A Relational Approach to Biblical Interpretation: Historical Criticism and Psychological Insights

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A RELATIONAL APPROACH TO BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION:
HISTORICAL CRITICISM AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

by

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ABSTRACT

A RELATIONAL APPROACH TO BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION:
HISTORICAL CRITICISM AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

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Carol Schlueter

It is the thesis of this paper that Walter Wink has effectively demonstrated the use of a complementary relationship between psychology and historical criticism to interpret biblical texts. The process is a dialectical hermeneutic which emphasizes relationship rather than dichotomy.
PREFACE

Everything that is, comes from a historical context of some sort.

This thesis was written in the struggle to find a method of interpretation for biblical texts that I could use as a personal growing experience. Let me tell you something of myself. My religious upbringing interpreted the biblical texts at face value. My educational experience encouraged me to question such aspects of the material such as sources, forms, author’s intention, etc. This stimulated a greater interest in biblical literature. Attempting to set texts in their historical context made them more real and comprehensible. I began to appreciate the author’s style and possible reasons for the use of style. My professors made me aware of the complexity, humour, beauty and diversity within the biblical literature.

These two ways of perceiving biblical literature represent the all too often dichotomous position between church and biblical scholars. I often found myself withdrawing from the ecclesiastical community of believers because of this duality. It became increasingly difficult to feel genuine about my participation in the church community when as a biblical student, I realized, so much of the historicity of the gospels was in question and what
was preached as fact was at best a possibility. The writings of C. G. Jung helped me to appreciate truths beyond historicity. The concept of the archetypes gave a common bond with all mankind. The religious archetype has been manifested in many stories and myths throughout all ages expressing people's experiences with and understanding of the ultimate (in Tillich's sense of the word).

Jung also emphasized the integration of the positive and negative aspects of the self. My religious tradition has taught me that the positive aspects were to be emphasized and the negative aspects were to be rejected and subdued. Yet, try as hard as I could to cut them off from my life they were always there.

Through Jung's psychology, I began to see that the negative was not something to run away from or to deny but could be transformed and had a healing dimension. The negative was to be accepted, acknowledged and integrated rather than denied, neglected and split off from the personality.

Jung's concept of psychic energy is also a helpful one. All aspects of the personality are energy-laden. When we recover those hidden aspects of ourselves, those fragmented, neglected and denied parts, we have energy restored to us to transform them.

Our culture is achievement oriented. We emphasize and promote youth, beauty and success. To admit and accept
that we grow old, that we fail, that we are not always what we seem is to face our humanness. The beauty of our humanness is rarely acknowledged, yet, it is that knowledge of what it is to be wounded, afraid, weak, faithless, etc. that enables us to respond to each other. Jung emphasized wholeness rather than perfection - the wholeness which integrates all aspects of humanness.

At this point I had not yet associated Jung's insights with biblical interpretation. However, during a university course called Hermeneutics, we were assigned to read The Bible In Human Transformation by Walter Wink. Here was a biblical scholar who had spent some time studying Jungian concepts and proposed a paradigm based on the Jungian concept of individuation, and where appropriate, other Jungian concepts.

Upon reading the book, I was most intrigued by his outline for a biblical study of the story of the Paralytic. He emphasized three major steps:

1) analysis of the passage
2) revivification of the scene
3) introjection of the characters in the story

The first two steps are not new in the field of hermeneutics. Conscientious historical critical scholarship engages in

\[1\] Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation, pp. 52-60.
form, source and redaction criticism.

It is the third step - that of introjection which intrigued me. This method of integrating the characters of the story into oneself is one that was not developed by Jung but which Jung used extensively. Jung believed that symbolic images were of great value. In dream analysis, symbolic images were useful not only to determine the causes of neuroses but also to direct the patient towards healing in the present. Introjection is dialoguing with various images within the self. In biblical interpretation, it involves dialogue with the biblical characters in a certain text. While biblical stories are not our own as our dreams are, yet, they are the manifestation of the dreams of the Jewish people and we may be able to learn something from them. The method of dialogue is one of questioning between the interpreter and the text. The leader of a biblical study group might ask, "What aspect of yourself resonates with the 'scribe' within you?" What part of you resonates with the 'paralytic'?" "What within you speaks to the 'faithful friends within you'?" These questions may be responded to non-verbally. Modelling one's 'paralytic' in clay, miming one's 'friends,' painting or writing a dialogue are just a few suggestions that are made.

The implications of the method were exciting. It was a method which enabled the personal involvement of the reader to the point of making the story one's own. The
reader was asked not only to identify with one character but with all of them — 'scribe,' 'faithful friends,' and 'paralytic.' The task of taking on the roles of each of them enables the reader to experience some of the feelings that may have been involved therein.

The second of Wink's suggestions which I appreciated was his emphasis on communal exegesis. It consists of a group of individuals sharing in the analysis of the text in its historical context and secondly the attempt to revive the scene as it may have taken place. Historical criticism guides this step.

Our personal responses to the text are also shared within the group. We learn through the sharing of ideas and experiences. Wink's emphasis on communal exegesis also attempts to bridge the gap between scholarship and the community of believers.

Having read Wink's book, I became interested in Wink's life. Through several articles which he had written, I began to piece more and more of his personal history. Following the articulation of his dissatisfaction with the historical critical method, Wink contemplated taking a sabbatical in Tubingen, Germany. However, some students encouraged him to attend the Guild for Psychological Studies in San Francisco, where Elizabeth Howes, Jungian analyst was using biblical texts and employing insight from Jungian depth psychology to enhance the possibility
for fragmented persons to be healed. Elizabeth Howes has published a book called *Intersection and Beyond*. It is composed of seminars given at the Guild and was helpful in stressing the healing dimension of the texts. She also makes use of myths and legends from other cultures.

I attempted to use the method as I understood it to interpret the parable 'The Good Samaritan.' Upon completion, I was not at all sure that I'd done it properly. I felt a lack of certainty about what I supposed Wink's method to be. How could I be sure I'd understood Wink's method by the mere reading of one main book and a few articles by Wink?

Having shared my dilemma with one of my professors, he suggested I call Walter Wink. That possibility had never entered my head and yet it was the perfect direction to take. It so happened that Wink was to be leader of a workshop two weeks later (July 5-9, 1976) at Union Theological Seminary, New York. Arrangements were made to attend. It was a workshop for clergy and laity to experience Wink's biblical study method. I was about to experience what Wink had written about.

This is, after all, the point. What began as intrigue had to be qualified by experience. I had the opportunity to meet with Walter Wink and discuss his work. I also had the privilege of participating in biblical
study with a group of people from varied backgrounds under the direction of Wink.

We were encouraged to dialogue with the images of biblical characters within ourselves. The point is, that from within ourselves, we were asked to respond. For example, we did a biblical study on the paralytic.¹ After a preliminary analysis of the story (historical context, comparison of the accounts, similarities and differences and possible reasons for the same) we attempted to reconstruct the scene in our imaginations. We were then asked to take a piece of clay and go find a private spot for ourselves where we might thoughtfully mold the paralytic that was within each of us.

This is not at all easy. I can tell you that. Who wants to face that within ourselves which is paralyzed—unable to move—has lost energy—is of no use to us? We like to emphasize our achievements and validate ourselves with them. Go look at my paralysis? After locating a nice grassy spot in the sun, I sat there—thinking. I felt very self-conscious. I didn't want to face this paralytic. I didn't want to admit that he was a part of my life. I felt a great distaste for him. Yes, and anger too. Yet, gradually, I began to mold him out of clay and in the molding and in the silent inner

¹Mtt. 9:1-8, Mk. 2:1-12, Lk. 5:17-26.
dialogue that we shared, I heard him speak to me.

I heard the reasons for his paralysis. I heard his anger - for my neglect, for my wanting to keep him a paralytic. This part of me resonated with the scribe in the story who was angry with Jesus for healing the paralytic. The healing of the paralytic threatened the scribe's position. I learned that his true desire was not to be kept a paralytic. I also learned that I feared his restoration for I'd have to change and acknowledge him. We came to some understanding of each other.

Our instruction had been to mold our paralytic, dialogue with him, and finally to pronounce Jesus words of forgiveness, "Your sins are forgiven. Rise, take up your bed and walk."

The dialogue that my inner paralytic and I shared changed my anger and hostility into a type of compassion. The forgiving - healing pronouncement of Jesus, really was a moving and absorbing experience for me.

It was the experience of the paralytic within wanting to be healed and the fact that my acceptance and acknowledgement of his presence, could restore more energy to the paralytic, that gave birth to the hope that my paralytic could be healed.

This is merely one example of what one might do in dialoguing with many images. The important thing in
any story is to dialogue with all or most of the images in a particular story especially those we tend to ignore because of their distasteful nature. We unconsciously tend to ignore the distasteful, the weak, inferior aspects of ourselves. To admit the distasteful in ourselves is for some a difficult task. For others, it is difficult to admit that we also carry the good, the beautiful and the strong within ourselves - like the persistence of the friends who carried the paralytic. The crowded house did not discourage them! We might find it difficult to admit that we too might be so faithful as they for a friend or a cause we loved. The imagining of these images creates possibilities in our lives which we didn't know were there or were forgotten or ignored.

The healing experience of the loving acceptance of a group of individuals mutually able to admit weakness and strengths and lovingly attempt to bind them together with bonds of understanding, prepares the way for personal transformation. It enables the courage to reject what is unhealthy and the energy to restore what needs restoring. The polarities become complementary in their rescued form - being brought into conscious acceptance and relation. They make life richer and broader.

I gained much experience at the workshop which was useful to me at a personal and practical level. I also
received papers which Wink had written. I had the good fortune to speak at length with Sharon Ringe a Ph.D. student working under Wink. Wink gave me a copy of *Hints for Leaders of Biblical Studies* that I shall enclose in the appendix. It has some very valuable, practical and thorough suggestions for anyone in the position of leading biblical study groups. Since my workshop experience, I used Wink's method in a Sunday School class with grade 7 students. These pupils were 11 and 12 years old. The story was of the Paralytic.

After an initial discussion period of analyzing the passage, we used plasticine to model our inner paralytic. We followed an approach similar to that already described above.

In all realism, let me say that not everyone in my class found the method an exciting or dynamic one. But then, Wink was well aware of that fact in his own workshops. I applied little pressure to the students to share their feelings about the experience. The care with which some of them molded their paralytic indicated that there was much seriousness in their work and the silence in the room indicated much thoughtful communication between paralytic and student. This was also demonstrated after Sunday School when one parent came to me and said, "I don't know what you were doing in your Sunday School
class this morning but my son really got something out of it for he said to me 'This may sound rather silly dad, but we used plasticene to make our own paralytic and we had to talk to it. It was really neat'!

The point is that here is a method that has practical implications for use in Sunday Schools and churches and wherever people get together to study biblical texts for the purpose of bringing healing into our personal lives and the lives of those who touch us. It combines the best of a historical approach and a psychological approach.

Interestingly, there was present that day in my class, an adult observer who questioned me afterwards. He wondered why I had not emphasized the fact that the friends of the paralytic carried him to Jesus out of love for him and that we ought to be ready to do the same?

In the process of introjection we are asked to respond to the images in the story. The story becomes our own. If, in this process, we respond to the images from within ourselves, then love is there too. When we can relate to the problems of others or the life circumstances of others as something common to us all, then we can love them as ourselves. To emphasize intellectually that we ought to love others is not enough. It is when we recognize the paralytic and acknowledge his presence
within us that we may be able to love him as part of ourselves—love him enough to be as faithful as the paralytic's friends. We love out of relation with others and not out of obligation or moralism. We love others because of their human condition—out of a recognition of our own humanness.

Only out of darkness can light come. Only out of sorrow can deep joy come. They are Siamese twins. So with the lives of the biblical characters. Out of a trickster Jacob was formed the man Israel. Out of a coward Abram was born the man of faith Abraham. Out of a traitor Simon was born the rock Peter. Out of the paralytic was formed a well man. These men, I believe were not made of two dichotomous personalities but were really one. It was acceptance of the first that enabled transformation to the second. The first is not cut off. It remains. The difference is that the first has been acknowledged, so that the second is possible. And so, this thesis is in the last analysis an attempt in imagining the possibility of accepting our humanness—the door to our being healed.
INTRODUCTION

Biblical texts as religious literature, need a method of interpretation which adequately preserves the integrity of the nature of the material. This study is done with the assumption that biblical literature provides us with information which contains insights about man's nature and that to which man commits himself.

It is my contention that a historical method solely concerned with "What happened?" is not able to maintain the integrity of the nature of the text and that the use of psychological insights may be of use to biblical interpretation. An attempt to deal adequately with that broad field which comes under the heading 'psychological insights" would be beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, I shall attempt to outline the use of a paradigm developed by Walter Wink which incorporates psychology and historical criticism to interpret biblical texts. He developed the paradigm out of a psychology based on Jungian concepts. His paradigm is outlined in The Bible in Human Transformation. The reason for my choice is due to the way Wink combines psychology with historical criticism. His use of Jungian psychology also lends itself to a comparison with a Jungian interpretation employed by Dan O. Via Jr. in "The Prodigal
Son: A Jungian Reading."

We shall begin with a background to the hermeneutical debate to which Wink addresses himself, and move on to encounter some of Jung's basic concepts in order to discuss the paper by Dan O. Via Jr. A brief evaluation of the paper will be made and an attempt to outline the weakness of a psychological approach. Following this, Wink's use of a psychological approach will be discussed. An attempt will be made to carefully outline Wink's paradigm and the possible contribution of combining historical criticism and psychological insights into a relational approach.
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CHAPTER I
THE HERMENEUTICAL DEBATE

"Historical biblical criticism is bankrupt." This is the confrontive statement which Walter Wink makes on the first page of his book, The Bible in Human Transformation.

This statement is made due to his concern with the limitations of the historical critical method. This concern is not new - it is expressed by many biblical scholars. The book is an example of the concerns of one contemporary scholar who is interested in the life and growth of a biblical scholarship. He writes out of a

1The historical critical method can perhaps best be described by the list of the steps suggested by the Ecumenical Study Conference held at Wadham College, Oxford (1949):
1) the determination of the text;
2) the literary form of the passage;
3) the historical situation, the Sitz im Leben;
4) the meaning which the words had for the original author and hearer or reader;
5) the understanding of the passage in the light of its total context and background out of which it emerged.


background of having been a minister for a number of years and since 1967, a member of Union Theological Seminary Faculty as Associate Professor of New Testament.

It was as a minister and later as professor that he became dissatisfied with the historical-critical method's inability to enable personal and social transformation. During a semester and summer's sabbatical, he studied under the direction of Elizabeth Howes in San Francisco, who uses psychological insights from a Jungian approach to further the understanding of myths, fairytales and biblical texts so that the text confronts the reader more dynamically. The insight Wink gained during this sabbatical gave him a means of driving beyond the limitations of the historical-critical method. Thus, the publication of his book, The Bible in Human Transformation.

Throughout the book, Walter Wink has very carefully criticized the historical-critical method. He has used the word 'bankrupt' in reference to it rather than 'dead,' 'useless' or some other word indicating a sharp break with the method. He demonstrates a sharply critical stance with

1Elizabeth Howes is a Jungian analyst who has worked in that tradition for thirty years. She is also leader of the Guild for Psychological Studies where Wink studied.
regard to the limitations of the method, yet, he does in fact, use the method, but has moved beyond it. He states that it needs new management. 1

There is no argument with the method as far as its usefulness is concerned. Together with other scholars, 2 he is aware of the positive contribution historical criticism has played in the history of interpretation. 3

Despite this fact, scholars are beginning to question the usefulness of the exclusive emphasis on historical criticism by biblical scholars. New questions are being raised — questions to which historical criticism does not address itself; i.e. What is understanding? What does the text say to my life?

Two main groups have emerged in hermeneutics. The groups differ in their aims and underlying presuppositions. One group is represented by scholars like H. Gadamer, R. Bultmann and G. Ebeling whose emphasis lies with the nature of understanding so that there is existential meaning for one's own life and future.

1Ibid., p. 16.

2R. Bultmann, E. Kasemann, G. Ebeling, P. Stulmacher and others.

The other group is represented by scholars like E. Betti and R. Hirsch whose emphasis in hermeneutics is understanding an object in terms of itself such that there is a gathering of objective evidence where verbal meaning can be determined and recognized as universally valid.¹

The basic difference then, is the presupposition of Betti and Hirsch of the possibility of an objective interpretation versus the insistence by Gadamer and Bultmann of the impossibility of such an attempt. Their emphasis is like that of the Heisenberg principle - that the object observed is itself altered simply by the condition of being observed.²

This is the point at which Walter Wink addresses himself to the hermeneutical problem. It is essentially that the interpreter himself must be examined as an essential part of the hermeneutical process.

For the purpose of examining the interpreter, Wink turned to psychology - that of Analytical Psychology as developed by C.G. Jung. It may be useful here to briefly review some concepts basic to Jungian psychology,


²Ibid., p. 52. In quoting Rudolf Bultmann, Palmer says, "objective meaning in history cannot be spoken of, for history cannot be known except through the subjectivity of the historian himself."
on the nature of man. We shall deal with only a few of Jung's concepts which may be relevant here.¹

CHAPTER II

PERTINENT JUNGIAN CONCEPTS

Jung views man as a creature of opposites\(^1\) where the integration of such opposites as thinking and feeling, sensing and intuition, instinctive and spiritual needs becomes a task. The process of conscious awareness of one's opposites within and their integration, Jung calls 'individuation.'

Inherent to Jung's thought is the structure of the psyche which he divides into three main areas - consciousness, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious. These are conceptual terms and do not refer to locations or substances in the psyche.

'Consciousness' refers to our waking state wherein we perceive the world around us. The 'personal unconscious' represents that which we have selectively repressed or forgotten and we are unable to recall all of its contents. The third concept is that of the 'collective unconscious.' The term collective was designated because of the universal character of its contents and modes of behaviour. It is

\(^1\)Paul Seligman, "C.G. Jung's Views on the Nature of Man," (Waterloo, 1972), p. 2. (Mimeoographed)
present in everyone of us and its contents are called 'archetypes.'\textsuperscript{1} The term has been used very early - as early as Irenaeus.\textsuperscript{2} Archetypes are forms of energy which become changed through becoming conscious. The myth and fairytale are conscious expressions of the archetype. The term 'archetype' however refers only to those psychic contents which have not yet become conscious. They are an immediate psychic experience. Their manifestation into consciousness is coloured by the perceiving, and thus is altered somewhat by the individual in whom it appears.\textsuperscript{3}

The archetypes are autonomous and cannot be integrated simply by rational means but require a dialectical procedure - a real encounter with them through dialogue. They often express themselves in dream symbols which reflect mythological motifs.\textsuperscript{4}

The objective of Jungian psychology is to enable man to be aware of his polarities and to consciously integrate them - thereby becoming more whole and able to drive beyond


\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 4.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., p. 5.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid.
oneself to relationships with others. The unconscious is looked upon as a complementary part of consciousness where the whole is a self-regulating system. It is when one aspect of consciousness becomes over differentiated and inflated, that there occurs a compensatory reaction from the unconscious. This reaction may take the form of disintegration of the personality in a crisis or a recurring dream, etc. It is essentially the unconscious relaying a message to the person.

The archetype of the 'self' is the guiding principle in one's life to wholeness. This archetype may be manifested in the Christ image for some people or in the mandala\(^1\) for others. In any case, it symbolizes that healing principle within man and is integrative.

The conscious ego expands to take in a greater region of that which has remained unconscious, and integrates it. We call this the process of 'individuation'.

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\(^1\)A mandala is a 'circle or square' symbolizing 'wholeness' and in all of them the relation to a centre is accentuated. Four is a significant number and is often used in the mandala patterns. It too symbolizes unity and totality. Jung's patients very often in the healing of their own psyche would draw a mandala and this seemed to indicate a definite move towards health. The mandala represents the transcendant function - that which seeks to heal and unify.

For additional information on the mandala, see Mandala by Jose and Miriam Arguelles, (Shambala: Berkeley and London, 1972).
leading to the formation of the 'self.' Jung explains it with an apt analogy. "It is as though the ego were the earth, and it suddenly discovered that the sun (or the self) was the centre of the planetary orbits and of the earth's orbit as well."\(^1\)

Consciousness and the unconscious dimensions of the psyche can be compared with that experience of the use of a searchlight. It illumines with various degrees of clearness, certain objects upon which it shines, and there is an outlying dark area of which we have no knowledge. Consciousness like the searchlight aims at definiteness and specificity but is partial and one-sided... narrow and shifting... functions by exclusion.\(^2\)

How does one reach the layers of the unconscious? Through projection, dreams, and a technique which Jung called 'active imagination,' we are able to reach these energy-laden centers.\(^3\) Jung believed that man has an inherent drive towards wholeness and the archetypal symbol


or image has the function of communicating a message to the individual to lead him to psychic wholeness. The ego is the integrator of the process and the centre of consciousness. The undertaking of the ego to uncover the contents hidden in the unconscious, according to Jung, was a difficult task. The easiest archetype to reach was the 'shadow' - that archetype representing the undeveloped aspect of the personality frequently projected onto others, i.e. that which we do not wish to admit in ourselves, we can see in others.\(^1\) It represents the unknown attributes of the ego - aspects that mainly belong to the personal unconscious and can be made conscious more easily than contents from the collective unconscious. In myths and dreams, the 'shadow' appears as a person of the same sex as that of the dreamer and possesses qualities of the dreamer which are not admitted by the dreamer, i.e. egotism, sloppiness, cowardice, etc. The 'shadow' can also be projected onto other people which prevents many genuine human relationships. Most often, the 'shadow' contains vital forces needed by the conscious individual in order to be a whole person. This may require sacrifice on the part of the ego - to give up some of its pride and admit the 'shadow' thereby withdrawing projections from people.

and dream figures. This integration of ego and 'shadow' leads to a further uncovering of the unconscious. The "I" is no longer made up of only the ego but moved beyond it to include the 'shadow'.

Jung points us to a process of becoming more aware of our complex psyche. He teaches us to listen to our inner world as well as the outer. The inner world - the world of the unconscious has much to teach us and the images found therein are meant to heal us and bring us to an awareness of the creative possibilities within us. They are of teleological significance and therefore warrant much attention. They contain autonomous power. Jung encouraged his patients to paint their images or to carry on dialogue with them in the form of a play. The images are symbols and they can never be totally emptied or rationalized in words. What the patient paints are his "active fantasies - that which is active within him. And that which is active within him is himself, but no longer in the guise of his previous error, when he mistook the personal ego for the self; it is himself in a new and hitherto alien sense, for his ego now appears as the object of that which works within him."¹

In speaking about the wonderful power of the imagination and its possibilities, Jung says, "The creative activity of imagination frees man from his bondage to the 'nothing but' and liberates in him the spirit of play."¹

In Jung's 'active imagination,' attention focuses on an image or symbol and through fantasy it is allowed to 'speak' to consciousness. Jung feels that through imagination we can draw near to experience. We cannot make an experience happen, but we can draw closer to it.

In Psychology and Religion, he says,

Nobody can know what the ultimate things are. We must, therefore, take them as we experience them. And if such experience helps to make your life healthier, more beautiful, more complete and more satisfactory to yourself and those you love, you may safely say: 'This was the grace of God.'²

It is not my intention here to go into depth regarding Jungian psychology. I would merely like to suggest the fruitfulness of examination into the thought and works of psychologists whose aim, together with many biblical scholars, is the study of man and his need to understand himself and his world.

The background material I have outlined merely

¹Ibid., p. 66.
²Jung, Psychology and Religion, p. 114.
scratches the surface to the depth and vastness of the studies Jung has done in depth psychology including such areas as Alchemy, Mythology and Eastern Thought. I am not proposing a polemic between Analytical Psychology and other psychologies and nor is Wink.

Jungian psychology has much depth and richness and it is this psychology of process which influenced Wink. Its dedication to a process of wholeness and its drive for integration of one's many selves is attractive to an interpreter like Wink who is concerned about man's tendency to build barriers around himself in order that he need not make himself vulnerable to a process which may change him. Jung's concern about man's tendency to be 'intellectual' rather than 'intuitive' or 'emotional' is reflected by Wink who accuses scholars of intellectualizing texts rather than being encountered by them - assuming that being encountered means one's whole being is grasped by the text or by what speaks in the text.

There is much that psychology can teach us about man's nature - his defences, his attitudes, behaviour formation and his needs.

Jung was not threatened by the use of other psychologies for he believed that people are different and respond to different techniques and therapies in this goal for wholeness.
Psychology can be an aid to hermeneutics in confronting the question "What does the text say to me today?" We shall discuss the possibilities for psychological insights later in the paper. Let us digress for a moment to consider the weaknesses in the use of psychology so that we may be realistic as to its possibilities.
CHAPTER III

WEAKNESSES IN THE USE OF PSYCHOLOGY FOR INTERPRETATION

There are many perspectives in the field of psychology that one could pursue to shed light upon biblical interpretation. We have explored some Jungian concepts in this paper. Since it is Jung's psychological insights which have formed much of Wink's use of psychology, we shall examine his position through a comparison with another author.

In the pages which follow, I shall make specific reference to a paper entitled, "The Prodigal Son: A Jungian Reading," by Dan O. Via, Jr.

In his paper, Dan Via interprets the text with the use of Jungian concepts but he has forced them upon the text so that textual characters are read as synonymous with Jungian concepts. He identifies the father as symbol of the 'self,' the elder brother as the 'shadow,' and the prodigal as the 'ego.' The story's dynamic is the struggle for consciousness and differentiation. Indeed, here the parable is completely removed from its historical


context and there is no attempt made to uncover the author's intent. The parable becomes a replica of Jungian psychology done in story fashion.

In reviewing Via's paper, it seems to me that the concepts have been read into the text without sufficient warrants from the text. One example will suffice.

Via states that the elder brother represents the prodigal's shadow. One wonders to whom this representation takes place? In the story, we are never sure that the brothers encounter each other - it is the father and not the prodigal son who reconciles the elder brother. A Jungian interpretation of individuation would emphasize the events surrounding the life of an ego whose state of inflated ego and alienation is changed through the integration of the unconscious shadow. It is the integration of ego and shadow that is the self. It is also noteworthy that there is some uncertainty at the end of the parable whether the elder son has been reconciled or not. The story does not indicate this at all. Thirdly, can we really be certain that the main character in the story is the prodigal son? A good case can be made to suggest that the main character is "a man" - the father.

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Since there is no encounter between the brothers, there is no reason to include the elder brother in the story from a Jungian perspective, yet he plays a significant role in demonstrating the father's generosity.

Via has also overlooked the fact that the story follows on the heels of two similar parables - the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin which do not lend themselves to hidden 'shadow' or 'ego' images.

William Doty in responding to Via's paper emphasized that Via's interpretation was predeterministic. He warned that Jungian "categories" can become plastic jackets and that all stories become a universal mishmash.

Doty's warning is justified. We shall later examine Walter Wink's use of Jungian psychology to interpret a biblical text. He uses a slightly different approach - taking great care not to force the jackets where they do not belong and complement.

In Wink's evaluation of Via's interpretative method, he says, "But it is clear that the parable is now really quite unnecessary; what one needs to hold in mind is the


\[\text{2Ibid.}\]
Jungian theory."¹

Wink's use of psychology has a very specific purpose to enrich exegesis - on one hand, to increase our understanding of the text and on the other hand, to help us to augment the text's impact upon ourselves.² The statement of these two purposes is reminiscent of the hermeneutical debate focussed upon at the beginning of this paper - that of whether hermeneutics ought to seek to establish the author's verbal intention or to also seek to relate historical meaning to what the text means for us today.

It is evident that Walter Wink seeks to honour both intentions with the use of psychology tempered with historical criticism.

In speaking of the use of psychological insights he says,

The sole reason for using psychological insights in Biblical Study . . . is to facilitate the encounter with the text in such a way that its horizon of meaning is able to touch our own with new possibilities for life.³

Via's use of psychological insights seemed to be

²Ibid., p. 12.
³Ibid., p. 4.
more objectivistic\textsuperscript{1} where the story is analyzed in terms of Jungian concepts but the hearer or the reader is left untouched.

Wink suggests that as interpreters we might also ask how a story resonates in the hearer - to explore the unconscious contents it arouses, what resources in the psyche it unlocks.

We interrogate ourselves. We can find ego, id and superego, or self, ego and shadow, in our own psyches, and doing so may help clarify and profoundly deepen the capacity of the parable to impact our lives.\textsuperscript{2}

Unless the hearer is questioned, the use of psychological concepts in this parable simply becomes an illustration of psychodynamics.

Here we have an excellent example to show that the use of psychology does not automatically do away with the main criticism of Wink against the historical critical method.

\textsuperscript{1}Objectivistic here refers to the academic ideal of detached observation of phenomena without interference by emotions, will, interests, or bias. The error of objectivism, according to Wink lies in its ideological position which is blind to the irrational or unconscious, and its separation of theory from practice.


\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 4.
Psychology can in fact be used objectivistically but the point is that Wink's emphasis is on the reader and how the text affects, or doesn't affect him. The interpreter is part of the hermeneutical task and as such needs to be examined as well as the text!

There has been much hesitancy in biblical studies regarding the use of psychology for interpretation. Wink gives a good analysis of three main reasons for this hesitancy. One reason is a theological concern that the affirmations of religious faith will be reduced to intra-psychic processes where the reality of God is rendered a mere function 'of psychic activity.' Another reason for hesitancy is the danger that psychological theory will be applied to a text where there is not sufficient evidence to warrant its use. The third reason is socio-political. It is the understandable concern that historical processes will be reduced to individual subjectivity and be exclusive of the social, political, cultural institutions and forces also at work upon the interpreter. Thus, there is a tendency that social involvement recedes and social structures do not change because they are safe from the

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1 Ibid., p. 4.
2 Ibid., p. 5.
scrutiny of the interpreter who uses a personalistic interpretation rather than an interpretation which also scrutinizes the forces which impinge upon the interpreter.¹

The theological, the socio-political and methodological concerns are some of the dangers which we confront in applying psychology in hermeneutics. However, these pitfalls are not inevitable. Surely an awareness of the problems surrounding the issue will be an aid to what successful use can be made of the knowledge we have gained from psychology. David Bakan has stated that the relationship of psychology to religious concerns ought to be such that it is complementary. I think his statement is a fitting one for our discussion here and therefore I will conclude this section with it.

Ultimate concern is not to be reduced to the psychological processes; but one should probe the nature of these processes in order to embrace our appreciation of the nature of what concerns man ultimately.²

¹Ibid., p. 5.
CHAPTER IV

POSSIBILITIES IN THE USE OF PSYCHOLOGY FOR INTERPRETATION

Having examined some of the possible weaknesses in the use of psychology, let us proceed with a realistic hesitancy and yet hopefulness as to the possibilities psychology might offer biblical interpretation.

Walter Wink proposes that psychological insights can be useful to biblical interpretation while maintaining the dual objective of understanding the text and encouraging encounter with the text so that personal and social transformation may occur.

In this chapter, we shall be examining Wink's proposals.

In the former case, the applicability of psychology is limited. Walter Wink has abandoned the use of psychology to psychoanalyze biblical characters due to insufficient warrants from the text.

He gives an example of the way in which he would use psychology to aid our understanding of a text. It is somewhat lengthy but I feel it needs to be included in its entirety in order for the reader to understand this point.

The text to be used is that of the obligation to
forgive one's brother.

Luke's version reads,

. . . if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive him. (Lk. 17:4)

Matthew's version reads,

. . . then Peter came up and said to him, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him 'I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.' (Matt. 18:21-22)

Luke's is no doubt the earlier form of the saying: seven times in the day. The number is already extreme, but realistic. Matthew's version, on the other hand, inflates the number by means of a rabbinic-type disputation. The figure seven is put into the mouth of Peter as questioner and rejected; not seven times but seventy times seven. This hyperbolic extravagance seems to me to reflect the mind of a scrupulous author in a scrupulous community, compensating for the tendency to harsh condemnation of others by casuistically placing the limits on forgiveness beyond the reach of casuistry. This change in Matthew's tradition, motivated as it appears to be by psychic needs, becomes a usable piece of data for historical reconstruction, insofar as it reflects on the legalistic temper of Matthew's community, and their attempts to keep it in check.

As a hypothesis this reconstruction would commend itself by virtue of explaining data for which no other hypothesis has been adequate. But further warrants would be required before it could be acknowledged as more than conjecture: Is there other evidence in the Gospel of Matthew that substantiates the charge of scrupulosity? Does Matthew or his community elsewhere betray tendencies toward blaming or unyielding condemnation of 'sinners'? Does Matthew elsewhere stress forgiveness in such a way as to indicate that it was a special problem for his community? Only when our hypothesis has been tested against theology and social setting of Matthew's Gospel as a whole would we be justified in regarding it as established . . . . Such use of psychological
tools in historiographical work, however, is nothing new. An entire sub-category of psycho-history exists within the discipline of historiography, and Erikson's work on Luther and Gandhi is only the best of many such endeavours. As a field-encompassing field, historiography quite naturally is able to absorb any new discipline which offers help in understanding the past.

Perhaps the Greek means 'seventy-seven.'

A few of the indications worth pursuing would be Mt. 5:29-30 (in a different context in Mk.); 5:48 (compare Lk.); 12:36-37 (utterly contradictory to 12:31, which is from Mk.); 19:12 (eunuchs); possibly 5:20

Consider for example the predilection in Matthew's Gospel for threatening hell, fire, brimstone, and gnashing of teeth (e.g. 8:12); 13:42, 50; 22:13; 25:30; also 25:26); the virtual damnation of unconverted Jews ('His blood be upon us and on our children,' 27:25; Cf. also 21:41); the development of new categories of 'righteous' and 'sinners,' 13:36-43, 49-50; 18:15-17 (in stark contradiction to 18:21-22); and the venom manifested toward the scribes and Pharisees, especially in the additons to Matthew's source in Ch. 23.

Matthew uses 'forgive' more than all the evangelists (16/9/14/0). He alone has the long Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (18:23-35), which he appends to the passage we have treated (18:21-22) as a full-scale illustration, modelled after the teaching on forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer (6:12) and its attached saying (6:14-15). Likewise he omits Mk's vindictive 'lest they . . . be forgiven' (Mk. 4:12), drops the causal inference (that God it is who has blinded the outsiders), and adds the entire passage from Isaiah, ending with 'Heal them.' So we may fairly conclude that Matthew was here anxious to counter judgmental tendencies which he has not consistently been able to eradicate in his traditions and perhaps even in himself. See also Mt. 5:7-9; 21-24; 7:1-5; 9:13a; 12:7; 20:1-16, all stressing mercy or forgiveness and without parallels. Even if Matthew's gospel has gone through several recensions, so that we cannot speak of the tendencies of a single author, the tension between blaming and forgiveness are manifestly characteristic of the early Christian fellowship in which this gospel was produced.
I wish to emphasize Walter Wink's statement that the first use he has made of psychological insights to interpret the biblical texts is not new to historiography, and it is limited in its usefulness.

The second application of psychological insights is to examine our reading of the text. Wink emphasizes that our own mind-set and disposition, neuroses and defense-mechanisms determine the way in which we read the text and limits what we let the text say to us.\(^1\)

Wink emphasizes that the probing of our own subjectivity in reading the text does not result in subjectivism, but in a higher kind of objectivity, wherein our own unconscious projections onto the text are admitted, analyzed and removed.\(^2\) Wink insists that this is a much more rigorous approach than objectivism with its

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. 15.

\(^3\)Ibid.
pretentions to detachment and disinterestedness. In Wink's view, it is not wrong to project onto the text - it is inevitable, but it is wrong when we don't critique our own perspective and go beyond it through the new insights which the text can disclose.

The question arises, "How does one critique one's own projections onto the text?" Wink emphasizes communal exegesis where dialogue allows us to examine our unconscious projections.

It may be helpful here to review a situation which happened when Wink was dealing with the story of Jesus' baptism with a group of students.

Wink explains it this way,

Recently a class was discussing the baptism of Jesus. Toward the end of the session I asked them to write out, in their own words and avoiding theological terms, what the 'voice from heaven' was saying to Jesus, according to Mark's version of the story. As they began to share their paraphrases I sensed in the group a resistance to the text for which I couldn't account. Finally one student put it into words.

'I focused on the closeness of the relationship. I put, "Thou art the one I have chosen to be closest to." I think when I wrote that, I was focusing on the positive, intimate aspect. But the more I think about it, that business about being called "son" is beginning to pick up a lot of negative father stuff for me--having your father say "son" to you, and "I like what you did." I don't know, for me it makes it much harder to be myself. These two sides of it are warring in me now, because I think I

1Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation, p. 16. The reference here applies to objectivism and refers to the historical-critical approach.
started out with a much stronger sense of the power and the real closeness and beauty of that intimate relationship.'

Others nodded in agreement. Apparently the personal anxieties of members of the group, relating to their own developing identities apart from their parents, had intervened and was coloring the way they were able to hear the text. My response was:

If that can be evoked in you, then it's really valuable to have it evoked, to let the negative part out. Because it is an inevitability that we're going to project onto God our own familial pattern in some respect or another. What we have to do here is to take the projections off of Jesus and off of God as much as possible and be conscious of them, and see where it leads us.

In this example, the mentality of Phillip Rieff's "psychological man" intrudes into the text. At least some people in a class of students in their early twenties will inevitably stumble over the parent/child image, and reduce the issue of acceptance and calling to the dynamics of the oedipal complex. But the issue cannot simply be swept under the rug, for our sense of acceptance by God is necessarily coloured, for us today, by our own relationship to our parents. By facing the possibility that we are projecting onto the text the unique problems of post-adolescence, we free the text for dialogue about the nature of an authentic relationship between God and ourselves, as it is here depicted in Jesus.

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26 In my experience with groups of older persons, the parent/child relationship is far less problematic due both to greater maturity and to the fact that being a parent naturally reduces negativity toward parental figures.

27 The Gordion knot cannot be cut by the simple expedient of declaring the baptism narrative a legend, and hence without value for the nature of Jesus' actual relationship with God. For as a legend the story would still be an attempt to account for the source of Jesus' knowledge that God is "Abba", an expression whose historicity

Here Wink has made use of psychology to examine the reader's position. An attempt is made to uncover that which prevents the text from speaking to the reader in a new way. The reader gains a sense of objectivity through the examination of our subjectivity.

Wink also uses psychological concepts to enable us to grasp some of the dynamics of the text where the text warrants their use. His use of Jungian concepts can be demonstrated in an example used to gain insight into the story of Jacob and Esau. 2 The study is very detailed. I shall only mention part of it so that illustration may be made of Wink's use of the Jungian concept of 'shadow.' It is important to remember that Wink is not considering the "historical Jacob" here, but the characterization of Jacob provided by the narratives. That is, there is no attempt made to "psychoanalyze" the historical figure but rather, to appreciate the story teller's

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2 Ibid., pp. 18-25. See Genesis Chapters 27-33.
art and its impact on us as readers. In essence, depth psychology has enabled Wink to suggest that Jacob's wrestle with a "man" is perhaps an external representation of Jacob's internalized Esau. (This does not preclude whatever else the being was). The being was not simply Jacob's internalized Esau but also the representation of Jacob's own shadow as well. In speaking of the contribution of depth psychology to this passage, Wink states,

...we can see this as a reckoning not just with Esau but with that aspect of Jacob's own selfhood which defrauded Esau and till now has lived by cunning and the manipulation of fate by deceit and trickery.\(^1\)

Depth psychology also asks if perhaps Jacob's manipulative character is not a reaction to the deep wound of being second-born by a few minutes and thus loser of inheritance and position — by mere minutes! The question is raised whether in the wrestle he is not wrestling with the very centre of his being which has in fact been wounded and which he was always attempting to compensate. However, Wink emphasizes that to stop at this point would indeed be reductionism for Jacob does not say, "I have met my neuroses face to face!" but rather, "I have seen God face to face!" The story tells us that the Power held his real name: a name which he did not know and one which

\(^1\)ibid., p. 21.
he couldn't bestow upon himself. The Other knew the mystery of him who had been chosen.¹ It is interesting to note that the story of the wrestling is very ambiguous — usually said to be due to source problems. The Hebrew does not make it clear who the 'he' is — Jacob or the man in verse 25 or 26. Roland Barthes argues that this ambiguity is not insignificant even if it is clarified later on — that indeed, the power of the narrative is in part a function of this very ambiguity and the identities of Jacob and the man are entangled until the very ending of the story where it is revealed: neither this one nor that one, but God.²

It was God who had brought him to the River Jabbok to face that in himself from which he had always been in flight. Wink stresses that in his discussion, he has not identified the 'man' as Jacob's shadow.³ Rather he used Jung's concept as a means of getting a grasp on the face which that phenomenon turns toward us near the start of the story. However, as the story proceeds and the narrator informs us that it is neither man nor spirit but

¹Ibid., p. 23.


God, we see where psychology can aid theology in the capacity to see our "fate" (our neuroses, our genetic givens, the accidents of birth and location and the damage done to us by others) as a divinely-appointed encounter and task.\(^1\)

Wink has successfully shown how he maintained content and process in a unity for where content did not complement the process described by Jungian psychology, Wink did not force the content into the process.

Wink goes on to let the text probe the reader. He draws on the insights he has gained through study under the leadership of Elizabeth Howes. One means is to have the reader, at the conclusion of communal exegesis of the text write out a dialogue between oneself, the Jacob figure (as an inner aspect of oneself) and the adversary within. The "Jacob" within us is the aspect of ourselves which resonates with the Jacob figure in the story. "Jacob" and "Esau" become effective images within us if the story evokes something "Jacob-like" in us. Wink suggests that perhaps it is a commitment from the past which has waned and the story can put us in touch with it and recover it as an aspect of ourselves. The "Jacob" side is that part of us which is able to become committed to consciousness,

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 25.
to our own healing, the will of God.¹

It is important that the ego remain related to both figures so that it doesn't identify totally with one or the other. We need to face that from which we flee - that which is wounded and rejected by us, for it too has a blessing to give us. We need that part as part of our full being which God restores to us.²

Wink emphasizes that the result is not simply "self-actualization" but reconciliation with real people as in Jacob's case.³ This method of internalizing characters is not new but in fact second nature to many story-telling cultures.⁴

²Ibid., p. 27.
³Ibid.


"In cultures where life is taught through the telling of tales this process of internalizing characters is second nature. An American Plains Indian explains it thus: 'Whenever we hear a story it is as if we were physically walking down a particular path that has been created for us. Everything we perceive upon this path or around it becomes part of our experience, both individually and collectively. This particular story has within it many mirrors which reflect certain realities that exist in all of us. Each of these little mirrors, when we look into it as a whole thing, or wheel, can be a teacher for us .... 'And that cuts it off!' said Hides On the Wind, clapping his hands together loudly. 'Can you tie any new Arrows that are parts of yourselves to this teaching?
Other methods of responding to images evoked by the text are such expressives as painting, mime, dance, working with clay, etc.\textsuperscript{1} Wink, like Jung, encourages their use to establish a relationship with the images evoked by the text.

Underlying the whole process, we see the Jungian presupposition that beyond our conscious control, lies a process which seeks our wholeness. We must cooperate with it. This process confronts us in the great myths and religious texts.\textsuperscript{2}

The last step is to keep from mystifying the political and social relations implicit in the text and in our relationship with the world. For Jacob represents Israel and Esau represents Edom,\textsuperscript{3} and all through her history strove with God and so we need to examine our own history in the light of what the story tells us of Israel's history. When a nation seeks to deal with its own internalized fears, it is freed from obsessive projections of those fears upon "enemies." Wink suggests that we look at "America's

\textsuperscript{1}For further examples of the usefulness of these expressives, see Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation, pp. 50-60, and its appendix.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 68.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., p. 32. "Israel did not dream up this confidence but came to it on the basis of rich and wide experience, of her history in fact; and, symbolizing it in a person, she illustrated it in a story," Gerhard Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, tr. by D.M.G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), Vol. 1, pp. 110f.
paranoia about international communism abroad (displacing our fear of the consequences of the injustices of the capitalistic system at home), or racism (which projects on blacks or Jews or other minority groups the dark sinister aspects of ourselves which we dare not face) . . . Whether it is our own inner turmoil, or our interpersonal relations, or the lives of nations, the uncomfortable truth is the same: we wrestle not simply with our problems; we wrestle with God.1

In the preceding pages, I have attempted to show how Walter Wink has used psychological insights to enhance the way the text impinges upon us and our understanding of the text. The emphasis has been on maintaining a complementary relationship of process with content where neither is ignored. The text does not become an illustration of psychodynamic case history but remains grounded in history and the psychodynamics are used to interrogate the text if content warrants it such that the content is not substituted by another content (Jungian theory).

Psychodynamics are used to interrogate the interpreter so that he can be more objective, having analyzed the way the text resonates or doesn't resonate within himself through communal exegesis.

1Ibid., p. 33.
There has been an attempt to show that theology and psychology can complement each other and that neither need be reduced to the other.

The movement from the personal to the wider scope of scrutinizing the socio-political realm has kept us from the mystification of the socio-political systems and the tendency to become simply personalistic.

It is my contention that Walter Wink has adequately illustrated the effective use of psychological insights for biblical interpretation. The dangers are still very real but not inevitable.

In fact, I wish to suggest that a historical-critical approach and a psychological one can properly chasten each other so that the text becomes alive but grounded in history so that process is not allowed to blur content but rather enhances it.
CHAPTER V

WALTER WINK'S PARADIGM

Wink's systematic approach combining historical criticism and psychological insights is outlined in The Bible in Human Transformation.

We have examined the weaknesses and possibilities for implementing psychological insights for biblical interpretation. In the same way, the positive value of historical-criticism in answering the question "What happened?" and in freeing texts from overbearing ecclesiastical influences, has been acknowledged. We have also discussed scholars like Bultmann and Ebeling who are seeking a hermeneutic which is able to speak to the question, "What does the text mean to me today?" It is of course a fundamental hermeneutical debate as to whether this is a task for historical criticism or the task of another hermeneutic. That debate is on-going. Walter Wink criticizes historical-criticism for its inability to deal with this question. It seems reasonable to acknowledge that historical criticism is unable to speak to this question because of the nature of its methodology and principles as practised by those seeking an objective
and verifiable interpretation.

Walter Wink criticizes scholars for their objectivistic approach, where in the interests of a 'scientific' approach, the text recedes further and further from touching the life of the interpreter.\(^1\) The error of objectivism, according to Wink lies in its ideological position which is blind to the irrational or unconscious, and its separation of theory from practice.\(^2\)

Wink speaks out of his own personal experience and his critical tone is the result of a scholar struggling with a method which for him, does not enhance the text. It is apparent that he is not alone in this experience.\(^3\)

An underlying assumption of Wink's paradigm is that the text has something to say because it was called into being and it is the desire to encounter that which called it into being which leads him to examine the text. Therefore, he approaches the text with interest in order to apply the text to his own life and world.\(^4\)

\(^{1}\) Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation, p. 3.

\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 5.

\(^{3}\) See Wink, "How I was Snagged by the Seat of My Pants While Reading the Bible," Christian Century, XCII (September 1975), pp. 816-19.

\(^{4}\) Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation, pp. 74-75.
It is my contention that Walter Wink has used historical criticism and psychological insights to enhance and temper each other in such a way that the text is allowed and encouraged to speak to us and inform our lives. I wish to outline briefly, Wink's paradigm.

Wink's paradigm is outlined under the following headings although it is a process rather than rigid categorization.

1. Fusion
   
   N¹ Negation of fusion through analysis of the object

2. Distance
   
   N² Negation of distance through analysis of the subject

3. Communion
   
   We shall discuss each section of the intended process. The first stage in this process is **Fusion** - a term applied to the life-stream in which we find ourselves - that of a particular heritage and tradition which have subtly led us to specific assumptions of our world. N¹ is the negation of that fusion with our heritage and tradition. In other words, the heritage and tradition come into question - we analyze them. The term 'negation' here may have negative connotations. In this case, it is considered a healthy indication of a desire to go beyond that which we assume from our past.
In regard to biblical study then, this is the stage where the biblical texts are questioned as to their consistency, origins, intention, etc.

The resolution of this tension with Fusion brings us to the second stage known as Distance. Distance involves the use of critical tools. Their function is to free the biblical texts from interpretative influences such as theology and dogma and seeks to hear the text on its own terms in answer to the question "What Happened?" in the historical setting. The attempt is made to gain a clear picture of the past. This could be called biblical criticism. A malaise may occur at this stage whereby those who negate the fusion tend to live off the negation. This results in a preoccupation with the historical-critical method.

When questions arise such as "What is the meaning of the text for my life?" they are neglected due to assertions by scholars dedicated to an objectivistic approach, that this is not an appropriate question to ask of hermeneutics.

Wink proposes a negation of the stage Distance to deal with this issue. He uses the heading N. It is Wink's assumption that not only the object needs to be questioned but also the subject - the one who interprets.  

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1Form, source, redaction criticism.

2Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation, p. 33.
The interpreter must undergo the same type of analysis as the object (the biblical texts) had. The subject or interpreter is questioned by a psychological approach where the responses of the interpreter are investigated. Here we might look at an analogy with a psychotherapeutic relationship where there is dialogue between analyst and patient. The dialogue enhances a possible objectivity for perceiving the life situation and also encourages personal response. It is the reciprocity of the therapist-patient relationship that often enables transformation. The analyst must also be willing to change.¹

In the same way, we need to dialogue with a distanced view of a text and a negation of that distance, or to put it another way, dialogue with a historical-critical approach and our responses to the text can be informative and aid in encountering the text.

It is our responses to the text (or the lack of response) which Wink has primarily examined in his use of psychological insights to interpret biblical study.

Interrogation of the subject means that we examine how the text resonates in us, and, as with dream interpretation, the premise is that characters in the story represent psychic phenomena within the subject. Although we didn't produce the story (like our dreams), its capacity

¹Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation*, p. 33.
to evoke response from us lies within the resonance with psychic and sociological realities within me.\(^1\) Thus he uses introjection as a method to probe the reader's self-understanding. Here the reader is asked to put the characters within himself and to find them in his own being.\(^2\)

Wink has demonstrated how an interrogation of the subject might look when carried out in reference to the story of the healing of the paralytic (Mt. 9:1-8; Mk. 2:1-12; Lk. 5:17-26). The leader of the group guides the discussion by a series of questions through first analyzing the passage noting differences, secondly, revivifying the scene with the aid of historical and literary data and, thirdly, introjecting the characters of the story. Questions such as 'Who is the "paralytic" in you? Who is the "scribe" in you?' are asked. The point is that when we are involved personally and encouraged to respond to the character in the story with insight and feeling, then the story becomes our own, and transformation takes place. Our unconscious responds to the images evoked by the text. We just let them speak. In a dialogue, the ego then dialogues with these unconscious voices, but

\(^{1}\text{Ibid.}, p. 62.\)

\(^{2}\text{Ibid.}, pp. 56-60.\)
is not overwhelmed or controlled by them. It is in becoming conscious of them that we can integrate those other aspects in ourselves which lie in the unconscious and yet are an integral part of ourselves.

Herbert Fingarette tells us

The vicarious living of other lives is not merely a desireable experience, it is essential. There can be no development into a human being without the incorporation into the total self of a variety of lives and part-lives. The more these are fully lived, the more rich and deep a self.¹

Through working with clay, paints, and mime, an effort is made to become more aware of the characters in the story and to be able to identify with them so that the story becomes one's own. In the case of the paralytic, the instruction might be to create with clay, one's own paralytic - that which is within oneself that is paralyzed and unable to move. This might be a feeling of despair and hopelessness which has paralyzed one's energy.

An effort is also made to become aware of that within us which is like the four friends who worked with persistence to reach Jesus such that the crowd did not deter them. They tried the roof instead!

Dialogue with the paralytic, friends and scribe in this way is an aid to making the story our own through

responding to the characters from our own inner selves. The integrative process which results from this kind of dialogue between the interpreter and the object is called Communio. We have already stated that communal exegesis is an aid to reaching this Communio. To state it another way, Communio is the relational dialogue between historical criticism and psychology.

Wink emphasized that there need not be a dichotomous relationship between historical criticism and psychology.

It is not unlike Jung's emphasis that a dichotomous relationship should not exist between the differentiated ego and the unconscious for they are on the whole complementary when brought into consciousness. So too, historical criticism could be invaluable to psychology in its ability to be thorough sorting out historical data while psychology is invaluable in its techniques to bring about a response to images found therein for the purpose of transformation.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Much of what Wink has done in his paradigm is not new to the field of historiography. Wink's contribution lies in his emphasis on the reader's responses to the text. This supports the view of hermeneutics which seeks to answer the question, "What does the text mean to me?"
He has successfully united psychology and historical criticism in a complementary relationship.

It is that emphasis on relation - not dichotomy, which is I believe Wink's contribution to hermeneutics so that psychology must always unite process with content in interpreting a text and not attempt to substitute a psychological context for a historical one. Historical criticism will seek to maintain the integrity of the content and will not allow the text to become an occasion for a case history for psychodynamics.

On the other hand, historical criticism must always seek to unite process with content so that the text's
concern for transformation and evoking faith is maintained as an integral part of the process and cannot be ignored by stating that the issue does not belong to hermeneutics simply because the method is unable to deal with it.

It is indeed this relation where the movement is back and forth between subject and object - where both are interrogated and allowed to respond, that enhances the possibility for transformation to occur.

It is an attempt to overcome the objectivistic position. It is indeed the admittal of a biased position due to culture, prejudices, etc. and an attempt to examine one's position through communal exegesis. In a sense it is a more objective position than the pretentiousness of a purely 'scientific' approach.

It is an attempt to ground biblical study in a context of real life situations with people who are asking questions which are of deep concern to their own lives. Scholarship then becomes relational to community.¹

This is an important aspect to Wink for it prevents a mystification of the social structure. Through communal dialogue, we are encouraged to examine that which is beyond the personalistic, and it engages the community in a critique of itself and its structures. Community here

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¹Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation, p. 77.
means - both believing and non-believing community in order for the social structure of the church to be examined. Wink's concern for relationship between scholarship and laity can be demonstrated in his involvement in establishing a training program for seminary students which includes lay-people and clergy.

Some of those who took three semesters of the training program are leading Bible studies at Taconic State Prison. The training program is an attempt to keep churches from the all too often polarization "between an arid, scholastic approach to scripture, on the one hand, and a pious, subjectivistic, uncritical approach on the other."\(^1\)

I am encouraged by efforts of this nature to bring laity, clergy and scholarship in a more mutual reciprocal relationship. I am concerned however, about the leadership of such Bible study groups by people who have little training in psychology and critical biblical study.

Wink's aim to bring scholarship and laity closer together is a very worthwhile aim but needs to be undertaken very slowly in order to avoid amateur psychology and neglect of the positive value of historical criticism and the insight it can provide.

Wink's continuing attempts to enhance his own methods of interpretation are necessary to avoid what Wink accused historical criticism of doing - 'living off the negation of a former paradigm.'

Walter Wink, in his book *The Bible in Human Transformation* is primarily concerned with establishing a 'new management' for biblical criticism. He proposes the use of psychological insights to interpret the texts. It is my contention that a complementary relationship between historical criticism and psychology might be established where both are under new management - the critiques they can offer each other. In this way, they are both pushed beyond their natural states of usage.

Their complementary relationship might help to temporarily overcome what David Bakan calls 'methodolatry' - the worship of method. He states that it is the assumption of science and religion that the fundamental reality lies beyond the manifest.

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2*ibid.*, p. 16.
3Wink, "On Wrestling with God: The Use of Psychological Insights in Biblical Study."
5*ibid.*, p. 159.
No matter how much we learn and how much we uncover, there is always the vast region of the unmanifest that is not unlike that picturesque description of the psyche where consciousness is the varying degrees of clarity in the beam of a searchlight and the unconscious is made up of a vast area of darkness.¹

The warning Bakan leaves with us concerning man's examination of that which is manifest, I shall conclude with as it is certainly applicable here.

"If at any stage of development we begin to worship the manifest or the means whereby we have made some part manifest, then indeed can it be said that we are being idolatrous."²

We have discussed the dangers and limitations of the historical-critical method and of the use of psychology in biblical interpretation. Wink's paradigm runs the risk of the limitations of both methods but also moves beyond both methods in the search for encounter with the unmanifest. We are warned not to become idolators by losing the sense of search for the fulfillment of the religious impulse³ and


³Ibid., p. 152. Religious impulse here refers to that in man which is concerned with the possibility of transcending expressions of his nature . . . . The function of the impulse is to reach out toward the unmanifest.
the overquick fixing upon methods or concepts as the ultimate fulfillment of that impulse.¹

This is I believe the greatest danger in Wink's method or any method. Wink speaks to this problem implicitly at the end of The Bible in Human Transformation. He says,

In this communion of horizons (that of Fusion and Distance) the dialectic of interpretation attains for a short moment the goal of understanding; then the horizons shift, our self-understanding and world change, we see the past in a different light, and the process begins anew.²

This is an attempt to say that one must ever push onward remaining open to new possibilities - for our context is continually changing. Wink has demonstrated his desire to move beyond his method.

He had become quite well established among biblical scholars with the publishing of his first book John the Baptist, in the Gospel Tradition. The reviews of the book by people like T.C.G. Thorton, J. Elliot, L.Keck, and R.T. Fortna show a respect for Wink's ability to be thorough and concise. The following statement shall illustrate:

"Wink's treatment is enviably concise and comprehensive. In a slim volume he has achieved a definitive, if not exhaustive presentation of this very important

¹Ibid., p. 154.
²Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation, p. 80.
subject."¹

The reviewers were positive concerning his work. Wink demonstrated his desire for growth and transformation in his move to criticize the position from which he wrote *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition*. This point should not be overlooked. Wink is not a naive reactionary but criticizes the very position he held - that of objectivistic scholar employing a strict historical critical approach. He did not reject the approach but attempted to correct that which seemed to him a limitation.

Wink became concerned about the objectivistic position of biblical scholars and severely criticized them. This is a very sweeping generalization of biblical scholars. (One wonders if Wink's criticism is his self-projected shadow?)

I confronted Wink about the sharpness of his tone²


See also, R. E. Brown, *Theological Studies*, XXX, (June, 1969), pp. 329-31. "The author is to be commended for the careful exegesis and balanced judgment that has gone into this important work. It is refreshing to see a willingness to question critical theories that have become sacrosanct," p. 330.

²Correspondence with Wink - letter dated September 29, 1976.
and he was aware that he had to be careful in this respect. Perhaps this is one reason why at the end of his book The Bible in Human Transformation he wrote,

This essay has been nothing less than an attempt at public exorcism. Its primary object is myself. It is not directed against any other persons as such, but at a particular role typification which is never, thank God, wholly incarnated, but which, to the degree that it is internalized as the professional superego, exercises demonic compulsive power over the self. Before it our finest hermeneutical and personal convictions are rendered powerless. I have personally found it extremely difficult to admit that I have taken away the key of knowledge. I have sought to hide that fact by the normal display of academic erudition and role dependency. To become free - to 'respond though I must change' - for many of us that spells a kind of dying.¹

It seems that if his reaction is in part his projected shadow, then he has at least, taken the task of withdrawing the projection by including himself in the criticisms.

If, indeed, his criticisms are self-projections, then they are projections which are constellated in others as well for while scholars have at times reacted negatively to Wink's criticisms, they have, on the whole, taken him seriously. The Chicago Cluster of Theological Schools spent an evening discussing Wink's essay,² as did the

¹Ibid., p. 82.

religion departments of Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo. The book was also used as one of the texts in a Hermeneutics class at Wilfrid Laurier University in 1975-76 and will be used again this year 1976-1977. Could it be that Wink's criticisms have struck some notes of truth among scholars who realize the limitations of historical criticism and are attempting to seek out methods which enhance transformation? This involves admission that we are not what we can become. It is the stance in life which responds although it may involve changing methods of interpretation and perhaps our lives. Jung emphasized man's need to become whole and the necessity of man's conscious will to be committed to this task - to grow though he must leave old patterns of behaviours and defenses. Once again it is important to emphasize that Wink has not rejected the work of historical criticism but has attempted to enhance interpretation with a complementary relationship between historical criticism and psychology in an attempt to add a link in the chain of hermeneutics which speaks to the question "What does the text say to me?"
Hints for Leaders of Communal Exegesis
by Walter Wink

1. **Trust Your Questions.** Work out your questions as carefully as possible. Be aware of the flow from one to the next. Then when the session begins, trust that these questions really have been given rise to by the text, and that they can lead the group into the text. If silence greets your question, repeat it. If more silence, repeat it again, or at most rephrase it. **But do not, under any conditions, begin giving answers to it.** To do so is sheer temptation and folly. It undermines the process. Participants sense your mistrust of the questions, consider it well-founded, and withdraw from your leadership. Your anxiety, communicated as self-doubt, makes them doubt that their involvement will be significant. So at all costs, stay with your questions. Generally this is only a problem at the beginning, while people are feeling their way into the text and the group. They need time for that, so give them the silent spaces to find their place. You will learn to distinguish a full from an empty silence; let a full silence stand as a beautiful gift; in an empty silence, repeat your question.

2. Be alert to new questions that come from the group. Go with them if they seem important and look for ways to integrate them into your line of questions.

3. If people bring up questions you plan to deal with later, you may either a) deal with it now, or if it interrupts another issue inadequately discussed, b) ask the person to hold it and that the group will come back to it. But if you do delay consideration, always be sure you do come back to it. To fail to do so is a terrible put-down.

4. Be aware of where you are in your series of questions, but don't let that prevent you from attending fully to what people are saying. If you are not fully present to a person as she/he speaks, she/he will read your
preoccupation as a lack of interest or disapproval.
And you will miss what they have to offer.

5. In preparing, save the last hour or so to center down,
pray over your questions (for trust in them, in the
process, in your colleagues, in the Spirit who makes
alive), and try praying for each person (if it is a
group you know). In any case open yourself to the
creative thing that wants to happen.

6. Having prepared as thoroughly as possible, say "I don't
know what this text is all about. I came to it with
the group, as it for the first time prepared to hear
something I never knew."

7. If in the group people debate with one another, try to
encourage them to simply let their differences stand,
without trying to force on each other a "correct"
notion. (On the other hand, errors in matters of fact
should be matter-of-factly corrected).

8. When one or a few persons dominate, as is generally the
case, try to widen involvement by some means or another,
as tactfully as possible, such as "We haven't heard from
some of the rest of you" (repeating question), or "Only
a few people have carried the responsibility for the
discussion. How about some of the rest of you."
Sometimes you simply can't be tactful, and have to ask
someone not to dominate. You'd better do it, though,
or it will undermine the whole process as people get
angrier and angrier.

9. When you sense resistance in the group, it is best if
you can (as I seldom ever have been able to) stop and
ask people where they are, perhaps volunteering your
own perception, such as, "My reading of the group is
..."

10. Above all, remember that the method is not an end but
a means. Look for what God is doing in the group, as
best you can. Be willing to be surprised. On the
other hand, don't abdicate leadership to someone else
(who seems to want it) or to the group "drift." Your
existence as a leader grants you an authority which
the group recognizes, and this is not "authoritarianism."
You are a facilitator of transformation. Hang on to that
value and don't let "being well thought of" divert you
from what the situation requires.
11. A word about emotions. If someone bursts into tears, or is silently crying, and your intuition is that the material itself has evoked the feelings, simply be aware of it and go on. If the person seems to need support, hopefully those sitting by them will provide it. If they don't, you will have to stop and provide it. (That has never happened to me, simply because people won't "break down" unless they sense that the group is supportive.) If the emotion seems not to have been evoked by the material, and the person can say where it's coming from, that will be helpful. On the whole, I regard the expression of feelings a good sign. It can show great strength for a person to weep in a group (especially a man), so don't assume that people need or want strokes when they cry.
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