

WEST: Still Not Coming Clean

[Peter Nicholson](#) and Charles Soper

The statement issued by the Wales Evangelical School of Theology giving the impression that there is “no evidence of false teaching by the WEST lecturers” and that no evidence exists of false teaching by “theological heavyweights like [...] Tom Holland [or] Jonathan Stephen”¹ continues to misrepresent the facts. The statement was written by the seminary’s former development manager, someone who by his own admission is not theologically competent to make such an assessment,² but it has been endorsed³ and made public by the seminary’s principal, who bears overall responsibility and who is in no position to plead ignorance of the contents of the seminary’s modest amounts of published research. Meanwhile, in response to two recent articles,⁴ the doctoral supervisor concerned has given his defence in an e-mail which in the interests of truth should not be left unexamined.

Dr Holland writes that the WEST doctoral dissertation on the motif of exile in the Hebrew Bible⁵ was rejected by one of the external examiners at first submission. The candidate resubmitted, with the two external examiners, who were not on the staff of WEST, effectively acting as supervisors, which meant that Dr Holland did not see the final draft before its second submission and final approval.⁶

The first key question is what will WEST do now? It has “discovered” that a work it helped supervise and continues to promote contains a malignant species of extreme unbelief. Will its contents be repudiated publicly? Will its author be admonished as publicly as he has hitherto been commended? Will firm measures be put in place to prevent a repeat of this problem, including definitive first-degree separation from the author and the seminary where he is Academic Dean,⁷ as well as from the liberals and institutions on to whom Dr Holland is attempting to shift responsibility, and the

¹ <http://www.webcitation.org/6FHxanDZB>

² <http://www.webcitation.org/6FbugjAwL>

³ <http://www.webcitation.org/6FkEaSA9H>

⁴ Peter Nicholson and Charles Soper, *WEST’s Shameful Contribution to Mission In Poland*, 22 March 2013, <http://www.strateias.org/west.pdf>; Peter Nicholson and Charles Soper, *WEST: Expanding the Boundaries of Inspiration*, 2 April 2013, <http://www.strateias.org/Expanding.pdf>. A third, related article has also been published: Peter Nicholson, *WEST: Further Failure to Separate from Ecumenists in Poland*, 10 April 2013, <http://www.strateias.org/westecumenism.pdf>.

⁵ Piotr Lorek, *The Motif of Exile in the Hebrew Bible: An Analysis of a Basic Literary and Theological Pattern* (Wrocław: Ewangelikalna Wyższa Szkoła Teologiczna, 2006), <http://www.webcitation.org/6FHf0ZLPr>.

⁶ E-mail to Charles Soper, 19 April 2013.

⁷ <http://www.webcitation.org/6G31qbVVS>

secular and liberal institution upon which WEST currently relies to obtain its academic accreditation?⁸

Another question, and one which is of far greater significance, concerns the appearance in the second submission of so much of what we at least consider to fall unequivocally into the category of false teaching. Are we expected to believe that it all appeared as if by magic only in the second submission? The answer to this question is not hard to find, and it raises further, serious questions as to the integrity of both supervisor and principal.⁹

In one of our recent articles¹⁰ we also draw attention to another WEST doctoral graduate, Sebastian Smolarz. The resultant doctoral dissertation has also been published, and is commended on WEST's website.¹¹ In his preface Dr Smolarz writes: "I received enormous help from scholars, many friends and people, while I was doing my research in Wales. It would be impossible to list them all here. I am particularly indebted to Dr Thomas S. Holland", and continues: "I would particularly like to express my gratitude to Dr Thomas S. Holland [...] for prompting me to have this work published."¹² Meanwhile, the back cover carries a warm commendation of a "fine, extensive, and detailed study"

⁸ The University of Chester. See <http://www.webcitation.org/6GXESdPHE> for some curious examples of the recent activity of its theological department, which include "The snan-yatra of Salkia. Contrasting voices on possession and animal sacrifice in contemporary Bengal", "Of Aggressive Spirits, Maoists and Other Gods. Shamans, Conflicts and Violence In Nepal" and "Asmodeus and Social Commentary: 17th–19th-Century Society Through the Eyes of a Biblical Demon". Nestling alongside these is a seminar presented by WEST's Director of Research, Bob Letham, entitled "'Much too uplifting and sublime to be a Christian thought' (Barth): The eternal covenant in Trinitarian context in the theology of John Owen" – see <http://www.webcitation.org/6GXINIGgG>; <http://www.webcitation.org/6GYj1X3e>.

⁹ While we do recognise that the doctorate on the Motif of Exile in the Hebrew Bible as well as the doctorate on the Metaphor of Divine Marriage discussed below were both completed before Mr Stephen took up his present role as principal in 2006, it has to be stressed not only that both doctorates are currently being endorsed in WEST web content posted under Mr Stephen's leadership, but also that we drew his attention to both authors in an e-mail sent to him on 5 July 2010. Not only is the principal in no position to plead ignorance of these two highly liberal publications, but using them to showcase WEST's academic credentials reveals his current priorities.

¹⁰ Nicholson and Soper, *WEST's Shameful Contribution*, <http://www.strateias.org/west.pdf>.

¹¹ Sebastian Smolarz, *Covenant and the Metaphor of Divine Marriage in Biblical Thought: A Study with Special Reference to the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2011); <http://www.webcitation.org/6GCQoS5D2>. Images of most of the pages of this dissertation referred to in the present article may be accessed at: <http://www.strateias.org/covenant.pdf>.

¹² Smolarz, *Covenant*, viii. The author also writes: "Special thanks should go to Blythswood Care and John Laski Trust Fund for their financial support of the project." The John Laski Trust Fund was deregistered as a charity in 2011. We have received an assurance from a former trustee that the Trust definitively separated from the entire denomination in which Dr Smolarz is an ordained minister in 2008 in view of the denomination's support for Federal Vision theology. Dr Smolarz continues to receive support from Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Cardiff: <http://www.webcitation.org/6GYkB6jms>.

in which “[i]mportant and helpful insights are presented”. The commendation is attributed to WEST’s “Head of Biblical Research”, the dissertation’s research supervisor Tom Holland.¹³

Even an initial examination of this book is sufficient to confirm the presence of an insidious cancer inside WEST. However, the fact that the dissertation is littered with approving references to Second Isaiah and deutero-Isaiah¹⁴ is by the standards of this book an almost incidental problem, and the author’s willingness to consider attributing part of the son of Amoz’ prophecy to Third Isaiah¹⁵ pales into insignificance before what is to be found in the chapters devoted to the New Testament, the area of the supervisor’s speciality.

In discussing the metaphor of divine marriage, the dissertation gives attention to the use of this metaphor in a number of the Saviour’s parables. This section of the book begins with a consideration of the nature of the parables, their interpretation and their origin. Critical theories are discussed as to which of the “sayings ascribed to Jesus” can with any degree of likelihood be considered as “Jesus’ original utterances”,¹⁶ and which were “composed by the post-Easter church in order”, for example, “to justify its later practice of fasting.”¹⁷ We see nothing amiss in an analytical *rebuttal* of critical approaches, but it is altogether another matter when these approaches are *adopted*, as they are in this dissertation: “our approach may point to the legitimacy of the view that the parables, or at least some of them, as we find them in the Synoptics, can be a reflection of Jesus’ original utterances retained in their original *Sitz im Leben*.”¹⁸ This latter term was coined by Hermann Gunkel in 1906,¹⁹

¹³ <http://www.webcitation.org/6GCQtQYRO>

¹⁴ See pages 38, 90, 93, 96, 148, 151, 157, 160, 161, 178, 181, 217 and 252. “[W]e attribute chapters 40-66 to Second Isaiah in order to distinguish them from chapters 1-39 which come from the hand of First Isaiah, the pre-exilic prophet” – Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 90. The significance of the designation “pre-exilic” is of course that the unknown author postulated by unbelieving critics and endorsed in this dissertation is held to have written the latter chapters of Isaiah only *after* fall of Jerusalem, a position which follows directly from an outright denial of the prophetic authenticity of Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1.

¹⁵ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 90.

¹⁶ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 130.

¹⁷ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 143.

¹⁸ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 143. The respected evangelical scholar E. J. Young, in a detailed and comprehensive refutation of Bernhard Duhm’s theory of the multiple authorship of Isaiah (not found in his later three-volume commentary on the prophet), writes: “It is the present writer’s conviction that some of Duhm’s principles have exerted a far more powerful influence upon the school of form-criticism than may generally be realised. For one thing, the endeavour to test the writing by its theology is a very close approximation to the idea of discovering the *Sitz im Leben* of any given passage. And once the mind becomes preoccupied with the question of the historical situation which gave rise to certain utterances it becomes quite natural to regard these utterances as detached bits or fragments. [...] In order, however, thus to understand the true position of the prophets in Israel’s history, it will be necessary once and for all to break with the view that the expositor’s task is to discover the *Sitz im Leben* (or the historical background) which supposedly gives rise to each prophetic utterance” – Edward J. Young, “The Study of Isaiah Since the Time of Joseph Addison Alexander”, in Edward J. Young, *Studies in Isaiah* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1955), 9-101, pp. 76, 101.

and lies at the heart of the development of form criticism, a profane and vile technique which later drove Rudolf Bultmann's "demythologising" of the sacred text.²⁰ We are left wondering *which* of the "at least some" of our Lord's parables in the Synoptics the dissertation allows us to consider authentic.²¹ The dissertation goes on to discuss, for example, which version of the parable of the wedding banquet is "closer to the original words of Jesus": the Matthean, the Lucan, the version found in the Gospel of Thomas or the hypothetical version said to have been in the early source Q, and whether the Matthean version "was made to meet the situation of the post-70 CE church".²² The dissertation's own solution to this dilemma is "to take the Matthean parable as independent of Luke's (or the one Luke used to construct his own)",²³ magnanimously proposing in this case at least "to focus on Matt 22:1-14 as a coherent unit that resembles the words of Jesus."²⁴ We are bound to ask not only if it is not the case that *all* of the Lord's parables are coherent units (i.e. not patchworks put together by different editors) and that *all* of them do more than just resemble our Lord's words, and if it is really the case that Luke's version is a made-up version? Furthermore, if this is the calibre of defence we can expect to see from WEST, the battle with unbelief is lost, for the enemy's standard already flies from its towers.²⁵

¹⁹ Werner Georg Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, trans. S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee (London: SCM Press, 1978), p. 450 n. 405; Martin J. Buss, "The Idea of *Sitz im Leben* – History and Critique", *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 90 (1978), 157-170, p. 159 (Gunkel developed the concept as early as 1895 – *ibid.*, p. 157).

²⁰ "But K. L. Schmidt and his like-minded colleagues, M. Dibelius and R. Bultmann, owe the most potent stimuli to the writings of [...] Hermann Gunkel" – Kümmel, *The New Testament*, p. 330. "The enterprise we have come to call demythologising is simply a continuation of form-criticism. The essential result of that earlier movement was its insight that the *Sitz im Leben* of the gospel pericopes was the preaching of the earliest Christian community. The sole purpose of the gospels is a kerygmatic one" – Hans-Werner Bartsch, "Bultmann and Jaspers", in Hans-Werner Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, Volumes I and II, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: SPCK, 1972), Volume II, 195-215, p. 195. The term "kerygma" is employed by scholars of this type to refer to the message preached by the early Christian community, a message which does not necessarily have and does not need a basis in historical fact.

²¹ We are not, however, in any doubt as to the ominous significance of the words "as we find them in the Synoptics". In keeping with standard critical theory, they mean that the Fourth Gospel largely represents the confession, kerygma or interpretation of the early Christian community (not to mention the contributions made by later redactors). See footnotes 20 and 37.

²² Smolarz, *Covenant*, pp. 152-153. In discussing this point, the dissertation refers even to the extreme "Jesus Seminar" as a pertinent source (*ibid.*, n. 166), citing the work of its chair, Robert Funk, who denied the Deity of Christ, any claim to Messiahship by the Saviour and all of His "I am" statements, believing they were figments of John's or another author's imagination. A brief referenced critique of the Jesus Seminar may be found at: <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/jesussem.html>. The dissertation's references to testimonial light from the Gospel of Thomas (for example on pp. 152 and 154), which the Jesus Seminar scholars sanctified as a fifth Gospel, is indicative of how the author's own convictions have been shaped by his reading material.

²³ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 153.

²⁴ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 155.

²⁵ In a footnote (Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 155 n. 178, compare *ibid.*, pp. 152-153 n. 166), the dissertation expresses cautious disagreement with the findings of the Jesus Seminar and the "grey" classification assigned to "the main core of the parable", but in so doing it lends credence to the validity of assumptions such as those underlying the colour coding system itself.

The dissertation also discusses the virgin of Matthew 1:23. Here we are told that “[a]lthough usually central to the debate on the virgin-birth of Jesus, Isa 7:14 can alternatively be read metaphorically, in which case [the virgin] can be viewed corporately as the daughter of Zion. [...] Simultaneously, Immanuel is also a corporate figure referring to the remnant, Isaiah and his followers in the nearest context”. Adding in a footnote that “[a]ll the linguistic tensions in [Isa 7:14] as well as in its context point to a metaphorical rendering”,²⁶ the dissertation goes on to assume that “[t]hus the meaning of Matt 1:23 is also corporate: the virgin is Israel and the child is the new faithful remnant, a movement within Israel started by Jesus.”²⁷ Conveniently for a dissertation on the metaphor of divine marriage, this then allows the conclusion that the ten maidens of Matt 25:1-13 “refer neither to the bridegroom’s nor to the bride’s attendants, but stand together as the [virgin], people of Israel.”²⁸ In making these assumptions, the dissertation relies heavily on the seven-page study of Gene Rice,²⁹ who writes that while the corporate interpretation of Immanuel is not new,³⁰ “it can hardly be said to be a popular one”.³¹ Presumably this explains why E. J. Young, in the total of 79 pages of discussion he devoted to the relevant section of Isaiah 7, does not even bother to mention it.³² Most significantly of all, Rice also makes clear that in choosing the term used for Immanuel’s mother, “Isaiah is concerned to express the idea, not of youth, nor of innocence, nor of purity, nor of a

²⁶ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 169. Neither in his 56-page detailed study of Isaiah 7:14-16, nor in a further five pages discussing the Immanuel prophecy found in another chapter of the same book, nor in eighteen pages of comment on Isaiah 7:10-17 in his later commentary does Isaiah scholar E. J. Young say anything which would be in the remotest agreement with this statement. See: Edward J. Young, “The Immanuel Prophecy”, in Edward J. Young, *Studies in Isaiah* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1955), 143-198, Young, “The Study of Isaiah Since Alexander”, pp. 77-81 and Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, Volume 1: Chapters 1 to 18 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 278-295.

²⁷ Smolarz, *Covenant*, pp. 169-170.

²⁸ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 170.

²⁹ Gene Rice, “A Neglected Interpretation of the Immanuel Prophecy”, *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 90 (1978), 220-227. The dissertation also refers at this point to the brief comments made by Barry Webb (Barry G. Webb, “Zion in Transformation: A Literary Approach to Isaiah”, in David J. A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl and Stanley E. Porter (eds), *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in celebration of forty years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, JSOT Supplement 87 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 65-84, pp. 81-84), which are themselves based heavily on Rice’s study.

³⁰ The corporate interpretation of the virgin was first proposed in 1850 – Rice, “A Neglected Interpretation”, p. 226. The corporate interpretation of Immanuel followed in 1856, and “[o]ne can count with the fingers of one hand those who have subsequently espoused it” (ibid.). Rice appends to this statement the names of just four commentators. Rice is a fifth. Webb is a sixth (Webb, “Zion in Transformation”, p. 84). WEST has added a seventh. While the corporate interpretation is the view of a tiny minority, this interpretation’s rejection of the traditional understanding of Matthew 1:22-25 is a view the WEST interpreter has in common with countless unbelieving liberals.

³¹ Rice, “A Neglected Interpretation”, p. 226.

³² The corporate interpretations of the virgin and Immanuel prophecies should not be confused with the collective interpretation of the suffering Servant prophecy, to which Young does devote several pages. See: Edward J. Young, “Of Whom Speaketh the Prophet This?”, in Edward J. Young, *Studies in Isaiah* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1955), 103-125, pp. 105-109, 123, and Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, p. 293 n. 42.

miraculous birth, but the birth of the remnant.”³³ It is this critical assumption which underlies this WEST dissertation’s approach to Matthew 1:23.

John the Baptist fares no better. The dissertation includes a discussion of John the Baptist’s use of the bride and bridegroom metaphor in John 3:29 and the question as to whether this is the first historical use of this image in relation to the Lord.³⁴ The main problem here, we are told, is not the difficulty in establishing a chronology for the Fourth Gospel in comparison with the sequence of events recorded in the Synoptics and for example, the Lord’s response to the fasting controversy in Mark 2:19-20.³⁵ A far more significant aspect of the question is found in the opinion that John’s “gospel at many points shows the marks of later theological reflection, some of which emerged from issues significant for the contemporary church. Therefore the tradition has been shaped to fit that particular *Sitz im Leben*.”³⁶ The dissertation continues in this vein by saying that “one still wonders if [John 3:29] is not a later reflection on the Baptist’s testimony in the face of the later situation of the church and its already developed understanding of the Jesus event (vv. 31-36 suggest this conclusion).”³⁷ Further considerations are discussed, but “this does not help us in determining whether the Baptist’s identification of Jesus as the bridegroom comes from pre-Easter sources.”³⁸ The dissertation concludes that John’s Gospel “seems a later theological reflection on the traditions about Jesus” and that “the proposal that John the Baptist’s last testimony about Jesus in John 3:27-30 is the earliest historical use of the nuptial imagery in connection with Jesus, cannot be sustained in the face of the difficulties pointed out above. [...] It is more probable that it was Jesus himself who first pointed out that he is the bridegroom.”³⁹ This claim, repeated in at least three other places,⁴⁰ is not based on difficulties in reconciling the chronology of John’s Gospel with that of the

³³ Rice, “A Neglected Interpretation”, p. 224.

³⁴ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 175.

³⁵ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 177.

³⁶ Smolarz, *Covenant*, pp. 175-176.

³⁷ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 176. The term “the Jesus event” is instantly recognisable as the language of classic Bultmannism: “Now, it is beyond question that the New Testament presents the event of Jesus Christ in mythical terms. The problem is whether that is the only possible presentation. Or does the New Testament itself demand a restatement of the event of Jesus Christ in non-mythological terms?” – Rudolf Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology”, in Hans-Werner Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, Volumes I and II, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London, SPCK, 1972), Volume I, 1-44, p. 34. The “already developed understanding of the Jesus event” of the early Christian community is a synonym for its “kerygma” (see footnote 20). The dissertation’s opinion quoted above that John’s “gospel at many points shows the marks of later theological reflection, some of which emerged from issues significant for the contemporary church. Therefore the tradition has been shaped to fit that particular *Sitz im Leben*” is based on the same concept.

³⁸ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 178.

³⁹ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 181.

⁴⁰ “In the light of the evidence available to us, we conclude that it was Jesus himself who first used and applied the metaphor of divine marriage in the NT” – Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 186; “We have suggested that it was Jesus, Yahweh’s anointed agent, who transformed the OT traditions of the *hieros gamos* to elucidate his messianic

Synoptics, but on critical theories of the *origins* of the Fourth Gospel, and is an endorsement of the view that John the Baptist did not really say the words attributed to him in the passage in question, but that they were put into his mouth to meet the situation of the post-Easter or post-70 AD Christian church.⁴¹ This again is immediately recognisable as being identical to the view held by Rudolf Bultmann.⁴²

This rapid overview of just some problem areas in this dissertation brings us finally to its treatment of the epistles of Paul. If some parts of Isaiah's prophecy are deutero-Isaianic, we now learn that some of Paul's epistles are in fact deutero-Pauline, which means that they were not written by Paul. In discussing several passages from the epistles, the dissertation states at the outset that "we will accept majority scholarly opinion on the chronology of Paul's writings."⁴³ The source of the "majority scholarly opinion" in question is given in a footnote on the same page as Werner Kümmel's *Introduction to the New Testament*.⁴⁴ We wonder what considerations made it necessary to assume the chronology proposed by a book so steeped in liberal and critical views – views which are anathema to all who rejoice to testify that by personal experience they have found the Word of God to be like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. Was no conservative work available on which

eschatological mission" – *ibid.*, p. 188; "Jesus was most probably the first to use the [nuptial] imagery concerning himself" – *ibid.*, p. 190.

⁴¹ As we pointed out in footnote 20, the kerygma does not necessarily have and does not need a basis in historical fact.

⁴² "The introduction (vv. 22-26) [...] shows the rivalry between Jesus and the Baptist in their ministry of Baptism, and shows how the Baptist is defeated in this rivalry, and how this fact is confirmed by the Baptist's disciples. It ought not to be difficult to see that this scene (vv. 22-26) is a *literary composition*, reflecting the rivalry between the sects of the Baptist and Jesus, nor to see that the Baptist who bears witness to Jesus is a figure from the Christian interpretation of history. [...] Taken as a whole 3.22-26 gives the impression of being the Evangelist's own composition, and in any case the utterance of the Baptist's disciples [...] must come from his pen" – Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), pp. 167-168. Bultmann did not, of course, believe that the Evangelist to whom he referred was John the son of Zebedee or anyone from that generation (*ibid.*, pp. 11-12), and this in turn raises another very serious matter: when the dissertation refers to "the author of Matthew" (Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 170), "the author of Mark 2:19-20" (*ibid.*, p. 148), "John the evangelist" (*ibid.*, p. 175), "the fourth evangelist" (*ibid.*, p. 177) and "the author of Revelation" (*ibid.*, p. 14) *whom does it have in mind*, and when the dissertation does refer to the author of the last book of the Bible as "John", does it mean the Beloved Disciple, John the son of Zebedee or the Presbyter John, or does it consider "John" to be just another convenient redactional allonym? It might also be appropriate to emphasise a further difficulty in layman's terms: since the dissertation has established that the words of John the Baptist in John chapter 3 are made up, how can we be certain that the words attributed in the same chapter directly to the Saviour are not made up too? Bultmann was sure they were.

⁴³ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 190.

⁴⁴ Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. Howard C. Kee (London: SCM Press, 1987). The dissertation cites as its authority pages 247-387 of this book. Strangely, having announced that it is going to discuss four passages from the epistles in the chronological order adopted for these epistles by Kümmel, the dissertation then discusses the passage from 2 Corinthians *before* the passage from Galatians, whereas Kümmel dates 2 Corinthians to the late autumn of 55 or the year 56 (*ibid.*, p. 293) and Galatians to the year 54 or 55 (*ibid.*, p. 304).

to base the chronology? Would citing a conservative chronology have been considered inappropriate, bearing in mind the ultimate object of the exercise? Do those who are behind this research, and those who are now supporting and promoting the dissertation, know the experience to which we refer? The dissertation at this point is in any case not entirely honest, covering up the real nature of Kümmel's opinions, because the chronology of the epistles presented by Kümmel is *not* one of "Paul's writings" at all. To give just one example, Kümmel categorically rejects the Pauline authorship of Ephesians, saying that "it cannot seriously be doubted that Eph does not come from Paul and is therefore a pseudonymous writing. [...] the theology of Eph is not simply an extension of Paul, but in part clearly in contradiction to Paul".⁴⁵ In keeping with this sentiment, the dissertation announces that it is going to discuss Ephesians 5:21-33, but that this passage is "of doubtful authorship".⁴⁶ When discussion of this passage finally begins, the dissertation again states that "[t]he authorship of the epistle to the Ephesians has been a matter of dispute in critical scholarship over the past century or more", adding that "[h]owever, it seems that the letter can be taken, at least, as a continuation of Pauline thought."⁴⁷ This statement, astonishing in itself because of its willingness to work on the assumption that the epistle to the Ephesians was not written by Paul at all, is astounding because it is accompanied by a footnote referring the reader to the controversial scholar E. P. Sanders. It is fearfully instructive to read the two pages of Sanders' work which the dissertation cites as its authority for the above opinion. Not only does Sanders in fact say that Ephesians should *not* be used as a source for Paul's thought, but amongst other things he writes:

"I take the sources for studying Paul to be the seven letters whose authenticity is unquestioned: Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, I Thessalonians and Philemon. Since there is little of religious or theological substance in Philemon, we are effectively limited to six letters. [...] I believe that it can be shown with a high degree of probability that Paul did not write the principal 'theological' part of Colossians, if he wrote any of it at all. Some would maintain that the two principal deutero-Pauline letters, Colossians and Ephesians, should be used as sources for Paul even if he did not write them. They are unquestionably substantially influenced by Paul's thought, to the point of quoting his letters extensively; but using them as sources for Paul seems to lead to confusion and inaccuracies, to imprecisions which should be avoided if they can be. The soundest approach is to deal with the letters which Paul can be reliably supposed to have written. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that the speeches in Acts which are attributed to Paul cannot be used as a source for his thought."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Kümmel, *Introduction*, pp. 361-362.

⁴⁶ Smolarz, *Covenant*, p. 190.

⁴⁷ Smolarz, *Covenant*, pp. 219-220.

⁴⁸ Ed P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 431-432.

Such are the critical assumptions underlying WEST's New Testament research.

It is noticeable that in its discussion of the parables the dissertation makes frequent reference to the Bultmannian study *Parables of Jesus* by Eta Linnemann.⁴⁹ The many references to this work betray a naive ignorance that Linnemann, who initially studied under Rudolf Bultmann himself before pursuing a successful career for many years as a Professor of Biblical Theology, eventually experienced conversion and profound repentance and gave up her position, later writing: "I regard everything that I taught and wrote before I entrusted my life to Jesus as refuse. I wish to use this opportunity to mention that I have pitched my two books *Gleichnisse Jesu* [*Parables of Jesus*] and *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte*, along with my contributions to journals, anthologies, and *Festschriften*. Whatever of these writings I had in my possession I threw into the trash with my own hands in 1978. I ask you sincerely to do the same thing with any of them you may have on your own bookshelf."⁵⁰

Linnemann also writes that "[o]nly a person who has experienced the new birth and lives in that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom can arrive at true knowledge", adding that the system of university theology puts scholars "under compulsion to make a name for themselves and to strive for human honour", and that "[a] theology student who has not yet died to the need for the recognition of men stands under the same pressure."⁵¹

Two other points made by Dr Holland, that the contents of a doctoral dissertation are the work of the candidate and not the supervisor, and that he himself accepts the authorship as stated in the texts themselves, wholly evade the issue. Quite apart from the obvious questions as to where, how and from whom Dr Smolarz learned this destructive approach to the Word of God, it has to be stressed that Dr Holland has very warmly commended Dr Smolarz' dissertation, and indeed was chief among those who encouraged him to publish it. We wonder, too, whether the doctorates completed by Piotr Lorek and Sebastian Smolarz feature in Dr Holland's academic CV or his list of publications and

⁴⁹ Smolarz, *Covenant*, pp. 129, 134, 136, 152, 153, 154, 156, 162 and 168.

⁵⁰ Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology? Reflections of a Bultmannian Turned Evangelical*, trans. Robert Yarbrough (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), p. 20. This section of the book can be read at: <http://www.webcitation.org/6G63dQSzR>. Linnemann has also written *Is There a Synoptic Problem? Rethinking the Literary Dependence of the First Three Gospels*, trans. Robert Yarbrough (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992) and *Biblical Criticism on Trial: How Scientific is "Scientific Theology"?*, trans. Robert Yarbrough (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001). Another account of her testimony can be read at: <http://www.webcitation.org/6G63m9klk>.

⁵¹ Linnemann, *Historical Criticism*, pp. 64, 88.

supervised research?⁵² Both doctorates certainly feature on WEST's publications list.⁵³ Counting successful PhDs is sure to feed the flesh, and Eta Linnemann draws attention to the warning of the Saviour: How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?⁵⁴ But when those PhDs endorse, promote and extend the findings of unbelieving criticism we feel bound to remind both supervisor and principal of the solemn ensample afforded for our admonition by Hiel the Bethelite, who laid the foundation of Jericho in judgment, and set up the gates thereof in retribution.

Indeed, the similarities which can be seen between the current affair and the tragic Down-Grade controversy are both striking and frightening. At the end of the 19th century entire denominations were commandeered by the covert operations of ambitious men, professing Christians whose pride in their learning⁵⁵ led them to sit in judgment on the Word of God and ride roughshod over the religious sentiments of the uninitiated. Is history repeating itself today in groups such as the FIEC?

There is yet one final matter. What gives the men who tout this grand tally of "successful supervision" the liberty to inflict the products of their training on the evangelical churches in Poland? They may have a mandate to use their own denominations in this way – although we do not for a moment believe that the people at the grass roots of these denominations are really aware of what this mandate involves in practice – but offering to "help" unsuspecting brethren in Poland and then taking advantage of their goodwill by training and financing ecumenists and liberals and paving the way for them to infiltrate the evangelical churches there displays a thoroughly deplorable audacity. And when it is becoming increasingly common today for pastors in the UK to make brazen admissions that they are happy frequenting pubs,⁵⁶ cinemas and rock concerts, and when they are importing this

⁵² Specifically, is Sebastian Smolarz included in the fourteen examples of successful research supervision referred to in WEST's profile of Dr Holland (<http://www.webcitation.org/6GCRk9OpT>)? Furthermore, if WEST were to update this profile to include a full list of all fourteen names, dissertation titles, degrees awarded and relevant dates, in what way would the list take account of the facts that Piotr Lorek's dissertation was rejected at first submission and that at second submission it was the external examiners who effectively acted as supervisors? Would the list, and its total of fourteen, in any way be in conflict with these facts? Does the profile as it stands involve an implicit claim by Dr Holland and WEST that the research underlying the liberal dissertation on the Motif of Exile in the Hebrew Bible was not supervised by the two external examiners but by Dr Holland?

⁵³ <http://www.webcitation.org/6FHf0ZLPr>

⁵⁴ Linnemann, *Historical Criticism*, p. 88.

⁵⁵ Bunyan's catalogue of the merchandise on sale at Vanity Fair included titles. Would this include the kind of title to be had in the German Row? "Let nothing that is on this side the other world get within you", Evangelist had warned Christian and Faithful shortly before they entered the town, "and, above all, look well to your own hearts and to the lusts thereof, for they are 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.'"

⁵⁶ For example: <http://www.webcitation.org/6FkEjIQgn>. At the beginning of the 20th century, the town of Cieszyn, only a few kilometres from the pub in question, was at the centre of a significant revival. The revival intensified following the visit made in 1904 or 1905 by Karol Kulisz of the Christian Fellowship in Cieszyn to the

culture wholesale into evangelical churches, is it the case that groups such as the FIEC are now without the strength to put a stop to this wicked treachery, or indeed the dreadful compromise being perpetrated at WEST, like Samson, who wist not that the Lord was departed from him?

1 July 2013

revival then under way in Wales (1904: Tomasz Bruell, "Ruch pietystyczny i jego znaczenie dla Kościoła", in Ewa Ołtarzewska-Wieja, Paweł Stanieczek and Manfred Uglorz (eds), *Kalendarz Ewangelicki 1995* (Bielsko-Biała: Augustana, 1994), 213-240, p. 232; 1905: Zbigniew Pasek, "Neopietyzm i wolne Kościoły na Śląsku Cieszyńskim w XIX i XX wieku", in Peter Chmiel and Jan Drabina (eds), *Die konfessionellen Verhältnisse im Teschener Schlesien vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart/Stosunki wyznaniowe na Śląsku Cieszyńskim od średniowiecza do współczesności* (Ratingen: Stiftung Haus Oberschlesien, 2000), 155-172, p. 158). The Cieszyn revival, in large measure the fruit of the earlier labours of Jan Pindór, marked the beginnings of contemporary indigenous Polish evangelicalism. Among the remarkable effects of the revival, it is recorded that "numbers of publicans ditched their alcohol in roadside drains, closed down their pubs, and took up other employment" – "Chrześcijańska Społeczność w Ustroniu", *Słowo i Życie* 3/2003, 24-25, p. 25, <http://slowoizycie.pl/ustron.pdf>.