

2004

## A Way Forward in the Scientific Investigation of Gospel Traditions: Cognitive-Critical Analysis

Paul N. Anderson

George Fox University, [panderso@georgefox.edu](mailto:panderso@georgefox.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ccs>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Psychology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Anderson, Paul N., "A Way Forward in the Scientific Investigation of Gospel Traditions: Cognitive-Critical Analysis" (2004). *Faculty Publications - George Fox School of Theology*. 98.

<https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ccs/98>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Theology at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications - George Fox School of Theology by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact [arolfe@georgefox.edu](mailto:arolfe@georgefox.edu).

A WAY FORWARD IN THE  
SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION OF  
GOSPEL TRADITIONS:  
COGNITIVE-CRITICAL ANALYSIS

*Paul N. Anderson, J. Harold Ellens, and James W. Fowler*

While biblical scholarship has been quite open to integrating multiple disciplines into exegetical and hermeneutical studies, only recently have psychological studies been welcomed to the table.<sup>1</sup> There are good reasons, however, for this reluctance. Too easily have psychological approaches to the Bible been used to produce results more conducive to the interpreter's interests, therefore depriving the Bible of its voice and co-opting its authority. Likewise, "psychologizing the text" has rightly become a charge to be avoided, in favor of more chaste and measured exegetical approaches.<sup>2</sup> A further vulnerability of psychological approaches to the Bible, or to any other text, is the specious character of the methodologies used. Where some schools of psychology have greater and lesser degrees of credibility—within the field and otherwise—these reputations and their subjective appraisals have given way to more "objective" approaches to interpretation. For these and other reasons, the last century or more of biblical scholarship has prized the historical-critical method above all others, displacing nearly all psychological approaches to biblical interpretation and anything bearing a close resemblance.

However, the problem with objectivistic approaches to the study of the Bible is that it was written by *subjects*—human beings—seeking to engage hearers and readers personally.<sup>3</sup> Communication, expression, and the preservation of memory are subjective ventures, not objective ones, so one's approach to interpretation must be adequate for the task

at hand. While reading one's situation and needs into the text might distort the text's most basic meanings, it is also true that texts can legitimately have more than one valid meaning. In fact, the most powerful of texts are considered classics because of the rich and prolific variety of meanings they continue to convey. For this reason, the best tools available for getting at the meanings of texts should be employed, and the best of psychological approaches to interpretation includes *cognitive criticism*—*analyzing the ways biblical writers came to think about issues in relation to their perceptions and experiences*. Aside from the hermeneutical value of employing such tools, the interest of the present investigation is to consider the impact cognitive-critical analysis might have upon the scientific investigation of Gospel traditions. In that sense, cognitive criticism is adopted as a primarily historical-critical tool rather than a hermeneutical one, although that venture could also be profitably explored.

Such a contribution is needed because of the *limitations* of the ways historical-critical analyses have been conducted until now. First, historical-critical methodologies have been afflicted by an *overly objectivistic approach to historiography*. Too easily, modernistic understandings of what "history" consists of have dominated our approaches to Gospel traditions, resulting in the privileging of empiricism and facticity over other more fitting measures of truth.<sup>4</sup> The result has been the setting up of mechanistic grids for determining historicity and the default rejection of anything not measuring up to contrived standards. In this regard, developing disciplinary approaches to assessing subjective factors in historiographic analysis will allow a more nuanced approach to Gospel-tradition analysis, with the result that valuable insights might be contributed to understandings of the material's character and origin.

A second limitation of historical-critical methodologies is that they *fail to account for human factors* in originative and developing Gospel-tradition histories. All four Gospels make clear allusions to the disciples not understanding things Jesus said and did but that with time they developed fuller understandings. This implies a dialogue between earlier perceptions and later understandings, affected by emerging experiences and new perceptions. Without some attention given to discovery and evolving understandings, earlier traditional material gets misunderstood by critics and thus labeled wrongly. A cognitive-critical analysis, however, would allow for movement in understanding, and it would factor in the correlations between theological content and human experience.

A third limitation of historical-critical methodologies is the way that historical-critical methodologies set up categories of naturalism versus supernaturalism<sup>5</sup> and exclude everything that does not measure up to the former standard. Understandings of the miraculous in the modern era are not necessarily the same as such during the first century of the Common Era, and taking into account factors of human perception broaden the possibilities for our understandings of realism. For instance, more adequate knowledge regarding how something may have come to be experienced or perceived as “wondrous” in the ancient Mediterranean world is extremely helpful for deeming reports within or without modern canons of historicity. Without cognitive-critical tools for interpretation, reports of traditional perceptions and developments lose their resilience and suffer at the hand of overly brittle measures of historicity proper.

A fourth limitation of historical-critical methodology involves the *inadequacies of assuming that Gospel traditions were disembodied sets of ideas* floating from one region to another, without factoring in the human element in their development and conveyance. Even if contemporary religious ideas played roles in the formation of traditional content, questions of why particular typologies were embraced and how they were assimilated by particular human beings are weighty considerations in the investigation. It could also be a fact that particular renderings of Jesus within distinctive Gospel traditions may have been related to the gifts and ministries of those particular Christian leaders; therefore, ways the human sources of Gospel traditions ideated and came to conceive of their understandings are important considerations for getting Gospel traditional analysis right.

A fifth limitation of historical-critical methodologies is that *redaction analysis and source-critical inferences often fail to account for more nuanced ways one tradition may have influenced another*. As scholars are now exploring oral developments of Gospel traditions and inter-fluential<sup>6</sup> relations between them, cognitive approaches to how these interactions may have worked may indeed provide helpful ways forward. Understanding how the collectors, crafters, and purveyors of Gospel material may have done their work, based upon their own understandings of things, adds to the realism of how Gospel traditions may have emerged. Cognitive criticism thus affords greater nuance to investigations of Gospel interrelations and the lack thereof.

In the *selecting* of cognitive-critical tools to be used for exegetical analysis, several criteria should be employed. First, the best and most useful models should be selected over alternative ones. Methodologies

that have earned the respect of cognitive theorists and are based on convincing research and nuanced use stand the greatest chance of being serviceable over the long run. Second, tools need to be selected that are appropriate to the task for which they are being used. The character of the epistemological inquiry should determine the selection of the tools, and cognitive-critical means should be employed along with other useful tools in an interdisciplinary fashion. Third, tools need to be used in ways that facilitate getting at the truth of a Gospel narrative rather than promoting the agenda and interests of the interpreter. In that sense, the same measures of neutrality and disinterest relevant to the use of other methodologies apply here. Fourth, the results of the uses of tools should be repeatable by other theorists, and they should be comprehensible to those wishing to ascertain their validity. Finally, tools should be selected that offer the fullest interpretive value; yet this will only be ascertained after the results of the analysis are presented and reflected upon.

The particular tools I have used to get at the epistemological origins of John's dialectical presentation of material include the crisis-transformational model of James Loder and the faith-developmental model of James Fowler.<sup>7</sup> Their works were applied to Johannine and Markan Gospel traditions along the lines of two theological interests: ascertaining perceptions of Jesus' humanity and divinity, and interpreting the miracles of Jesus. In the first theme, perceptions and experiences gave rise to reflection as to what sort of a being Jesus was; the second interest addressed individuated reflections as to why miracles happened and why they did not. The development of both of these themes can be inferred in Markan and Johannine traditions, and they may even have been in dialogue with each other along the way. Insights from these analyses, then, relate to gaining a fuller understanding of the experiential/reflective processes early Christians must have gone through in telling the stories of Jesus, and they also cast light on how these things relate to readers and hearers in later generations. In that sense, Gospel writers and traditions were more like ourselves than we might have thought.

### **About This Study**

The present study includes four sections. Following this introduction is a review of my book, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel* (Anderson, 1996), by J. Harold Ellens. In this excellent review, Professor Ellens comments upon the book and its place within the history of interpretation. His insights into its place within emerging psycholog-

ical approaches to the Bible are especially significant, but he also knows the scholarly literature about John well enough to comment valuably on the book's impact within Johannine studies and biblical theology at large. His words are greatly appreciated, and his insights are, as usual, keen and insightful.

The third section is an abridged version of my "reception report" on the same book presented at the 1998 Orlando AAR/SBL meetings. The original version gathered the highlights of over thirty-five reviews, including international ones, and it sought to make sense of what aspects of the book appear to make contributions among reviewers, what aspects are more controversial, and what sorts of ways the book might further cognitive-critical approaches to studying Gospel traditions. The abridged version in this chapter addresses comments and critiques that refer to the latter concern, focusing on the reviewers who commented upon the uses of Fowler (1981) and Loder (1981), as well as related cognitive-critical contributions.

The fourth section is a response to the third, also presented at Orlando, which allows James Fowler to comment evaluatively on how well *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel* employs his and Loder's models in conducting Gospel tradition-history investigations. As well as engaging the present monograph and essay, Professor Fowler was asked to comment on ways his faith-development work might be applied to other sorts of biblical studies, including prospects for the future. It is in the service of that larger venture that these three sections and the introduction are contributed to the present collection. Indeed, the greatest measure of whether cognitive-critical approaches to biblical texts are serviceable to exegetical studies is the degree to which they catch on. That being the case, the success of the present venture will only be able to be ascertained from the reflective perspective of the future.

In some ways, psychological approaches to biblical interpretation are today where sociological approaches were two and three decades ago—just getting going, and still in the nascent stages of their development. However, as particular approaches to biblical interests call for the use of cognitive-critical methodologies, new vistas will be opened and new opportunities may emerge for getting closer to the central meanings of biblical texts. Not all approaches will be of equal value. Some will be limited by the adequacy of the method, and some will be limited by the extended use of a worthy tool. Nonetheless, the measured and reflective employment of a worthy cognitive-critical tool not only opens up our insights into original meanings of classic

biblical texts; it helps us consider what those texts might mean for later readers as well. If the present studies contribute toward that venture, they will have served a valuable purpose indeed—but only the reader will be able to decide if that is so.

### **A Review by Ellens of Anderson's Work on John's Christology: A Case Study in the Cognitive-Critical Analysis of Gospel Traditions**

New Testament studies have been considered a field of research that is an inch wide and a mile deep, and this is especially true of Gospel studies. While saying something new about a Gospel text is not impossible, and while saying something worthy is only slightly less uncommon, the great challenge is to contribute both within the same analysis. Such is the case for this interdisciplinary treatment of John's notoriously intriguing Christology, as Paul N. Anderson has added cognitive-critical analysis to the mix of literary, historical, and theological exegetical approaches (Anderson, 1996). In so doing, not only are the primary issues of Johannine studies critically engaged, but the epistemological origins of John's Christological tensions are meaningfully elucidated. This is what makes this work important for biblical studies and Christian theology in general, as well as for the exploration of new and effective methodologies in particular. The present review, therefore, endeavors to assess the value of this creative monograph as a case study for cognitive-critical approaches to the scientific analysis of Gospel traditions.

This superb volume of New Testament exegetical study is a revision and expansion of Professor Anderson's doctoral dissertation, successfully submitted and defended at the University of Glasgow in 1988. At the time of this review, its author was serving as visiting associate professor of New Testament at Yale Divinity School, on a leave of absence from George Fox University in Oregon. D. Moody Smith asserts in the opening sentence of his laudatory foreword that this book "is at once one of the most concentrated and intensive exegetical studies and one of the most wide-ranging and suggestive essays on Johannine Christology that I have seen" (Anderson, 1996, iii). Professor Anderson states that John's portrayal of Jesus is one of the most fascinating and provocative in the New Testament. It presents him as both human and divine, and this tension has been a prolific source of debate and disagreement within Christianity and beyond. The purpose of this work is to explore the origins and char-



acter of the Christological tensions of the Fourth Gospel by means of seeking a deeper understanding of the dialectical process of thought by which the evangelist has come to embrace such a distinctively unitive *and* disunitive Christology. To illustrate this tension, Anderson cites the entertaining quote from Conybeare in his review of Loisy's *Le quartrieme evangile*, to the effect that if Athanasius had not the Fourth Gospel, Arius would never have been refuted; adding that if Arius had not the Fourth Gospel, he *would never have needed refuting* (Anderson, 1996, 1f.).

Anderson's book is an example of consummate scholarship, thoroughness, and attention to detail, both in its formal structure and in its exhaustive exegetical contents. Its ten chapters are structured within three major parts, each of which is augmented by an articulate introduction and a concise summary of findings and conclusions. The book also includes eight appendices and five bibliographies. It is in his seventh chapter that Anderson's contribution to the cognitive analysis of Gospel traditions stands out most impressively (Anderson, 1996, 137–166). Here the dialectical character of John 6 and the rest of the Fourth Gospel are analyzed by means of building upon Bultmann's and Barrett's descriptions of dialectical thinking, bolstered by the work of cognitive theorists James Fowler and James Loder. This chapter covers such scholarly issues as the linguistic and redactional characteristics of the text, Jesus' ironic response to the miracle-seeking crowd, John's view of sacraments with parallels to what Ignatius called the "medicine of immortality," and the dialectical means by which the evangelist not only reflects upon the ministry of Jesus, but also the literary means by which he engages his audience in an imaginary dialogue with his narrative subject: Jesus. The conclusion, "On 'Seamless Robes' . . . and 'Left-Over Fragments,'" draws the findings of the book together into a synthesized whole, and four epistemological origins of John's Christological tensions are sketched in the final section. These consist of an agency Christology, the dialectical thinking of the evangelist, the dialectical situation of the evangelist, and literary devices employed to engage the reader in the subject of the Johannine narrative—Jesus (Anderson, 1996, 252–265).

It is not possible in a review, even an extended one, to present the full argumentation of a book of such detailed analysis as this volume presents; however, at least offering the following sweeping summary and some selected illustrative excerpts of method and argument illuminating the author's work is required. In 1858 David Strauss described John's Gospel as a seamless robe woven neatly together from top to



bottom, an indivisible literary unity. Wellhausen, Bultmann, and others opposed this unitive appraisal in favor of emphasizing John's disunitive features. In doing so, they sought to account for the origins of John's material, especially addressing questions of John's Christological tensions. Why, for example, does the Gospel present us with both *very high and quite low* Christological material? Why was the evangelist so clearly ambivalent about who Jesus was, and what was the significance of those convictions he maintained? What did the Gospel's author really intend to say about Jesus' relationship to God as Father? Was it a relationship of equality, or subordination? Anderson sharpens these questions by putting the inquiry this way: Is the Christological unity and disunity of the Fourth Gospel attributable to tensions *external* to the evangelist's thinking, or *internal* and inherent to it? This is why he was compelled to address literary, historical, and theological issues together. The results of one investigation affect the others, and this will always be so.

Anderson concludes that the simple oppositioning of diachronic and synchronic approaches has not been very helpful, but that a third option that takes into consideration the dynamics of rhetoric and cognition may be more useful: namely, a combined "synchronicity of authorship and diachronicity of audience. This moves the poles of the tensions to the 'dialogue' between the evangelist and the rhetorical targets of his evolving context. A high correlation exists between recent commentators' understanding of John's Christological unity and disunity and the theory of composition adopted by each scholar. This fact suggests that, as progress is made in understanding more about John's Christological unity and disunity, one's insight into composition issues will be enhanced, and *vice versa*" (Anderson, 1996, 253). The crowd, the Jews, the disciples, Jesus, and Peter provide a literary and hermeneutical guide to various watershed turns in the Johannine literature and community.

Bultmann has asked the right questions, but neither his approaches nor his answers adequately demonstrate stylistic or linguistic disunity at a sufficient level to infer more than one literary source. Moreover, the kind of disparate narrative and interpretive comments we find in the text do not clearly demonstrate an editor's adding of disparate material other than that which might have been added later, but probably still originating with the Johannine evangelist. Furthermore, the "contextual difficulties identified by Bultmann are not as problematic as he argues. They do, however, play a central role in his disordering and reordering the discourse material in John 6, so as to bolster the

crea  
the  
cate  
nine  
B  
the  
the  
mak  
erar  
psyc  
crow  
pers  
the  
ing  
tury  
form  
exar  
John  
way  
ities,  
tury  
tives  
5,000  
tion  
movi  
the p  
Brea  
Sir  
ing a  
more  
auth  
torica  
ceptu  
gence  
at lea  
signif  
well  
autho  
tion,  
Jesus-  
late fi

credibility of his theory of composition. More realistically, they betray the evangelist's use of irony, serving to dislocate—and then to relocate—the reader's thinking along the lines of the ethos of the Johannine Jesus" (Anderson, 1996, 254).

Bultmann's treatment of the eucharistic reference in John 6 shifts the focus from John's Christology and urges that the combination of the references to flesh and blood, manna, and nourishment in Christ makes the text seem more disparate than it actually is. In fact it is a literary, stylistic, and theological unity when one realizes the ironic, psychodynamic, and rhetorical devices at play in both the words of the crowd and of Christ. Anderson cites Fowler's structuralist model of personality theory and faith development, as well as Loder's study of the dynamic formation of transforming encounters to explain, in keeping with the Gospel text, what it must have been like for a first-century follower of Jesus to "encounter in him theophanically the transforming presence of the love of God" (Anderson, 1996, 255). For example, the human sources of the traditions underlying Mark and John understood the same events in Jesus' life in remarkably different ways. Without connecting them necessarily with particular personalities, Anderson nonetheless follows the lead of Papias, the second-century writer, in referring to them as "Petrine" and "Johannine" perspectives. Comparing the two with regard to the story of the feeding of the 5,000 demonstrates that there is a series of different levels of perception evident in the Johannine narrative, indicating that the author was moving along a continuum of reflective maturation that ended with the perception of the centrality of being nourished by Jesus as the Bread of Life.

Similarly, with regard to the crowd's interpretation of the sea crossing and Jesus' reaction to it, the author of John's Gospel goes through more steps of developing awareness and interpretation than does the author of Mark's Gospel. These are psychological, cognitive, and rhetorical issues of style and stimulus. "These and a matrix of other perceptual differences may account for much of the interpretive divergence between the 'bi-optic Gospels,' Mark and John. In other words, at least two of Jesus' followers understood his mission and ministry in significantly different ways, and some of these differences extended well into the sub-apostolic era" (Anderson, 1996, 255). The first author, writing in the late 60s C.E., with less time of reflection, digestion, and church tradition development under his belt, has a human Jesus—that is, a lower Christology. The second author, writing in the late first-century C.E., with more decades of psycho-theological reflec-

tion, cognitive processing, and a much longer period of the church's confessional and theological unfolding behind him, has a higher Christology of an exalted Christ in tension with a human Jesus: the man from Nazareth who is the Christ of God. This Jesus moves smoothly back and forth in John 6 from God's agent to human discussant. Countering and complementing the view of Peder Borgen, "the section reflects a homily, perhaps given as a Christianized form of midrash, . . . and the 'text' with which it begins is not an Old Testament passage (about manna in the wilderness), but the narration of events in the ministry of Jesus. . . . Thus, the invitation to choose the life-producing Bread over other kinds of 'bread' is the exhortative fulcrum of John 6" (Anderson, 1996, 257). Thus, Anderson accounts for the unity and disunity in the Gospel, and the tensions it produces are

attributable to the following factors: a) . . . the dialectical process of theological reflection in keeping with contemporary examples. Two of these include the tension between a present and future eschatology, and the apparent tension between determinism and free will in John. . . . b) What has appeared to be subordinationism versus egalitarianism between the Father and the Son in John is actually a reflection of the *evangelist's agency christology*. The Son is to be equated with the Father precisely because he represents the Father identically. . . . c) The evangelist's ambivalence toward Jesus' signs is an indication of his *reflective dialogue with his tradition*, in which he continues to find new meanings in the significance of Jesus' words and works. . . . d) The tension between the flesh and glory in the evangelist's christology is the result of an *encounter theology*, and the theophany on the lake is a prototypical example of such an encounter. It may even have been formative. Analogous to Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, the memory of this event remained transcendent from the earliest stages of the tradition to its later written rendition, and its slant is fundamentally different from the pre-Markan account. . . . e) A final explanation for some of John's unity and disunity involves the *dialogical means by which the evangelist seeks to engage the reader in an imaginary conversation with Jesus*. By means of local and extended irony, misunderstanding dialogues, discourses which employ rich metaphors christocentrically, and by portraying the stories of other people who encounter Jesus in the narrative, the evangelist woos, cajoles, humours and shocks the reader. In doing so, he seeks to create a *crisis*—a temporary sense of disturbance and dislocation—as this is the *first and prerequisite* step in any experience of knowing. The evangelist adapts to the specific needs of his sector of Christianity, but never does he stray far from his christocentric understanding of God's love, which is always and continually initiating a saving/revealing dialogue between God and humanity. . . . Thus, truth, in the christological sense, must be

ur  
(A

Fr  
volu  
And  
field  
ner,  
erud  
exha  
page  
C. K  
Fort  
Smit  
addr  
God  
revie  
tical  
surp  
are c

Pe  
that,  
tigat  
of as  
to th  
equa  
tivel  
Inte  
forgo  
This  
of ev  
this

Hur  
And  
Fou

It  
revie  
Not  
issue  
insig

understood in subjective, personal terms, as well as objective ones. (Anderson, 1996, 260–264)

From this most cursory of all possible treatments of this watershed volume in Johannine and Christological studies, it is clear that Paul N. Anderson has given profound attention to the key issues at stake in his field of work. He has thoroughly digested, in a fair and balanced manner, the immense work of the scholars who have crafted the long and erudite history of the perplexing questions here addressed. He is exhaustive in his treatment of and frequent extended, often multi-page, references to the works of Rudolph Bultmann (130 citations), C. K. Barrett (40), Peder Borgen (45), Raymond E. Brown (45), Robert Fortna (35), Robert Kysar (25), Barnabas Lindars (30), D. Moody Smith (30), and the like. Though Anderson has not extensively addressed such issues as Jesus' use of terms such as Prophet, Son of God, Messiah, and Son of Man (the particular current interest of this reviewer), the psychological, rhetorical/oratorical, dialogical/dialectical, theological, and particularly Christological implications of this surprisingly generative volume of careful and detailed textual analysis are of immense value in the study of each of these knotty questions.

Perhaps the greatest value and interest of this book lies in the fact that, while it is of the most exquisitely intense form of scholarly investigation, it remains a most delightfully readable volume which will be of as great an interest and accessibility to the informed lay person as to the most superior and esoteric scholar—and, in my judgment, it is equally necessary to both. Sell your bed and buy a copy of the attractively packaged and decently priced second printing by Trinity Press International (1997). Do it right away! You cannot afford to miss or forget it—there will be a large hole in the fabric of your worldview! This is a definitive volume in the field, which will require the attention of every serious scholar from now on and of every honest inquirer into this arena of truth.

### **Human Sources of Gospel Traditions—A Report by Anderson on the Reception of *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel* and Implications for Further Study**

It is indeed a high privilege to receive such a learned and thoughtful review of one's work as the one provided above by J. Harold Ellens. Not only does he put his finger time and again on the really pressing issues addressed in my book, but he also does so with lucidity and insight. Especially significant is his picking up on the relations

between composition theories, historical issues, and theological interpretation. These interests are intertwined in John, and that is why one must deal with one of these features to get at the other two—and vice versa. Especially helpful is the way Professor Ellens has featured the various epistemological origins of John's Christological tensions. This is the central conclusion of the book, and he comments helpfully on the importance of each (Anderson, 1996, 252–265). Thinking of John's theological tensions in these ways will help, I believe, in understanding its rich material, and this especially applies to the dialectical thinking process of the evangelist. These issues will be unpacked further, as the following reception report engages the critiques of my work in ways I hope will facilitate truth-seeking (and truth-finding) inquiry itself.

John's Christology presents the interpreter with one of the most fascinating labyrinths of issues and conundrums one can imagine. It has the highest presentation of Jesus' divinity in the New Testament, and it presents the clearest picture of Jesus' humanity and subordination to the Father. It contains futuristic and realized perspectives on eschatology, and its view of miracles is both elevated and existentialized. Indeed, 1,900 years of debate have followed in its wake, and the classic theological discussions of the Christian era have sought to make sense of its distinctive witness to Jesus as the Christ, often with opposing sides of debates *both* citing the Gospel of John. What the church fathers explained by means of metaphysical constructs, modern scholars have addressed by means of diachronic explanations of composition, among others.

While one approach alone cannot do justice to John's rich set of unitive and disunitive features, the present work seeks to account for the epistemological origins of these and other tensions by means of applying literary, historical, and theological analyses. As well as these approaches, the present work also applies sociological and cognitive studies in interdisciplinary ways, seeking to make the best use of the best tools available for addressing particular issues at hand. As Wayne Rollins pointed out several years ago, these ventures not only work with different disciplines, but they seek to cast light on the history of Gospel traditions themselves.

This abridged essay, then, presents a few examples of the discussion of the character, assets, and limitations of applying cognitive-critical tools to Gospel-tradition analysis in reviews within the scholarly community, then suggests ways to conduct further study. The most impressive thing about the reviews and comments so far is that nearly

all of  
gelist  
appro  
promi

A C

Gos  
around  
Christ  
and pr  
humar  
quent  
theolo  
agents  
of kair  
experi  
themse  
seekin  
terms

Whi  
ing the  
not sin  
torical  
of Gos  
ing cor  
ary, an  
the bes  
proble  
guistic  
ways h  
Such r  
tions o  
"canno  
analyse  
sense, t  
tive fac  
been ef  
model.  
rate int  
in grea  
scrutin

all of them comment on the dialectical character of the Fourth Evangelist as being key, and nearly in unison declare the cognitive-critical approach to the Johannine tradition to be the most provocative-yet-promising aspect of this study. Time will tell if such is the case.

### **A Critical Assessment of Johannine Tradition Analysis**

Gospel traditions were not disembodied sets of ideas floating around detached from human thought and experience in the first Christian century. No. Gospel traditions were formed, transmitted, and preserved in the memories, convictions, and aspirations of living human beings seeking to connect the momentous past with subsequent contexts and needs. They drew upon Jewish and Hellenistic theological and mythic constructs, but at the same time were creative agents of synthesizing work, connecting recollections and narrations of kairoic events with subsequent situations in the light of emerging experience. In that sense, the human sources of Gospel traditions were themselves practical theologians—asking questions of meaning and seeking to understand the implications of a God, who, in Pauline terms (2 Cor. 5:19), was “in Christ reconciling the world” to Godself.

While this book uses cognitive and other methodologies in assessing the epistemological origins of John’s Christological tensions, it is not simply a psychological approach to a biblical interest. It is a historical/critical investigation into the character, origin, and formation of Gospel traditions. Nor does it “psychologize the text” without having considered other approaches. It engages leading historical, literary, and theological issues pertinent to the topic, attempting to make the best use of the most appropriate methodologies for the particular problems facing critical analyses of the text. Some of these require linguistic analyses of language, and some require scientific analyses of ways humans experience, perceive, and reflect upon significant events. Such require the use of cognitive analyses precisely because assumptions of how the human sources of Gospel traditions “must have” or “cannot have” functioned are already operative within interpretive analyses, but often without any basis in psychological research. In that sense, this study challenges uncritical assumptions regarding cognitive factors already at work among biblical scholars, which have not been effectively analyzed in keeping with any sort of research-based model. They simply stand as unquestioned pillars upholding elaborate interpretive structures, which may indeed be recognized as being in great danger of collapse in the face of their foundations’ rigorous scrutiny.

For this and other reasons, my work begins with examining the soundness of prevalent approaches to John's Christological unity and disunity employing literary, historical, and theological means of analysis. *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel* thus aspires to the same enterprise of scientific analysis as have the studies of Bultmann and others, seeking to infer the epistemological origins of John's Christological tensions. Any sound theory, however, must possess theoretical validity *and* evidential veracity. Both of these aspects are thus measured as scholarly views on a number of issues are tested analytically. Methods found to be sound are retained and built upon, while those found lacking become the starting place for new questions and ventures.

An all-too-easy fallacy of text analysts is to project their methods onto their subjects, disregarding social, psychological and experiential realities. The problem is not that they are scientific analyses versus other sorts but that constructs rooted primarily in linguistic analysis, without the benefit of sociological and psychological considerations, bear so little resemblance to actual life represented in ancient texts. The present work thus advocates a shift in scientific tradition analysis from a text-dominated enterprise to one that also includes human experience in the formative processes studied.

Three *traditionsgeschichtlich* (history of traditions) assumptions in particular are challenged by this work: first, that because John's treatments of Jesus' signs are filled with tension, the evangelist must have used an alien source with which he disagrees. Bultmann and others reason that he has taken over an alien signs source, with which he feels ambivalent, replacing wonder-attestation endings with his own existentializing valuations. Theoretically, this solution sounds plausible, although it goes against the opinion of the redactor, whoever that might have been. And, as Daniel Merkur has pointed out, diachronic literary solutions to content-oriented problems are always more intrusive and therefore less likely, unless compelling evidence requires such a move. Where the diachronic solution especially falls flat, however, is in terms of the evidence. Given the feeble veracity of these leading *traditionsgeschichtlich* views, validity analysis must be applied. Indeed, it may be possible that the only way to explain theological tension between John's inclusion of signs and their existentialization is to infer a corrective use of an alien signs source—despite the lack of convincing evidence. If this is the case, the critical scholar needs to know. On the other hand, if one might have thought dialectically about the value of signs—even within one's own tradition—such a model needs also to be assessed in terms of its plausibility and

va  
af  
Join  
se  
ta  
co  
a l  
so  
we  
seem:  
cu  
dr  
ca  
ap  
in  
th  
by  
Bu  
nie  
Ch  
to  
me  
co  
th  
th:lan  
up  
ma  
evpr  
tu  
pa  
th  
an  
att



validity. *James Fowler's faith-development work thus supplies a fitting approach to such an analysis regarding the emergence and formation of the Johannine tradition.*

A second *traditionsgeschichtlich* opinion accompanies the first, assuming that because John's tradition is so different from the Synoptic presentations, and because John's material has the most elevated presentation of Jesus, John's tradition cannot be regarded as having any connection to the historical ministry of Jesus and must be relegated to a late-and-only-late spiritualization of Jesus and his ministry. If this is so, we need to acknowledge it and move on. However, veracity here is weak also. *The use of James Loder's transformation analysis here applies in seeking to account for the distinctive origin of the Johannine tradition.*

A third issue, then, relates to historical-critical views as to what may and may not have been possible. Ironically, in an attempt to rescue the Gospels from their embarrassing miracles, even more wondrous schemes have been devised to account for how the material came together, if indeed it had no basis in actual events. Bultmann's approach, for instance, assumes it is more believable to infer three independent sources underlying John, which after being gathered by the evangelist became disordered and were then reordered (wrongly) by the redactor, who added further dissonant content. This gives Bultmann "permission" to reorder the material in ways that conveniently confirm his earlier source designations and explain John's Christological tensions accordingly. This is the sort of work referred to by Mikhail Bakhtin in his critique of modernistic literary-critical methodologies: "Underlying the linguistic thinking that leads to the construction of language as a system of normatively identical forms is the practical and theoretical aim of studying dead foreign languages that have been preserved in written texts" (1983, 42).

It cannot be too strongly emphasized *that this philological aim has largely determined the character of all European linguistic thought.* It grew up and matured over the corpses of written languages. Nearly all the main categories, nearly all the basic approaches and skills, were evolved while trying to breathe life into these dead corpses.

A great divide exists, though, between real problems and imagined problems based on modernistic categories foisted upon ancient literature. In this sense, most of our historical-critical and literary-critical paradigms have been constructed without the benefit of considering the best scientific research as to how humans come to ideate, emote, and reflect upon the foibles of human experience. Cognitive criticism attempts to get back into the living realities represented by classic

texts. Where literary-critical assumptions are sound, though, one is happy to build upon them. Where they fall short, either in terms of theoretical validity or empirical veracity, they must be improved upon. This is what both my book and this further discussion attempt to do.

### A Report on the Reception of *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*

By the end of 1999, the book had been reviewed by forty-two reviewers, and due to the European first printing, at least half of the reviews are in journals outside the United States. All of them were positive, and some even furthered discussions by their engagement. A few review summaries and input relevant to the cognitive-critical analytic aspect and the application of the work of Fowler and Loder are cited below. They are drawn from the published reviews and engagements along with several informal comments, with an eye to their implications for future research.<sup>8</sup>

Positive responses to the book expressed appreciation for a wide range of features, including its exegetical method, its analysis of key Johannine themes, its analysis of the apostolic origins of the Johannine tradition, Johannine Christology, its treatment of ecclesiology, its theory on the evolution of sacraments, its discussion of Johannine/Synoptic relations, the literary analysis of John's text, and technical features such as footnotes, appendices, summaries, tables, and bibliography.<sup>9</sup> Negative responses were largely confined to questions about the history of the Johannine situation and wondering whether "Petrine" and "Johannine" trajectories could be inferred within the Gospel traditions.<sup>10</sup> One of the most significant comments, in my view, is that of Robert Kysar, who used his *Review of Biblical Literature* review to declare his change of opinion regarding John's use of sources.<sup>11</sup> The single most positive aspect of nearly all the reviews, however, involved numerous comments on the *significant interdisciplinary contribution it makes, especially in the application of cognitive studies by Fowler and Loder to the critical analysis of Gospel traditions*. Several commented on this being the most likely to be a controversial aspect of the book, but that it also could be the most provocative and stimulating.<sup>12</sup>

Some reviews expressed a bit of caution about building on the constructs of those whose works are built on those of Piaget and Kohlberg. In response, it is important to note that Loder and Fowler's works are both substantive enough in their own rights to be considered on the bases of their own merits. In particular, Fowler's original

program  
views, ;  
to the  
Sternbe  
and his  
back. W  
any giv  
their th  
off the  
several  
run the  
works c  
supplan

One r  
ment, t  
After a  
(1997, §  
el munc  
reciente  
peca de  
interpre  
gestive  
oped, ar  
reservat  
chologic  
tation c  
though,  
should §  
even *pe*  
ogizatic  
adequat  
tempera  
prise is  
review:

In wh  
Paul [  
nine s  
Loder  
The Je  
into th  
Paul's

program is constructed on an empirical base of 359 extensive interviews, and as he included women in his survey, his work is not subject to the same criticisms as Kohlberg's. I recently interviewed Robert Sternberg, a leading psychologist at Yale University, about the work, and his impression is that Piaget and Kohlberg were making a comeback. While deconstructing the giants in any field becomes the rage at any given time, his feeling is that, despite particular weaknesses of their theories, the likes of Piaget and Kohlberg seem *less* likely to slip off the docket than they did a decade ago. Conversely, the works of several of their critics, not rooted in empirical research, have largely run their courses. For these and other reasons, worries about the works of leading faith-development theorists becoming all too quickly supplanted by alternative approaches may be disregarded.

One review judges, but does not elaborate on the basis for the judgment, that the use of psychological approaches is less than helpful. After an otherwise positive review, Francisco Contreras Molina (1997, 375) declares, "Se trata, pues, de un libro sugerente, conoce bien el mundo joánico, está muy actualizado, pone al corriente de la más reciente bibliografía exegética. Como salvedad indicamos que tal vez peca de un exceso de interpretación psicológica con detrimento de la interpretación teológica del evangelio." (One is treated, then, to a suggestive book which knows well the Johannine world, is very developed, and puts into play the most recent exegetical bibliography. As a reservation we indicate that sometimes it sins from an excess of psychological interpretation to the detriment of the theological interpretation of the Gospel.) No basis is offered for the latter judgment, though, nor is there any statement of how theological interpretations should suffer at the hand of psychology-related exegetical *pecados*, or even *pecadillos*, at least in this particular case. Assuming that theologization *did not* involve psychological or cognitive processing is not adequate either historically or theologically. While the concern for temperance is understood, the superficial questioning of the enterprise is unconvincing. More discerning is Alan Kolp's pre-publication review:

In what is a creative—but, I am sure, will be a controversial—move, Paul [Anderson] introduces the world of faith development into Johannine scholarship. He looks at people such as James Fowler and James Loder to gain a critical sense of the way faith is born in people's hearts. The Johannine gospel is explored to chart how people's hearts develop into the depth of life eternal! Many will see this focus as a digression to Paul's scholarly main thrust; however, it could be key! (Kolp, 1995, 55)

### Prospects for Further Research

Kolp's prediction indeed comes true in the following discussion of several works, including one of the most engaged and sustained reviews by Michael Daise of Princeton. While Daise feels the nuanced uses of Fowler and Loder are effective, he raises questions relating to the use of cognitive studies within historical-critical investigations. First, he wonders whether the same sort of cognitive dialectic would have existed between an author and alien sources, as well as reflecting an inward dialogue (Daise, 1996). I believe this could have been the case, but the fact of insufficient diachronic evidence pushes one toward a more unitive Johannine tradition, with tensions inherent to it.<sup>13</sup> Second, he questions whether cognitive-critical methodologies can be used effectively to determine origins and developments of Gospel material, as evidence could equally be argued in more than one direction. Nonetheless, Daise rightly points to one of the most provocative results of this investigation: namely, that the exploration of John's material as reflecting first-order cognition rather than second-order patterns of thought suggests the primitivity of John's material, rather than its lateness.<sup>14</sup> Daise thus offers the following observation on the future of an approach that employs new methodologies from other disciplines: "The value of Anderson's work lies not so much in establishing a new paradigm of Johannine christological development as in offering new (interdisciplinary) criteria by which historical data about that development may be assessed. If others follow his lead, the literary, rhetorical, and sociological methodologies which have recently enhanced Johannine studies will be further enriched by techniques and models drawn from psychological research."

Addressing things from a different standpoint, James Loder, in *The Logic of the Spirit*, asserted that my treatment of the sea-crossing Theophany does not go far enough (Loder, 1998, 247, 333). In holding that a transformative encounter with the Divine actually changes physical realities internal and external to one's world, Loder says: "My point with Anderson's carefully worked out exegetical study is that the theophany was not merely making things better; it actually altered the physical reality at stake. This is a paradigm for how the spiritual presence of Christ works in the formation and transformation of the believer and his world." Again, while one might argue that such may indeed have been the case, the scope of the present analysis is more modest. It sought to confine itself to the cognitive factors at work in how one experiences and perceives such realities.<sup>15</sup> It should be stated, though, that perceived realities *are* realities too; they need

not be moved from subjective categories to objectifying ones to be regarded as important or genuine. While there are many directions interdisciplinary cognitive-critical works could take, addressing the following questions could indeed be profitable and serviceable.

*To what degree were the sources of Mark, and to a lesser degree, Q, L, and M, also affected by cognitive factors in the origin and formation of their traditions?* Indeed, our approaches have appropriately employed *religions-geschichtlich* (history of religions) methods, but why were particular motifs, schemas, and mythologies chosen to convey the story of Jesus? As well as sociological and contextual factors, such interests may also have involved psychological ones, and analyses into the relations between Christological models chosen and experiential and psychological factors could be profitable. Especially telling could be the relation between the distinctive ministries of early Christian leaders and the ways they crafted and presented distinctively the ministry of Jesus. This is part of the approach I take in exploring the formation of the Petrine and Johannine traditions, which may have been in dialogue with each other for over a half a century—even continuing beyond the lives of particular leaders, who then come to play typological roles after their deaths.<sup>16</sup>

*In what other areas might the works of Fowler and Loder be employed in the analysis of other Johannine issues?* For instance, if the *Eimi* motif from its inception bore with it theophanic associations within the evangelist's reflection, to what degree might it have served as a rubric within which to organize the Johannine presentation of Jesus' discourse ministry? Or, to what degree does the problem of the delay of the *Parousia* affect the evangelist's understanding of eschatology, leading to an unanticipated appreciation of the work of the spiritually present Christ in the community of faith and a clarification of what Jesus did and did not say regarding the *Parousia*? These and other classic theological themes could benefit from the fitting application of cognitive-critical analyses.

*Are there other cognitive models that might be drawn into the analysis of Gospel traditions besides those of Fowler and Loder?* These are two models that assist a disciplined analysis of Gospel traditions, but others also abound with their own merits and appropriateness for particular application. Robert Sternberg, a leading psychologist at Yale University, and my colleagues at George Fox University Graduate School of Clinical Psychology have made a few suggestions, but I would be delighted to learn of other models that others feel have merit for such application. Cognitive dissonance theory, wisdom analyses, and other

studies in cognitive dialectics are a few approaches that offer exciting ways forward. I appreciate also James Fowler's comments below as to some of the profitable ways cognitive-critical biblical analysis might be employed beyond Gospel-tradition studies. With Fowler, I would value seeing what a Pauline scholar does with cognitive-critical analyses of Romans 7, and perhaps Philippians 4. These sorts of approaches would indeed be valuable, and I would be very supportive of their exploration.

Finally, while he has reservations about the historical plausibility of my reconstructions of Johannine tradition and community history, and while he questions the applicability of modern analyses of cognition and faith development for a first-century writer, John Riches best captures the gist of what I was trying to address with the whole project. Whether it relates to the evangelist's "guessing points or naming stars," he picks up on an important contribution of the book—a reinterpretation of what it means for John to be considered the "spiritual Gospel." Perhaps John's dynamic tensions do not suggest removed distance from the transforming career of Jesus, but radical proximity to it. Says Riches,

I have always been fascinated by the breaks and gaps in the text of the Fourth Gospel as well as by the sense of development and forward movement in the Gospel as a whole, at least up to the Farewell Discourses. . . . Paul Anderson's wonderfully researched study of John's Christology focuses these questions around a discussion of John 6 and directly confronts the most significant challenge to a view of the chapter's unity, that of R. Bultmann. What he proposes is a reading of the evangelist's thought which recognizes its dialectical character . . . and sees this as a central characteristic of the evangelist's thought: theological reflection on the mystery of the incarnation which requires a disciplined wrestling with opposed modes of thought none of which can ever exhaust the reality of what is being contemplated. (Riches, 1999)

What C. K. Barrett rightly put his finger upon in identifying the "dialectical thinking" of the Fourth Evangelist, the works of Fowler and Loder illuminate when applied in cognitive-critical ways (Barrett, 1972). Ironically, this is precisely the sort of cognitive operation Bultmann believed was required of dialectical theologians today, although he refused to allow a first-century thinker to operate on such levels of cognitive operation (Bultmann, 1969). His *traditionsgeschichtlich* mistake, thus, was to invest in the science of "breathing life into the corpses of ancient texts" rather than the science of engaging the *human vessels underlying Gospel traditions* from whom these texts



emerged. Whether cognitive-critical tools will facilitate further exploring human realities underlying the origins, developments, and meanings of classic texts, only time will tell. When used in conjunction with other methodologies and with a fair amount of modesty, however, who knows? They might yet open interpretive doors that have hitherto remained closed.

### **A Response by Fowler to the Use of Psychological Theory in Paul Anderson's *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6**

I write with excitement about Paul Anderson's original and rewarding study of John 6. It uses a variety of methods common to New Testament scholars. In addition, it adds a method of analysis that draws on developmental and transformational psychologies. As one of the two researchers and authors from whom Anderson draws his psychological points of analysis and interpretation, I am honored to have this opportunity to respond to his 1996 book, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*.

#### **John's Gospel as a Religious Classic**

John's Gospel (like all Gospels) is a religious "classic." I use the term in the sense of Hans George Gadamer and David Tracy: A classic is an expression of the human spirit that gathers into a fitting unity something that is fundamental, recurring, and universal in our experience. It brings into nuanced focus some nexus or knot that perennially perplexes or gifts our species. Or it captures, in form and media that prove illuminative, some breakthrough of sublime transcendence that again and again both forms and washes clear the gates of our perception. A classic stands the test of time. It brings to expression something that is fundamentally true about the human condition but does so in a way that respects the essential complexity, the stubborn persistence, and the honest opacity of its subject matter (Gadamer, 1975; Tracy, 1981). Classics capture what Paul Ricoeur has called a "surplus of meaning" (Ricoeur, 1967). They exhaust our capacities of interpretation before we have exhausted their meanings. There is a penumbra of mystery around the heart of any true classic. It gives rise to conflicts of interpretation and discloses surprising depths as we inquire into its multiple layers of meaning.

A *religious* classic, in Tracy's usage, is a special instance of the larger idea of the classic. A religious classic, also an expression of the human



spirit, has the special quality that it conserves and makes powerfully accessible moments that may be called "disclosure-concealment events." A religious tradition is constituted by a series of mutually interpreting, unified, and tensional events of disclosure of the Whole by the power of the Whole. These moments of disclosure are also moments of concealment. God's self-disclosure never exhausts God's being. Likewise, our apprehensions and expressions of disclosure events are never adequate fully to appropriate what they offer. Again there is a surplus of meaning, and an essential opacity, giving rise to conflicts of interpretation.

### **The Process of Creating a Classic Text versus Being Capable of Comprehending a Classic Text**

In bringing faith development theory and its descriptions of the conjunctive stage of faith into the discussion of biblical hermeneutics, we have to distinguish between the processes of creating a classical text and the process by which a postmodern reader becomes capable of appreciating classical texts in their fullness. It is one thing to say that readers who would fully grasp and honor the "honest opacity" of a classic's text must have found the limits of the individuative-reflective stage's dichotomizing rationality and be ready for transition. It is another to suggest that the original articulators or writers of a classic text must also have made a similar cognitive and spiritual passage.

Let us view for just a moment the epistemological sequence of adult developmental stages in faith development theory.<sup>17</sup> We start with the *synthetic-conventional* stage. This stage depends upon the emergence of formal operational thinking—the capacity for "thinking about our thinking," and the ability to use abstract concepts to capture and convey narrative and other meanings. It involves mutual interpersonal perspective-taking, where one begins to construct others' perspective upon the self and to make an effort to understand their reactions and interpretations of our behavior. Religiously, it involves the ability to appreciate symbols as rich representations of clusters of meaning. The synthetic-conventional stage locates authority external to the self, or in internalized versions of established authority. It does not yet have a well-developed capacity for third-person perspective-taking, in which the self sees itself and those with whom it has relations from an independent angle. It therefore lacks the ability to analyze and achieve some measure of objectivity regarding the meanings at stake in the interchanges between self and others. Religious communities principally composed of persons best described by synthetic-conventional

faith tend to form around authoritative leadership and to rely upon their authorizing interpretations of religious traditions.

The *individuating-reflective* stage grows out of two decisive cognitive and emotional steps. These steps may come in sequence or simultaneously. First, developing the capacities for third-person perspective-taking, the person becomes capable of constructing an inquiring and evaluative approach to interactions with significant others. The relationship itself (whether with a person or a group) becomes an object of inquiry and evaluations. Ethically, this means being able to reason about relations—just and unjust, fair and unfair—with a new kind of “objectivity.” Second, the symbols and narratives of a religious tradition, and one’s relation to (or through) them, can be objectified and critically analyzed. With the exercise of these new capacities, the locus of authority shifts from external to internal. This is the step Kant referred to in his essay “What Is Enlightenment” when he cried out “*Sapere Aude*”—trust the capacities of your own thinking or knowing. This stage thinks in dichotomous terms: either/or. It funds demythologizing strategies, converting parabolic and narrative materials into conceptually mediated insights. The individuating-reflective stage, with its new analytical capacities and its confidence in conscious analysis, has less capacity for, and attentiveness to, the not-conscious sources of insight and distortions in personal or group knowing. It tends to disvalue symbol, myth, ritual, and non-cognitive sources of faith-knowing. This stage looks for intellectual formulations regarding faith and living that have the qualities of ideological clarity, apparent comprehensiveness, and affirmation of the possibilities of individual mastery and control.

The *conjunctive* stage can arise from one or more sources. Central among these may be fatigue of the ego and the conscious self from the processes of trying to manage a complex world without ways to comprehend factors that elude the cognitive structures with which they operate. For many men (and some women) the transition to the conjunctive stage begins with an “ego leak”—an experience of failure, of fatigue or of ennui, that signals that a persistent blindsiding is going on. Vaguely, one realizes that the meaning-making ego requires richer resources and ways of making sense of the self’s connection to larger and deeper powers and resources. For women, it may come with the growing confidence that the spiritual limits of inherited institutionalized traditions are not adequate to sustain the affective and moral lives they are evolving. Conjunctive faith requires coming to terms with the unconscious dimensions of behavior and meaning-making. It

involves the embrace of paradox and polarities: It means acknowledging that we are both old and young, masculine and feminine, weak and strong, conscious and unconscious, good and evil. Paul bespeaks this awareness in Romans 7 where he says, "The good I would do, I do not do; the evil I would not do, I do. Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

It may be that the faith stage theory captures something timeless as regards the ways human beings, as persons and groups, go about the making of meaning. I hope this is the case. But as this account suggests, faith stage theory also takes its particular course in part because of the historical and cultural movements we think of as *pre-modern*, *modern*, and now, *postmodern*. I have taken this brief excursus to call us to suitable caution about utilizing a twentieth-century theory to illumine first- and second-century texts.

There is the danger with this kind of anachronism that we might assume that the writer of John's Gospel must have been a conjunctive-stage individual to assemble or write the Johannine text. This is a possibility that may or may not have been so. I find another explanation more likely—and more confirming of the Christ event as a genuine locus of revelation. In the response of first-century persons and communities to the acts and teachings and to the death and resurrection of Christ, transformations occurred and new patterns of consciousness and radical faith were evoked. New practices took form, giving rise to communal efforts to bring to expression the radical and unexplainable news that had occurred among them. In that effort—a group effort—gradually there arose formulations, in teaching and writings, and in sacraments and practices, of the revelatory paradoxes of the incarnation. These gave structure and content to the memories and hopes, the proclamations and teachings of the communities of faith.

The Gospel of John became a classic because its narrative and images brought to expression the elements of faith, of cosmology, of liturgical celebration, and of theological struggle the early Christian communities faced. It has demonstrated durable power perennially to awaken and form new levels, depths, and configurations of understanding and faith in hearers and readers. A classic rises from a structuring and struggling to conserve and communicate new gestalts of transforming apprehension.

The contemporary adult reader of John's Gospel may approach it from the variety of structuring stages of faith that we have examined. As Paul Anderson suggests, this leads to differential and to less or more adequate interpretations of that text. In his careful and construc-

tive criticisms of Bultmann's demythologizing and existential analysis of John's Gospel, Anderson—rightly, I think—sees Bultmann's exegetical and theological reading of John as shaped by the cognitive and emotional features of the individuative-reflective stage. This funds Anderson's judgment that the dichotomous logic of post-enlightenment scientific reason and the existentialist response to it flattens the Gospel's dialectical power. The text is genuinely revelatory and constitutes a classic because of those features that the first-century narrators and writer(s) minted and assembled. In hitherto unprecedented ways, they brought to word gestalts of meaning too big, too consequential, and too weighty to be captured, either in the available symbol systems or in their era's commonly used structuring forms of cognition. In a practical sense, this cognitive and spiritual stretch helps constitute at least part of what we mean when we speak of revelation and of the divine inspiration of scripture.

Anderson suggests that "John's" Gospel brings the narrative of God's self-giving in Jesus as the Christ to expression through a conjunctive stage structuring. This, he claims, involves the holding together of affirmations that may seem to be contradictory. The text holds together what Nicholas of Cusa referred to as *coincidentia oppositorum*—the convergence and mutual embrace of opposites. Anderson is saying that, in the polarities that John holds together in these paradoxical affirmations, new creation occurs.

Illustrating his own dialectical mindset, Anderson has held the Fowler and Loder uses of psychology (development and transformation) in one frame. This is proper. But often Loder and his followers deny that this can or should be done. Important anthropological issues in theology—issues of sin and its manifestations in cognition and action—are part of this debate. Loder believes that transforming moments involve the relinquishing of self-confident, self-referencing rationality and its replacement with a post-critical faith and epistemology of brokenness and grace. I agree with this, but don't want to limit the transformations in faith-knowing and faith-living to one kind or locus of transformation. It is also worthwhile to note that, strictly speaking, neither Loder nor I is a psychologist. Both of us have training in theology, ethics, and the social sciences. We are readers and researchers in psychology, but I believe it is true to say of Loder, as it is of me, that our use of psychology is ultimately in the service of theological anthropology—theology's account of the dynamics of human being and becoming.

### Anderson's Contributions

By his use of faith development and transformational perspectives, Anderson has genuinely illuminated the dialectical and transformational dynamics of John's Gospel. He has given us a new appreciation of paradoxical and dialectical images in John that require to be held together rather than dichotomized or systematic. He has helped us recognize that truth takes form in the meaning space created *between* the apparently tensional dualities that the Gospel of John holds together.

Anderson's thesis and use of faith development theory has significant implications for the churches' use of John's Gospel. The narratives and themes of John 6 have long been loci of difficulty for those who would define orthodox Christian belief. The larger book has also been a source of division regarding the question of who may be "saved." Such passages as John 3:16 and John 14:6: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me," have been used as strong leverage for evangelical efforts to bring people to acceptance of Christ. At the same time, this use of the Gospel has been a stumbling block for those who hold that interpreting the text that way actually diminishes and distorts the remarkable truth claims that come to expression in John's Christology.

I would like to see Anderson's approach carried over into the interpretation of Pauline theology as well. It seems to me that Paul cries out for interpretation via conjunctive epistemology. Holding together the witness of Jews and Christians (Rom. 9-11), affirming the duality and tension at the heart of human beings and in himself (Rom. 7), and affirming both that there is a transforming relationship with Jesus Christ ("If anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation") and a gradual process of maturation in faith ("When I was a child, I spoke like a child") suggest that Paul Anderson could faithfully spend a scholarly lifetime continuing his fruitful work.

### Notes

1. See Wayne Rollins's epoch-making monograph outlining the history of psychological approaches to the Bible (1999). Rollins shows how psychological studies have been used and misused in biblical studies throughout the modern era and compellingly demonstrates the role of the Bible in the founding and development of disciplinary psychology.

2. This is one of the reasons Albert Schweitzer so vigorously opposed the use of psychological approaches to interpretation (1913/1948). In the disser-

tatic  
out  
sketch  
of th  
3  
New  
lical  
dista  
advo  
4  
to ob  
in ou  
soug  
are fi  
ality  
out i  
5.  
tings  
schol  
wont  
ment  
or th  
istic :  
histo  
6.  
betwe  
tions,  
tions,  
the o  
heard  
their  
mista  
Ande  
7.  
mode  
Loder  
logica  
critica  
sons p  
8.  
Raym  
Ogilv  
file at

tation of one of Schweitzer's four doctorates (the medical one), he launches out polemically against those who employ psychology inappropriately in sketching imagined portrayals of Jesus having more of a lodging in the mind of the interpreter than in the historicity of reported events.

3. Walter Wink's book *The Bible in Human Transformation: Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study* (1973) wrought an impressive change in biblical interpretation. No longer were interpreters able to justify staying a "safe distance" from the text, when all other humanistic and scientific ventures advocate intimate engagement with one's subject.

4. See Parker Palmer's approach to the character of truth; it is not limited to objective categories but includes subjective ones as well (1983). Further, in our quests for truth, it is not only we who seek the truth, but we are also sought by truth, until we (in Pauline terms) come to know fully, even as we are fully known. In that sense, the quest for truth engages the life of spirituality (and psychology) rather than being against it. This connection is borne out in nearly every facet of scientific discovery, as well.

5. As a contrast to supernaturalism, the workings of the divine in the settings of humans, supranaturalism is even less elevated. Historical-critical scholars have tended to oppose the historicity of anything even hinting at the wondrous-producing "explanations" often more wondrous than the amazement-evoking realities being addressed. Considering how ancient witnesses, or their purveyors, came to perceive something as wondrous provides a realistic alternative to rejecting all appeals to wonder in the name of modernistic historiography.

6. During oral stages of Gospel traditional history, if there was contact between two traditions, resulting influences may have traveled in both directions, not just one. One example is the early Markan and Johannine traditions, which appear to have enjoyed an interfluent set of contacts during the oral stages of their traditional developments. Put otherwise, as preachers heard each other tell stories, they may have influenced each other in the ways their stories were told. For John and Mark, as independent traditions, one mistake is to assume that one must have influenced the other only (see Anderson, 1996).

7. J. Harold Ellens refers to them as structuralist and psychodynamic models of human development, accordingly. James Fowler refers to his and Loder's work as being that of religious anthropologists rather than psychological theorists proper. The reason I refer to their approaches as cognitive-critical is that both of them deal with cognition—the means by which persons perceive, experience, and reflect upon matters of personal importance.

8. Letters and notes have come in from Ernst Käsemann, John Riches, Raymond Brown, C. K. Barrett, Craig Koester, Jeff Staley, and Lloyd John Ogilvie, among others. These letters and reviews are available in an archival file at the Yale Divinity School Library.



9. Perhaps the most extensive engagement of the work so far is found in David DeSilva's new introduction to the New Testament (2004, 392–474). In his chapter on John, he integrates well my theories of John's origins with engaging interpretive discussions. In particular, he works creatively with my treatment of the presentation of Peter and the Beloved Disciple in John, complete with its ecclesiological implications.

10. Informally, several European scholars have objected to my reference to Peter's being presented as "returning the Keys of the Kingdom to Jesus" in his declaring Jesus (alone) to possess the words of eternal life in John 6. Granted, one is overstating the case slightly for effect, but seven similar-yet-different parallels between Peter's receiving the Keys in Matthew 16:17–19 and presentations in the Gospel of John are not insignificant. In response to Graham Stanton's excellent point (1999) that Matthean ecclesiology was also "familial" and "egalitarian," I was able to clarify my view. Whether John's corrective to rising institutionalism in the late first-century church was aimed at a Matthean "text" or not, the primary target was probably the likes of Diotrephes (3 John 9–10), who may have been advancing his own positional leadership based upon a view of Petrine (either Matthean or Ignatian) authority (Anderson, 1999a).

11. Kysar's change of mind (1999) is especially significant, as he has been a leading advocate of source-critical (diachronic) analyses of John's composition. An emerging set of theories as to the origins of John's material has therefore been developed in other essays, addressing John's relation to the Synoptics (Anderson, 2001, 2002), the history of the Johannine situation (Anderson, 1997), and the dialectical character of the Father–Son relationship in John (Anderson, 1999b), evoking engagement in other settings.

12. According to James McGrath (1997), "Anderson's approach enables him to make helpful, fresh insights into John's Gospel. In one footnote (pp. 154f. n. 21) he cites psychological research into elderly eyewitnesses in order to see whether John ben Zebedee should be as easily excluded from the list of possible authors as is often the case. While he is clearly familiar with psychological literature, sociological and literary factors are also kept in view. . . . Anderson's book is an absolute must. My own regret is that it reached me *after* I wrote my article on John 6!"

13. This is a case where my claims are somewhat misunderstood. While I do not claim John could not have been based in a derivative way on Mark or on sources (this cannot be demonstrated), my research simply demonstrates the evidence for such views is pervasively insufficient, requiring an alternative approach. Likewise, while the human thinkers underlying "Petrine" and "Johannine" traditions need not be connected with particular personalities (a misunderstanding of several reviewers—see Anderson, 1996, 155, notes 21 and 22), they still cohere into unitive trajectories *whoever* their originative sources might have been.

14. According to Daise (1996), "The most intriguing implication Ander-



son draws from his dialectical theory is that the Fourth Gospel's Christology was formulated, not by second or third generation Christians half a century after Jesus' death (as is conventionally understood), but by one of Jesus' followers during Jesus' own lifetime." In conjunction with this point, several reviewers also commented on the importance of Appendix VIII (Anderson, 1996, 274–277), which uncovers an overlooked first-century clue to Johannine authorship.

15. See the further exploration of cognitive factors in apprehending the sea-crossing Theophany in Anderson (1995); included also in this collection.

16. Explorations of ecclesiological developments between Johannine and Matthean traditions, for instance, are explored further in Anderson (1997, 2002). Likewise, treatments of John and Mark as "the Bi-Optic Gospels" are developed further in Anderson (2001, 2002).

17. The classic text is *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Development and the Quest for Meaning* (Fowler, 1981). For discussions that relate the faith stages to pre-modern, modern, and postmodern forms of cognition, consciousness, and faith, see Fowler (1996).

## References

- Anderson, P. N. (1995). The Cognitive Origins of John's Christological Unity and Disunity. *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, 17, 1–24.
- Anderson, P. N. (1996). *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6. Wissenschaftlich Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament II* 78. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck); American printing, Valley Forge: Trinity Press International (1997).
- Anderson, P. N. (1997). The *Sitz im Leben* of the Johannine Bread of Life Discourse and Its Evolving Context, *Critical Readings of John 6*, A. Culpepper, ed., Biblical Interpretation Supplemental Series 22. Brill: Leiden, 1–59.
- Anderson, P. N. (1999a). A Response (to the Reviews of R. Kysar, S. Schneiders, A. Culpepper, G. Stanton, & A. Padgett). *Review of Biblical Literature*, 1, 62–72.
- Anderson, P. N. (1999b). The Having-Sent-Me Father—Aspects of Agency, Irony, and Encounter in the Johannine Father-Son Relationship. *Semeia*, 85, 33–57.
- Anderson, P. N. (2001). John and Mark—the Bi-optic Gospels, *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, R. Fortna & T. Thatcher, eds. Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox Press, 175–188.
- Anderson, P. N. (2002). Interfluent, Formative, and Dialectical—A Theory of John's Relation to the Synoptics, *Für und wider die Priorität des Johannesevangeliums*, P. Hofrichter, ed., Theologische Texte und Studien 9. Hildesheim, Zürich, & New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 19–58.
- Bakhtin, M. (1983). The Latest Trends in Linguistic Thought in the West (also attributed to V. Voloshinov), *Bakhtin School Papers*, A. Shukrnan, ed. Oxford: RPT Publications, 31–50.

- Barrett, C. K. (1972). The Dialectical Theology of St. John, *New Testament Essays*. London: SPCK Press, 49–69.
- Bultmann, R. (1969) The Significance of “Dialectical Theology” for the Scientific Study of the New Testament. *Faith and Understanding* (vol. 1), R. Funk, ed., L. P. Smith, trans. London: SCM, 145–164.
- Bultmann, R. (1971). *The Gospel of John*, G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. N. W. Hoare, & J. K. Riches, eds. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Daise, M. (1996). Review of *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel* by Paul N. Anderson. *Koinonia*, 8, 100–106.
- DeSilva, D. A. (2004). *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.
- Fowler, J. W. (1981). *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Fowler, J. W. (1984). *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and the Christian Faith*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Fowler, J. W. (1996). *Faithful Change: The Personal and Public Challenges of Postmodern Life*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Gadamer, H. G. (1975). *Truth and Method*. New York: Seabury.
- Kolp, A. (1995). Review of *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel* by Paul Anderson. *Quaker Religious Thought*, 27(4), 53–55.
- Kysar, R. (1999). *Review of Biblical Literature*, 38ff.
- Loder, J. (1981). *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Loder, J. (1998). *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- McGrath, J. (1997). Review of *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel* by Paul N. Anderson. *Theological Gathering*, 3.
- Molina, F. C. (1997). Review of *Christology of the Fourth Gospel* by Paul N. Anderson. *Achivo Teologico Grandino*, 60, 375.
- Palmer, P. (1983). *To Know as We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Riches, J. (1999). Archive, Yale Divinity School Library; including the original paper presented at Orlando and an Appendix with evaluative statements and individual responses.
- Ricoeur, P. (1967). *The Symbolism of Evil*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Rollins, W. G. (1999). *Soul and Psyche: The Bible in Psychological Perspective*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress.
- Schweitzer, A. (1913/1948). *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus: An Exposition and Criticism*. Boston: Beacon.
- Stanton, G. (1999). *Review of Biblical Literature*.
- Tracy, D. (1981). *The Analogical Imagination*. New York: Crossroad.
- Wink, W. (1973). *The Bible in Human Transformation: Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study*. Philadelphia: Fortress.