

Churchmanship and personality among clergymen in the Church in Wales: are Anglo-Catholic priests more feminine?

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to develop and test a new measure of Anglo-Catholic orientation capable of assessing the extent of the continuing influence of the Anglican-Catholic movement among Anglican clergy and useful for testing theories regarding the association between Anglo-Catholic orientation and personality. Data provided by a sample of 232 clergymen serving in the Church in Wales support the internal consistency reliability of the 21-item Francis-Littler Anglo-Catholic Orientation Scale, and, in terms of the Eysenckian dimensional model of personality, demonstrate that Anglo-Catholic orientation is associated with higher levels of psychological femininity as assessed by the neuroticism scale, but not as assessed by the psychoticism scale.

Keywords: Personality, religion, Eysenck, Anglo-Catholicism, clergy, femininity

Introduction

The Anglican Church, developing from the internationalisation of the Church of England, occupies a highly distinctive position among the various Churches emerging from the Reformation. The Anglican Church claims the distinction of being both Reformed and Catholic. During the nineteenth century both the Reformed roots and the Catholic roots of the Church of England were, as it were, rediscovered and re-emphasised through the emergence of the Tractarian or Anglo-Catholic Movement (Penhal, 1996; Hylson-Smith, 1993) and through the emergence of the Evangelical Movement, reflecting the Reformed tradition (Saward, 1987, Hylson-Smith, 1988). Both movements tried to capture the soul of the Church of England by investing in seminaries in order to train clergy in their distinctive traditions and by collecting advowsons in order to influence the appointment of clergy to parishes through the patronage system. Between these two wings of the Anglican Church there has stood (and continues to stand) a broad middle territory which has been variously described, but which was well-characterised by Walker (1988) as the ‘middle way’.

The ethos of the Anglo-Catholic movement included such features as a high doctrine of the ministry and of the sacraments, ornate vestments, pageantry, atmospheric music, incense, confession, obedience, fasting, beauty, submission and subtle imagery. The ethos of the Evangelical movement included such features as emphasis on biblical theology, biblical inspiration, biblical authority, personal conversion, justification by grace through faith, centrality of a preaching ministry, absence of ritual and imagery, simplicity in church architecture, and simplicity in clerical dress with cassock, surplice, preaching scarf and hood.

Randall’s (2005) monumental study on the continuing significance of ‘churchmanship’, the distinction between the different traditions visible within Anglicanism, makes it clear that there are measurable psychological as well as theological differences between clergy attracted to the Evangelical wing of the Anglican Church and clergy attracted

to the Catholic wing. One relatively neglected psychological construct that may hold power to distinguish between the Anglo-Catholic and the Evangelical orientation is that of sex role identity as conceptualised, for example, through the classic Bem Sex Role Inventory that distinguishes between the independent orientations of masculinity and femininity (see, Bem, 1980). It is not difficult to speculate that the very different emphases of the Evangelical movement and the Anglo-Catholic movement may appeal more to priests whose personality profile display higher levels of masculinity or higher levels of femininity.

There is something much more feminine about the appeal of the Anglo-Catholic orientation and something much more masculine about the appeal of the Evangelical orientation. Indeed the nineteenth century observers themselves were not slow to note the feminisation of the Anglo-Catholic clergy, whom some critics of the movement described as essentially un-English and unmanly (Best, 1967). For example, *Punch* (1865) characterised Anglo-Catholic clergy as ‘parsons in petticoats’ who ‘are very fond of dressing like ladies. They are much addicted to wearing vestments... variously trimmed and embroidered.’ Kingsley (1881) wrote of ‘an element of foppery even in dress and manner; a fastidious, maundering, die-away effeminacy’. Rigg (1895) in a classic study of the leaders of the Anglo-Catholic movement made much of the ‘characteristically feminine’ mind and temperament of Newman and the lack of virility of most of his disciples. According to Chadwick (1954) even the founder of the Anglo-Catholic theological college at Cuddesdon, Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, agreed that the religious formation provided by his college lacked vigour and ‘virility.’ If the same descriptors were offered in the late twentieth century they might well not carry the same level of implied criticism.

These observations may lead to the direct hypothesis that priests who espouse an Anglo-Catholic orientation may also display higher levels of psychological femininity. The

operationalisation of this hypothesis requires robust means of assessing both Anglo-Catholic orientation and psychological femininity.

There are two established research traditions for assessing the notion of psychological femininity. The first such tradition builds on Bem's pioneering work and assumes that it is reasonable to provide direct measures of psychological masculinity and psychological femininity (see Bem, 1981). The problems with this approach have been well rehearsed in the literature and hinge on the subjective assessments that need to be made in calibrating such measures (for a review, see Wilcox & Francis, 1997). The second research tradition builds on established personality theory and recognises that, within the population as a whole, women routinely record higher scores than men on some personality scales, while men routinely record higher scores than women on other personality scales. Eysenck's dimensional model of personality provides a good example of this approach and will be employed in the present study.

The Eysenckian dimensional model of personality maintains that personality differences may be most adequately and economically expressed in terms of a small number of higher order factors, built up from the observed correlations between primary or lower order traits. In its present form, the theory proposed three higher order factors, namely neuroticism, extraversion and psychoticism. These three dimensions of personality have been operationalised, together with a lie scale, in the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck and Eysenck, 1975) and the Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck, Eysenck and Barrett, 1985).

Cross-cultural studies using Eysenck's measures have confirmed a clear pattern of personality differences between the sexes. For example, Francis' (1993) exhaustive review of the international empirical data on neuroticism establishes the case that women consistently record higher scores than men on the Eysenckian neuroticism scales. Similar reviews also

demonstrate that men consistently record higher scores than women on the Eysenckian psychoticism scales (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991). Using the Eysenckian model of personality the research hypothesis can then be sharpened to propose that priests who espouse an Anglo-Catholic orientation may display higher levels of psychological femininity as reflected in higher neuroticism scores and in lower psychoticism scores, compared with other clergy.

There are also two research traditions (one well-established and one developing) for assessing churchmanship. The first (well-established) research tradition was displayed to good effect by Randall (2005) who was himself building on Francis' earlier work reported in a range of studies, including Francis and Lankshear (1995a, 1995b, 1996) and Francis, Lankshear, and Jones (1998). Randall invited clergy to identify their churchmanship by means of a seven-point semantic differential grid anchored by the two constructs 'catholic' and 'evangelical'. Although this semantic differential grid has served well, it remains vulnerable to the criticism of all single-item measures. The second (developing) research tradition has tried to develop a scale of Anglo-Catholic orientation capable of assessing the *degree* of identification with the Anglo-Catholic tradition. In an innovative study, Francis and Thomas (1996) developed a nine-item scale of Anglo-Catholic orientation that generated the satisfactory internal consistency alpha reliability coefficient of .91 (Cronbach, 1951).

In a first attempt to examine an association between Anglo-Catholic orientation and psychological femininity, Francis and Thomas (1996) administered the short-form Eysenck Personality questionnaire Revised (Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985) together with their nine-item index of Anglo-Catholic practices to a sample of 222 clergymen serving in the Church in Wales. Their data found no significant correlation between Anglo-Catholic orientation and either neuroticism scores or psychoticism scores. In a second study, Randall (2005) administered the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) together with his semantic differential grid index of churchmanship to a sample of 262

Anglican clergy ordained in England and Wales in 1994 (202 males and 60 females). This data demonstrated significantly higher mean scores on the neuroticism scale among Anglo-Catholic clergy compared with Evangelical clergy, but no significant mean differences between the two groups on the psychoticism scales.

The present study proposed to build on the foundations put in place by Francis and Thomas (1996) in order to develop a further and more highly nuanced index of Anglo-Catholic orientation. In order to develop the new Scale of Anglo-Catholic orientation, conversations with clergy (who self-identified as influenced by the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church of England) generated a list of characteristics from which items were crafted. Those ultimately selected for inclusion are presented in table 1.

Method

Procedure

A questionnaire was mailed to all full-time stipendiary parochial clergy serving in the Church in Wales. A total of 593 questionnaires were successfully delivered, and 391 were returned, generating a response rate of 66%.

Measures

Anglo-Catholic orientation was assessed by the specially developed 21-item Francis-Littler Anglo-Catholic Orientation Scale (ACOS). Respondents were asked to assess 'how important each experience is to your own faith', using a five-point scale anchored by: 1 = low importance, 3 = medium importance, 5 = high importance.

Personality was assessed by the short-form Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised (Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985). This is a 48-item measure containing four scales of 12 items each (extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, and the lie scale). Respondents were asked to assess the relevance of each item on a two-part scale: yes and no.

Sample

The present analysis is based on the 232 male respondents who provided full data on the relevant scales used in the study. The sample comprised 22 clergy under the age of forty, 43 in their forties, 109 in their fifties, 56 in their sixties, and 2 in their seventies.

Analysis

The data were analysed by the SPSS statistical package using the frequency, reliability and correlation routines.

Results

-Insert table 1-

Table 1 presents the 21 items of the Francis-Littler Anglo-Catholic Orientation Scale, together with the item rest-of-test correlations and the proportions of the respondents who rated the importance of the experience for their own faith four or five on the five-point scale. The scale achieved the satisfactory alpha coefficient of .95. All the 21 items contributed positively to the homogeneity of the scale, with item rest-of-test correlations ranging between .51 and .83. The percentage endorsement of the items reveals the way in which the range of issues included in the measure successfully differentiates different levels of influence by the Anglo-Catholic Movement. Five of the items were endorsed by fewer than 10% of the clergymen: 6% rated receiving the Blessed Sacrament without touching it; 7% rated saying the Rosary; 7% rated seeing statues in church; 9% rated calling the priest 'Father'; 9% rated using incense in worship. Five of the items were endorsed by between 10% and 19% of the clergymen: 11% rated saying the Angelus; 12% rated fasting before receiving the Blessed Sacrament; 17% rated venerating the Saints; 17% rated devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary; 18% rated lighting votive candles. Three of the items were endorsed by between 20% and 29% of the clergymen: 20% rated making pilgrimages to holy shrines; 20% rated marking the Stations of the Cross; 21% rated using holy water. Six of the items were endorsed by between 30% and 39% of the clergymen: 32% rated receiving the imposition of ashes; 32% rated the

use of vestments by the priest; 33% rated witnessing ceremonial ritual in worship; 33% rated praying for the dead; 36% rated genuflecting before the Blessed Sacrament; 37% rated signing themselves with the sign of the cross. The remaining two items were endorsed by more than 40% of the clergymen: 45% rated receiving absolution from a priest; 61% rated attending Mass.

-insert table 2 –

Table 2 presents the scale properties for the five measures employed in the study in terms of means, standard deviations and alpha coefficients (Cronbach, 1951). The measures of Anglo-Catholic orientation, extraversion and neuroticism all show high levels of internal consistency reliability, and the lie scale exceeds the threshold of acceptability of .65 proposed by DeVellis (2003). The poorer performance of the psychoticism scale is consistent with the known properties of this measure (Francis, Brown, & Philipchalk, 1992).

-insert table 3–

Table 3 completes the analysis, presenting the Pearson correlation coefficients between Anglo-Catholic orientation, extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism and the lie scale. These data provide partial support for the research hypotheses regarding the association between Anglo-Catholic orientation and femininity. The hypothesis regarding a positive correlation between Anglo-Catholic orientation and neuroticism was supported. The hypothesis regarding a negative correlation between Anglo-Catholic orientation and psychoticism was not supported.

Conclusion

The present study set out to examine churchmanship and personality among clergymen in the Church in Wales by proposing a new measure of Anglo-Catholic orientation, by suggesting the Eysenckian dimensional model of personality as a method for capturing psychological femininity, and by testing the specific thesis regarding the

association between Anglo-Catholic orientation and femininity in terms of the correlations with neuroticism scores and with psychoticism scores. New data provided by 232 Anglican clergymen serving in the Church in Wales were employed to examine these issues. The following three main conclusions can be drawn from these data.

The first conclusion concerns the assessment of Anglo-Catholic orientation. The newly proposed Francis-Littler Anglo-Catholic Orientation Scale (ACOS) performed with good internal consistency reliability and the items displayed well-differentiated levels of discrimination ranging from 61% of the clergymen who endorsed the item 'attending Mass' to just 6% who endorsed the item 'receiving the Blessed Sacrament without touching it'. Some construct validity was demonstrated by the way in which this instrument performed in connection with the research hypotheses. The instrument also possesses good face validity. On these grounds the ACOS can be commended for further use.

The second conclusion concerns the overall level of commitment to the Anglo-Catholic Movement displayed by clergymen serving in the Church in Wales. Only four of the items received endorsement from more than one-third of the clergymen and these four items generally reflected practices that seem to have gained broader acceptance across the range of churchmanship within the Anglican Church: attending Mass (61%), receiving absolution from a priest (45%), signing myself with the sign of the cross (37%), and genuflecting before the Blessed Sacrament (36%). Certain characteristics that may seem more highly distinctive of the Anglo-Catholic position were endorsed by fewer than one in ten of the clergymen: using incense in worship (9%), calling the priest 'Father' (9%), seeing statues in church (7%), saying the Rosary (7%), and receiving the Blessed Sacrament without touching it (6%).

The third conclusion concerns the level of support for the thesis that attraction to and attachment to the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Anglican Church reflects a higher level of psychological femininity, than attraction to and attachment to the Evangelical wing. Within

the Eysenckian dimensional model of personality this thesis proposed a positive correlation between ACOS and neuroticism scores and a negative correlation between ACOS and psychoticism scores. The first of these hypotheses was supported by the data and the second was not. This finding (which is consistent with the finding reported by Randall, 2005) suggests that attraction to and attachment to the Anglo-Catholic way of the Anglican Church may be connected with some aspects of psychological femininity rather than to all aspects of the construct.

Further research is now needed to build on this study in two ways. First, direct replication of this study within other Provinces of the Anglican Communion would add to knowledge in two ways: by providing a measure of the differential influence of Anglo-Catholicism across the Communion and by testing whether the same association exists between churchmanship and psychological femininity in other Provinces. Second, extension of this study employing other measures of psychological femininity would broaden the bases on which the research question could be tested empirically.

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Table 1

Anglo-Catholic Orientation Scale: item rest of scale correlations and item endorsement

	<i>r</i>	agree %
Genuflecting before the Blessed Sacrament	.83	36
Using incense in worship	.77	9
Making pilgrimages to holy shrines	.73	20
Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary	.82	17
Use of vestments by the priest	.77	32
Calling the priest 'Father'	.78	9
Making the Stations of the Cross	.72	20
Seeing statues in church	.77	7
Receiving absolution from a priest	.70	45
Venerating the Saints	.80	17
Praying for the dead	.73	33
Signing myself with the sign of the cross	.77	37
Saying the Rosary	.76	7
Receiving the imposition of ashes	.71	32
Fasting before receiving the Blessed Sacrament	.68	12
Attending Mass	.65	61
Using holy water	.75	21
Witnessing ceremonial ritual in worship	.71	33
Saying the Angelus	.80	11
Receiving the Blessed Sacrament without touching it	.51	6
Lighting votive candles	.75	18

Table 2

Eysenck Personality Scale properties

	alpha	mean	sd
Anglo-Catholic orientation	.95	49.07	20.66
extraversion	.88	6.71	3.75
neuroticism	.84	4.97	3.38
psychoticism	.53	2.10	1.51
lie scale	.69	3.89	2.47

Table 3

Correlation matrix: Anglo-Catholic orientation and personality

	Ext	Neu	Psy	Lie
Catholic orientation	-0.04	+0.14*	-0.10	+0.08
Lie scale	-0.11	-0.11	-0.10	
Psychoticism	-0.05	-0.12		
Neuroticism	-0.19**			

Note: *, $p < .05$; **, $p < .01$; ***, $p < .0001$