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**Review of *Psychological Insight into the Bible*, Chapters 6-10  
Ed. Wayne G. Rollins and D. Andrew Kille**

First let me say that it is an honor and privilege to have been asked to do this because these individuals have contributed as much as anyone to the field of psychological biblical criticism and I have long looked to each of them as people who have actually helped define psychological biblical criticism, they have been instrumental in carving this field out and consolidating it and I daresay putting psychological biblical criticism on the map. And in this respect I would point to Wayne Rollins definitive resource in this field, *Soul and Psyche: The Bible in Psychological Perspective* and I think it was in Boston 1999 when I had just started my doctoral program at Union in Psych and Religion when I attended a panel which was a discussion of this wonderful resource. And I have had many occasions to refer to that book, which I would call a reference book, as well as Wayne's 1983 book entitled *Jung and the Bible*.

And then there is the work of Andy Kille, particularly his definitive 2001 work entitled *Psychological Biblical Criticism* which is part of a very well regarded series on biblical hermeneutics put out by Fortress Press and I think when I first saw this book in print I thought, well, I guess psychological biblical criticism has finally arrived!

I want to say as well that both of these scholars are wonderful and very generous colleagues and have given freely of themselves to myself and I am sure to any number of other people who have shown a predilection to turn their minds to subjects related to psychological biblical criticism. And I am very grateful to them both for that which has been so helpful to many of us in this still emerging field.

Overall before I start specifically talking about chapters 6-10 which are the chapters appointed to me I would say that this book is a welcome addition to our field. I would think that it could well be used as a reader in an appropriate seminary class particularly in the way that it places this field in historical perspective with the earliest work being a selection from M. Scott Fletcher's 1912 book entitled *The Psychology of the New Testament*.

I also very much appreciated the editors' commentaries which precede each chapter and which themselves are references. Also very helpful are the suggested readings at the end of each chapter.

Finally I situate myself at the outset as not only one who loves to read and think about this stuff but as a parish clergyperson actively engaged in the trenches of ministry in the church, working with scripture in preaching and bible study and church leadership on a day to day basis. And it is through that lens and the lens that wants to make this material relevant to seminarians I teach in my spare time on an adjunct basis, that I read this material.

The first chapter I have been asked to comment upon is chapter 6 which bears the overall title *Biblical Symbols and Archetypal Images* and which consists of three (3) selections exemplifying biblical symbols and archetypal images.

**6.1 “Water as a Religious Symbol” (p. 103)**--is an excerpt from Patrick Henry's piece, “Water, Bread and Wine: Patterns in Religion.”

In this piece Henry “wets” (pun intended) our appetite for coming to understandings of the deeper psychic, symbolic meaning of water in the new testament, and particularly the waters of baptism, specifically the symbolism of water as symbolizing the return to creation in the cosmic sense. He discusses two possible and not necessarily inconsistent symbolic constellations: one is the dual symbolism of water as both womb and tomb, for if water is life giving it can also be death dealing. This was Eliade's understanding of water symbolism. But Henry goes on to discuss Richard Rubenstein's focus on the baptism with water as symbolizing an escape, or re-birth, from parental infanticide, with the fear of the mother being even more early and primitive than the fear of the father which emerges in the Oedipal period. And if I were going to continue writing this excerpt myself I know that it would lead to a discussion of the much overlooked work of Otto Rank who was an early protégé of Freud's but who broke with Freud over his belief that the most fundamental and definitive psychic event and trauma in every person's life is not the Oedipal drama which occurs between the ages of 2 and 5 but the trauma that inevitably ensues in the emergence from the womb, and the constant (unconscious) tension between the desire to return to the womb, to merge, to be part of something bigger, which involves annihilation of one's individuality, and the conflicting heroic desire to flee the womb and the mother and embark on one's own independent heroic journey.

**6.2 Wayne Rollin's “Biblical Archetypes and the Story of the Self” (p. 106)**, an excerpt from his wonderful book, *Jung and The Bible* which I personally have had many occasions to refer to. In this excerpt Dr. Rollins discusses various specific archetypes and this segment serves as a kind of bridge to the later segments in this chapter which talk about specific archetypes. No discussion of psychological biblical criticism would be complete without some explication of the concept of archetypes which for me represents the real heart of understanding the psychic power of biblical texts. The editors had posited at the introduction to chapter 6 that “The year 1912 is most likely the birth date of depth psychological analysis of religious symbols, myths and archetypal images,” that being the year Jung published *Symbols of Transformation* and in that work Jung

began his lifetime work of highlighting affinities between “religious” images and stories and those that spontaneously emerged in the dreams and visions and active imaginations of his clients.

Dr. Rollins specifically highlights various specific archetypes: hero, the masculine and feminine, archetypes of “the inner self,” archetypes of “the other,” archetypes of the cosmos, or the holy, the archetypal process of the conflict between good and evil.

From my own perspective, it is in understanding the power and the energy of myths and symbols and their underlying archetypes that we begin to understand the power and the inevitability of religiosity and of the emergence of scripture and ritual and sacrament and it is from this perspective of believing in the power of myth and symbol and archetypes and their resulting sacred texts and ritual and sacrament that I have viewed with helplessness and sadness the work of so many intelligent people over the last few years who have mocked biblical narrative and denounced religious ideation as stupid and empirically improvable and destructive. I am talking about the smug and quasi-intellectual outpouring of people like Christopher Hitchens (God is not great), Sam Harris (Letter to a Christian Nation), Richard Dawkins (The God Delusion), not to mention the movie that came out last month by Bill Mahrs entitled, Religilous and in all of these works sacred text and sacrament and ritual are gleefully mocked. So as I read this chapter 6 I wondered not for the first time how we could put this material out there to counter the simplistic formulations of Dawkins and Hitchens and Harris and Mars and to show how and why it is that from a psychological perspective the myths and symbols of sacred texts and the sacraments and rituals that emerge continue to have psychic power for people.

**6.3 “Jesus the Holy Fool” by Elizabeth-Anne Stewart (p. 113)**—a two page excerpt from her book of the same name. In this excerpt we see a brief piece of a discussion of “the Fool” as archetype known by many names: “clown, trickster, jester, buffoon, joker which springs up in many oral and written traditions. I would say about this piece that I found it to be too short to be particularly meaningful and overall I would have to say it is the weakest of the excerpts I have been asked to comment on. Again, it is only 2 pages of what I presume is a whole book and I have to say I wasn’t able to get on board with it although maybe I need to read more. She talks about the role of the circus clown who walks the dividing line between the comic and the dangerous—for example, in being shot out of a cannon—and then in the same paragraph posits Jesus the Holy Fool who in the passion narrative, “submits to slapstick which is ultimately death-dealing to him” but I just am not able to go along with her to see the passion narrative as “slapstick.

Chapter 7 “Biblical Personalities: Ezekial and Paul” (p. 116)

**7.1 Seeking Ezekiel**, an eight page excerpt from a book by David Halperin (p. 118). In this excerpt, David Halperin’s thesis is that Ezekiel is a man overwhelmed by sexualized rage against females, and he particularly relies on Ezekiel chapters 16 and 23. Again, this is a brief excerpt from a much longer work and at times it was hard for me to follow but the central premise is

that the mother is identified with Jerusalem (the “bad mother”) and the Temple (as “the good mother”). Halperin contends that Ezekiel identifies himself with Yahweh, the male father and in that role feels free to righteously rail against the unfaithful besmirched mother Jerusalem. The unconscious traumatic conflict that Ezekiel suffered by reason of his hatred of the mother led, says Halperin, to his muteness. When Ezekiel’s wife died, he believed it foretold the fall of Jerusalem and then his dumbness was “cured.” But, as Halperin notes at the conclusion of this piece, “It is hard to imagine that Ezekiel could have resolved this conflict without some measure of insight into its reality....It will follow that the dumbness must sooner or later have returned, or been relaced by some other conversion symptom serving the same function” or providing an unconscious response to Ezekiel’s hatred of women.

It has been noted by feminist biblical scholars—and I am quoting Katheryn Pfisterer Darr in *The Women’s Bible Commentary*—that “Ezekiel elaborated on the female imagery of earlier prophets, and the result is some of the Bible’s most misogynist texts. He flatly condemned certain women for their religious practices and stressed the priestly belief that during their monthly periods females were a potential source of ritual impurity for males. Of these and other reasons, many contemporary women have criticized Ezekiel, wary of the consequences of his message for women.” I would make the additional obvious observation, that misogyny is alive and well today: psychopaths, rapists and killers often seem to focus on women as their victims and, in times of war, women are, with depressing predictability, raped and mutilated. This is going on today in the Congo and Darfur. The fact is that every individual’s fundamental experience of love and hate is with a woman, in the mother child relationship. Even those who have been mothered by “good enough” mothers may harbor unconscious resentment of the power of women to give and withhold good things—instinctual satisfaction, food, love, warmth, protection, sex and affection. The vesting in women of this power may cause fear, hatred or even something like awe in the presence of a woman viewed as particularly powerful. One can only imagine the impact of all of these realities when coupled with the ancient honor/shame culture of Ezekiel’s time in which expressions of sexuality was so restricted.

**7.2 “Psychological Perspectives on the Life of Paul,” by Terrance Callan (p. 127).** In this segment Terrance Callan’s project is to apply the methodology of Gerd Theissen to understanding the psychology of Paul as an individual, as distinguished from undertaking to understand the psychology of his theology. And Gerd Theissen’s piece on the psychology of Paul’s theology appears in Chapter 4. Here I begin to be confused about the organization of this book because Robin Scroggs piece in Chapter 10 is also a study of Paul’s psychology. I find that it jumps around a bit and I think the organization would have been better if at least the two chapters on the psychology of Paul’s theology had appeared together. Not sure what the thinking was of having them in different chapters. But in any case Callan’s piece is largely a discussion of Paul’s rather consistent and startling boasting about himself, his own faithfulness and spiritual and moral blamelessness. In my view the article does not contain a lot

of depth about what it might have been in Paul to give rise to such boasting, except the author does posit that in Paul's honor/shame culture, where there was an ongoing competition for honor, and such boasting may not have been unusual for males in his time. In the end, I was left with more questions than I started with as a result of reading this piece.

## Chapter 8: Biblical Personalities

In this chapter 8 there are two more discussions of biblical personalities: one of Jesus and one of Moses. Again, here I wondered why the discussion of the personality of Paul and Ezekial are in separate chapters from the chapter on the personalities of Moses and Jesus. The thinking of the chapter organizations wasn't apparent to me.

**8.1 Moses and Yahweh, Edward Edinger (p. 141).** I never fail to be edified when reading Edward Edinger's clear and authoritative interpretation of Jung and this piece was no exception. I especially appreciated the discussion in this piece about the challenges and the dangers of individuation—There is something about this conversation about individuation that I find very hopeful—the notion of the struggle and the fear—Moses' struggle, the plagues, the perceived and mysterious threat of God to kill Moses right after his call, the resentment and trials of the ancient Isrealites as they are led out of Egypt to the promised land. And as I read this I tried to think of ways to bring this alive for people in preaching and teaching, again to counter the feeling of spiritual deadness I often feel in parish life, resulting, again, I think in works like Bill Mahr's movie *Religilous*, in which he mocks the ancient stories. There is a modern failure to understand the basis of the power of these stories, and yet, like Freud and other estimable atheists of old, there is an obsession with the stories in the modern day atheists. I often wonder, how can we get this information into the collective and, on the other hand, if you have to try to get information about the power of myth and symbol out into the collective, could it be that the particular myths and symbols you are talking about have lost their power? I ask this question polemically and theoretically.

**8.2 Jesus at 30, John W. Miller (p. 149).** In this interesting piece we have a study of Jesus from a developmental perspective. I always find discussions of the psychology of Jesus interesting and I enjoyed this one as well but what I found lacking in this brief excerpt at least was any acknowledgement that Jesus grew up and came of age in a different time. The editors of this volume would call an analysis of the time in which the text was written, "the world behind the text" which is a different world than the one we live in, which makes the project of analyzing him as a person, his motives and psychological challenges, always very dicey because of the VERY limited data, even more tenuous. For my money Donald Capps 2000 psychological study of Jesus is more interesting because he attempts to do a psychological study of Jesus by looking at his life, words and actions (as we read them recorded in the gospels) alongside an attempt to understand Jesus culture, that is the world behind the text. This provides more context for the personality that emerges from scripture. I don't see

this in John Miller's piece and instead Miller just seems to analyze Jesus from a developmental perspective as if he were a 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> century person.

## **Chapter 9, Dynamics of Biblical Texts: Hebrew Scriptures, p. 158**

**9.1 The Story of Adam and Eve, John Sanford, p. 160.** Again, at the risk of being a bore I think of Bill Maher's movie which I saw this fall in which he repeatedly talks about the Adam and Eve story, and interrogates religious believers, by referring to the Adam and Eve story as the story of a "talking snake" when in reality it is so very much more. I found Sanford's discussion of the myth of the fall interesting because it happens that I my primary preoccupation for the last six years or so has been in conceptualizing goodness and evil but Sanford rejects the view that the myth is about the act of becoming conscious. That it, the myth is often said to represent the beginning of humankind's painful step into psychological awareness and away from unconscious containment in purely natural existence. Sanford rejects that view, saying that he thinks that Adam and Eve in eating the fruit actually **experienced** evil, as distinguished from coming to an awareness of the existence of good and evil or the distinction between them. He would have to say more about how he arrives at that view because I was just not persuaded that that is what the myth is about. That interpretation just doesn't work for me alongside of Adam and Eve's sudden awareness that they were naked, etc. I had occasion recently in connection with a different project to read Harold Ellens discussion of the myth of the fall in one of the volumes of Praeger's *Encyclopedic Psychology of the Bible*, in which he elegantly states my own view: "If one takes the story of the fall seriously as an element in a cosmic paradigm for general human psychological development, it may be seen to describe a crucial stage in human growth from the childlikeness of Eden to mature kingdom building an cultural responsibility."

**The Story of Jonah, Andre Lacocque, p. 166, from the multivolume work I just referred to.** The story of Jonah and the whale is another story that Bill Mahrs has a lot of fun with in his movie *Religilous*. In this excerpt Laccoque talks about the story of Jonah and the whale as a story of Jonah's initial denial and unconsciousness, and his perilous movement toward consciousness. But indeed I found this piece to be much more a theological piece than a psychological one. The author says, in theological-- almost homiletic-- language, "Jonah is called to participate in the divine action; he is to be co-creator with God." And this is well and good, I agree with it. From a psychological perspective we also say that Jonah initially shrunk from the painful process of individuation. But might we not acknowledge that what Jonah was being asked to do by God involved a lot of cost to his ego structure, and that in a sense Jonah made a fool of himself by prophesying that which God had told him, only to have God change God's mind? Isn't this often the case with the individuation process? And I refer back to the Edinger piece about Moses, where right after Moses was called to take the Israelites out of Egypt God tried to kill him. And so what I would say about this piece about Jonah is that it is lets God too much off the hook. Let's face it: God told Jonah to do and say something, Jonah didn't want to but finally agreed, and then was made to look like a fool for it. This is a complaint many of the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures have with God.

**6.3 The Ten Commandments, Edward Edinger, p. 171**—Another wonderful essay by Edinger arguing for the centrality of the individuation process in religious experience, and in this instance in understanding the most basic meaning of the injunctions of the ten commandments as underlining the need to make unconscious material conscious.

## **Chapter 10 “Dynamics of Biblical Texts: New Testament” (p. 175)**

**10.1 The Wedding at Cana, Françoise Dolto and Gerard Severin (p. 177)**, a dialogue on the wedding at Cana; the original version was evidently a conversation on French radio and although it is a short snippet I found it very interesting and I think it could be very helpful from a homiletic standpoint.

**10.2 Christ and AntiChrist by Charles Davis (p. 181)** This piece takes Apocalyptic struggle between good and evil, between Christ and AntiChrist as expressive of the battle that takes place in the depths of the human psyche, which is often projected onto perceived human enemies. He sees the Christ/Antichrist battle as archetypal, and he concludes that the Christ-Antichrist archetypal plot is toxic when it is projected as a political boilerplate upon one’s enemies. And how we have seen this happen in recent years, with the casting of other people and nation states in language such as: the “evil empire, the “axis of evil,” “evil” men, etc. This archetypal plot really does have a lot of energy, it is a great intensifier and is the greatest weapon that our own political leaders possess and have used in the last eight years to lead their people into war.

**10.3 The Psychology of Paul, Robin Scroggs, p. 188.** My assignment concludes with this piece, and reading this piece was a very poignant experience for me because I had a personal relationship with the late Robin Scroggs which was one of very great respect and affection. Robin Scroggs was my New Testament professor at Union, he was a beloved mentor of mine and I took courses from him including, perhaps most memorably, his course on Paul. It was by reason of his tremendous and heartfelt use of psychology in his hermeneutical understanding of Paul that led me to ask Professor Scroggs to serve on my doctoral dissertation committee which he somewhat reluctantly did, protesting all the time that he was a New Testament scholar and knew nothing about psychology which is belied in his thought and conversation and work. He and I had various lunch dates and wonderful conversations over the course of my time at Union and following my time at Union. I still miss him. I think that Robin Scroggs was most fundamentally a Freudian and I think his profoundest psychological influence was Norman Brown’s book *Life Against Death*. It is one of the most poignant and enduring memories of my time at Union that I recall Scroggs in front of our Paul class, a man in late mid-life, and he was urging an understanding of Paul that he had clearly taken into the core of his being, and that understanding is expressed on page 190 of this work, where he says the following: “The world of death is the world of the performance principal (justification by works); it is the world of repression dominated by the superego. God’s act of justification by grace enables persons to switch worlds, to leave that culture of death and to enter a world always intended by God for people (the new creation) founded on the total and entirely free gift from God (justification by

grace.) This transformation does not involve 'trying harder,' .... Rather it is the giving up of effort, the acceptance of life as total gift. Expressed in Freudian terms, it is the way back behind the processes of sexual organization, not toward the womb but rather toward a transformed narcissism culminating in joyful and loving unification with others." And here we have the distinct echoes and influences of Kohut's piece on cosmic narcissism. Scroggs insists that "divine transformative acts can be described in psychoanalytic terms as well as theological ones. If this makes it easier for modern people to understand Paul, why not?" Why not indeed?