Clergy Personality and Collaborative Ministry: The Way Ahead for Stable Extraverts?

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A sample of 991 male clergy affiliated to the Evangelical Alliance in the United Kingdom completed the short-form Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, together with a scale regarding collaborative ministry. The data demonstrated that effective collaborative ministry was significantly related to the clergy's personality. Effective collaborative ministry was correlated positively with extraversion, correlated negatively with neuroticism, and unrelated to psychoticism. While the model of collaborative ministry may provide an exciting way ahead for clergy who display stable extraversion, this may be a less welcome route for clergy who display neurotic introversion.

KEY WORDS: clergy; personality; collaborative ministry; Eysenck.

INTRODUCTION

Collaborative ministry has been a major theme in church thinking, ecumenically and internationally, over the past two decades. Although nuanced in a variety of ways, the same basic theme has been discussed under the concepts of shared ministry (Diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich, 1980), total ministry (Zabriski, 1995), local ministry (Bowden & West, 2000), team ministry (Carr, 1985), ministry leadership teams (Greenwood, 2000), and every member ministry (Redfern, 1999), as well as collaborative ministry (Sofield & Juliano, 1987).

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By the beginning of the 1980s, collaborative ministry was being clearly promoted in the Church of England at both local and provincial level. At the local level, the report *Shared Ministry*, by the Diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich (1980, p. 6) clearly advocated that:

Ministry within the church needs to be exercised so that all its members can be equipped to share in the wider ministry.

At the provincial level, the report, *To a Rebellious House?*, by the Partners in Mission Consultation (1981, p. 47) emphasised that:

The whole pilgrim people of God share in ministry, and clergy and laity must be trained for this shared ministry.

The notion of collaborative ministry continued to have a prominent place in subsequent Church of England reports, including *A Strategy for the Church’s Ministry* (Tiller, 1983), *Faith in the City* (Archbishop of Canterbury’s Commission on Urban Priority Areas, 1985), *Faith in the Countryside* (Archbishops’ Commission on Rural Areas, 1990), and *Strangers in the Wings* (Advisory Board of Ministry, 1998). In 2002 the interim report of the working party set up by the Archbishops’ Council, *The Structure and Funding of Ordination Training* (Archbishops’ Council, Ministry Division, 2002, p. 69) indicated that:

our aim was to provide high quality training for the clergy that will equip them to offer vibrant and collaborative spiritual leadership, to empower a vocationally motivated laity and, thereby, to promote and serve God’s mission in the world.

In their book, *Dynamic Local Ministry*, Bowden and West (2000, p. 19) could rightly claim that:

Most dioceses are persuaded that God is calling his church to a collaborative model of ministry where clergy and laity work together to bring about the transfiguration of the world which we believe to be his will.

The case for collaborative ministry has been variously underpinned by theological and by practical arguments. The theological case for collaborative ministry is generally rooted in a theology of baptism as a total rite of initiation into the body of Christ, in an interpretation of the Pauline teaching on the nature of the body of Christ, or in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Building on the theology of baptism, the World Council of Churches (1982, p. 20) faith and order paper, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, sets the scene by arguing as follows:

The Holy Spirit unites in a single body those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witnesses into the world . . . The Spirit calls people to faith, sanctifies them through many gifts, gives them strength to witness to the Gospel, and empowers them to serve in hope and love.

The report, *Strangers in the Wings* (Advisory Board of Ministry, 1998, p. 27) makes the point more directly.