	69
Male Evangelical Bible College students ⁴	278	50	50
Church in Wales churchgoers ⁵	101	35	65
Male Church of England churchgoers ⁶	116	52	48
Female Church of England churchgoers ⁶	211	27	73
Male AOG bible college students ⁷	190	56	44
Male UK population norms ⁸	748	65	35

Frequencies of Thinking and Feeling among Christian groups and the Table 2 United Kingdom population norms

¹Goldsmith and Wharton (1993)

- ²Irvine (1989) ³Francis, Payne and Jones (2001) ⁴Francis, Penson and Jones (2001) ⁵Craig, Francis, Bailey and Robbins (2003) ⁶Francis, Duncan, Luffman and Craig (2004) ⁷Current study ⁸K and all (1008)
- ⁸Kendall (1998)