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Reading the incident at the pool called Beth-zatha (John 5: 1-16) through the lenses of  
introverted intuition and extraverted intuition: Perceiving text differently

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### **Abstract**

Working within the sensing, intuition, feeling, thinking (SIFT) approach to biblical hermeneutics, the present study focuses attention on the distinctive voices of dominant extraverted intuition, and dominant introverted intuition. The voice of dominant introverted intuition is further nuanced by taking into account the differential influences of auxiliary extraverted feeling and auxiliary extraverted thinking. These voices are articulated by type-alike hermeneutical communities (involving 22 participants) working with the incident at the pool called Beth-zatha narrated in John 5: 1-16. The present study goes beyond previous work employing hermeneutical communities comprised on the basis of dominant function-orientation by including the effect of contrasting auxiliary functions.

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

## **Introduction**

The SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching, as crystallised by Francis and Village (2008), has its roots both in the reader-perspective school of biblical hermeneutics and in Jungian psychological type theory. The reader perspective school of biblical hermeneutics argues that the interpretation of text is shaped both by the text and by the context of the reader (Segovia & Tolbert, 1995a, 1995b). Foundational studies in this tradition were rooted in conceptual analysis and drew largely on sociologically-informed categories like power, leading to liberation readings (see Botta & Andinach, 2009), gender, leading to feminist readings (see Schottraff & Wacker, 2012), race, leading to black readings (see Brown, 2004), and sexual orientation, leading to queer readings (see Guest et al., 2015). Alongside these sociologically-informed categories, the SIFT approach introduced psychologically-informed categories, drawing on Jung's model of psychological functioning (Jung, 1971) and on the language of psychological type theory as further developed and sharpened by a series of psychometric instruments, including the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey & Bates, 1978), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985) and the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005; Francis et al., 2017).

The aims of the present paper are (1) to review the development of the SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching rooted in the four function approach within psychological type theory; and (2) to build on these foundations by testing and developing the eight function-orientations approach to biblical hermeneutics, drawing on the Johannine incident at the pool called Beth-zatha as recorded in John 5: 1-16.

## **Psychological type theory**

Psychological type theory distinguishes between two core psychological processes, the perceiving process that is concerned with gathering information and the judging process that is concerned with evaluating information. Jung helpfully described perceiving as the

irrational process since it *was not* concerned with evaluation, and judging as the rational process since it *was* concerned with evaluation. The theory suggests that each process is reflected in two contrasting functions. The two perceiving functions are styled sensing and intuition. The two judging functions are styled feeling and thinking. Jungian theory suggests that optimal human functioning draws on all four psychological functions: sensing (S), intuition (I), feeling (F), and thinking (T). The SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics rests on two core principles, one psychologically grounded and the other theologically grounded. The psychologically grounded principle argues that sensing types and intuitive types are likely to perceive the same text in characteristically distinctive ways; and that feeling types and thinking types are likely to evaluate the same text in characteristically distinctive ways. The theologically grounded principle argues that a fuller and richer reading of sacred text occurs when these different readings are brought into conversation and considered side-by-side.

Drawing on psychological type theory, Francis and Atkins (2000, 2001, 2002) set out to test the SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching by applying that approach to the principal gospel readings proposed by the three-year cycle of the Revised Common Lectionary. This systematic application of the theory demonstrated that the approach was sustainable. They were satisfied that psychological type theory could be applied as a hermeneutical tool. What this approach did not do, however, was to demonstrate empirically that readers and preachers tend to read and proclaim scripture with the distinctive voices and emphases shaped by their own psychological preferences. Subsequently, a series of independent and inter-related studies has set out to examine the empirical roots underpinning the SIFT approach.

These studies have followed two different conceptual routes, but employed the same basic method. The basic method involved inviting participants to explore psychological type

theory and to become aware of their own psychological type preferences. Then participants were invited to work in ‘type-alike’ groups in order to reflect on and to respond to a specific passage of scripture. The two different routes built on different approaches to psychological type theory and to establishing ‘type alike’ groups.

One group of studies looked at the two psychological processes in turn. First the participants were divided into groups distinguishing between sensing and intuition where they were invited to explore one text concentrating on the perceiving process. Then the participants were divided into groups distinguishing between feeling and thinking where they were invited to explore a second text concentrating on the judging process. In the first study in this series, Francis and Jones (2011) focused on the resurrection narratives reported in Mark 16: 1-8 and Matthew 28: 1-15, working with two different groups: 26 ministry training candidates, and 21 Anglican clergy and readers. In stage one, the participants were divided according to the perceiving process and invited to discuss the Marcan resurrection narrative that is rich in material to attract sensing and intuition. In stage two, the participants were divided according to the judging process and invited to discuss the Matthean resurrection narrative that is rich in issues to engage feeling and thinking.

The second group of studies looked at the four psychological functions at the same time. In this context the participants were divided into groups defined by their dominant psychological type preference, distinguishing between dominant sensing types, dominant intuitive types, dominant feeling types, and dominant thinking types. In the first study in this series, Francis (2010) focused on the feeding of the five thousand reported in Mark 6: 34-44, working with two different groups: 24 licensed readers in England and 22 licensed clergy in Northern Ireland. Within these dominant type groups, the participants were invited to prepare a presentation on the text (Mark 6: 34-44).

Following these two routes around 40 published studies have explored different passages of scripture, mainly from the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Psalms

### **Jungian function-orientations**

While empirical research concerning the SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics has focused on distinguishing between the four perspectives characterised by sensing, intuition, feeling and thinking, Jungian type theory can also take a further step of differentiating between the orientation in which functions are exercised, distinguishing the extraverted orientation from the introverted orientation. This more complex and more developed approach to psychological type theory generated eight orientation-functions: extraverted sensing, introverted sensing, extraverted intuition, introverted intuition, extraverted feeling, introverted feeling, extraverted thinking, and introverted thinking. The description and development of the eight orientation-functions have been discussed by Beebe (1992, 2017), Thompson (1996), Berens (1999), Haas et al. (2001), Hartzler and Hartzler (2004, 2005), Berens and Nardi (2004), Hartzler et al. (2005), Haas and Hunziker (2006), and Ross and Francis (2020).

*Extraverted sensing* is rooted in the here and now. It is concerned with the present reality rather than past experience or future possibilities. Extraverted sensing employs the five senses and focuses on the rich immediate experiences arising from each moment. Extraverted sensing is aware of and interested in the colours in the environment (seeing), in the voices, music and sounds (hearing), in the texture, temperature and movement (feeling), in the scents and aromas carried by the breeze (smelling) and in the flavours of the food (tasting).

*Introverted sensing* is rooted in the detailed recall of previous experience, both the concrete realities and the affective responses. Present reality is routinely and carefully

checked for familiarity against the internal data bank of images. Present sense impressions may trigger vivid recollections, including those that were emotionally charged. Indeed, the more emotion attached to the original experience, the more vivid the recall. Introverted sensing automatically makes connections between what is in the immediate environment and past experience in ways that may neglect the novelty and potential of present experiences.

*Extraverted intuition* is rooted in awareness of future possibilities and future potential. It looks at how things are and quickly progresses to considering how things could be. Extraverted intuition generates possibilities for the future, multiple possibilities. It is rarely satisfied with offering just one possibility when many contrasting possibilities come to mind. Brainstorming multiple options is fun. Extraverted intuition spots patterns and sees connections. Extraverted intuition wants to seek out new perspectives in things, find new ways of doing things, and challenge and change established routines.

*Introverted intuition* is rooted in searching for the deeper meaning in things. It reads between the lines and concentrates on symbolic significance and meaningful signs more than on concrete information and data. Introverted intuition is attracted to abstract and complex ideas and explanations, and may find the intricacies and richness of the inner world difficult (or impossible) to encapsulate in precise language. Introverted intuition strives for perfection and is eager to challenge and to change things. It is excited by the unknown and generates unexpected flashes of insight.

*Extraverted feeling* is rooted in maintaining positive, caring, harmonised relationships with others. It is motivated to build relationships on the basis of 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.

*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 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 logically analysed pragmatism. Extraverted thinking tends to operate within the framework of established rules, policies and regulations and to apply this framework logically and rigorously. The foundations for the decided outcomes need to be clearly established and stated.

*Introverted thinking* is rooted in an inner framework of precise categories. These internal categories are unique to the individual and a great deal of thought has gone into creating and testing them. Introverted thinking enjoys focusing on the parameters and processes used to formulate logical decisions. Introverted thinking wants to understand how everything really does fit together. It sorts out the most salient distinctions and criteria for a particular situation, evaluating the positive and negative implications. Introverted thinking

discerns the deeper structure aware that there is more to any problem than immediately meets the eye.

An initial application of the function-orientation approach with psychological type theory to the SIFT method of biblical hermeneutics was reported by Francis, Strathie, and Ross (2019) in a study that examined the reading of the Beatitudes from Matthew 5: 1-10 through the lenses of introverted intuition and introverted sensing. A second study reported by Francis et al. (2021) also concentrated on the contrasting lenses of introverted intuition and introverted sensing, this time in respect of reading the Wedding at Cana in Galilee from John 2: 1-11. A third study reported by Francis and Ross (2022) concentrated on the contrasting lenses of introverted intuition and extraverted intuition, this time in respect of reading the Good Samaritan from Luke 10: 25-37. These three studies confirmed the added richness brought to biblical interpretation by taking the orientations as well as the functions into account.

### **Research question**

Against this background, the aim of the present study was to build on and to extend the work reported by Francis, Strathie, and Ross (2019), Francis et al. (2021), and Francis and Ross (2022) by examining the added nuance of taking into account contrasting auxiliary function-orientations. Opportunity to explore this broader agenda was provided by the annual seminar arranged by the Network for Psychological Type and Christian Faith in 2021. The constraints of Covid-19 meant that the seminar took place online. From the Network 22 individuals who were well versed in psychological type theory agreed to comprise a hermeneutical community and gave permission for their participation to be recorded and analysed for research purposes. The passage of scripture selected for the attention of this hermeneutical community was the incident at the pool called Beth-zatha narrated in John 5: 1-16.

### **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 given by the New Revised Standard Version, and given notice that within the hermeneutical community 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 perceiving function-orientation and will be drawn into the present analysis. The analysis is therefore based on 10 of the 22 participants.

**Participants**

There was a high number of dominant intuitive types among the participants that allowed three groups to be formed. The group of five dominant extraverted intuitive types comprised four ENFPs (two males and two females) and one ENTP (female). The group of three dominant introverted intuitive types with auxiliary extraverted thinking comprised three INTJs (all male). The group of two dominant introverted intuitive types with auxiliary extraverted feeling comprised two INFJs (both female). There was no one among the participants who displayed dominant extraverted sensing, a very rare type within Christian communities (Ross & Francis, 2020), and only one who displayed dominant introverted sensing, ISFJ (female). For this reason the focus of the present study is limited to intuition.

**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 then engaged the documented data with the wider literature.

## **Results**

### **Dominant extraverted intuition**

The group of five dominant extraverted intuitive types comprised four ENFPs, two males (David and Len) and two females (Jean and Ruth) with auxiliary introverted feeling, and one ENTP female (Beth) with auxiliary introverted thinking. This group of dominant extraverted intuitive types was quick off the mark to get going and wasted no time trying to recall or focus the task on which they were about to engage. Even the very short pause at the beginning was swiftly challenged by Beth (the lone ENTP) asking why silence was being kept. Beth's question 'why' set the tone for a group of extraverted intuitive types exploring what they perceived as a puzzling, an intriguing, and a stimulating passage of scripture.

Accordingly, David was quick to get the ball rolling. He described the text as 'hugely sparse'. In almost every line David wanted to ask questions. Which Jewish festival was it? How did Jesus know that the man had been there for 38 years? Why is there absolutely no emotional reaction to these events? It is not every day that someone gets healed after 38 years. For David the passage had indeed begged a huge number of questions, and it had got his imagination racing.

Following David, members of the group focused on different aspects of the narrative. Jean became caught up in trying to figure out the symbolism of the number 38, but Len dismissed this as wasted effort. For him it signified a long period of time – a life-time's worth in the ancient world. Ruth connected this with the experience of a black activist who had been released from prison after 30 years. Like that freed activist this man had got his life back.

Ruth openly acknowledged that, as an extraverted intuitive type, she was going to let her imagination wander. Her first great leap was stimulated by the word ‘invalid’ – an English word that is spoken in two different ways and has two different meanings (meaning someone who is unwell or something that is not legitimate). She was wondering whether the man’s quest for healing was really valid.

Jean interjected that her mind had jumped at Jesus’ injunction to the man, ‘Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you’. This put her in mind of how Job was tormented by his comforters. Really Jesus should *not* have been saying this to the man.

Other members of the group picked up on Jean’s concern. David thought that it was inconceivable that someone who had been static for 38 years could have had opportunities for sinning. Beth (the ENTP within the group) quickly corrected David’ theology. For her sin is an inner attitude and the paralysed man could have engaged in sinful attitudes. Ruth, on the other hand, saw sin as not trusting in God. Ruth heard Jesus’ injunction as warning the man against losing faith in him as healer.

Beth moved the territory. Her mind had jumped to the idea of ‘outsider anxiety’. The man saw himself as an outsider. He had no one to support him. The whole time he is there on the outside and never quite making it to where he wants to be.

In a light bulb moment Jean recalled something about the story from Sunday school. She recalled reference to an angel coming down to stir the water and the first person jumping in after that being healed. By this time Beth (the ENTP within the group) had looked up the passage online and recalled the disputed piece of text omitted from the New Revised Standard Version.

Ruth’s mind had moved on. Now she was wondering why the man had gone to the temple. What was he doing there? Having been kept out of things for 38 years, was he now

desperate to join in? For Beth (ENTP) the answer was more obvious. Having been healed it was natural for him to want to make a sacrifice of a bird or two.

Still focusing on Jesus finding the man in the temple, Ruth wondered why the man was so keen to pass the responsibility for carrying his bed onto Jesus, 'He told me to do it'. The man was passing the buck, just as Adam had done when he ate the apple. This seemed to be part of his character. He would not stand firm. He would stand up for himself.

Jean wanted to know why the bed was so important to the man. Blind Bartimaeus had been content to leave his cloak behind and to follow Jesus. Why was this man clinging to his mat? Ruth jumped in that the mat was very important to the Pharisees. David linked this with the healing of the man who was let down through the roof in Mark 2. Now Jean wanted to know why Jesus had not anticipated the trouble he was making for the man by asking him to carry his mat.

Len, who had been following the conversation, observed how every contribution was beginning with 'I wonder why?'. Then he added his own contribution to the growing list. 'I wonder why Jesus asked the man whether he wanted to be healed?'. This was a key question for Len. Perhaps Jesus had spotted that the man really did not want to be healed. Perhaps he had settled to a way of life and did not want to have to face change.

Ruth found Len's question disturbing. She sensed Jesus was addressing the same question to her. 'What is it that really I don't want to change? It is a very disturbing passage the more I think about it.'

Jean moved onto a new topic. 'I am wondering what about all the others who were not being healed. Once again David was puzzled by the lack of interest that all the others who were waiting to be healed took in the man who had been healed. After all he had been there for ever and now he was off carrying his mat. Thinking of all those who had not been healed, Ruth links them with the people she sees living on the pavement and begging in the street.

As the session was drawing to a close, Jean tried to encourage the group to crystallise their presentation for the plenary. There was zero energy for this in the group. Rather than summarise what had been discussed previously, five dominant extraverted intuitive types wanted to make new connections and to explore new possibilities. They preferred to offer a joint presentation to the plenary. Len offered to get that going by asking David a question and by inviting others to jump in.

### **Dominant introverted intuition with auxiliary extraverted thinking**

The group of three dominant introverted intuitive types with auxiliary extraverted thinking comprised three INTJs, all male (Mark, Robert, and Fraser). Mark opened the group by inviting reflection on what they shared in common. There was ready recognition and naming of dominant introverted intuition supported by auxiliary extraverted thinking. Drawing on his auxiliary extraverted thinking, Mark then invited Robert to share his perspective, ‘Well Robert, what do you make of this strange passage?’.

Robert noted that he had heard the story before. Hearing the account this time, a number of thoughts had come to mind, a number of questions. He wondered how Jesus had known that the man had been there for such a long time. He wondered about the enormous power of Jesus’ words. He wondered about the concept of sabbath. He was puzzled about the links between sin and sickness. He explained that such questions often come into his mind when he explores holes in what he observes. He wanted to ask questions about discrepancies in the story and about things that he felt were missing from the story. Then a number of different explanations came to mind, but there was nothing permanent in the explanations. For Robert, it is the questions that capture his imagination, not the answers.

Still drawing on his auxiliary extraverted thinking, Mark drew Fraser into the conversation. Fraser wondered at which of the Jewish festivals this all took place and how the festival had significance for the healing. He wondered why Jesus asked such an obvious

question of the man, 'Do you want to be made well?'. He wondered why the Jews were so legalistic: their problem was not with Jesus healing the man, but with the man carrying his mat on the sabbath.

Now answering his own question, Mark said his attention had been caught by the paralysed man saying that he had no man to put him into the pool. He recalled that this passage had played an important part in shaping Christology in the early Church. For healing the paralysed man needed the human Jesus to intervene. While healing is the divine activity (and so Jesus needs to be God), healing and rescuing from sin requires the saviour to be human (and so Jesus needs to be man). Mark reflected how that single sentence in John's Gospel has been made to carry a lot of weight.

Finding a pause in the conversation, Robert stepped into the silence. Robert was not interested in Christological speculation, but in what the passage might mean for him in regard to the effect it might have on his life and on the lives of others. The passage was puzzling. We do not even know whether the paralysed man knew who Jesus was. He probably did not have a clue. Robert went on to reflect how sometimes we meet individuals who have a huge impact on our lives, but we never find out who they really are. They may simply say something that brings us new insight – that in a sense brings us healing. We think that something divine may be happening. That man was healed and he became part of the community.

Robert's line of thought sparked a new idea in Fraser's mind. He wondered how people get back into the community if they have been out of it for 38 years. Now this prompted Fraser to wonder more deeply about the paralysed man's social networks. Where did he live? How did he get to the pool everyday? Fraser also wanted to press harder the question regarding why the writer of John's Gospel decided to include this particular story. For Fraser, the real point of the story occurs after the passage that they were studying. The



real point comes in the following verses when Jesus justifies his activity on the sabbath by saying, 'My father is still working, and I also am working'. Fraser then underlined how at this stage the Jews resolved to kill Jesus because he was calling God his father. This observation returned Fraser to John's enduring interest in Christology.

Returning to his own line of thinking, Robert affirmed that Jesus revealed himself to the paralysed man through the very act of healing. For Robert, the really interesting question concerned how that same dynamic may continue to happen today.

Mark then looked back to Robert's question about the links between sin and sickness. For example, in the current passage, Jesus explicitly warned the man whom he had just healed, 'Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you'. To Mark's way of thinking, Jesus was explicitly linking sin and sickness. Fraser picked up the challenge and made the link with John 9 where Jesus was asked the question, 'Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'. Jesus had replied, 'Neither. He was born blind that God's works might be revealed in him!'. For Fraser this raised a completely different set of ethical questions.

By this point, however, time was running out, and Mark invited the group to reflect on how they would draw things together for the plenary session. 'Has there been any signs of INTJ activity?' he asked. In his opinion, what he had observed in the group was dominant introverted intuition in overdrive, as individual connections were being made and questions were being asked. At the same time, in the group Mark had observed auxiliary extraverted thinking, organising, facilitating, and showing their inner creativity. Mark observed how each of the three participants had followed his own inner direction. There had been no sense of needing to reach agreement. There had been a rich diversity of views without disagreement. Mark concluded that all three INTJs working together had given each other permission simply to be themselves.

**Dominant introverted intuition with auxiliary extraverted feeling**

The group of two dominant introverted intuitive types with auxiliary extraverted feeling comprised two INFJs, both of whom were female (Susan and Helen). This group was begun by Susan reading the task slowly and clearly, 'Our task is, bring your preferred dominant and auxiliary functions out to play. What do you perceive and evaluate in the passage of scripture?'. Reflecting on this task Helen observed that they were not being asked to do anything out of the ordinary. Their dominant and auxiliary functions came into play naturally.

Helen went on to say that, when she looked closely at the passage, she found herself asking 'why' three times. First, she wondered why Jesus went up to Jerusalem. This is quite straightforward. He went up because there was a festival of the Jews, and he is Jewish. Jesus was doing what he does as a Jewish person. Second, Helen wondered why Jesus did what he did on the sabbath. Now for her this was more complex. Jesus had been there before. He must have seen the man there before. Jesus could have done what he did on the Friday, or waited until the Sunday. But he did it on the sabbath, knowing that it was going to stir up trouble. Third, Helen wondered why the man who had been healed went away and told the Jews that Jesus had instructed him to carry his mat. On the surface this just doesn't seem a very grateful thing to do.

What really sparked Helen's imagination, as she began to wonder about these matters, was the idea that Jesus was stirring things up. Although the particular translation of the Bible used for this exercise had omitted the disputed verse about the angel stirring up the water, Helen remembered it and brought it to the centre of her attention. In 38 years the man had failed to get into the water when the angel stirred it up. Now Jesus came along and stirred everything up. Jesus stirred up the water; Jesus stirred up the man; Jesus stirred up the Jews; Jesus stirred up trouble.

When Helen paused, Susan interjected that the question she found herself asking was why did Jesus ask the bizarre question, ‘Do you want to be made well?’ and why did the man respond in such a bizarre way? If you had been sitting there for 38 years waiting to get healed, how would you feel if someone asked you that question? But instead of jumping at the opportunity, the man’s reply explains why he had failed to get healed for such a long time.

Then Susan went on to say, ‘Jesus often asks that question to people. It is a very real question. Do people really want to be made well?’. Susan went on to say that we don’t know whether the man really wanted to be made well. Probably Jesus didn’t know either. Yet Jesus just went ahead and healed him, and ‘that is a bit weird’. The man could have complained. He could have taken Jesus to court. He had lost his livelihood. He had been sitting there for 38 years gathering money, and now he couldn’t do it anymore.

Susan’s insight sparked deeper reflection and further connections in Helen’s mind. She began to conceptualise the man playing the victim archetype. He was a particular kind of victim, a cripple. There is a cripple archetype inside ourselves that holds us back, that makes us say ‘No, I cannot do this’. The man couldn’t get into the pool – it wasn’t really his fault. He had no one to put him into the pool. It was the fault of other people for not placing him there. It is easier to remain ill, to remain the victim. That way you don’t have to accept responsibility. Indeed he did not even accept responsibility for carrying his mat on the sabbath. Jesus made him do that.

Pushing the connections a little further, Susan began to see the whole story as weird. There is no faith involved. The man never says thank you. Then he drops Jesus into trouble. But he doesn’t even know who Jesus is.

Helen now contemplated that the whole story might be seen as something that Jesus had set up deliberately. ‘I think Jesus wants the man to point to him. Jesus wanted trouble.

This had to happen so that things could move on'. Helen pointed out that this is where the Jews started persecuting Jesus. We would never have heard of Jesus had the Jews not started to persecute him.

Susan took the analysis in a new direction. The story said something about God and about God's activity. You don't have to do anything to experience healing. You don't even need faith. Sometimes in our own lives God has given us a great gift and we have done absolutely nothing. And that threw a spanner in classic teaching about the importance of faith.

Helen took the analysis in another unconnected direction. Helen felt annoyed with Jesus saying, 'Do not sin anymore'. What right had Jesus to connect that man's unfortunate predicament with sin!

Having spent the session asking the question 'why' on so many occasions, now time had really run out, Helen concluded by saying that she was happy with raising questions that do not get answered. Rather, she said, 'I am uncomfortable when someone comes up with too many answers'.

## **Discussion**

### **Dominant extraverted intuition**

The very first to speak was the single ENTP in the group, Beth, whose dominant and basic coping function-orientation was assisted by the nurturing auxiliary of introverted thinking. Such rapid initiative is characteristic of this - the most mercurial of all the sixteen types (see further, Ross & Francis, 2020, pp. 211-221).

David (ENFP) responded readily with a wide-ranging generalisation, as is the inclination of the extraverted intuitive dominants generally and then followed with a plethora of open-ended questions using a variety of interrogatives – what, how and why. This prompted 'much switching and jumping around' that seemed readily accepted as is customary

in conversations among extraverted intuitive dominants, along with occasional confrontation accepted as *frisson* and as par for the course when extraverted intuition is in play. For example, Jean's conjecture about 'the symbolism of the number 38' was met with a clear riposte: Len dismissed this as wasted effort.

There was comfort in experimenting with the connotative power of words which is characteristic of the intuitive function generally irrespective of its orientation, though it may be more rapidly expressed when intuition boasts an extraverted orientation. Such connotative comfort was illustrated by the many lateral associations made in this type-alike group. For example, Ruth's play on the word 'invalid' as meaning either someone who was challenged, or someone whose life may not have been seen as valid by others (or by Jesus), was accepted and left to 'hang in the interpretive air' during what remained of the group interaction. In the same connotative vein, immediately following Ruth's castigation of Jesus' injunction to the healed person to 'sin no more', Jean's mind was reported as going straight to Job's interlocutors blaming Job's for his own suffering.

The extraverted intuitive dominants seemed content to leap into a variety of interpretations without feeling the need to fill in the gaps with more grounded knowledge. This might be regarded by other types (especially those with introverted sensing) to be untethered or unmoored (or even unethical), with likely insistence on evidence deriving from textual scholarship for such interpretations to be taken seriously. The capacity of extraverted intuitives to 'wonder out loud' without concern for evidence fits with early findings on religion and type when those with intuitive preferences were found to be more at ease with religious doubts compared to those with sensing preferences (Ross et al., 1996). It could be helpful in future research on type and biblical interpretation to include the reactions of the other seven type dominant functional-orientations to extraverted intuitive plenary presentations. Extraverted intuition is also comfortable with divergence regarding

interpretation, for example in regard to what constituted 'sin' in response to Jesus' injunction to the healed lame man to 'sin no more' – three approaches to sin were presented in short order – sin as an action, sin as an attitude, and sin as lack of faith.

Each group member's preoccupation with 'wondering' either out loud or its internal occurrence in personal reflection merits following up in future research as a characteristic of the operation of intuition, perhaps ranging across extraverted and introverted orientations. Furthermore, another possible characteristic of intuition is a tendency toward divergence, in contrast to the sensing function's concern with focus and the convergence of attention. For instance, at the end of the group it was reported: 'Jean tried to encourage the group to crystallise their presentation for the plenary. There was zero energy for this in the group, rather than summarise what had been discussed previously, five dominant extraverted intuitive types wanted to make new connections and to explore new possibilities.'

### **Dominant introverted intuition**

With regard to the introverted intuitive dominant group with auxiliary extraverted thinking (INTJ) there seemed to be a similar comfort with 'wondering' that characterised the extraverted intuitive group. However, the atmosphere evoked from the report was that it was cooler, indicating a more reflective, contentment to speculate without the requirement for results in the form of answers. For example, characteristic of introverted intuition, Robert reflected upon and reported his own process to the group. There was reported a rich diversity of speculative reflection and acceptance of this individual diversity without the need to bring any overarching coherence to the discussion. All three engaged in theological reflection in regard particularly to Christology, which illustrates the influence of thinking auxiliary function on the group discussion.

The introverted dominant group with auxiliary extraverted feeling (INFJ) focused on the human motivation and its complexities. The personhood of Jesus was explored, his

motivation for returning to Jerusalem for example, and for choosing to heal the lame man on the sabbath. One of the participants, Susan focussed on Jesus' inquiry 'Do people really want to be made well?'. Exploring possible ambivalence about healing is an established topic in psychoanalytic discourses on healing highlighted by the term 'secondary gain' which draws attention to the pervading issue of dependence that characterises human relationships. Those with intuition and feeling as preferences may well be drawn to and concerned with such complexities that may disrupt the relational harmony so cherished by those with a differentiated extraverted feeling function orientation.

Compared to the INTJ group, among the INFJs there was less speculation concerning the theological implications of the healing process and its after effects. By the same token, the INFJs enjoyed the shared fascination and attraction to 'word play' as had occurred in the extraverted intuitive group. For example, Helen seemed to take pleasure in the different kind of 'stirrings' in the narrative – psychological and political stirring of controversy by Jesus in healing on the Sabbath, paralleled by the reputed physical stirring of the waters by an angel that infused the water with potential healing power, possibly only if matched by individuals' particular motivation. Helen seemed to enjoy employing the rhetorical device of repetition of 'stirring' for its dramatic effect of illustrating her exegetical point.

The discussion between the two INFJs seemed to centre significantly upon the interpersonal dynamics between Jesus and the lame person, which perhaps reflects the distinct inflection given by their nurturing/sustaining auxiliary function orientation of extraverted feeling. Extraverted feeling is particularly concerned with establishing interpersonal harmony and the obstacles encountered in effecting its realisation in a specific setting, situation moment.

While the style of intuitive speculation is shared by both the introverted intuitive groups, the content and form is significantly modified by their contrasting auxiliary function

orientations of extraverted thinking and extraverted feeling. The extent to which this seems the case underlines the value of David Keirsey's reformulations of type theory in terms of four temperaments wherein the decisive factor in regard to those with intuitive preferences is whether intuition is paired with feeling or thinking, especially in regard to applications to religion and spirituality (see Keirsey & Bates, 1978). Furthermore Keirsey's separating those with a sensing perceiving preference in terms of introverted (SJs) and extraverted sensing (SPs) is very relevant in terms religious affiliation where SJs have been repeatedly found to be the most numerous temperament in religious groups and SPs the least likely of the four temperaments to affiliate (Ross & Francis 2020).

Toward the end of their conversation, both INFJ participants made comments associated with extraverted feeling – Susan spoke of understanding Jesus' healing of the lame man as a 'gift' which is the interpersonal expression of generosity from one person to another person. Helen for her part in conclusion seemed comfortable expressing open annoyance with Jesus associating the man's condition with 'sin'.

### **Conclusion**

The SIFT approach to biblical hermeneutics and liturgical preaching, as crystallised by Francis and Village (2008), drew on Jungian psychological type theory (Jung, 1971) to examine the role of the two perceiving functions (sensing and intuition) and the two judging functions (thinking and feeling) in reading and interpreting scripture. In the introduction to the present paper attention was drawn to the series of empirical studies that have tested the SIFT approach in relation to a range of biblical passages.

The present paper belongs to a new stream of research that develops and extends the SIFT approach by recognising that Jungian psychological type theory offers a richer and more complex understanding of the four functions by differentiating between the introverted



and extraverted expression of each function. This approach to psychological type theory refers not simply to four functions, but rather to eight function-orientations.

Three earlier studies had explored reading the Beatitudes (Matthew 5: 1-10) through the lenses of introverted intuition and introverted sensing (Francis et al., 2019), reading the wedding at Cana in Galilee (John 2: 1-11) through the lenses of introverted intuition and introverted sensing (Francis et al., 2021), and reading the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37) through the lenses of introverted intuition and extraverted intuition (Francis & Ross, 2022). The present paper has now added a fourth study reading the incident at the pool called Beth-zatha (John 5: 1-18) through the lenses of introverted intuition and extraverted intuition, and additionally nuancing these dominant lenses by also taking the auxiliary functions into account (differentiating between auxiliary feeling and auxiliary thinking).

The main conclusion that can be drawn from these four studies is that the reader perspective approach to biblical hermeneutics informed by psychological type theory is further enriched by taking the eight function-orientations model into account. This conclusion, however, is limited by the restricted data currently available. So far only four passages of scripture have been tested by this approach and as yet the approach has concentrated entirely on the perceiving process. Further studies are now needed to build on the foundation set by these first four studies.

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#### **Authors' contributions**

L.J.F. took responsibility for overall conceptualisation of the article and analysed the data;

C.F.J.R. organised the discussion. Both authors analysed the data and shaped the article.

**Ethical considerations**

Ethical approval to conduct the study was obtained from the School Research Ethics

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