

WEST: Expanding the Boundaries of Inspiration

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In the opinion of Richard L. Schultz, Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College,¹ scholars who identify themselves as evangelical but reject the unity of the book of Isaiah are “expanding the boundaries of the doctrine of inspiration”² and “expanding the boundaries of biblical inspiration”.³ The Professor also wonders whether “through their interpretation of Isaiah” such scholars have “undermined their theological foundation”,⁴ warning that we must “never yield to the temptation to sell our soul for a mess of academic respectability.”⁵

This will be of concern to all supporters of the Bible League Trust, which lists among its aims an intention to resist attacks made on the inspiration of Scripture. Meanwhile, the Wales Evangelical School of Theology has issued a statement which gives the impression that there is “no evidence of false teaching by the WEST lecturers” and points to a “long list of esteemed ministers and missionaries that have been trained at WEST”. The statement continues by claiming that no evidence exists of false teaching by “theological heavyweights like [...] Tom Holland [or] Jonathan Stephen”.⁶ Our initial response to WEST’s statement is already available online,⁷ and we encourage all interested parties – for the sake of their Polish brethren⁸ – to weigh it carefully. The relevance of the opinion expressed by Professor Schultz lies in the fact that it is easy to point to at least one person trained at WEST who does fall into precisely the category described. Where then does this leave the WEST lecturer who supervised this man’s doctoral research, or the seminary’s principal, who bears overall responsibility?

¹ <http://www.wheaton.edu/Academics/Faculty/S/Richard-Schultz>

² Richard L. Schultz, “How Many Isaiahs Were There and What Does It Matter? Prophetic Inspiration in Recent Evangelical Scholarship”, in Vincent Bacote, Laura C. Miguez, and Dennis L. Okholm, eds, *Scripture in the Evangelical Tradition: Tradition, Authority, and Hermeneutics* (Downer’s Grove: IVP, 2004), 150-170. A copy of this article can be accessed at: <http://people.bethel.edu/~pferris/ot103/Schultz-HowManyIsaiahs.pdf>. The quotation is from p. 155.

³ Schultz, “How Many Isaiahs”, p. 158.

⁴ Schultz, “How Many Isaiahs”, p. 150.

⁵ Schultz, “How Many Isaiahs”, p. 170.

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

⁷ <http://www.strateias.org/west.pdf>

⁸ Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for *them*.

In a list of WEST graduates whose research we are given to understand is “capable of edifying the church worldwide” and was conducted with the help of a “suitable supervisory team”,⁹ WEST includes the published version of a doctoral dissertation which analyses the motif of exile in the Old Testament.¹⁰ In this dissertation, Piotr Lorek, the author, works on the assumption that what critical scholars call the Deuteronomistic History (Deuteronomy–2 Kings) is “a literary entity and unity” which “was all written at the same time, after the fall of Jerusalem.”¹¹ Adoption of this critical view with its terminology is fundamental to the author’s treatment of the motif of exile, because this section of the Bible is then held to contain literary reflection which took place after the Babylonian exile began. It also means that speeches attributed, for example, to Moses, Joshua, Samuel and Solomon are “not merely the work of an editor but of an author” and were “written with a purpose”.¹²

The dissertation’s author goes on to make abundantly clear his rejection of the unity of Isaiah, making several references to “Second Isaiah” and “Deutero Isaiah”, significantly defining “Second Isaiah” as “Isa 40-55”.¹³ Since Second Isaiah purportedly ends at chapter 55, this suggests the existence of what critics call Third Isaiah. This innovative fantasy was pioneered amongst others by Bernhard Duhm, who also considered Isaiah 53 to be part of an old song about a leprous rabbi.¹⁴ That Dr Lorek does indeed believe Isaiah 56-66 to be the work of at least one further writer is seen from his approving dependence on the term “Trito Isaiah” in another study he published the same year.¹⁵ Assuming the disunity of Isaiah may have the convenient effect for a doctoral candidate of furnishing additional sources of exilic and post-exilic literary reinterpretation of the motif of exile, but it also creates a number of well-known conflicts with a position of Biblical inerrancy. Young explains why this spurious fable of multiple authorship, for which the evidence is negligible, boils down to challenging “the authority of the New Testament” and making “mince meat of the Old Testament

⁹ <http://www.webcitation.org/6FHf0ZLPr>

¹⁰ 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). Scans of the relevant pages of this dissertation may be accessed at: <http://www.strateias.org/PLphd.pdf>.

¹¹ Lorek, *Motif*, pp. 30, 31.

¹² Lorek, *Motif*, pp. 32, 30.

¹³ Lorek, *Motif*, p. 118.

¹⁴ See Edward J. Young, “The Authorship of Isaiah”, *Themelios* 4.3, 11-16 (1967). A copy of this article can be accessed at: http://www.theologicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ifes/4-3_young.pdf. Duhm is discussed on pp. 11-12. See also the reference to: Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja übersetzt und erklärt (The Book of Isaiah Translated and Explained)*, 1892 (4th ed., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922) in Richard E. Averbeck, “Christian Interpretations of Isaiah 53”, in Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser, eds, *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012), 33-60. The reference to Duhm is found on p. 54, and can be viewed online at: <http://tinyurl.com/cyv2nf3>.

¹⁵ Piotr Lorek, “Ewangelia Izajasza w Liście do Rzymian”, *Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne Śląska Opolskiego*, 26, 181-190 (2006). The reference to Trito Isaiah is on p. 183.

prophecies”.¹⁶ The critical view is predicated on the assumption that passages which warn about future judgement and exile must have been written *after* the event they are depicted as foreseeing, implying a rejection of Divine inspiration, an infidelity that WEST’s student has embraced. From whom did he learn this error?

In similar fashion, the dissertation assumes a post-exilic date for the books of Obadiah and Joel.¹⁷ It also rejects the unity of the book of Zechariah, referring approvingly to “First and Second Zechariah”,¹⁸ while the book of Daniel is treated as a book written by “the author of Daniel” in “the widely accepted dating” of the “middle of the 1st century BCE”, “the story of Daniel” being “selected or composed to communicate figuratively the hero’s own historical situation in the period of Greek rule over Palestine.”¹⁹

Worst of all is what we learn from the dissertation’s acknowledgements page. We discover, for example, that the research was carried out at WEST, Tyndale House and the Evangelical School of Theology in Wrocław, Poland. We learn, too, that it was Blythswood Care (Scotland) which provided “generous financial support” for the research. And we also see that the author records his primary thanks, for “stimulation, expertise and help”, to one of the “theological heavyweights” referred to by WEST in its statement, “Dr Thomas S. Holland”.²⁰

One is reminded of the message of books such as Harold Lindsell’s *The Battle for the Bible* (1976) and *The Bible in the Balance* (1979), the findings of George Marsden’s *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (1987) and the lessons drawn by Iain Murray in his chapter on “intellectual respectability” and Scripture in *Evangelicalism Divided* (2000). One is also reminded of the opinions on the subject expressed on many occasions by Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who said “I tremble to think of the position” of men who use the premises of higher criticism to undermine the Word of God.²¹ One is reminded, too, of the warning sounded by no less a figure than E. J. Poole-Connor in his seminal book *The Apostasy of English Nonconformity*. A man not afraid to name names, his devastating analysis of the leading Nonconformist theologians and theological colleges of the day is

¹⁶ Young, “The Authorship of Isaiah”, pp. 15, 12.

¹⁷ Lorek, *Motif*, p. 148.

¹⁸ Lorek, *Motif*, p. 147.

¹⁹ Lorek, *Motif*, p. 140.

²⁰ Lorek, *Motif*, p. 6.

²¹ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Righteous Judgement of God* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), pp. 171-172.

one which should be reprinted and a copy given to every one of WEST's supporters.²² "Such is the course", wrote Poole-Connor, "upon which Dr Peake and other 'trusty pilots' have set the Free Churches. Whither will it lead them?"²³ It appears to us the vessel is already heavily grounded on the rocks.

2 April 2013

²² It is also appropriate to note that the fellowship Mr Poole-Connor proposed to establish was to be one for those who had separated from the compromised denominations – for "all separated Conservative Evangelicals". See: Edward J. Poole-Connor, *The Apostasy of English Nonconformity* (London: Thynne & Co. Ltd, 1933), p. 74.

²³ Poole-Connor, *Apostasy*, p. 44.