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Reading the incident at the pool called Beth-zatha (John 5: 1-16)
through the lenses of dominant introverted feeling, dominant extraverted feeling,
and dominant extraverted thinking: Evaluating text differently

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Abstract

The sensing, intuition, feeling, thinking (SIFT) approach to biblical hermeneutics focused initially on the four distinctive voices of the two perceiving functions (sensing and intuition) and of the two judging functions (thinking and feeling). Subsequent studies have introduced the additional nuance of distinguishing between the introverted and the extraverted expressions of these four functions. The present study brings into focus the distinctive voices of three of the four judging function-orientations, drawing on the involvement of 22 type-aware participants exploring in type-alike groups the incident at the pool called Beth-zatha narrated in John 5: 1-16.

Keywords: reader perspective, psychological type, SIFT method, psychology and Bible, function orientations

Introduction

The SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching as originally crystallised by Francis and Village (2008), was rooted in the model of psychological type theory that differentiates among two perceiving functions (sensing and intuition) and two judging functions (thinking and feeling). The SIFT approach hypothesised that each of these four functions would engage with scripture in distinctively different ways, with sensing types displaying a distinctive interest in the details of the passage, with intuitive types displaying a distinctive capacity to grasp the bigger vision, with feeling types attracted to the deep values and human interest in the passage, and with thinking types taking a critical and analytic approach to the passage.

When they proposed the theoretical foundations for the SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics, Francis and Village (2008) also proposed and initiated a programme of empirical research designed to explore and to test the validity of this theoretical approach. This programme of research involved inviting participants to explore psychological type theory and to become aware of their own individual psychological type preferences. Then participants were invited to work in type-alike groups. The assumption underpinning working in psychological type groups is that, when like-minded people work together, the emerging consensus reinforces type preferences and allows the distinctive voices of the preferences to emerge with greater clarity. Working within type-alike groups participants were invited to reflect on and to respond to a specific passage of scripture. Within this context type-alike groups were constructed in two different ways.

In the first way, type-alike groups were constructed to look at the two psychological processes in turn. Looking at the perceiving process, participants were placed into groups according to their preference for sensing or for intuition. Looking at the judging process, participants were placed into groups according to their preference for thinking or for feeling.

This approach was tested in an initial study by Francis and Jones (2011), focusing on the resurrection narratives reported in Mark's Gospel and in Matthew's Gospel. Groups of sensing types and groups of intuitive types worked with Mark 16: 1-8, a passage rich in material to engage the perceiving process. Groups of thinking types and groups of feeling types worked with Matthew 28: 1-15, a passage rich in material to engage the judging process. This study was conducted twice with two different groups of participants: 26 Anglican ministry training candidates, and 21 Anglican clergy and readers.

In the second way, type alike groups were constructed to look at the four psychological functions at the same time. This meant that participants were placed into groups according to their dominant psychological type preferences, that is to say, according to their strongest and most developed function, irrespective of whether this is a perceiving or a judging function. Thus, this approach distinguished among dominant sensing types, dominant intuitive types, dominant thinking types, and dominant feeling types. This approach was tested in an initial study by Francis (2010) focusing on the account of the feeding of the five thousand recorded in Mark 6: 34-44. This study was also conducted twice with two different groups of participants: 22 Anglican clergy, and 24 Anglican readers.

Recent studies employing one or other of these two approaches to constructing type alike hermeneutical communities have concentrated primarily on exploring the impact of psychological type preference on the interpretation of Psalms or passages from the Gospels. For example, in terms of recent studies working with Psalms, Francis, McKenna, and Sahin (2018) and Francis and Smith (2018) explored interpretation of Psalm 1 (Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked); Francis, Jones, and Ross (2020) and Francis, McKenna, and Sahin (2020) explored interpretation of Psalm 73 (Truly God is good to the upright, to those who are pure in heart); Francis, Smith, and Evans (2021) explored interpretation of Psalm 93 (The Lord is King, he is robed in majesty); and Francis, Smith, and

Corio (2018) explored interpretation of Psalm 139 (O Lord, you have searched me and known me). In terms of recent studies working with passages from the Gospels, Francis and ap Siôn (2016) and Francis and Smith (2017) explored interpretation of Luke 24: 13-35 (The road to Emmaus); Francis and ap Siôn (2017) explored Luke 5: 1-7 (The call of the first disciples); Francis, Smith, and Francis-Dehqani (2017) explored Mark 6: 6b-17 (The missionary journey of the disciples); Francis and Ross (2018) explored Matthew 27: 3-10 (concerning Judas) and Matthew 27: 19-25 (concerning Pilate); Francis, Smith, and Astley (2022) and Francis, Smith, and Francis-Dehqani (2018) explored the theology of grace in Matthew 6: 25-30 (Looking at the birds, considering the lilies); Francis, Jones, and Martinson (2019) explored Mark 1: 4-9 (The Baptism of Jesus); Francis, Jones, and Hebden (2019) explored Matthew 18: 15-18 (teaching about binding and loosing on earth); Francis, Smith, and Evans (2021) explored John 18: 33-37 (Jesus' dialogue with Pilate); and Francis and Stevenson (2024) explored John 21: 1-12a (the resurrection appearance at the lakeside).

This application of psychological type theory is consistent with Jung's own thinking (Jung, 1971) and with the way in which a series of psychometric instruments operationalise his theory, including the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985), the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey & Bates, 1978), and the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005; Francis, Laycock, & Brewster, 2019). However, Jung's own thinking also offered a more nuanced understanding of the four core psychological functions by distinguishing between the introverted expression and the extraverted expression of each function. As well as offering differentiation among the four functions (sensing, intuition, thinking, and feeling), psychological type theory also proposes differentiation among the eight function-orientations (introverted sensing, extraverted sensing, introverted intuition, extraverted intuition, introverted thinking, extraverted thinking, introverted feeling, and extraverted feeling). The description and development of the eight orientation-functions have

been discussed by Beebe (1992, 2017), Thompson (1996), Berens (1999), Haas, McAlpine, and Hartzler (2001), Hartzler and Hartzler (2004, 2005), Berens and Nardi (2004), Hartzler, McAlpine, and Haas (2005), Haas and Hunziker (2006), and Ross and Francis (2020).

A new strand of research developing and extending the SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics has adopted the eight function-orientation model. The first four studies to adopt this approach all concentrated attention on the perceiving process. In the first of these studies, Francis, Strathie, and Ross (2019) profiled the distinctive interpretation of the Beatitudes reported in Matthew 5: 1-10 through the two lenses of introverted sensing and introverted intuition. In the second study, Francis, Stevenson, and Ross (2021) profiled the distinctive interpretation of the Wedding at Cana in Galilee reported in John 2: 1-11 through those same two lenses of introverted sensing and introverted intuition. In the third study, Francis and Ross (2022) profiled the distinctive interpretation of the Parable of the Good Samaritan reported in Luke 10: 25-37 through the two lenses of introverted intuition and extraverted intuition. In the fourth study, Francis and Ross (2025) profiled the distinctive interpretation of the incident at the pool called Beth-zatha reported in John 5: 1-16 through the lenses of introverted intuition and extraverted intuition.

Research question

Against this background, the aim of the present study was to build on and to extend the work reported by Francis and Ross (2025) by returning to the incident at the pool called Beth-zatha reported in John 5: 1-16 and on this occasion exploring the interpretation of this narrative through function-orientations of the judging process. Three judging function-orientations were present within the group studied: introverted feeling, extraverted feeling, and extraverted thinking. The fourth judging function-orientation (introverted thinking) is rare within Christian communities (Ross & Francis, 2020).

Introverted feeling is rooted in awareness of inner values, standards and beliefs, and grounded in the individual's internal values system. It recognises our non-negotiable beliefs. Introverted feeling thrives on internal harmony. The outside world is assessed and measured against these deeply held internal values. For introverted feeling decisions in the external world are based on this internal system of values. Introverted feeling recognises when others are suffering from internal disharmony and tries to offer support. When its own values are challenged introverted feeling does not compromise. It is the most intensely subjective of all the functions.

Extraverted feeling is rooted in maintaining positive, caring, harmonised relationships with others. It is motivated to build relationships through acceptance and trust and may shy away from sharing difference in opinion or perspective. Extraverted feeling cares for others' feelings and may seek to defend or protect others, making evaluations on how they see others' needs. Extraverted feeling takes a deep interest in other people and connects easily with others who hold the same fundamental values and are seen as warm, outgoing and understanding individuals.

Extraverted thinking is rooted in objective analysis that is aware of external circumstances. Extraverted thinking operates in the outside world by imposing boundaries on the problems being solved to ensure that they are manageable. It strives to find the best decisions within the time available, rather than the best possible of all decisions. Here is a logical and analytical pragmatism. Extraverted thinking tends to operate within the framework of recognised rules, policies and regulations and to apply this framework with consistency and rigor. The foundations for the decided outcomes need to be clearly established and stated.

Method

Procedure

The hermeneutical community was formed online within the annual seminar convened in 2021 by the Network for Psychological Type and Christian Faith. Before the seminar participants were emailed the incident at the pool called Beth-zatha from John 5: 1-16 in the translation provided by the New Revised Standard Version and given notice that within the hermeneutical community constituted by the seminar they would be invited to address the following issue: ‘Bring your preferred dominant and auxiliary functions out to play. What do you perceive and evaluate in this passage of scripture?’

Analysis of the psychological type profiles of the 22 participants indicated that it would be possible to constitute six hermeneutical communities, three of which were shaped by a dominant judging function-orientation and will be drawn into the present analysis. The analysis is therefore based on 9 of the 22 participants.

Participants

The group of four dominant introverted feeling types comprised four INFPs, two females (Louise and Margaret) and two males (Owen and Patrick). The group of three dominant extraverted feeling types comprised two ENFJs (Andy and Sidney) and one ESFJ (Yvonne). The group of two dominant extraverted thinking types comprised one male (Harry) and one female (Emma), both ENTJs.

Analysis

The three groups were recorded within the online platform and each of these video recordings was analysed and documented by the first author. The second author engaged the documented data with the wider literature.

Results

Dominant introverted feeling

The group of four dominant introverted feeling types comprised four INFPs, two females (Louise and Margaret) and two males (Owen and Patrick). Owen opened the group by

clarifying the aim which was talking about the passage with a sense of our dominant and auxiliary functions; he asked, 'Do we know what these are?'. Margaret was quick to provide the answer: dominant introverted feeling with extraverted intuition.

Louise then set the ball rolling by vocalising what had made her feel uncomfortable when she heard the passage. 'I was uncomfortable with the fact that it refers to the Jews as though they are the enemy', she said. Then Louise anchored her feeling in current reporting of anti-Semitism and her personal network of Jewish friends. 'I get annoyed with John', she said, 'Jesus too was a Jew – why call them the Jews?'. Reflecting further on her deep-seated lack of comfort, Louise noted that she was identifying with them as the underdog in the story.

Margaret sought to mollify the situation and suggested that John identified them as the Jews simply to distinguish them from the other people around at the time – the Romans and the Greeks. Then she asked Louise if she would have felt more comfortable with John referring to them as the Pharisees. Louise said that she would, pointing out semi-humorously that she did not know any Pharisees. Owen wanted to provide a wider context by pointing out that Gospel scholarship had long been alert to antisemitic strands in John's Gospel. Then Margaret, drawing on her own experience as an American living in Britain, observed that 'Not all Americans think the same thing, although most British people think they do'.

Concerned to redirect the conversation, Owen asked, 'So what about the paralysed man?'. Patrick responded that he found himself reacting to the paralysed man with a bit of irritation. To him the man seems to be feeling sorry for himself. When he is asked the question, 'Do you want to be made well?', he doesn't even bother to answer it. Patrick added, 'That is so introverted. He is so caught up in himself. He is hiding something. He has been hiding something for 38 years. But Jesus sees right through him.'

Louise is keen to understand why the man responded as he did. Perhaps he is depressed in some way. Perhaps he is someone who hasn't the energy to make decisions

about what they really want. Louise grounded this interpretation by reference to a friend who had been on anti-depressants for 20 years. Margaret wondered whether the man may have tried many times to get into the water when it was stirred up, but his friends had never got there in time, and so he had given up in despair.

Owen offered a different take on the motivation and character of the paralysed man, saying, 'I think I am a bit more cynical about him. He is a con artist. He doesn't want to get in that pool. Jesus says to him get up, pick up his bed, and stop messing about'.

Patrick picks up on Owen's lead. Perhaps Jesus is asking the man whether he wants 'to get over himself'. There is something empowering in what Jesus asked him to do. Jesus saw him as unwell. Jesus knew that he had been there a long time. Jesus knew that he was stuck, and he challenged him to change the situation. Owen spotted the danger of complicity in social problems. People had been saying that there was nothing they could do to solve that man's problems. They would chuck him some money and that simply perpetuated the problem. Margaret built on that lead, saying that it would have taken time, energy and commitment to help him. He would have needed someone to stay with him over a long period of time to be there the moment the water was stirred up. And even then, there was no guarantee that he would have been the first into the pool. Today it is easier to give money to the guy busking in the street than to say, 'Hi, what is your issue, can I help?'.

In the same vein, Louise found a contemporary parallel and observed that often the establishment makes it worse by doing stuff for people when they have really got to do it for themselves. Here Jesus is saying to the man that he can lead a normal life. Then later Jesus says to him that he must keep on doing things for himself – otherwise he will step back into something even worse.

Louise gave more thought to the statement about 38 years in particular. This is very precise. It suggests that someone present at the Beth-zatha pool knew the individual and was

familiar with his life. Louise also pondered what Jesus' intervention achieved. She saw Jesus' empowerment of the man as a political threat to the *status quo*. Paralysed and sitting there, he was no threat to anyone. Now up and about, carrying his own mat, he was likely to follow Jesus the healer and give further credence to Jesus' threat to the *status quo*. For Patrick this idea prompted further reflection on how Jesus continues to threaten the *status quo*.

Owen gave more thought to Jesus' strange warning to the man, 'Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you'. Nothing worse than what? Nothing worse than what has just happened, being suddenly healed. Owen also remained puzzled that the paralysed man did not know who Jesus was. Surely if a well-known healer dropped in on the pool, he would have looked up and taken note. For Patrick this observation simply confirmed just how turned in upon himself that man had become. Patrick could hear that same man saying, 'You know what? I have been here for 38 years, for 38 years'. He was really stuck. For Patrick the story challenges each of us to look back and to ask the questions, 'Where am I stuck? Am I able to take the step? Can I do it?'

By this point, however, time had run out. Owen offered to report to the plenary and the group decided to take a break.

Dominant extraverted feeling

The group of three dominant extraverted feeling types comprised two male ENFJs (Andy and Sidney) and one female ESFJ (Yvonne). This group of dominant extraverted feeling types began the session by wanting to get to know each other. Andy suggested that each in turn should say who they are and where they are from. Each contributor was affirmed and some of the personal information explored a little further. For this group, the participants seemed to hold greater interest than the text sitting in front of them.

Andy, who had orchestrated the personal introductions, then turned attention to the task in hand, 'Now we have to look at the passage. Our brief was to look at it from our

dominant function. We are all dominant F. What were your reactions to this healing story?' Framing the question this way Andy was already putting his cards on the table. For Andy the human interest in the story was captured by the word 'healing'.

What appealed to Sidney in the story was the attention given to the words of those involved. This was more than a narrative report. Sidney could hear Jesus saying to the man 'Do you want to be made well?'. Sidney could feel the despair in the man as he said, 'I have no one put me into the pool when the water is stirred up.'

Andy caught the direction of Sidney's comment and said that this reminded him of the conversation in one of Luke's stories about healing. Luke really does feel like an eyewitness account. Sidney affirmed this connection, 'And that is why Luke would be so attractive to us feeling types. Luke is strong on details and people. It has to be good'. Meanwhile, Yvonne is nodding agreement and affirmation.

Listening to Andy and to Sidney, Yvonne reflected on her personal response to the passage. Listening to the passage being read, Yvonne recognised that she had engaged with the personal narrative up to the point when the healed man was asked to pick up his mat and walk. 'It began to lose me when it moved on to "Now the day was a sabbath" and the Jews were getting involved. I lost my natural engagement and had to start focusing in order to work out what was going on. At the beginning I was visualising the invalids gathered round the five porticoes. I was picturing all those individuals.'

Sidney agreed with Yvonne's analysis. For him the first half is the story and the second half is commentary. It is the first half that grabs our attention. Yvonne affirmed this insight, 'Exactly, exactly'. Sidney added emphatically, 'What do you need the commentary for?'

Andy said that he had prepared for the session by reading Tom Wright's commentary on the passage. Two things had struck him from the commentary, one positively and the other

not so positively. The positive point was that Wright had connected the healing in chapter 5 with the healing of the son of a royal official at the close of chapter 4. The two healings followed each other and in both cases the healing is effected through a word spoken by Jesus: in the first case 'Your son will live', and in the second case 'Take your mat and walk'. We can hear Jesus saying these things.

On the other hand, Andy was 'quite horrified' by Wright's second point. On Andy's reading, Wright was saying that Jesus' aim was to get the man away from the pool. He tells the man that he has to get up and take responsibility for his life. Andy's interpretation of events was very different. 'I think that was rather hard. I don't think he was enjoying being there at all. I think Jesus just had huge compassion for him and was aware of his problems.'

Andy went on to say that he was also disturbed by the tradition that when the water was stirred only the first person there claims the healing. Moreover, he didn't really know what to make of Jesus warning the man, 'Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.'

Yvonne agreed that she found this difficult as well. 'That is something I can't naturally understand or engage with. I can't get my head around it.' Andy reaffirmed this response, 'It doesn't read very comfortably, does it?'. Sensing the growing lack of comfort with the passage, this group of extraverted feeling types wanted to move onto more comfortable territory. Moving away from the passage under discussion, their conversation for the last ten minutes of the session moved from the text to exploring the people who were engaging with the text. This time they wanted to explore how each of them experienced their shared preferences for extraversion and for judging in their personal lives and in their professional ministries. In this way the session ended, just as it had begun, with the three individuals establishing what they had in common and affirming each other's responses.

Dominant extraverted thinking

The group of two dominant extraverted thinking types comprised one male (Harry) and one female (Emma), both ENTJs. Harry spoke first observing that this was an interesting piece. It had already got his mind engaged. Emma interjected quickly to ensure that they were both on task, 'What do you perceive and what do you evaluate in this passage of scripture?' she read aloud and deliberately. Harry repeated the question and checked that it was the same instruction for all the groups. Emma reflected on the implications of that precise question for ENTJ groups 'I assume that we perceive with our auxiliary and evaluate with our dominant'.

Using his dominant function of extraverted thinking Harry identified the three issues that had already engaged his mind and he listed them in order. The first issue concerned what he called 'the limited energy concept'. Here there is the notion of a finite amount of healing energy in the water. People are thinking that if they can get in first, they will use up all the available energy. The second issue concerned what he called 'spiritual competition'. People were being competitive about wanting to get healed. Their thoughts were only for themselves and not for anyone else. The third issue concerned the assumption that misfortune and sin were linked. People were assuming that they were unwell as a consequence of sin. For Harry each of these issues needed serious and careful analysis.

Using her auxiliary function of introverted intuition, Emma linked the narrative with what she called a striking painting held within the modern art collection of the Methodist Church of Great Britain. This painting of the pool by the Sheep Gate was 'a vision of hell because there is so much disease and torment there.' It was the picture that raised fundamental questions in Emma's mind, first about the origin of disease and suffering and then about the purpose of the narrative within John's Gospel.

Harry felt that he needed to address the second of Emma's questions and bring some clarity to bear on that. Harry argued that this specific healing narrative may have been foundational to John's antisemitic agenda. John stood out strongly against a certain style of

religion, the religion exemplified by the Pharisees. To establish his point, Harry went directly to the last sentence of the passage, ‘Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath’.

Emma, keen to verify Harry’s argument, reached for her Bible. ‘Is this the first mention of the Jews persecuting Jesus in John’s Gospel?’ she asked. Remembering that John had transferred the narrative of Jesus cleansing the temple from where it stood in the Synoptic Gospels (as the prelude to the Passion Narrative) to chapter two in his Gospel, she looked up that passage. In the Synoptic Gospels after the cleansing of the temple the chief priests and the scribes sought to kill Jesus. In John’s Gospel, the cleansing of the temple passes without controversy. In John’s Gospel the trigger for the Jews persecuting Jesus was something way less dramatic, but closely pinned to their understanding of the Law. They set against Jesus because he healed someone who had been an invalid for 38 years and did so on the sabbath.

What then caught Harry’s attention was how the scene in John’s Gospel had moved from the pool to the temple. It seems that it was in the temple that the Jews began to plot against Jesus. This is something that deserves further attention, but unfortunately by this point time had run out.

Discussion

Dominant introverted feeling

The group of dominant introverted feeling types were comfortable speculating in contrasting ways about psychological motivation in relation to (1) the problematic orientation of the author of John’s Gospel toward Jewish religious leaders at the time of Jesus’s active ministry, (2) the conscious motivations for Jesus’ speech and actions regarding the paralysed individual, (3) the conscious and probably unconscious motivations underlying the latter’s paralysis, and (4) how the latter’s motivation related to his behaviour and speech toward

Jesus immediately following his healing and later in the temple with Jesus and some religious leaders. All these themes are congruent with the introductory description of introverted feeling, particularly in regard to ‘awareness of inner values, standards and beliefs’.

The conversational atmosphere that suffused the extensive and diverse exchanges of these four introverted feeling types accords also with classical descriptions of introverted feeling. Jung (1971) felt that the saying ‘Still waters run deep’ (p. 381) spoke to an essential quality of this function-orientation. Indeed, the speed with which participants shared their insights underscores the propensity for self-reflection that characterises dominant introverted feeling types. Nevertheless, both confrontation and conflict were present in this group, but were kept within reasonable bounds. Louise expressed annoyance at John’s prejudice toward Jewish religious traditions, and this brought in Margaret to soften her sense of the dissonant impact of Louise’s tone on everyone, with the more benign explanation that the fourth evangelist wanted merely to distinguish the inhabitants of Palestine from other ethnic groups within the Roman Empire. To make sure Louise’s remark was more effectively addressed – and its tone diffused – Owen sought to cast the issue in a historical scholarly context. These gambits by Margaret and Owen are in keeping with a remark made by John Beebe (in a personal communication), when he stated that as a party host he values a few introverted feeling types since their quiet valuing of inner harmony percolates and ensures nothing will get wild or out of hand at the party.

Introverted feeling has been identified as the most subjective of the eight function-orientations. This aspect is reflected in a number of highly personalised responses made by all four participants. For instance, ‘Louise noted that she identified with them (the Jewish religious leaders) as the underdog in the story’. Margaret moved on from her first comment mildly challenging Louise’s exasperation with John’s antisemitism by portraying herself as subject to British stereotypes of Americans that she had encountered as an American living in

the UK. Patrick for his part expressed irritation with the paralysed man's emotional complexity and inaccurately accused him of avoiding Jesus' confronting question: 'Do you want to be healed'. Patrick seemed oblivious to the rejoinder that the paralysed person made to Jesus, namely that he has no one to take him to the water when turbulence of the pool activates its healing potential. Patrick went on to impute deception: 'He is hiding something'. Louise and Margaret in turn then moved to defend the man on the grounds of him being depressed, or de-spirited. The other male in the group, Owen, was also critical of the healed man, but used a less respectful epithet: according to Owen, 'He is a con artist'.

The female introverted feeling types were initially more critical of the context of the healing narrative, but moved towards each other from initial points of divergence, whereas the men converged in being critical of the paralysed person as a malingerer and valorise Jesus' approach as tough love. In the concluding conversation Margaret brought in an understanding of the complexity of the paralysed person's motivation, along with the social situation by the pool, saying that the remedy to his situation required the willingness of another human to provide a sustained and sustaining relationship to the person Jesus chose to heal. This remark reflects the subtlety of reflection available when the sensitivity of dominant introverted feeling is harnessed to the complexity of auxiliary extraverted intuition as it is in INFPs.

Gender is invariably relevant to accounting for conversational patterns and often interacts with the different frequency of psychological type of genders. In the case of introverted feeling types with auxiliary extraverted intuition, according to the population norms (Kendall, 1998) there are in the UK a higher frequency of males than females (3.6% among men compared to 2.7% among women): 6.5% would be the expected frequency if all sixteen types were equally represented in a given population. Thus, both male and female INFPs, it could be argued, might feel 'oppressed minorities'. However, by the same token it

is reasonable to hypothesise that male INFPs may feel more ‘othered’ by prevailing male gender norms in Britain. This may go some way to explain the milder attitude exemplified by Owen’s response toward dissonance between the women in the group in contrast to his intense reaction, and that of Patrick, to the triangulated conflict between male healer, the healed man and the male local religious leadership.

Louise persisted in her benign introverted feeling reformulation when she plumbed the depths of Jesus’ possible insights into the paralysed person’s situation, reframing Jesus’ seemingly stern injunction in terms of contemporary psychological sensibilities ‘Sin no more’ as a strong directive to re-contact his human capacity for agency despite whatever trauma he may have suffered earlier in his life.

Dominant extraverted feeling

Extraverted feeling has been described as making ‘judgements and determinations in harmony with generally accepted values of some kind based on human relatedness’ (Ross & Francis, 2020, p, 33). This function-orientation is concerned with the development of harmony among people. Accordingly at the start of the extraverted feeling type-alike group a significant amount of time was devoted to validating each member before the text received any attention. For this type – extraverted feeling dominants – process precedes outcome. When the text was eventually addressed, the story was designated ‘a healing narrative’. Moreover the gerund (a verbal noun) – healing – was assumed by the group to be not only an active process but also an inter-active one involving a human agent, Jesus, the one who conducts the healing, along with a human object, the literally long-suffering paralysed male, who is the recipient of Jesus’ energetic presence expressed through speech. This approach to healing contrasts with a more introverted sense of healing prevailing in contemporary holistic approaches to health, as in the assertion ‘Jane is healing well’ in which the assumption is that

of an internal method, albeit one that may manifest externally with the passage of time in the reduction of overt symptoms.

Although the first speaker, Andy, designated the story an account of healing in this active sense of the word, in which one human being does something to another human being, it is noteworthy that Jesus does not actually touch the man. However, Sidney, who was the second speaker, leaves us in no doubt that speech is an act. For Sidney claims that he could literally 'hear Jesus saying to the man "Do you want to be made well?"'. Sidney was also able to resonate empathically to the despair in the man as the latter said, 'I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up.' There appeared to be gathering in the group a felt sense of enacted drama arising through verbal interaction of this nature. When the function-orientation of extraverted feeling prevails, events are experienced dramatically: direct speech is valued and focussed upon, and interactive encounter is selected for comment.

The one woman in the group, Yvonne, was automatically engaged in the opening verses by the healing drama, but was set back when the narrative shifted to the debate in the temple as to the whether sabbath rules had been violated, an issue for her that could probably only be resolved by bringing to bear the function orientations of (1) introverted thinking – in order to discern the most salient distinctions for evaluating the healing interaction, followed in turn by the deployment of (2) extraverted thinking in order to determine the practical implications of a moral infraction.

Yvonne's interest in the narrative, however, was rekindled for her – as an ENFJ, dominant extraverted feeling with auxiliary introverted intuition – through the stirring of her nurturing introverted intuition (Beebe, 2017; Ross & Francis, 2020) to imagine the collective plight of suffering people around a pool of water gathered singularly by hope of alleviating their respective suffering. As Yvonne averred, 'I was visualising the invalids gathered round the five porticoes. I was picturing all those individuals.' Their situation may well have been

disturbing for Yvonne, but it seemed her attention was enlivened by its contrast to the deadening deliberation of rule infraction and its potential consequences.

Sidney corroborated Yvonne's analysis, even conferring a different ontological status to the second part of the narrative enacted in the temple – reducing the equally active speech acts between the temple-goers to a secondary level of 'commentary'. This affords an insight into the potentially high intensity of discord between individuals of different psychological types. It is one thing to disagree, but another to invalidate a speech act that draws on another function orientation. This may be particularly the case for extraverted feeling types, for whom, when confronted with difference of opinion, there is not only the problem of the issue to be resolved between the individuals but also the disequilibrium that the extraverted feeling type experiences when out of harmony with another human being, which in turn produces the wish to invalidate that source of the external disharmony, the other human being who is experienced as 'disagreeable'. Further research is required, as other function-orientations may also show up as destabilising and invalidating. In fact the authors, NTJs both, may be projecting their own shadow functions in singling out extraverted feeling in this regard.

The intensity of extraverted feeling was again revealed in the closing interaction when Andy showed no reserve in expressing strong positive and negative opinions about the commentator, Tom Wright (2010), whose commentary he had consulted. By the same token both Andy and Yvonne expressed disapproval of the competitive healing scenario described by the narrator in which only the first in the pool is healed. It felt almost that the author of John's Gospel was responsible for the competition he reported, a phenomenon that has been referred to as 'shooting the messenger'.

Because of the disposition of the function-orientation of extraverted feeling to cherish harmony at almost any price, Yvonne and Andy struggled with the apparent moral judgementalism in Jesus' injunction to refrain from sinning in the future. It seems that when

extraverted feeling is the dominant function-orientation operative in a group culture, phenomena are perforce personalised, which generates a persisting dramatic atmosphere that may, however, be tiring or even exhausting for individuals for whom extraverted feeling shows up in their shadow personality.

Dominant extraverted thinking

Both the male and the female ENTJs demonstrated the goal-oriented, structuring characteristic of extraverted thinking by first confirming the shared purpose of the group. Emma read out the instructions so that they both could be ‘on track’ from the outset, while Harry exhibited the broad vision of his auxiliary introverted intuition by checking that their specific instruction was consistent across all the type-alike groups.

There followed Harry’s immediate differentiation of three issues: (1) the pool’s limited healing energy, (2) the culture of competition arising for this finite spiritual resource, and (3) the belief that sin causes disease. The swiftness of Harry’s formulation demonstrates the ineluctable concern with abstraction that arises when intuition combines with thinking. Such agility validates the emphasis that Keirsey and Bates (1978) place on certain combinations of function orientations in their four-fold temperament theory: intuition paired with thinking (NT), intuition paired with feeling (NF), sensing paired with an extraverted judging function-orientation (SJ) and extraverted sensing combined with an introverted judging function-orientation (SP).

The present authors’ shared NTJ speculation is that, if there were ESTJ’s in the group, then there would be a vigorous debate as to how much valuable time should be spent on a careful sensing study of the text as opposed to time devoted to idle intuitive conjecture. Nevertheless, no sooner had Harry articulated such far-reaching issues for analysis, than Emma in a single imaginative leap revisited a modern painting – at her Church’s headquarters – of the healing at Beth-zatha pool. In her view, the painting collapsed two of the issues that

Harry had enumerated – spiritual competition and disease causation – into ‘a vision of hell’. This depiction Emma then further intensified as constituting additional evidence for the Fourth Gospel’s antisemitic narrative arc. Thus, competition for a limited spiritual resource became transmogrified into a competing spiritual vision – healing kindness set against obligatory Sabbatarian commemoration of divine cosmic rest.

Harry built further on this intensity by arguing the centrality of legalism versus healing in John’s Gospel. Harry drew attention to John’s early placement of this Sabbath healing as signifying the episode as the triggering factor in the escalation a conflict of religious emphasis, into a life and death existential one and sets the trajectory toward Jesus’ passion.

The intuitive thinking couple riffed off of each other’s imaginative associations, with Emma adding the contrasting time location of the temple cleansing within the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels. At the very end, a new reflective set may have been underway – the significance of the temple as a locale of confrontation, perhaps symbolic of the polarization of a past-and-place on the one hand and kindness-and-the-future on the other. However, true to the dynamic psychological structure of the ENTJ, while on the inside introverted intuition can ‘go anywhere instantly’, on the outside order should be observed according to the dictates of extraverted thinking, and so the conversation ended at the appointed time.

Conclusion

Building on a set of four earlier studies reported by Francis, Strathie, and Ross (2019), Francis, Stevenson, and Ross (2021), Francis and Ross (2022), and Francis and Ross (2025), the present study stands as part of a programme of research designed to test the expansion of the SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching from concern with the four functions proposed by psychological type theory to the eight Jungian function-

orientations. In their earlier study, Francis and Ross (2025) had identified the Johannine narrative of the incident at the pool called Beth-zatha (John 5: 1-16) as a particularly rich narrative capable of engaging a range of function orientations. Taken together the earlier study and the present study have explored the engagement of five of the eight function-orientations (introverted intuition, extraverted intuition, introverted feeling, extraverted feeling, and extraverted thinking). The responses of these five function-orientations, concentrated by working in type-alike groups, have emerged with some clarity in ways that clearly resonated with the analysis of wider literature concerned with the clarification of the function-orientation preferences. From a scientific perspective, that cumulative evidence from all five studies confirm the value of investing in further studies, drawing on a wider range of biblical materials. Such future studies need also to devise research contexts in which the remaining three function-orientations may also be observed (introverted thinking, introverted sensing, and extraverted sensing).

From a practical perspective, the cumulative evidence from all five studies confirm the value of introducing this richer and wider approach to psychological type theory (identifying the eight function-orientations alongside the four functions) within the initial and continuing professional development of religious leaders, biblical scholars, and preachers. Within the broader context of the reader perspective approach to biblical hermeneutics, awareness of the engagement of the eight function-orientations with biblical material may both enrich the diversity of interpretation and also engage a wider and more inclusive community of readers.

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Authors' contributions

L.J.F. took responsibility for overall conceptualisation of the article; C.F.J.R. organised the discussion. Both authors analysed the data and shaped the article.

Ethical considerations

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