

# Putting the Historical Jesus in His Place

## Part 2

### *A Spiral Dynamics Perspective*

“Everything that rises must converge.”

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

### Paul Alan Laughlin

The first article in this two-part series (*Fourth R*, Jan-Feb 2006), examined the past and ongoing work of the Jesus Seminar in light of a relatively obscure, non-traditional, American-born religious movement called New Thought. This was a useful endeavor because so much of the agenda of Westar Institute has been deliberately set and carried out over against traditional, mainstream forms of Christianity (and their sometimes hostile supporters), especially those that insist on literalist readings or doctrinaire interpretations of scripture. New Thought, by contrast, especially in its intentionally Christian expressions, has presented for well over a century both a metaphorical form of biblical interpretation and a concept of Jesus as the Christ that in some ways are more radical departures from the Christian norm than anything yet produced by Westar or its Seminars.

Over the past several years, a number of scholars affiliated with Westar Institute have come to see their work on behalf of religious literacy in the broader and more positive context of what Karen Armstrong has identified as the Second Axial Age. That term refers to the combined and far-reaching effects of the so-called Copernican Revolution in cosmology in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the following two hundred years of the Western Enlightenment that it prefigured, and the resulting modern scientific method and worldview that prevail today in the developed parts of the world. The first Axial Age, first defined and so labeled over fifty years ago by German philosopher Karl Jaspers, occurred in the three centuries on either side of the year 500 BCE and produced, in addition to classic Western and Eastern philosophies, most of the great world religions, including Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and biblical

Judaism. It marked a dramatic *turn* or *revolution* in humanity's thinking about the world and our place in it—hence, the axis imagery. Armstrong's second Axial Age is no less momentous than Jaspers', but differs in its thoroughgoing embrace of empirical observation and reason as the final co-arbiters of truth, and its identification of material entities and natural forces as the basic building blocks of reality—all presuppositions that seriously challenge the very religious worldviews that had emerged from the previous Axial Age.

As useful as Armstrong's gloss on Jaspers has been, a much more comprehensive view is provided by a new and increasingly popular conceptual system. Spiral Dynamics, a psychologically-based interpretation of the evolution of human consciousness, identifies Armstrong's second Axial Age as a shift to a fifth historical age (with Jaspers' first axial event seen as inaugurating and defining a fourth epoch). Spiral Dynamics further maintains that we are already well into a sixth such era, with a seventh that is not only imminent but already evident, and an eighth that is looming just over the horizon but as yet barely discernable to a few advanced souls. These eras and the three that preceded them are important in that each in turn produced a specific type or level of human consciousness that built upon, absorbed, and finally supplanted the previous conceptual modalities. In short, the effects of this evolution are cumulative, and all modern human beings are heirs to the full range of mental layers, though they tend to operate primarily at one or another of the more recent ones.

The connection between a theory of consciousness and the proper place of Jesus in modern spirituality and theology may not be immediately obvious; I contend, however, that the compelling categories of Spiral Dynamics



will provide a new and useful perspective for both assessing the significance of the past work of the Jesus Seminar and determining the proper place and future of the historical Jesus it has defined. More than that, this new theory of the evolution and present constitution of human consciousness might well contribute to Westar's future agenda by enhancing its relevance to the spiritual needs of the twenty-first century as a whole and the Christian faith in particular.

### A Brief Introduction to Spiral Dynamics<sup>1</sup>

Spiral Dynamics is rooted in the thought of Clare W. Graves, a professor of psychology at Union College in Schenectady, New York, who flourished in the mid-twentieth century and died in retirement in 1986. Not a particularly prolific or prominent scholar, Graves nonetheless made a major contribution to his field: a theory of the

1. I am most indebted in this section of the article to the Reverend EJ Niles, Westar Associate and founder of the ETB (Embracing the Bible) Web-based ministry (<http://www.etbible.org>). Among many other excellent materials available on her website is a highly accessible tutorial on Spiral Dynamics.

evolution of human consciousness that he insisted on calling "The Emergent, Cyclical, Double-Helix Model of Adult Biopsychosocial Systems Development." The cumbersome label may help explain why his ideas didn't catch on in his lifetime. But Don Beck, a friend and former student, built upon Graves' pioneering work while a professor of developmental psychology at the University of North Texas and formally introduced the mature system and its intriguing (and mercifully simpler) name in a groundbreaking 1996 book entitled *Spiral Dynamics: Mastering Values, Leadership, and Change*, which he co-authored with Christopher C. Cowan. Among other testimonials, Beck and his Spiral Dynamics have been credited by such prestigious observers as Nelson Mandela and Bill Clinton with helping to end apartheid in South Africa. And no small commendation of Beck's system is its endorsement and adoption by Ken Wilber, a seminal philosopher of transpersonal psychology.

Briefly defined, Spiral Dynamics is a theory of the evolution of human consciousness through eight successive and ascending ages, separated by seven pivotal, threshold, or axial shifts to higher levels of sophistication. (See the inset diagram.) The levels themselves are called MEMEs, a term borrowed from neo-Darwinian evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, who coined it (in a lower-case format) in his famous book, *The Selfish Gene* (1976). For Dawkins, memes were substantive, powerful cognitive units of cultural transmission (for example, fashions, fads, musical types, architectural forms, and ideologies) that serve as dynamic components in the evolution of human culture. Beck took Dawkins' term, capitalized it (often with a small superscripted "v" attached to the front to denote "value"), and gave it a broader connotation. For Beck, a MEME or "MEME is a core value system, a kind of "meta-meme" that serves as an organizing principle and "attractor" for the more specific Dawkinsian memes. The MEME, in effect, collects the memes into a sort of constellation that can serve as a worldview or "core intelligence" that determines a person's or society's values, priorities, decisions, and actions. Having identified eight such MEMEs (and hinted at a ninth), Beck went so far as to color-code them in order to help students of Spiral Dynamics keep them straight.<sup>2</sup>

The earliest stage in the evolution of human consciousness is the Age of Nature, which produced what now constitutes the lowest level of human consciousness (MEME): the Instinctual<sup>3</sup> (*beige*). It prevailed among our most ancient human ancestors and was due, no doubt, to their being at the mercy of the forces of nature. It lasted

2. The colors are not arbitrary but symbolic, some obviously and some subtly so. For an explanation, see Beck and Cowan, *Spiral Dynamics*, p. 67.

3. Different Spiral Dynamics theorists and commentators (and sometimes the very same individual) use a variety of labels for these stages. See the inset chart and note 4 below.

## Don Cupitt

### The Great Questions of Life

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## SPIRAL DYNAMICS IN BRIEF

HISTORIC AGE	MEME: LEVEL/TYPE OF CONSCIOUSNESS	
Spirituality ..... [cusp now?]	Holistic ( <i>turquoise</i> ) (aka Organic)	2nd Tier (Being)
Globalization ..... [late 20th c.]	Integral ( <i>yellow</i> ) (aka Kaleidoscopic)	
.....		
Conscience..... [1960s & 70s]	Sensitive ( <i>green</i> ) (aka Egalitarian)	1st Tier (Subsistence)
Reason..... [17th & 18th c. CE]	Scientific ( <i>orange</i> ) (aka Achievist)	
Religion ..... [800-200 BCE]	Authoritative ( <i>blue</i> ) (aka Purposeful)	
Agriculture..... [7K BCE]	Egocentric ( <i>red</i> ) (aka Impulsive)	
Speech**..... [25K BCE]	Magical ( <i>purple</i> ) (aka Animistic)	
Nature*..... [4M yrs.ago?]	Instinctual ( <i>beige</i> ) (aka Survivalist)	

\* The Age of Nature cannot be regarded as "axial" because it was the original, default stage of human consciousness, and therefore better understood as emergent.

\*\* The Age of Speech (or more specifically the early years of its rise) is therefore a first "axial" age"; what we have in Spiral Dynamics, therefore, is a total of eight ages separated by seven axes or thresholds.

until about 27,000 years ago, ending with the emergence of our immediate human forerunners, the Cro-Magnons. The Instinctual mentality was characterized by fear, survivalism, sensory acuteness, and unreflective impulsivity in reaction to situations that threatened health and life itself. Because Spiral Dynamics maintains that all of the levels of consciousness that have developed historically endure thenceforth, at least in attenuated forms, the Instinctual mindset can be found today in the likes of newborns, the senile, certain psychotic individuals, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder victims, and those who are caught in life-or-death situations.

With the Cro-Magnons came the Age of Speech, which was dominated by the Magical (*purple*) mindset (MEME). Spiral Dynamics doesn't use Jaspers' terminology, but if it did, this would be its first "axial" age, since it marked the first profound change (turning or revolution) in awareness in the evolution of the human species. What emerged now and prevailed for a considerable time—some eighteen millennia or so—was the animistic (nature worship) worldview, which was tribal, ritualistic, superstitious, and attentive to the spirits that controlled nature and could do people good or harm. Traces of this mindset are found today in superstitions, patriotism, the cultivated team-spirit of sports participants and fans, corporate pep rallies, and the twisted familial loyalty of the Mafiosi.

That second era and its dominant mindset were superseded about 9,000 years ago by the Age of Agriculture, a development in our pre-history that produced the first real settlements that help to distinguish the Neolithic Era from nomadic hunter-gatherer societies of the Paleolithic. From the standpoint of Spiral Dynamics, an Egocentric (*red*) level of consciousness manifested itself in this historical period, springing no doubt from the need to protect owned land and other possessions from the encroachments of others. It was characterized by heroism (real and mythic), feudalism, jungle-law mentality, individualism, self-assertiveness, exploitation, mercilessness, and even cruelty. This mindset survives today among mercenaries, epic and super-action heroes, thieves, predators, gang leaders, and brutal dictators, as well as in the lyrics of heavy metal and gangsta-rap music.

A mere six and a half millennia or so after the emergence of that third era in the development of human consciousness (that is, about 2500 years ago) came a fourth: the Age of Religion and its concomitant Authoritative (*blue*) level of consciousness.<sup>4</sup> This new mindset (MEME) was marked by obedience, orderliness, conformism, moralism, literalism, dualism, and heteronomy (that is, acceptance of external authority). Most of the great and enduring classic religions were founded during this era, the beginning of which roughly coincides with the midpoint of Jasper's Axial Age. Here emerged powerful political and religious hierarchies that enforced standards of belief and behavior. According to Beck, this MEME can be found today in the military, Boy Scouts, evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity, and the Republican party (to name but a few examples).

That era and its dominant mindset endured, according to Spiral Dynamics, around two millennia—that is, until the Copernican Revolution and the Western Enlightenment gave birth to modern science and technology and the resulting worldview, all of which promoted

4. I would be remiss if at this point I did not mention what I perceive to be a couple of serious oversights on the part of the major theorists of Spiral Dynamics. After the appearance of the red MEME with the discovery of agriculture, one would have expected the next great phase to coincide with the invention of writing around 3000 BCE, for that not only defines the line between pre-history and history, but also marks the point at which civilization proper appears in the form of the great ancient cultures (e.g., Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Indian), and with them, the very notion of *deity* (in the form of polytheism). All of these would seem to mark a stage in the evolution of human consciousness at least as epochal as those associated with the earlier appearance of speech and agriculture; and one would assume that a surge in human consciousness accompanied such a spectacular moment in history. A second possible oversight is the invention of manufactured tools, perhaps around 100,000 BCE, which should suggest a major leap forward in human consciousness; but it, too, is ignored by Spiral Dynamics. My contention here is that the failure to recognize such important milestones does not invalidate the Spiral Dynamics schema, but it does suggest the need for serious revisions: some new ages, MEMEs, and symbolic colors.



the flowering of capitalism and modern democracy. This Age of Reason (Armstrong's second Axial Age), was characterized by a Scientific (*orange*) consciousness (MEME) that was autonomous (self-authenticating) and acquisitive of both knowledge and material goods. The key traits of the mindset prevalent in this era are rationalism, objectivity, discipline, control, competition, consumerism, materialism, entrepreneurship, and an intense drive for achievement. It is visible today in what would appear at first to be strange bedfellows: on the one hand, Ayn Rand, Wall Street, Rodeo Drive, and yuppies; and on the other, professional scholarship and research, modern science and technology, and liberal-progressive religion, education, and politics in general. Its poster child might be the technological genius turned business mega-giant and billionaire, Bill Gates—though his advocacy and munificent charitable support of world health, nutrition, justice, equality, education, and peace would seem to place him at the next level as well.

The sixth historical age—triggered by a fifth cognitive leap—is that of Conscience. Together with its corresponding Sensitive MEME, it emerged a mere forty or so years ago from the conscience-stricken recognition of modernity's deleterious effects on both our natural environment and ourselves. The emergent consciousness in this period was personal-growth-oriented, communitarian, equalitarian, antinomian, consensual, affective, trusting, caring, compassionate, multi-cultural, pluralistic, and ecological. Not coincidentally, the color assigned was *green*. All of these traits conjure up memories of the free-wheeling, back-to-nature, revolutionary, peace-loving flower children of the '60s and early '70s, and epochal books like *The Greening of America* and *Earth Day* (both of which appeared in 1970). But this same mindset can be seen today in such organizations, movements, and individuals as the Esalen Institute, GreenPeace, The Green Party, Bono, ACLU, PETA, Doctors without Borders, ecofeminism, interfaith social-action organizations, and Oprah.

These six historical eras and corresponding MEMEs constitute what Beck terms First Tier or Subsistence levels of consciousness. The two ages that follow represent a monumental, even precipitous leap forward to a "whole 'nother level." The transition to the first of these, therefore, constitutes the most revolutionary of the axial shifts to date, and we are allegedly on that threshold, with perhaps one percent of the world's population having already passed over it. This dramatic lunge forward to the Second Tier (of Being versus mere Subsistence) was inaugurated by the recent dawning of the Age of Globalization and marked by an Integral (*yellow*) MEME and a willingness to deal creatively and responsibly with a world so increasingly interconnected by technology, communications, economics, and politics that it seems to be shrinking even as its

population balloons. Integral consciousness is systemic, organic, dynamic, inclusive, interconnective, intuitive, multi-perspectival. It is evident today in The New Physics, chaos theory, systems theory, the "Butterfly Effect," the Internet, *Wired* magazine, and the global village. Above and beyond that stage, but following hard on its heels, comes an Age of Spirituality, marked by a Holistic (*turquoise*) MEME that is synthetic, experiential, multi-dimensional, and finally cosmic. It is detectable today to the discerning in the resurgence of interest in the quasi-visionary work of scientist-mystic-theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (who died in 1955), in the Western world's creative appropriation of Eastern spiritual practices and philosophies (which in their own way have been ahead of their time), and in the work of such seminal thinkers as Ken Wilber and, of course, Don Beck. These two eras and their respective levels of consciousness are, according to Beck, sure to be superceded, first by a ninth as yet unimaginable age and MEME (but already colored *coral*), and then by who-knows-how-many more.

Beck envisions this whole historical and evolutionary process as a rising spiral vortex for two primary reasons. First, that pattern is pervasive in nature, visible in the shapes of galaxies, hurricanes, and genetic structures; second, it captures the way the lower stages and their MEMEs are taken up and included in (and ideally placed under the control of) the higher stages and their MEMEs, much in the way that things are sucked up higher and higher into a tornado and, in a sense, converge there into a complex admixture—though with much more positive effects than their natural-disaster analogs. Beck also maintains that every person living today operates primarily at one or another of these levels of consciousness, but in a way that both incorporates the MEMEs below it and anticipates the ones above. He further proposes that specific conditions or circumstances can nudge, push, or propel us downward to lower levels or upward to higher ones. A person who normally operates at the rational Scientific level of consciousness, for example, can quickly revert to the primal, survivalist Instinctual mode if kidnapped or threatened by a tornado. By the same token, advances in the evolution of human consciousness always come in dribs and drabs, led by a pioneering few who are forced by circumstances to make a leap to a higher level, and then to wait for the rest of humanity to catch up, as it were.

In summary, then, these eight historic periods and their respective worldviews (MEMEs)<sup>5</sup> emerged successively in human history, crossing approximately datable thresholds in response to changing existential circum-

5. Beck at one point nicknames the MEMEs, from oldest to newest, as: SurvivalSense, KinSpirits, PowerGods, TruthForce, StriveDrive, HumanBond, FlexFlow, and GlobalView.



stances. A fully developed human consciousness (a rarity) will not only contain all of these MEMEs, but will exhibit the higher-ordered ones as dominant and managerial over the lower, while still capable of reverting even to the most primitive in extreme circumstances. Beck also maintains that the MEMEs play out in our social, political, and economic interactions on both the smallest and the grandest scales. Not all of humanity is immediately swept up by the new stage of consciousness at any given threshold or buys into its characteristic worldview. Ample evidence shows that individuals, societies, and entire cultures coexist while exhibiting various levels of consciousness; the unsurprising result is warfare—ideological, cultural, and military. The sense one gets from Beck, however, is that once a new wave of consciousness and its attending worldview have appeared, it is there for all and forever, and will eventually attract enough of a critical mass of adherents to make it socially, culturally, or even globally dominant.

### The Greening of the Historical Jesus

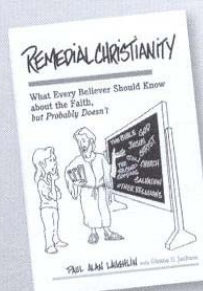
By now, the reader may well be wondering what this analytic scheme has to do with Jesus. The answer is that it is highly relevant. For starters, seen in the light of this Spiral Dynamics model, the work of the Jesus Seminar (and perhaps Westar as a whole) can be seen as a clear example of *orange*-level Scientific consciousness and its post-Enlightenment autonomous, empiricist, and rationalistic values. Its arch-nemesis, traditional (and especially evangelical and fundamentalist) Christianity, by contrast, is shown to be operating primarily from the next lower but profoundly different *blue*-level Authoritative consciousness, marked by its heteronomous reliance on such external authorities as scriptures, doctrines, clergy, and other power-brokers. Since such observations serve to confirm Westar's sense of being both an advocate and an element of Armstrong's Second Axial Age, the Spiral Dynamics model makes only a limited contribution to our self-understanding as an organization.

Much more significant is the fact that Spiral Dynamics presents a much broader context than Jaspers' and Armstrong's Axial Ages for viewing the work of the Jesus Seminar.<sup>6</sup> Beck's historical periods and corresponding

6. Armstrong herself, in her recent book, *A Short History of Myth*, identifies the six periods of history commonly acknowledged by historians: the Paleolithic period (hunting and gathering—c. 20000–8000 BCE); the Neolithic Period (farming—c. 8000–4000 BCE); the Early Civilizations (written language—c. 4000–800 BCE); The Axial Age (800–200 BCE); the Post-Axial Period (200 BCE–1500 CE); and the Great Western Transformation (1500–2000 CE). Interestingly, her periods roughly coincide with Beck's first six ages, with two notable exceptions: (1) her Paleolithic period includes Beck's first two ages, Nature and Speech; and (2) unlike Beck, she wisely recognizes the ancient civilizations, their religions, and their use of writing as marking an important threshold in human history. (See note 3 above.)

levels of human consciousness lead to the recognition that the historical Jesus delineated by this predominantly *orange* organization is not only, like itself, *orange*-Scientific (as a rational teacher of social ethics), but decidedly and remarkably *green*-Sensitive as well. As Robert W. Funk describes him in *A Credible Jesus: Fragments of a Vision*, the historical Jesus presented God's Imperial Rule or Domain as an immanent but invisible reality that was a striking alternative to the one generally seen and accepted by his contemporaries. The ideal reality that he envisioned transcended both tribe and family, being broadly inclusive not only of outsiders and outcasts, but of enemies as well. This Divine Realm or Regime was marked by a radical trust ethic that offered reassurance in the face of the hard facts of oppression and adversity, and did so with a thorough-going sense of celebration, relying heavily on imagery and symbolism drawn from the world of nature. It is no wonder, then, that this ideal was considered by the high and mighty in both the secular and the religious spheres to be subversive—a perception that led ultimately to the execution of the troublemaker who proffered it. From the standpoint of Spiral Dynamics, this Jesus—with his anti-authoritarian, egalitarian, communitarian, and naturalistic orientation—could hardly be greener! He was therefore operating at not one, but two levels of consciousness above that of his *blue*-Authoritative detractors and persecu-

## Paul Alan Laughlin

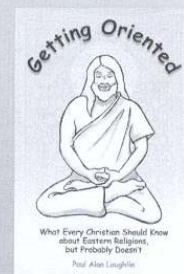


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tors (not to mention their traditionalist-Christian counterparts so visible and vocal today).

However inadvertently, the Jesus Seminar appears to have produced not only a Jesus who transcends its scholars' largely *orange* methodologies, but a prescient sage who anticipated and prefigured a stage of human consciousness that would not manifest itself with any critical mass for nearly two millennia. So far so good! It is a sign of professional integrity when interpreters produce a portrait of an historical and inspirational figure that doesn't simply typify themselves—though one has to wonder how many of the Jesus Seminar Fellows still carry a *green* MEME from their days of youthful and perhaps even hippy rebellion, however much it may have been suppressed by later devolution into the *orange* "achieverism" of professional scholarship, success, and status. In any case, for Christianity to be a truly relevant (or even viable) faith for the Third Millennium, we shall have to ask hard questions about the adequacy of our *orange-green* historical Jesus. For one thing, we shall have to ask whether there is more to him than meets the eye. Can we discern, for instance, a mystical spirituality behind the Regal Reign pronouncements that might bespeak the kind of integralizing dynamic of the still-higher *yellow* MEME and even point beyond it to the holism suggested by the yet more highly spiritual *turquoise*? If not, then it may be time—as I suggested in an earlier article in this publication<sup>7</sup>—to examine and appropriate other Jesus and Christ

*The Jesus Seminar appears to have produced but a prescient sage who anticipated and prefigured a stage of human consciousness that would not manifest itself with any critical mass for nearly two millennia.*

images (including some that we have rejected and disparaged in the past) and reclaim them in new, imaginative, and anything but literal or rigid ways.

Be that as it may, one thing is clear: to the degree that the principal purveyors of Spiral Dynamics are correct, Westar—through no fault of its own—has been on the cutting edge of biblical scholarship only in the sense that it has been playing the leading role in an important but tardy game of catch-up. It has been fighting battles and gaining ground in a war against the Authoritative (*blue*) consciousness that should have been won in the late 1960s or mid-'70s at the latest—that is, during the time of the so-called Second Quest for the Historical Jesus. In other words, in the late 1980s and the '90s, long after the greening of America had made its dramatic appearance with the hippies and politically radical types, Jesus Seminar scholars were still struggling to extricate the historical Jesus from the biblical texts by means of an *orange* methodology, seemingly unaware that two revolutions in human consciousness had occurred since the full onset of Karen Armstrong's Second Axial Age. Yet surprisingly and commendably they got more than they bargained for: an orange and green (Rational and Sensitive) Jesus who therefore at least partially represented Beck's sixth historic age (of Conscience) and MEME (Sensitive). By the time they had finally accomplished this goal, however, yet a seventh age (Globalization) had already appeared and, with its Integral consciousness, was threatening to render Westar's musings about Jesus if not completely irrelevant, at least decidedly *passé*. And with the Spirituality-Holistic age MEME coming hard on the heels of the Globalization-Integral pair, our work appears all the more dated.

### Long-term Implications

The validity of Spiral Dynamics is, of course, an issue subject to and worthy of extended debate. But to the extent that it correctly reminds us that human consciousness is constantly evolving and extraordinarily complex, Spiral Dynamics suggests two important agenda items for the future work of Westar. The one concerns methodology in New Testament scholarship; the other has to do with the main object of inquiry thus far, the historical Jesus. First, if current historical-critical methodology is indeed mainly what Beck calls *orange* in nature, we need to be asking what (in his terms) *green*, *yellow*, and *turquoise* methodologies might look like. In other words, what will it mean or

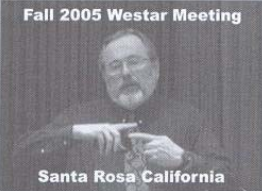
7. "The Once and Future Christ of Faith," *The Fourth R* 18.2 (Mar-Apr, 2005): 2-7, 14.

Paul Alan Laughlin

Audio & Video

*Putting the Historical Jesus in His Place*

A current and compelling theory of the evolution of human consciousness recognizes not just two axial ages, but seven historical stages, and further maintains that we are on the cusp of an eighth that promises a dramatic leap to a whole new level of awareness. Viewed in light of this theory, the past work of the Jesus Seminar and the historical Jesus that it has recovered gain more clarity and significance, and the future task of Westar Institute in reshaping the Christian faith for the twenty-first century becomes more sharply defined and urgent.



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entail if New Testament scholars move beyond—but true to the spirit of Spiral Dynamics without leaving behind—a purely scientific, historical-critical approach? Might they embrace Sensitive, Integral, and eventually Holistic perspectives and techniques as well? Is such a methodological shift even conceivable, much less commendable? Second, if the historical Jesus as currently understood by the Jesus Seminar is indeed *orange-green*, is there any evidence of a Global Age-Integrative (*yellow*) or Spiritual Age-Holistic (*turquoise*) mindset in his authentic sayings and doings? Might we discover evidence of an even higher consciousness (*coral?*) that would enhance our understanding of him *and* help propel humanity to a whole new level of awareness? Here, it seems to me, is a point at which scholars who are not biblical specialists—including theologians, philosophers, historians of religions, mythologists, psychologists, etc.—might usefully join the discussion.

I have no final answers to these two meta-questions, of course; indeed, the first (concerning methodology) is about a field of study that is not my specialty, and should be addressed and discussed primarily by New Testament scholars, though preferably not in a disciplinary bubble. Relative to the object of their inquiry (Jesus), however, I do have a couple of hunches (perhaps heretical in their deviations from mainstream Westar thinking) that border on working hypotheses, and some practical suggestions derived from them. The first inkling is that there *may* be some good evidence—or at least, in Funk’s words, “a glimpse of a glimpse”—of a Global (Integral) or Spiritual (Holistic) Age or an even higher consciousness in the authentic words and deeds of the historical Jesus, though these present a regrettably small cache of data with which to work. Nevertheless, I can envision a Jesus Seminar project to explore and perhaps define the *spirituality* of the historical Jesus that underpinned his social ethics. Such a project might well take its starting point from two explorations of this topic by Seminar Fellows, *The God of Jesus* by Stephen Patterson and *Jesus Before God* by Hal Taussig.

Whatever the outcome of such an enterprise (which may well be of short duration due to the paucity of evidence), I also respectfully suggest, of all things, a John Seminar. I do so because in comparison to the Synoptic gospels, the primary source of the historical Jesus, the Fourth Gospel—with its almost purely fictional Jesus and the mystical mindset of its author—will likely reveal much more evidence of these second-tier MEMEs. After all, Beck and Wilber propose that both Integral and Holistic consciousness are inherently mystical, a quality that suffuses the Johannine gospel. The purpose of a John Seminar, therefore, would be to recover the historical

*What will it mean or entail if New Testament scholars move beyond a purely scientific, historical-critical approach?*

John or, more accurately, the pseudonymous author of the Fourth Gospel. The objective would be not to reconstruct his life, but to discern his mindset and—what may amount to the same thing—his spirituality, both of which *may* turn out to reside in the *yellow-turquoise* range and thus (dare I say it?) to exceed the spirituality and significance of the historical Jesus, especially if the latter is finally adjudged to exhibit merely *orange-green* consciousness.

### Conclusion

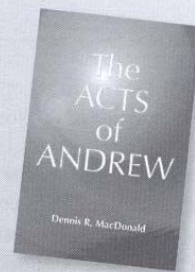
Such speculations and modest proposals aside, my principal point here is that the Spiral Dynamics model at least bears close examination and evaluation, for it might provide us with a useful framework for understanding the past work and evolving the future agenda of Westar as it strives to facilitate the reformulation of Christianity for the Third Millennium. For better or for worse, spirituality is clearly afoot in our culture and world, and however tempting, it is far too easy to dismiss this phenomenon (or constellation of phenomena) as some loopy “grassroots” movement that needs to be enlightened with our superior rationality. Perhaps such “New Age” manifestations are positive signs of an inevitable *yellowing* and *turquoising* of human consciousness going on around us.

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## Dennis R. MacDonald

### *The Acts of Andrew*

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If this is the case, a revision of our scholarly mindsets and methodologies is essential, and perhaps even urgent. A good model might be the field of physics, which has long since transcended the Enlightenment's Newtonian view of the universe and nature to produce a Quantum Mechanics replete with chaos, strings, and quarks. It may be advisable for New Testament scholarship and constructive theology to follow suit and, without forsaking the historical-critical method, to move beyond it toward a more integral or holistic investigative model that matches the cutting edge of the evolution of human consciousness itself. In other words, Spiral Dynamics strongly suggests that it may be high time for the Jesus Seminar to begin forging a Quantum Hermeneutics. **413**

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