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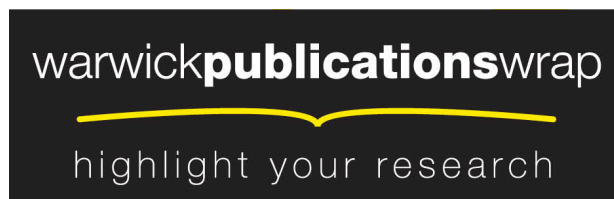
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What happened to the fig tree? An empirical study in psychological type and biblical
hermeneutics

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Abstract

The SIFT method of biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching has its roots in Jungian psychological type theory and maintains that the reading and interpretation of text is shaped by individual preferences within the perceiving process (sensing and intuition) and within the evaluating process (thinking and feeling). The present study tests the empirical foundation for this method by examining the way in which three groups of participants familiar with handling scripture (N = 31, 14, and 47) interpret the Marcan narrative concerning the cleansing of the temple and the cursing of the fig tree. The data provide further support for the psychological principles underpinning the SIFT method.

Keywords: SIFT, hermeneutics, psychological type, psychology, bible, religion

Introduction

The SIFT method of biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching was developed and tested in a three volume response to the Gospel readings proposed for the principal Sunday service by the Revised Common Lectionary (Francis & Atkins, 2000, 2001, 2002), grounded in the wider hermeneutical and homiletic debates by Francis and Village (2008), and displayed in a variety of contexts by Francis (1997, 2003, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2010a). While a number of contextual approaches to hermeneutics have drawn on sociological categories (say gender, oppression, or ethnicity), the SIFT method draws on psychological categories (specifically psychological type theory).

Psychological type theory has its origins in the pioneering and creative work of Carl Jung (see, for example, Jung, 1971), but has been developed, clarified and popularised through a range of psychological assessment devices that have been applied within religious and theological contexts, most notably the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985), the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey & Bates, 1978), and the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005). As generally understood, there are four key components to psychological type theory, and each of these four components can be experienced and expressed in two distinctive and opposing ways. The theory distinguishes between two orientations (introversion and extraversion), two perceiving processes (sensing and intuition), two judging processes (thinking and feeling), and two attitudes toward the outer world (judging and perceiving).

The two orientations are concerned with where energy is drawn from and focused. On the one hand, extraverts are orientated toward the outer world; they are energised by the events and people around them. They enjoy communicating and thrive in stimulating and exciting environments. They tend to focus their attention on what is happening outside themselves. They are usually open people, easy to get to know, and enjoy having many

friends. On the other hand, introverts are orientated toward their inner world; they are energised by their inner ideas and concepts. They enjoy solitude, silence, and contemplation, as they tend to focus their attention on what is happening in their inner life. They may prefer to have a small circle of intimate friends rather than many acquaintances.

The two perceiving functions are concerned with the way in which people perceive information. On the one hand, sensing types focus on the realities of a situation as perceived by the senses. They tend to concentrate on specific details, rather than on the overall picture. They are concerned with the actual, the real, and the practical, and tend to be down to earth and matter of fact. On the other hand, intuitive types focus on the possibilities of a situation, perceiving meanings and relationships. They may feel that perception by the senses is not as valuable as information gained from the unconscious mind as indirect associations and concepts impact on their perception. They focus on the overall picture, rather than on specific facts and data.

The two judging functions are concerned with the criteria which people use to make decisions and judgements. On the one hand, 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. On the other hand, 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.

The two attitudes toward the outer world are concerned with which of the two sets of functions (that is, perceiving or judging), is preferred in dealings with the outer world. On the one hand, judging types seek to order, rationalise, and structure their outer world, as they actively judge external stimuli. They enjoy routine and established patterns. They prefer to

follow schedules in order to reach established goals and may make use of lists, timetables, or diaries. They tend to be punctual, organised, and tidy. They prefer to make decisions quickly and to stick to their conclusions once made. On the other hand, perceiving types do not seek to impose order on the outer world, but are more reflective, perceptive, and open, as they perceive external stimuli. They have a flexible, open-ended approach to life. They enjoy change and spontaneity. They prefer to leave projects open in order to adapt and improve them. Their behaviour may often seem impulsive and unplanned.

Jung's view is that each individual develops one of the perceiving functions (sensing or intuition) at the expense of the other, and one of the judging functions (feeling or thinking) at the expense of the other. Moreover, for each individual either the preferred perceiving function or the preferred judging function takes preference over the other, leading to the emergence of one dominant function which shapes the individual's dominant approach to life. Dominant sensing shapes the practical person. Dominant intuition shapes the imaginative person. Dominant feeling shapes the humane person. Dominant thinking shapes the analytic person. According to Jungian type theory the function paired with the dominant function is known as the 'inferior function'. It is here that individuals experience most difficulty. The dominant sensors may struggle with intuition; dominant intuitives may struggle with sensing; dominant feelers may struggle with thinking; and dominant thinkers may struggle with feeling.

In essence, the SIFT method of biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching addresses to each passage of scripture in a systematic way the four sets of questions posed by the four psychological functions of sensing and intuition (the two perceiving functions) and of thinking and thinking (the two judging functions). The two perceiving functions (sensing and intuition) are applied first, since the perceiving process is concerned with gathering information and ideas. This is the irrational process unconcerned with making judgements or

with formulating evaluations. The two judging functions (thinking and feeling) are applied second, since the judging process is concerned with evaluating information and ideas. Both feeling and thinking are rational functions.

The SIFT method of biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching was developed initially on the basis of theoretical extrapolation from psychological type theory. Subsequently a small body of empirical research has begun to test this application of theory using both quantitative (Village & Francis, 2005; Francis, Robbins, & Village, 2009; Village (2010) and qualitative (Francis, 2010b) approaches.

The first quantitative study Village and Francis (2005) invited a sample of 404 lay adult Anglicans from 11 different churches to read a healing story from Mark's Gospel and then to choose between pairs of interpretative statements designed to distinguish between the perceiving functions (sensing and intuition) or between the judging functions (thinking and feeling). The participants also completed the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey & Bates, 1978) as a measure of psychological type. The data demonstrated that, when forced to choose between contrasting options, participants preferred interpretations that matched their psychological type preferences in both the perceiving process and the judging process.

In the second quantitative study, Francis, Robbins, and Village (2009) invited a sample of 389 experienced preachers to read Mark 1:29-39 and to record their evaluations of the four reflections on this passage proposed originally by Francis (1997) and which were derived from the SIFT method of biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching. The participants also completed the 126-item Form G (Anglicised) of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985) as a measure of psychological type. The data demonstrated that preachers were four times more likely to prefer a sensing interpretation of the text rather than a thinking interpretation, emphasising the richness of the narrative rather than facing the theological questions posed by it. Moreover, there was little evidence to

suggest that preachers were less likely to appreciate interpretations consonant with their less preferred function than those consonant with their most preferred or dominant function. In this sense, the SIFT method should be accessible to preachers of all psychological types.

In the third quantitative study, Village (2010) invited a sample of 718 recently ordained Anglican clergy serving in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales to read the healing story from Mark 9:14-29 and to select between interpretative statements designed to appeal to particular psychological type preferences. The participants also completed the Francis Psychological Type Scale (Francis, 2005) as a measure of psychological type. The data demonstrated that, after controlling for differences in biblical conservatism, preferences for interpretation were significantly correlated with psychological type function preferences in both the perceiving process and the judging process. These findings confirmed and expanded the findings from the earlier study among Anglican lay people reported by Village and Francis (2005).

In the one qualitative study so far conducted in this field, Francis (2010b) studies two groups of Anglican preachers (24 licensed readers in England and 22 licensed clergy in Northern Ireland). Both groups followed the same procedure. First, the ideas underpinning the theology and psychology of individual differences were introduced and workshop opportunities were provided to explore type theory. Then participants completed the 1995 edition of the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey, 1998). The findings of the type sorter were used to allocate the participants to dominant type groups (dominant sensing, dominant intuition, dominant thinking, and dominant feeling). The dominant type groups were asked to prepare a presentation on their approach to Mark 6: 34-44 (the feeding of the five thousand).

These data demonstrated that, when working in type-alike groups, preachers generated preaching material consistent with the emphases of their dominant psychological type.

Sensors gave close attention to the details of the text and focused on practical outcomes.

Intuitives allowed the text to spark their imagination and sometimes ended up with themes far removed from the starting point of the passage itself. *Feelers* saw the passage through the lens of compassionate concern and from the perspective of the people within the narrative. *Thinkers* saw the passage from the perspective of the ongoing theological issues raised.

Francis (2010b) concluded that there were two main limitations with his qualitative study examining the SIFT method of biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching, namely that only two groups of participants were studied and that only one passage of scripture was employed (feeding the five thousand). Reflecting on these limitations, Francis (2010b) argued for replication studies capable of extending the range of scripture and of extending the number of groups of participants.

Against this background, the aim of the present study is to build on, to extend, and to modify the research model displayed by Francis (2010b). This is achieved by four steps. Step one has identified a passage of scripture that accesses themes quite different from those accessed by the feeding of the five thousand, namely Mark 11:11-21 (the cleansing of the temple). Step two has been to identify three further groups of participants (a group of clergy, a group of clergy and lay preachers, a mixed group of people including laity, lay preachers and clergy). Step three has been to distinguish between the perceiving process and the judging process and to invite participants to approach the passage in two ways, first distinguishing between sensing and intuition, and second distinguishing between thinking and feeling. Step four was to present the narrative of Mark 11:11-21 in two stages. For the exercise involving the perceiving process the incident of the fig tree was omitted using only 11:11, 15-19; for the exercise involving the judging process the incident of the fig tree was included using 11: 11-21. This strategy enabled the perceiving process to concentrate on the themes of the entry to Jerusalem and the cleansing of the temple without wrestling with the incident of the fig tree. It also enabled the judging process to view the same passage from a

very different perspective without the sense of focusing on exactly the same context for the second time.

Method

Procedure

All three groups followed a similar procedure. The exercise was embedded in a programme concerned with an introduction to psychological type theory and to the principles of hermeneutical methods that take into account the perspective of the reader. Space was given to complete a measure of psychological type and subgroups were formed on the basis of the preference scores recorded by each individual. In the first workshop, subgroups were created according to the strength of preference recorded for sensing and for intuition. In the second workshop, subgroups were created according to the strength of preference recorded for thinking and for feeling.

Measure

Psychological type was assessed by the 126-item Form G (Anglicised) of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). This instrument uses a forced-choice questionnaire format to indicate preferences between extraversion and introversion, sensing and intuition, thinking and feeling, and judging and perceiving. Broad support for the reliability and validity of the instrument is provided in the international literature, as summarised by Francis and Jones (1999) who additionally demonstrated the stability of the scale properties of the instrument among a sample of 429 adult churchgoers. In another more recent study among 863 Anglican clergy, Francis, Craig, Whinney, Tilley, and Slater (2007) reported the following alpha coefficients: extraversion, .80; introversion, .79; sensing .87; intuition, .82; thinking, .79; feeling, .72; judging, .85; perceiving, .86.

Participants

Study one was conducted among 31 Anglican clergy serving in the Church of England (18 men and 13 women). Study two was conducted among 14 Anglican clergy and licensed readers serving in the Church of England (9 men and 5 women). Study three was conducted among 47 participants, a mixed group of clergy and lay people (15 men and 32 women).

Results and Discussion

Study One

Study one was conducted among 31 Anglican clergy serving in the Church of England (18 men and 13 women). The type profile presented in table 1 demonstrates a slight preference for introversion (17) over extraversion (14), a clear preference for sensing (18) over intuition (13), a marked preference for judging (22) over perceiving (9), and a balance between thinking (16) and feeling (15). In terms of dominant types there were 12 dominant sensors, 7 dominant feelers, 6 dominant thinkers, and 6 dominant intuitives

Perceiving process

After exploring their understanding of the perceiving process and their understanding of the two perceiving functions (sensing and intuition), the group was divided into four sub groups of roughly equal proportions representing high sensing, medium sensing, medium intuition, and high intuition (relative to the profile for the whole group). The passage Mark 11:11 and 15-19 was given to the participants and read aloud (omitting the incident of the fig tree). All four groups were then asked to consider the passage first through the sensing function (what do you see?) and second through the intuitive function (what do you perceive?). They were asked to treat the exercise as preparation for preaching. The responses from each of the group will be presented in turn.

Sensing

The high *sensing* group was keen to research the background for the passage. They looked for evidence in what had preceded this passage in Mark to explain Jesus' anger, to explain the fear of the chief priests, and to explain why people did not grasp what was going on. The quest left them dissatisfied. The evidence was incomplete. They looked for evidence in the Old Testament passages echoed by Mark. They drew attention to Jeremiah 7 and to Isaiah 56. They went in search of other sources of evidence in the Old Testament. Then they focussed on the significance of the text 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations' and tried to pin down the background for the place of Gentiles within the Jewish tradition. This group struggled more to be enthusiastic about identifying major themes from the passage. They settled on posing three questions. What does it mean for God's house to be a house of prayer? What does it mean for God's house to be a house for all nations? What does it mean for Jesus to come and deal with the mess in his house? Even then the group felt more comfortable raising these questions than going beyond the text to speculate about the answers.

The medium *sensing* group took a detailed and close look at the text itself. Considerable time was spent on the opening verses ensuring that the detail had been properly noticed and fully noted. When Jesus entered Jerusalem he went into the temple. He saw the temple to be at the heart of the city and at the centre of his interest in the city. Once there he looked at the whole scene. He took in everything and noted everything he saw. Jesus took his time to observe, to note, and to consider before taking any action. (In this sense Jesus himself displayed the characteristics of dominant introverted sensing). The pause before the action confirms Jesus' commitment to deep consideration and reflection. Considerable time was spent on considering what Jesus actually did in the temple in turning over the tables and driving people out. Considerable time was also spent on the text, 'My house will be called a

house of prayer for all nations'. This text shows that God's love and God's plans stretch to the whole world, and we must not distort, we must not divert God's plans. This group, too, struggled more to be enthusiastic about identifying major themes from the passage. They settled on posing just one question. Where were the disciples when all this was going on; what were they doing; what were they thinking? The question, once posed, was left unanswered.

Intuiton

The high *intuitive* group struggled with exercising the sensing function. When trying to articulate what they saw in the story, they preferred to identify themes rather than detail. At this point five themes emerged. They observed Jesus and saw his abhorrence of sacrilege. They observed the fig tree and saw Mark's device for interrupting the story. They observed Jesus' behaviour in the temple and saw the stark contrast with the triumphal entry into the city. They observed the cleansing of the temple and saw the foreshadowing of the Kingdom of God. They observed the reaction to Jesus' actions and saw the power struggle of cosmic proportions. Exercising their preferred intuitive function, this group developed four main themes. The first theme concentrated on 'the real difference' that a day can make. On day one Jesus just observed. By day two he had reflected and was ready to act. The second theme concentrated on 'the real contrasts' between what religious institutions deliver and on what Jesus desires. The third theme concentrated on 'the balance' between inaction and action in dealing with sin; in this narrative Jesus exemplifies decisive action. The fourth theme widened the canvas further and discussed the major motifs of judgement, justice and injustice.

The medium *intuitive* group began by exercising their sensing function and listed four points of detail that attracted their attention in the narrative. They looked at Jesus and noted his behaviour: he came, he saw, and he went away. They looked at the wider scene and noted

what they observed: doves, seats and violence. They looked at the outcome of the narrative: the disruption in the court and the dismay of the money changers. Most of all, however, they wanted to look at the fig tree (the aspect of the passage they had been asked to ignore). The group was much more energised when they exercised their preferred intuitive function. Now they identified four major themes and began to speculate. Theme one focussed on corrupt systems and on the need for followers of Jesus to speak out against such corruption. Theme two focussed on the destruction of the temple and on the need for religious institutions to check that they are fulfilling their God-given mission. Theme three focussed on the management of change and the need to accept disruption and destruction as part of the process of change. Theme four took as its inspiration the text that the temple was a place of prayer for all nations and emphasised the need for the church to be inclusive in its vision.

Judging process

After exploring their understanding of the judging process and their understanding of the two judging functions (thinking and feeling), the group was divided into four subgroups of roughly equal proportions, representing high feeling, medium feeling, medium thinking and high thinking (relative to the profile of the whole group). The whole of Mark 11:11-21 was then read (including the incident of the fig tree). All four groups were then asked to employ their preferred judging process to identify the issues which they would wish to inform their preaching. The responses for each of the four groups will be presented in turn.

Feeling

The high *feeling* group was keen to get fully inside the lives, feelings and experiences of the characters in the narrative. This group began by showing concern for the traders in the temple who were fulfilling a key role in the local economy and in the religious ritual. They must have been so upset. From the traders, attention was drawn to the disciples who were there supporting their teacher and leader. They must have been so embarrassed and so scared.

From the disciples, attention was drawn to Jesus. In this scene Jesus displays a rich range of emotions: frustration, anger, sadness, anguish. All of this boils over into violence. Was such violence really necessary? Was such violence really helpful? Was Jesus really in control of what he was doing? Reflection on this range of emotions within the biblical narrative led to consideration about the emotions experienced within church congregations and within church leaders today. This group did not mention the fig tree.

The medium *feeling* group followed a path quite similar to that followed by the high feeling group. They too began by focussing on the ‘victims’ within the narrative, in their terms showing primary concern for the money changers rather than for the traders. They were concerned to discuss both how the money changers felt when they were so publically disgraced, and how they felt when they looked back on the day later in their lives. Then they focussed on another group of ‘victims’ and expressed their compassion for the Gentiles who had been excluded from their proper place around the temple by those who had given priority to the commerce. Then they turned attention directly to Jesus. They were concerned to discuss what was going on in Jesus’ life at the time and why he displayed such uncharacteristic anger. They wondered how Jesus had felt the previous night when he turned away from the temple and what drove him to come back in such a mood. Reflection on this range of emotions within the biblical narrative led to consideration of how we feel when ‘Jesus overturns our tables’. Do we become angry, or do we appreciate that space is being cleared for something creative to take its place? Some of the group reflected personally on their own tendency to resist God’s plans until God shakes them severely out of their existing ways. This group did not mention the fig tree.

Thinking

The high thinking group began by giving consideration to the fig tree. They understood the fig tree as a symbol for Israel. Here was an object lesson concerning God’s

judgement when God's people failed to bring forth the fruit that God desired. The judgement was extended to the temple because the temple was unfaithful to God's plans by excluding the Gentiles and by desecrating the area designated for them to worship. The turning point in the Gospel is when Jesus judges the fig tree and the temple; and at this point the scribes and pharisees judge Jesus. This turning point, however, leaves a very uncomfortable situation. The fig tree is dead. The temple has only been cleansed on a temporary basis. The disciples are bewildered. The plot is put in motion for the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. The whole narrative was likened to a Greek tragedy. From this point onwards the outcome was inevitable as the scene was set for Holy Week, and for Good Friday.

The medium *thinking* group offered a brief and constructive analysis of the message of judgement presented by the passage. They, too, began with the fig tree. The judgement, they argue, seems harsh and inappropriate for the text itself says that it was not the reason for figs. Behind the judgement, however, they see a narrative not concerned with *chronos* (the time for figs) but with *kairos* (the time for the Lord's visitation). Behind the fig tree they see the established Old Testament symbolism for Israel (the people of God). Like the fig tree God's people failed to be prepared and ready for the time of the Lord's visitation, and as a consequence they deserved the judgement that they received. The group was content with the results of their analysis and considered the task done.

Study two

Study two was conducted among 14 Anglican clergy and licensed readers serving in the Church of England (8 clergy and 6 readers; 9 men and 5 women). The type profile presented in table 2 demonstrates equal preferences for introversion (7) and extraversion (7), preference for intuition (9) over sensing (5), preference for feeling (8) over thinking (6), and preference for judging (10) over perceiving (4). In terms of dominant types there were 6 dominant intuitives, 3 dominant sensors, 3 dominant feelers and 2 dominant thinkers.

Perceiving process

After exploring their understanding of the perceiving process and their understanding of the perceiving functions (sensing and intuition), the group was divided into three subgroups. The passage Mark 11:11 and 15-19 was given to the participants and read aloud (omitting the incident of the fig tree). All three groups were asked to consider the passage from the perspective of their preferred perceiving function (sensing or intuition). They were asked to treat the exercise as preparation for preaching. The following analysis will focus on the contrast between the group comprised entirely of sensors and the group composed entirely of intuitive.

Sensing

The sensing group approached the passage by deciding to analyse it verse by verse. The task, therefore, unfolded in six steps.

In verse 11, Jesus 1) entered Jerusalem, 2) entered the temple, 3) observed everything, 4) went to Bethany, 5) took the disciples with him. He was able to reflect in company.

In verse 15, Jesus 1) entered Jerusalem, 2) entered the temple, 3) drove out the traders, 4) overturned the tables. He acted alone.

In verse 16, Jesus 1) stopped the traffic through the temple. He protected the holy place.

In verse 17, Jesus 1) taught, 2) cited scripture, 3) reclaimed the temple for all nations, 4) accused them of becoming a den of robbers. He exercises authority.

In verse 18, the religious leaders 1) were afraid of Jesus, 2) planned to kill Jesus. The people were 1) spellbound by Jesus. The opposition grows.

In verse 19, Jesus 1) leaves Jerusalem, 2) takes his disciples with him. Another day nearer to the crucifixion.

Intuition

The intuitive group approached the passage by deciding to agree on one major theme. They identified the theme as 'Jesus the leader', and proceeded to discuss the following characteristics of Jesus' leadership.

Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem was no accident. It was well prepared and well planned. Jesus had arrived on a donkey (in response to prophecy), had been greeted by palm branches and had been saluted by the enthronement psalm. The arrival itself was part of a big picture, a cosmic plan, the arrival of God's Messiah. Jesus is an anointed leader.

Jesus did not act in haste. He went into the temple, he observed everything, and he went away overnight to reflect. Jesus is a reflective leader.

Jesus did not act with caution. He confronted the money changers, he disrupted the dealers, he barred the porters, he spoke out his condemnation. Jesus is a leader with authority.

Jesus did not lose his temper. He acted with resolve and was deliberate in order to bring about change. Jesus is a firm leader.

Jesus provoked dislike and hostility from the authorities and left the crowd spellbound. Jesus is a controversial leader.

Having finished the task of reflecting on Jesus' style of leadership, the intuitive group reflected on what it had done and concluded that it did not like the Jesus whom it had profiled.

Judging process

After exploring their understanding of the *judging* process and their understanding of the two judging functions (thinking and feeling), the group was divided into three subgroups. This time the whole of Mark 11:11-21 was given to the participants and read aloud (including the incident of the fig tree). All three groups were asked to consider the passage from the perspective of their preferred judging function (thinking or feeling) to identify issues which

they would wish to inform their preaching. The following analysis will focus on the contrast between the group comprised entirely of feelers and the group comprised entirely of thinkers.

Feeling

The feeling group quickly came to the view that they found the whole passage to be very uncomfortable. They felt sorry for the money changers (who were only doing their job). They felt sorry for the dealers in doves (who were playing an important role in the sacrificial system). Above all they felt sorry for the fig tree (it was not even the season for figs). Jesus' actions made them feel uncomfortable.

They felt that the whole passage was full of powerful emotions and that the emotions were too negative. Jesus' attitude toward the fig tree was harsh. Jesus' attitude toward the money changers was harsh. Jesus' attitude toward the dealers in doves was harsh. Jesus' emotions made them feel uncomfortable.

The feeling group tried to place themselves in Jesus' shoes and to understand why he did as he did, and why he felt as he felt. When Jesus entered Jerusalem and the temple he confronted so many signs of failure, such disregard for the things of God, that he felt completely 'hacked off'. Only by feeling strongly and by acting violently could Jesus declare the way open for the Kingdom of God to destroy the old order and to establish the new order.

Thinking

The thinking group took the view that the whole passage modelled Jesus as taking a very thinking approach to his life and ministry. When Jesus went into the temple, he went in to analyse what was going on. He observed in a calm and logical way, before going home to reflect on things and to develop a strategy. When Jesus confronted the fig tree, he analysed the situation, considered that the situation could not be remedied and took the logical stem of passing decisive judgement. When Jesus went into the temple on the second day, he made his message very clear, First, he acted out his message – so that all could see it. Then amid the

upturned tables, he called down the authority of scripture. There was logic and inevitability about it.

As a strongly motivated thinker in this narrative, Jesus had lost touch with his feeling function and may not have fully appreciated the effect of his behaviour on others. He may not have intended to startle Peter by the sight of the withered fig tree. He may not have intended to leave the crowd spellbound. He may not have intended to provoke the religious leaders to kill him. As a strongly motivated thinker Jesus may have misjudged the consequences of his actions.

Study three

Study three was conducted among 47 participants, a mixed group of clergy and lay people, interested in psychological type thinking (32 women and 15 men). The type profile presented in table 3 demonstrates preferences for introversion (25) over extraversion (22), for intuition (29) over sensing (18), for feeling (28) over thinking (19), and for judging (29) over perceiving (18). In terms of dominant types, there were 21 dominant feelers, 13 dominant intuitive, 9 dominant thinkers, and 4 dominant sensors.

Perceiving process

After exploring their understanding of the perceiving process and their understanding of the two perceiving functions (sensing and intuition), the group was divided into five subgroups of roughly equal proportions. The passage Mark 11:11 and 15-19 was given to the participants and read aloud (omitting the incident of the fig tree). All five groups were asked to consider the passage from the perspective of their preferred perceiving function (sensing or intuition). They were asked to treat the exercise as preparation for preaching. The following analysis will focus on the contrast between the two extreme groups of high sensing and high intuition.

Sensing

The high sensing group settled down to examining the details of the passage and did so by raising a number of question to which they wanted to find answers.

- Why was Jesus going to the temple?
- Why did Jesus and the disciples decide to stay outside Jerusalem in Bethany?
- Why were the events split over two days; why did Jesus leave and then return?
- What kind of trade was going on in the temple; was it honest trade or dishonest profiteering?
- How many tables did Jesus overturn, what was the scale of the exercise?
- What were the disciples doing while all this took place?
- What did Jesus do for the rest of the day after overturning the tables? Did he stand his ground to prevent the return of the money changers?
- Were the chief priests there to see it all happen, or did they just happen to hear about it afterwards?
- Why didn't people prevent Jesus from doing this?

Next the high *sensing* group consciously brought into play their five senses in order to re-create the scene in greater detail. In particular they opened their eyes to look at the city of Jerusalem and at the temple in particular. They listened to and described the sounds of the traders, the crashing of the tables, and the voice of Jesus the teacher. They felt the anger of the disturbed traders, the amazement of the crowd, and the fear of the religious leaders. The emotions of the occasion became tangible. Then the high sensing group proceeded to identify what they could deduce from the details of the narrator.

- Jesus' action was clearly deliberate, since he had considered his actions overnight.

- For Jesus action preceded teaching. He turned over the tables first and then based his teaching on it.
- Jesus inspired the crowd by his actions and by his teaching. They were spellbound by him.
- Jesus provoked the chief priests and scribes by his actions and by his teachings. They were afraid of him.
- Jesus experienced anger, righteous anger. This is an appropriate emotion.
- At the end of the day Jesus left it all behind him. The job was well done and he returned back home.

The high sensing group concluded with critical self-reflection, asking whether they had missed the bigger picture by looking so closely at the details of the narrative.

Intuition

The high intuitive group began by talking excitedly about the range of big themes that were sparked by the narrative (in no particular order).

- The passage inspired the theme of all nations worshipping in Jerusalem. Here was a vision for the unity of all God's people.
- The passage inspired the theme of examining our own 'house' and testing whether that too had become a 'den of robbers'.
- The passage inspired the theme of care for doves and for the birds of the air. Jesus' overturning of the tables meant liberation for the captive birds.
- The passage inspired the theme of legitimising revolution, of upturning tables, and of challenging the establishment.
- The passage inspired the theme of examining current commercial interests and the investment strategy of the Church Commissioners.

- The passage inspired the theme of examining both the positive and the negative connotations of being spellbound. What does it mean to be caught under Jesus' spell?
- The passage gives no voice to those whose livelihood was challenged by Jesus' actions, and inspired the theme of paying attention to the voiceless and to the oppressed.
- The passage inspired the theme of examining our own use of sacred space and attitudes toward our own church building.

The high intuitive group went on to vision the image of Jesus that stood behind the narrative. Here is a Jesus who is:

- committed to justice;
- fearless of the consequences;
- driven by his goals;
- premeditates overnight his actions;
- carries out violence in the name of God;
- expects people to understand and share his goal.

The high intuitive group finished by going back to the narrative and asking what took them by surprise, what had they failed to see in the story first time round. Now they were suddenly grasped by verse 16: 'Jesus would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple'. Why, they asked was that important to the gospel writer? Why was that point noted? What does it mean? Then the conversation turned to the more global ways in which our preconceptions colour what we notice and what we do not notice in any narrative. And suddenly time was up!

Judging process

After exploring their understanding of the judging process and their understanding of the two judging functions (thinking and feeling), the group was divided into five subgroups of roughly equal proportions. This time the whole of Mark 11: 11-21 was given to the participants and read aloud (including the incident of the fig tree). All five groups were asked to consider the passage from the perspective of their preferred judging function (thinking or feeling) to identify the issues which they would wish to inform their preaching. The following analysis will focus on the contrast between the two extreme groups of high feeling and high thinking.

Feeling

The high feeling group began by focussing on the fig tree. Some identified with the fig tree and felt sorry for it. Some began to explore their own condition through identifying with the experience of the fig tree. 'Am I', they asked, 'being unfruitful like the fig tree, and do I deserve the same judgement?' Developing this line of thought some heard the personal call to be 'fruitful' and to be 'in season'.

Some of the group felt real pain over the fate of the fig tree and tried hard to find an alternative explanation for the narrative. They could not accept that Jesus would behave in such a way. They tried to rescue Jesus from being thought to act in this manner. Others identified with Jesus' experience of hunger and began to explore how they could respond to Jesus' hunger, Jesus' hunger for the salvation of the world. Others moved on to consider the people of the world who were suffering hunger – as a consequence of famine, war and natural disaster.

The high feeling group then considered more deeply the implication of Jesus' hunger and saw in this very fact strong affirmation of Jesus' humanity and strong confirmation of Jesus' ongoing capacity to empathise with the needs of the human condition. When Jesus is

feeling hungry himself, he is also feeling for the hunger of the world and for the needs of the needy.

Some returned to the narrative and tried to explain why Jesus was feeling hungry. Had he been staying with Mary and Martha in Bethany, surely they would not have let Jesus set out without having breakfast and without taking a packed lunch.

The high feeling group agonised over the way in which Jesus felt anger and expressed anger in the passage. Jesus cursed the fig tree; Jesus overturned the tables. In John's account the group recalled, Jesus made a whip of cords. Here is the human emotion of anger writ large, and Jesus experienced it too. Repeatedly the group felt uncomfortable with the idea of Jesus cursing the fig tree. Surely Jesus could just as easily make the tree bear fruit as make it wither to its roots.

Thinking

The high thinking group began by looking for strategies to put distance between the uncomfortable themes of the narrative and their preferred understanding of Jesus. Attention quickly moved from the person of Jesus to the theological agenda of Mark the writer.

On this account the cursing of the fig tree became an enacted parable designed to interpret the cleansing of the temple. The fig tree stands for God's people. God planted the fig tree in the promised land and the time has now come for God's anointed one to come into the very heart of God's people (to Jerusalem and to the temple) in order to receive the fruits.

On this account, the people of God were not ready for the anointed one to come. They had not recognised the time of their visitation. Like the fig tree they were not in season.

On this account, Jesus' activity in the temple was both prophetic and decisive. By overturning the tables selling doves, Jesus put an end to the sacrificial system of the temple. By turning away the money changers, Jesus put an end to the people's capacity to deal in the animals and birds for sacrifice. By drawing on the prophecy of being a house of prayer for all

nations, Jesus put an end to the exclusivist view of the privileged people of God and opened the door to the Gentile nations.

On this account, when the disciples went away and Peter saw that the fig tree had withered, it was clear that the old order was over. The Messiah had come and God was creating a new order of things.

Having established a way of making the narrative acceptable, the high thinking group proceeded to reflect on occasions within the life of the church when it was appropriate to act in prophetic and decisive ways, when it was appropriate to pronounce God's judgement, when evil had to be uprooted in order to make space for good fruit to flourish. Such reflection led inevitably to consideration of the Christian response to political corruption and to demonic governments.

Conclusion

The SIFT method of biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching was developed on the basis of Jungian psychological type theory to reflect the notion that different psychological type preferences would be drawn to read and to proclaim scripture in different and highly distinctive voices. Such an approach to scripture is properly situated within the broader category of reader response perspectives on hermeneutics.

In order to test the empirical bases for the SIFT method of biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching, Francis (2010b) set up an initial study designed to document how two groups of Anglican preachers (24 licensed readers in England and 22 licensed clergy in Northern Ireland) interpreted Mark 6: 34-44 (the feeding of the five thousand) when allocated to dominant type groups (dominant sensing, dominant intuition, dominant feeling, and dominant thinking). The present study set out to extend the enquiry undertaken and reported by Francis (in press) in four ways: by identifying a passage of scripture that accesses themes quite different from those accessed by the feeding of the five thousand, and selecting the

cleansing of the temple from Mark 11: 11-21; by working with three further groups of participants (a group of 31 clergy, a group of 14 clergy and preachers, and a mixed group of 47 people including laity, lay preachers and clergy); by distinguishing between the perceiving process (sensing and intuition) and the judging process (thinking and feeling); and by presenting the narrative in two stages, accessing the perceiving process without including the incident of the fig tree and accessing the judging process including the incident of the fig tree.

Taken together, Francis' (2010b) earlier study on the feeding of the five thousand and the present study on the cleansing of the temple (and the incident of the fig tree) have provided secure empirical support for the insights underpinning the SIFT method of biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching. Taken together these two studies have also displayed a robust approach for designing empirical research in the field, drawing on two different approaches: one approach employing dominant type groups and the other approach focusing separately on the perceiving process (sensing and intuition) and on the judging process (thinking and feeling). Further studies are now needed employing these approaches among other groups and focusing on different passages of scripture.

Table 1

Anglican Clergy

The Sixteen Complete Types				Dichotomous Preferences		
ISTJ <i>n</i> = 4 (12.9%)	ISFJ <i>n</i> = 6 (19.4%)	INFJ <i>n</i> = 1 (3.2%)	INTJ <i>n</i> = 2 (6.5%)	E	<i>n</i> = 14	(45.2%)
+++++	+++++	+++	+++++	I	<i>n</i> = 17	(54.8%)
+++++	+++++		++	S	<i>n</i> = 18	(58.1%)
+++	+++++			N	<i>n</i> = 13	(41.9%)
	++++			T	<i>n</i> = 16	(51.6%)
				F	<i>n</i> = 15	(48.4%)
				J	<i>n</i> = 22	(71.0%)
				P	<i>n</i> = 9	(29.0%)
				Pairs and Temperaments		
ISTP <i>n</i> = 1 (3.2%)	ISFP <i>n</i> = 1 (3.2%)	INFP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	INTP <i>n</i> = 2 (6.5%)	IJ	<i>n</i> = 13	(41.9%)
+++	+++		+++++	IP	<i>n</i> = 4	(12.9%)
			++	EP	<i>n</i> = 5	(16.1%)
				EJ	<i>n</i> = 9	(29.0%)
				ST	<i>n</i> = 6	(19.4%)
				SF	<i>n</i> = 12	(38.7%)
				NF	<i>n</i> = 3	(9.7%)
				NT	<i>n</i> = 10	(32.3%)
ESTP <i>n</i> = 1 (3.2%)	ESFP <i>n</i> = 1 (3.2%)	ENFP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	ENTP <i>n</i> = 3 (9.7%)	SJ	<i>n</i> = 14	(45.2%)
+++	+++		+++++	SP	<i>n</i> = 4	(12.9%)
			+++++	NP	<i>n</i> = 5	(16.1%)
				NJ	<i>n</i> = 8	(25.8%)
				TJ	<i>n</i> = 9	(29.0%)
				TP	<i>n</i> = 7	(22.6%)
				FP	<i>n</i> = 2	(6.5%)
				FJ	<i>n</i> = 13	(41.9%)
ESTJ <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	ESFJ <i>n</i> = 4 (12.9%)	ENFJ <i>n</i> = 2 (6.5%)	ENTJ <i>n</i> = 3 (9.7%)	IN	<i>n</i> = 5	(16.1%)
	+++++	+++++	+++++	EN	<i>n</i> = 8	(25.8%)
	+++++	++	+++++	IS	<i>n</i> = 12	(38.7%)
	+++			ES	<i>n</i> = 6	(19.4%)
				ET	<i>n</i> = 7	(22.6%)
				EF	<i>n</i> = 7	(22.6%)
				IF	<i>n</i> = 8	(25.8%)
				IT	<i>n</i> = 9	(29.0%)

Jungian Types (E)		Jungian Types (I)		Dominant Types		L. J. Francis Psychological type of Anglican clergy.			
<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%				
E-TJ	3	9.7	I-TP	3	9.7		Dt.T	6	19.4
E-FJ	6	19.4	I-FP	1	3.2		Dt.F	7	22.6
ES-P	2	6.5	IS-J	10	32.3		Dt.S	12	38.7
EN-P	3	9.7	IN-J	3	9.7	Dt.N	6	19.4	

Note: N = 31 + = 1% of N

Table 2

Anglican clergy and readers

The Sixteen Complete Types				Dichotomous Preferences		
ISTJ <i>n</i> = 2 (14.3%)	ISFJ <i>n</i> = 1 (7.1%)	INFJ <i>n</i> = 2 (14.3%)	INTJ <i>n</i> = 1 (7.1%)	E	<i>n</i> = 7	(50.0%)
+++++	+++++	+++++	+++++	I	<i>n</i> = 7	(50.0%)
+++++	++	+++++	++	S	<i>n</i> = 5	(35.7%)
++++		++++		N	<i>n</i> = 9	(64.3%)
				T	<i>n</i> = 6	(42.9%)
				F	<i>n</i> = 8	(57.1%)
				J	<i>n</i> = 10	(71.4%)
				P	<i>n</i> = 4	(28.6%)
ISTP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	ISFP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	INFP <i>n</i> = 1 (7.1%)	INTP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	Pairs and Temperaments		
		+++++		IJ	<i>n</i> = 6	(42.9%)
		++		IP	<i>n</i> = 1	(7.1%)
				EP	<i>n</i> = 3	(21.4%)
				EJ	<i>n</i> = 4	(28.6%)
				ST	<i>n</i> = 2	(14.3%)
				SF	<i>n</i> = 3	(21.4%)
				NF	<i>n</i> = 5	(35.7%)
				NT	<i>n</i> = 4	(28.6%)
ESTP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	ESFP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	ENFP <i>n</i> = 2 (14.3%)	ENTP <i>n</i> = 1 (7.1%)	SJ	<i>n</i> = 5	(35.7%)
		+++++	+++++	SP	<i>n</i> = 0	(0.0%)
		+++++	++	NP	<i>n</i> = 4	(28.6%)
		++++		NJ	<i>n</i> = 5	(35.7%)
				TJ	<i>n</i> = 5	(35.7%)
				TP	<i>n</i> = 1	(7.1%)
				FP	<i>n</i> = 3	(21.4%)
				FJ	<i>n</i> = 5	(35.7%)
ESTJ <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	ESFJ <i>n</i> = 2 (14.3%)	ENFJ <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	ENTJ <i>n</i> = 2 (14.3%)	IN	<i>n</i> = 4	(28.6%)
	+++++		+++++	EN	<i>n</i> = 5	(35.7%)
	+++++		+++++	IS	<i>n</i> = 3	(21.4%)
	++++		++++	ES	<i>n</i> = 2	(14.3%)
				ET	<i>n</i> = 3	(21.4%)
				EF	<i>n</i> = 4	(28.6%)
				IF	<i>n</i> = 4	(28.6%)
				IT	<i>n</i> = 3	(21.4%)

Jungian Types (E)		Jungian Types (I)		Dominant Types		L. J. Francis Psychological type of Anglican clergy and readers
<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
E-TJ	2 14.3	I-TP	0 0.0	Dt.T	2 14.3	
E-FJ	2 14.3	I-FP	1 7.1	Dt.F	3 21.4	
ES-P	0 0.0	IS-J	3 21.4	Dt.S	3 21.4	
EN-P	3 21.4	IN-J	3 21.4	Dt.N	6 42.9	

Note: N = 14 + = 1% of N

Table 3

Mixed groups

The Sixteen Complete Types											
ISTJ <i>n</i> = 3 (6.4%)	ISFJ <i>n</i> = 1 (2.1%)	INFJ <i>n</i> = 2 (4.3%)	INTJ <i>n</i> = 6 (12.8%)	E <i>n</i> = 22 (46.8%)	I <i>n</i> = 25 (53.2%)	S <i>n</i> = 18 (38.3%)	N <i>n</i> = 29 (61.7%)	T <i>n</i> = 19 (40.4%)	F <i>n</i> = 28 (59.6%)	J <i>n</i> = 29 (61.7%)	P <i>n</i> = 18 (38.3%)
+++++	++	++++	+++++								
+			+++++								
			+++								
ISTP <i>n</i> = 1 (2.1%)	ISFP <i>n</i> = 2 (4.3%)	INFP <i>n</i> = 6 (12.8%)	INTP <i>n</i> = 4 (8.5%)	Pairs and Temperaments							
++	++++	+++++	+++++	IJ <i>n</i> = 12 (25.5%)	IP <i>n</i> = 13 (27.7%)	EP <i>n</i> = 5 (10.6%)	EJ <i>n</i> = 17 (36.2%)	ST <i>n</i> = 7 (14.9%)	SF <i>n</i> = 11 (23.4%)	NF <i>n</i> = 17 (36.2%)	NT <i>n</i> = 12 (25.5%)
		+++++	++++								
		+++									
ESTP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	ESFP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%)	ENFP <i>n</i> = 4 (8.5%)	ENTP <i>n</i> = 1 (2.1%)	SJ <i>n</i> = 15 (31.9%)	SP <i>n</i> = 3 (6.4%)	NP <i>n</i> = 15 (31.9%)	NJ <i>n</i> = 14 (29.8%)	TJ <i>n</i> = 13 (27.7%)	TP <i>n</i> = 6 (12.8%)	FP <i>n</i> = 12 (25.5%)	FJ <i>n</i> = 16 (34.0%)
		+++++	++								
		+++									
ESTJ <i>n</i> = 3 (6.4%)	ESFJ <i>n</i> = 8 (17.0%)	ENFJ <i>n</i> = 5 (10.6%)	ENTJ <i>n</i> = 1 (2.1%)	IN <i>n</i> = 18 (38.3%)	EN <i>n</i> = 11 (23.4%)	IS <i>n</i> = 7 (14.9%)	ES <i>n</i> = 11 (23.4%)	ET <i>n</i> = 5 (10.6%)	EF <i>n</i> = 17 (36.2%)	IF <i>n</i> = 11 (23.4%)	IT <i>n</i> = 14 (29.8%)
+++++	+++++	+++++	++								
+	+++++	+++++									
	+++++	+									
	++										

Jungian Types (E)			Jungian Types (I)			Dominant Types			L. J. Francis Psychological type of Anglican clergy and laity
	<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%	
E-TJ	4	8.5	I-TP	5	10.6	Dt.T	9	19.1	
E-FJ	13	27.7	I-FP	8	17.0	Dt.F	21	44.7	
ES-P	0	0.0	IS-J	4	8.5	Dt.S	4	8.5	
EN-P	5	10.6	IS-J	8	17.0	Dt.S	13	27.7	

Appendix**Mark 11: 11-21**

¹¹ And he entered Jerusalem, and went into the temple; and when he had looked round at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. ¹² On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. ¹³ And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it. ¹⁵ And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons; ¹⁶ and he would not allow any one to carry anything through the temple. ¹⁷ And he taught, and said to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." ¹⁸ And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and sought a way to destroy him; for they feared him, because all the multitude was astonished at his teaching. ¹⁹ And when evening came they went out of the city. ²⁰ As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. ²¹ And Peter remembered and said to him, "Master, look! The fig tree which you cursed has withered."

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