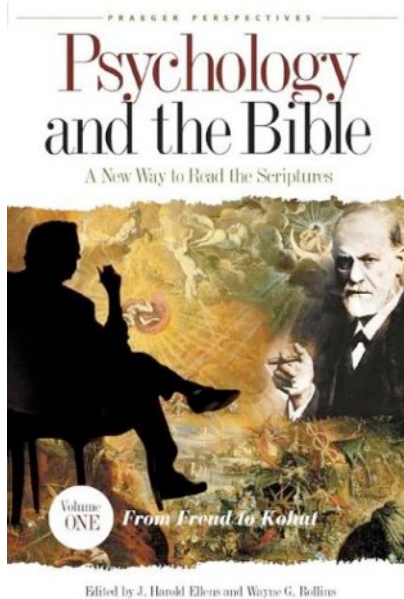


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Ellens, J. Harold, and Wayne G. Rollins, eds.

Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures

Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality

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This four-volume series will be extensively reviewed here in four parts, each of which will discuss the twelve to fourteen chapters written by the contributors. The series reflects the work of the Psychology and Bible section of the Society of Biblical Literature. The series is also designed to be read by college students, clergy, and scholars seeking to explore the psychological interpretation of biblical texts. The essays reflect the experiences and scholarship of many diverse biblical, theological, and psychological scholars. However, the texts are well-written and intend to provide a gateway by which one might enter the realm of psychological criticism of the Judeo-Christian scriptures and find a clearer understanding of this movement, which began in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Each volume begins with an overview of each authorial contribution by the editors, which helps to clarify the direction of the text.

Volume 1: *From Freud to Kohut*

This volume serves as a general introduction to the various methods and perspectives used in psychological study of the sacred texts. In the introduction Ellens and Rollins discuss the history of psychological criticism and its value to biblical and religious studies. The editors apply Andrew Kille's suggestion that this approach studies the world behind the

text, the world of the text, and the world in front of the text. Kille's chapter fully discusses these points of study and suggests that this helps the interpreter/pastor to appreciate the various characters and personalities in the biblical stories.

Ilona Rashkow's chapter on sexuality and a Freudian lens in the Hebrew Bible sheds light on the question of incest and the biblical text. Rashkow reads the Torah while reading Freud's research concerning the Oedipus complex. This leads her to question the Torah's silence concerning the father's relationship to their daughters. Rashkow admits that this is the one relationship not condemned in the Torah and suggests that Freud's belief that father-child incest was a natural part of ancient societies.

Wayne Rollins' essay on Carl Gustav Jung's relationship with his father, psychology, and the Bible provides a great historical overview of Jung's religious convictions and love of truth. Jung's father, a conservative Reformed clergy, seemed to abandon his faith in light of his intellectual findings. Jung, however, seemed to grieve his father's unwillingness to bridge intellectual truth with biblical faith. Rollins continues throughout this history to suggest that Jung's use of the biblical texts indicated that he still believed that faith and knowledge were intricately involved. Mitternacht also discusses another scholar's integration of knowledge and faith. This chapter explores Theissen's integration of psychology and New Testament studies. Mitternacht surveys Theissen's application of Pauline psychology to the book of Romans. For Theissen, Paul saw himself as the new Adam amidst the struggles that he faced in his ministry.

Lyn Bechtel begins the next section of this volume, which explores differing aspects in the field of psychology. Bechtel discusses developmental psychology and its interpretation of human development from infancy to adulthood. Using this method Bechtel, explores the creation of "Adam and Eve" and their "fall into sin" as a natural development from new creation (infancy) to adulthood (wise and understanding). Underwood's essay suggests that the biblical text was meant to be a playful tool to help the reader address issues that they face that prevent their healing and growth. He compares this to Winnicott's playful therapy and "Squiggle Game." In this game the therapist works with the client (usually a child) to help the client to interpret a drawing by alternating drawing lines to create a project together. For Underwood, Winnicott's playful teasing of the client helps him or her to invest in the story. Underwood would suggest that the biblical texts, at times, call the "client" to enter the story and take ownership by joining in this creative partnership. Petri Merenlati uses psychoanalytic criticism to observe the role of the Gospels to also entice the reader to enter the story and identify with characters. These characters help the reader to find meaning in the story and his or her own life. William Morrow discusses PTSD in light of the trauma of Second Isaiah. For Morrow, the community of the Jews was traumatized by their displacement, yet the suffering servant provides an object with

which the community can identify and embrace in their own anxiety. Kamila Blessing applies Family Systems Psychology as a method of understanding family and interpersonal dynamics in the ancient texts. Using the birth and life of Samuel as an example, Blessing finds that God becomes the hero because God is the third part of the relationship triangle. This willingness to embrace those who were hurting and develop relationship provided hope for those whose structures began to reflect the anxiety and fear of a nation.

Bernard Lang discusses Catholic theologian Eugene Drewermann's romantic view of the biblical text. Drewermann found that religion was a major component in the psychological and emotional development of the individual. Neuwoehner applied the psychosymbolic approach to the interpretation of the text. The reader identifies symbols of the story and amplifies these images. These images lie deep in the subconscious of the individual and help one transform through story, identification, and symbols. Transformation happens not just to the individual but to the community as well. Gruenwald completes these essays with a discussion of Kohut's psychoanalytic approach. While God symbolizes the qualities of mercy, faith, and protection, the Messiah became a representation of this God. Gruenwald suggests that there were many concepts of messianism, but the ancient community still sought empathy and mercy in their God. This attractive quality provided hope in the midst of crisis and suffering in the ancient world.

Ellens completes this volume with a chapter that ties the articles to the theme of reading the scriptures through the new lens of psychology. Ellens suggests that this newer method provides an exciting opportunity to see the religious text with a fresh perspective that engages both the reader and the characters and transforms the community and individual.

Volume 2: From Genesis to Apocalyptic Vision

This volume focuses on psychological criticism of characters in the Torah and Prophets. These famous Bible heroes are discussed from the psychologist's couch both historically and therapeutically. Ellens and Rollins again introduce this volume by giving an overview of each chapter by examining the biblical text and the self and its relationship to God.

Walter Wink discusses Jacob's deviousness as a reflection of his inner wounds as a man. As the second born he was manipulated, neglected, and finally wrestled with himself and the ego. In chapter 3 Ellens suggests that the fall (Gen 2-3) was an expression of Adam's desire for differentiation from God. The psychodynamics of this fall/sin involve God's willingness to confront the new creature and Adam's will to rebel and seek independence. Rashkow discusses father-daughter incest in the stories of Eve and Lot's daughters. With Freud's rejection of father-daughter seduction for the Oedipus complex, Rashkow suggests

that Eve was seduced by the serpent and God, while Lot's daughters were also seduced by a drunken father. For Rashkow, the biblical text opens the door for incest as an acceptable practice by the father in the ancient world. Later in the volume Rashkow discusses the names of God and phallic power. The discussion Moses has with God concerning the name and God's vague response suggests to Rashkow that Yahweh expresses fear in revealing this power and control to Moses. Kille next discusses Jacob as one who constantly confronted his own ego through conflict with those who threatened him. Through these conflicts Jacob experienced a sense of differentiation and became more complete

Another section of the volume offers discussions of the Prophets from a psychological perspective. André LaCocque discusses Jonah from the personality of one who was angry with his enemies. Jonah also resisted God's desire to practice compassion and mercy. Jonah, according to LaCocque, is the antihero of the story. Two chapters later Dan Merkur offers a psychoanalysis of Jeremiah. He suggests that Jeremiah's preaching was his own struggle to repent and accept his fate from Yahweh. He accuses Jeremiah of hallucinations, misinformation, and immaturity when it came to living the message of God. Jeremiah's prophecies seem to be more an examination with his own struggle to repent than a message to a rebellious nation. However, Jeremiah identified with the people of Israel and used himself as an example for the Jewish nation. Schmitt, Jobling, and Garber perform various evaluations of Ezekiel as a prophet, trauma survivor, and victim of PTSD. This seems to explain his erratic behavior, graphic preaching, and possible sexual issues. Ezekiel's wild stories and bizarre experiences also suggest that he wrestled with a God who showed compassion to a rebellious prophet and nation. Kille discusses Amos 5:18–20 in the next essay. His emphasis on the "Day of Yahweh" and the woe oracle also indicates that the nation of Israel, while longing for this day, was living in a state of denial that the prophet sought to tease out with his expression of the Day of Yahweh as destruction and fear. Martin Buss closes the essays concerning the prophets with his discussion of selfhood and the prophets. For Buss, the prophetic messages expressed the prophets' desire for action and their identification with God's emotions.

Essays in this volume also address the Writings and a pseudepigraphal text. Bernhard Lang focuses on Proverbs and Lady Wisdom. This goddess seemed to be a remnant of ancient Israel's polytheistic worldview. For Lang, Lady Wisdom was also the student/scribe's personal/protector god or goddess. Wisdom was considered a construct of the scribe who continued to live on in the minds of those seeking a spiritual protector. Merkur discusses the book of Job as psychotherapeutic change where the reader observes Job's transformation. However, Merkur suggests that the end of the transformation was still as unsettling as the original suffering of Job. For Merkur, the character's development was much more exciting than the book as literature. Daschke emphasizes 4 Ezra and the

character's loss, grief, and encounter with other grieving characters. Daschke believes that the angel assumed the role of therapist to console and develop the writer. Finally, a second essay by Merkur concerns the visionary practices of Jewish apocalyptic. For Merkur, the author experienced grief, sadness, trauma, and suffering. This experience is different from those that require prophecy through sleep deprivation, fear, mourning, trances, bipolar episodes, or erratic behavior. However, apocalyptic literature manipulates the ego to address issues out of the control of the reader.

While this volume does not end with a conclusion, it provides a glossary in the back for the student learning a new vocabulary.

Volume 3: From Gospel to Gnostics

This volume discusses the Gospel accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as a case for psychology. Only one chapter discusses the gnostic texts. Ellens and Robins again introduce this volume by discussing the value of the Gospels in the study of psychology. Jack Miles has suggested that theology can "activate archetypal truths anchored deep in the soul." (1) Ellens and Robins not only survey the contents of this volume; they integrate the chapters as support for the study of religion and psychology. For the editors, the Gospel accounts help to present experiences and inform and transform readers. This happens through the common symbols of religions, narratives, biblical personalities, and religious phenomena. Concepts of the soul and psyche, along with hermeneutics (the world between the reader and the text), also work to transform the reader of these accounts.

Walter Wink discusses his struggle to apply his doctoral research to the parishioners where he preaches. His discussion of Jacob's wrestling with himself (his shadow) seems to be a metaphor for our wrestling with the text and with historical criticism. For Wink, historical criticism seems to isolate the reader from engaging the text and allow it to transform him or her. Ralph Underwood engages Mark 15 with object relations theory. In his view, the reader observes and embodies the reading as God's suffering and my suffering. Kamila Blessing follows this with a discussion concerning Jesus' parables and Erickson's confusion teachers. For Blessing, the parables not only told a story; they confused, confronted, and caused the reader to transform through the cognitive dissonance they produced in the story.

Kari Syreeni's chapter on grief work and the Gospels indicates that the resurrection was a coping mechanism for the community facing denial, anger, and hopelessness in the death of their teacher. For Syreeni, the stories of the risen Jesus provided comfort to those grieving the passion. Petri Merenlahti suggests that the manly Jesus in Mark was created

by the community to give a sense of pleasure and joy in the retelling of this Gospel narrative. Michael Newheart and Paul Anderson discuss the Gospel of John and psychodynamic culture. Newheart indicates that the symbols of John's text (water, reign of God, shepherds, and bread) were designed to identify with the reader and guide him or her to transformation. Anderson's essay focuses on the dynamic tension in the narrative designed to help others develop their faith and grow through suffering and stress.

The letters attributed to the apostle Paul are the subject of the next essays. Anthony Bash focuses on 2 Cor 10–13 from a psychodynamic approach. He suggests that Paul's defensiveness expressed his ego's defensiveness. The text also illustrates the classic displacement, denial, and splitting that happens when the ego feels threatened. Blessing applies triangles to Gal 1–2 as Paul's method of calling the community to identify with Jesus and develop their relationship with their Messiah. Dieter Mitternacht approaches Galatians and the opponents of Paul with a nontraditional view. For Mitternacht, the opponents were not Judaizers who forced the Galatians to be circumcised. The Galatian congregations were being challenged to identify with the humiliation of Jesus and the cross and resist the social pressure from those opposing the simplicity of the gospel. Paul also challenges the community in his willingness to model this humility and call them to follow the way of Jesus.

Charles Davis and Ellens explore apocalyptic texts. Davis discusses Rev 17 as psychic drama as an inner desire to find personal identity in the war between the Christ and antichrist. Ellens suggested that the apocalypse provided a response to the community's loss, suffering, and death in Jesus. Apocalypse provided hope for a grieving community expecting the parousia of Jesus.

Jill McNish expresses the psychology of shame as rooted in the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus embraced the life of shame in the humiliation of the incarnation and provided an answer to this shame through relationship, acceptance, his righteousness, forgiveness, mercy, and compassion. David Miller encourages readers to accept the similarities between biblical imagery and likeness. For Miller, the reader has an opportunity to identify with the images in the biblical world and find psychological wholeness. Rollins examines the historical interpretation of psyche, soul, and self as expressions of the inner human consciousness. Finally, Schuyler Brown discusses gnostic language in the texts concerning begotten and the nature of God. Brown accuses the church of removing this intellectual level of gnosis for a basic level of confessional theology.

Volume 4: *From Christ to Jesus*

This volume emphasizes the life of Christ as a model for personal transformation. Ellens and Rollins introduce the volume asking the age-old question whether the divine man emerged from the historical man or if the historical man gave birth to the divine man. Ellens and Rollins suggest that the search for the historical Jesus needs to be replaced by the study of the social and psychology of Jesus. They indicate that Jesus did not leave any written material, in order to prevent the inflated projections of the written word and because he trusted the power of human imagination to help the movements go forward. Ellens's next chapter suggests that the confessional church developed a divinity model of Jesus. Confessional theology, rather than historical information, is responsible for the divine Jesus.

James Charlesworth expresses that a psychobiography of Jesus provides the reader with a convenient tool to understand Jesus in his setting. The social interaction of Jesus with the crowds, his charismatic nature, the culture of pilgrimage, and the purification rites and their dangers suggest that Jesus' self-understanding was an important process in the life of this Galilean. John Miller focuses on the psychology of males in their thirties and their experiences of transition, vision, and relationships. For Miller, Jesus exhibits classic signs of a thirty-year-old man who mentors, dreams, and matures in a culture where males must adapt to their environment.

Donald Capps authors four chapters in this volume. He proposes a psychobiography of Jesus as one who felt a disconnection from his parents, especially his father and stepfather. This was reflected by melancholy, a desire for a father figure, and hope of divine reversal. Capps next explores Albert Schweitzer's critique of psychologists as being ineffective in the study of Jesus. Capps indicates that ancient cultures experienced hallucinations and emotional dreams as part of their natural experiences. He next illustrates Jesus as a power tactician in the way Jesus became known, built an organization, and collected a following. This model, suggested by Jay Haley, seemed practical. However, Haley proposed that Jesus miscalculated his role by offending the Pharisees and thus was murdered. Capps indicates that Jesus used a surrender tactic that discredited the Pharisees and those oppressing others. Capps also writes that Jesus lifted the oppression of others through story, words, and vision as a numinous presence.

Walter Wink focuses on Jesus' original impulse to overturn oppression. The archetypal understanding of the Son of Man reflected the ancient belief that God would overcome the oppression of all people. Wink suggests that the church return to this impulse and, in turn, model the Son of Man's role in the community. In the next essay Andries van Aarde examines Jesus as a figure who displayed qualities of one without a father figure.

Jesus associated with the fatherless, single women, and the oppressed because he, too, had been neglected or abandoned by a father. Anderson, Ellens, and Fowler examine each other's works in the Gospels as cognitive-critical analysis. In this chapter each author suggests that psychological study provides a better understanding of the text and characters than the traditional historical-critical method that has dominated biblical studies for decades.

Hal Childs explains that the traditional historical study of the Bible is guilty of projecting the scholar's views into the text. Anderson suggests that Jesus' deeds transformed individuals through dissonance in common themes found in the Gospels. For Anderson, the multiple attestations for Jesus' relationship with John the Baptist, cleansing the temple, healing on the Sabbath, eating with sinners, and references to God as Father provide key archetypes for psychological study in the transformation of the reader. Schuyler Brown concludes this volume by suggesting that the language of the biblical text opens the door for the psyche to engage the world of the Bible and experience transformation.

As someone who has met many of the authors and listened to presentations at the SBL Annual Meeting, I enjoyed reading their contributions to this series. I have had the benefit of learning more in this area from Ellens and Robbins through their continued work with the various sessions held at the national conventions throughout the past five years. The field of psychology and Bible is a growing discipline and one needed in the field of biblical studies. This four-volume series is valuable tool for seminary classes that seek to introduce this discipline to the student. While the four volumes are quite lengthy, the series provides the reader with a thorough overview of the field and examples of how this work is applied to the various genres of the Bible. The texts are easily understood and make this series valuable for clergy who are interested in developing another skill in biblical interpretation.