

# William K Kay : Personality and Renewal

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## Introduction

The work of God in relation to the church:

- Reformation : radical overhauling of the life of the church (concerned with doctrine)
- Revival : characterised by the impact it has on those outside the church
- Restoration : returning of the church to truths/ministries that have been lost
- Renewal : affects styles of worship, prayer, ministry; more inclusive than reformation and less intensive than revival – the gentlest of the four.

The expression of renewal within the church is influenced by human personality. What people *do* in response to the presence of God within a congregation is partly determined by their dispositions/preferences.

The challenge to the church is to retain and enliven the people already worshipping while, at the same time, to bring new people to Christ... As the church is renewed, and as it retains young people, it begins to change in the way that it does things.

## Personality

Biblical models: the main metaphors for the person within the Bible are

- A tree
- A pot/vessel

Moral attributes

Parts of the personality

- Heart (seat of thoughts and emotions)
- Mind
- Spirit

Human spirit of the Christian is joined with the HS (1 Cor 6.17), so the thoughts of God may be communicated to the Christian at the interface.

HS infuses God's love into our hearts also (Rom 5.5).

In these texts we find :

- a distinction between inner and outer
- an expression of the inner nature in the outer world of deeds/words
- a need for integrity, holiness in the inner life of the Christian
- direct communication between God and Christian through the HS

## Psychological models : Eysenck

Eysenck identifies 3 dimensions of personality, related to the physical constitution of the body:

1. Introversion/extroversion – to do with how we handle stimuli to the brain (turning to the inner world or remaining with the world of the senses)
2. Neurotic/stable – to do with the nervous system (active autonomic system leads to adrenalin and nervous responses; less active one leads to lower levels of anxiety, even when anxiety is appropriate!)
3. Tough/tendermindedness – to do with male sex hormone (unconventional behaviour, coldness vs conventional behaviour and emotional warmth)

## Psychological models : Myers-Briggs

Rooted in psychological processes rather than in physical ones. But similar in conclusions.

Both identify an extroversion/introversion aspect to human personality

Both identify differences in the way people prefer to let either thinking or feeling predominate

Both presuppose a predisposition/preference to function in one way or another, but not a compulsion.

## Renewal

Reformation, revival, restoration and renewal all rejuvenate the life of the church.

Renewal can turn into revival.

Subject here: the behaviour of human beings when the church is being transformed through a series of spiritual and emotional 'waves'. What is the influence of personality?

What is renewal?

1. A process all Christians have experienced through their initial encounter with God – Titus 3.5 – renewal is connected with Christian initiation and a radical break between a life without God and a life with God.
2. A process which takes place more persistently thereafter – Rom 12.2 – a renewal as a mental process which allows Christians to see things differently, to live by the will of God not the pattern of the world.
3. In common terminology : A process which takes place in the life of a congregation, usually marked by more fervent and extempore prayer, and by a fresh appreciation of the love of God. These changes lead to a greater desire to worship and a more complete sense of victory over sin.

Most accounts of renewal begin with prayer. There may at the same time be a theological search, but the initial common factor in renewal is regular, determined prayer, usually triggered by a crisis or awareness of inadequacy. At some point the prayer shifts focus from being *for* something, and becomes *to* someone. It often breaks into new languages at this point. Once the renewal has begun, charismatic gifts are discovered. A correspondence between the lifeworld of the NT and our own clicks into place. The HS becomes a potent force rather than a theological abstraction. The gifts are understood to be for the building of the body, and renewal takes its place as a corporate thing.

## Personality and renewal

There have been several studies of the relationship between personality and charismatic activity.

A study of 930 Pentecostal ministers (using Eysenck) found that charismatic activity was correlated with extraversion.

Correlated with stability were tongues, dancing and receiving definite answer to prayer. Correlated to toughmindedness were all charismatic activities except tongues and being slain in the Spirit which were correlated with tendermindedness [I've noticed this; Fs fall over, Ts don't].

MBTI based studies produce compatible findings. Ts are more likely to score highly on charismatic experience than Fs.

So the popular belief that charismatic Christians are more likely to be touchy-feely kinds of people who make judgments on the basis of subjective considerations is not correct [God working with the shadow?]. There is a statistically significant association between thinking and charismatic experience.

A study of Church of Wales clergy found their typical profile is ISFJ. Another study found that S types give higher value to traditional aspects of Christianity than N types. Taken with the finding that extroverts are more likely to have charismatic experiences, it seems that Welsh clergy have the opposite profile to that most likely to embrace charismatic experience. Such personality differences may explain why some are drawn towards the freedom of charismatic services and others to the quiet predictable pattern of traditional liturgy.

## Conclusions

1. Extroversion is related to the exercise of charismatic gifts and to charismatic renewal
2. T types / toughminded types are associated with charismatic experience, perhaps because they are more comfortable with the jumping of social and conventional boundaries. Stability is also needed in order to feel comfortable at making a fool of oneself.
3. The connection between certain personality types and charismatic renewal is theologically neutral.
4. We may assume that charismatic gifts are available to all personality types, but some avail themselves more readily of them than others.
5. Charismatic gatherings can be adapted to suit the personalities of those less likely to share in charismatic worship – loud music, forceful preaching, demands for socially unusual behaviour are not a necessary part of renewal, they are just the preferences of extroverts. Pleas to diminish these things should not be seen as a desire to limit renewal, but rather a desire to increase its scope to those at present outside it.
6. It seems that the apparently theological differences in renewal may in fact be personality preferences, to do with expression not reality. So: some of the faults of charismatic theology arise out of the psychological needs of their proponents – as for example theologies stressing authority appeal to authoritarian personalities, and theologies objecting to the ministry of women appeal to a disposition which fears female dominance.
7. Morality – the biblical concept of personality takes us back to the moral and spiritual requirements for charismatic blessing: the vessel must be clean, the heart pure, the meditation of the believer on the law of the Lord, the mind renewed, the spirit thirsting for God.