Stefan Green, *Toward Apocalypticism: A Thematic Analysis of Isaiah 65-66*, Åbo Akademi University Press, Åbo 2020, 336 p., ISBN: 978-951-765-965-9

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Stefan Green's doctoral thesis, although defended at an advanced age, represents a fresh perspective on the book of Prophet Isaiah. The author, with a theological background in the USA, Belgium, Sweden and finally in Finland at Åbo Akademi University, was also personally motivated to complete his thesis by tragic circumstances in his life, as his wife passed away following a long period of illness before his academic efforts could be realised.

Green's thesis concerns chap. 65-66 of Isaiah, usually assumed by modern Bible scholars to be part of the third section of the book ascribed to an author labelled Trito-Isaiah, who lived in the post-exilic period, almost 150 years after the historical prophet. For his analysis, Green chose the final two chapters of Trito-Isaiah, viewed as a bridge between prophetic and apocalyptic literature (p. 5). The author drew attention to the fact that his work is not to be understood as a regular biblical commentary on Isaiah 65-66, but as a new approach in finding themes relevant for the apocalyptic literature such as the Enochic five books (p. 30).

The academic interest in apocalyptic literature rose with Plöger's book *Theokratie und Eschatologie* (1959) and Paul Hanson's contribution *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (1975). During the post-exilic community in the Persian province of Yehud, these authors envisioned a tension between the theocratic groups around the newlybuilt temple of Jerusalem and the proto-apocalyptic groups, the forefathers of the Haredim, the God-fearing, which were marginalized (p. 3-4). While the theocratic authorities were more connected to the mundane settings and the politics of the temple administration, the apocalyptic groups focused on future expectations.

Although Isaiah 65-66 doesn't belong to the fully-grown apocalyptic genre, the text contains many elements that were taken over by and developed in the apocalyptic literature. Green's work compares Isaiah 65-66 to the Apocalypse of Enoch (1 Enoch) from the 2nd century BCE, focusing on themes that found direct reference or simply reoccurred in the famous pseudepigraphical book. In fact, the Enochic literature offered an apocalyptic Pentateuch similar to the canonical one: the Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch 1-36), the Similitudes of Enoch (chap. 37-71), the Astronomical

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Book (chap. 72-82), the Book of Dreams (chap. 83-90) and the Epistle of Enoch (chap. 91-108).

In dating chapters 65-66 of the Book of Isaiah and discussing the authorship, Green adopted a balanced position, considering them as written by the same author as Isa 56.1-59.21. The temple seems to be already restored, so the author wrote after 515 BCE, after Ezra 9-10, but before Nehemiah (mid-5th century) (p. 12). The polemic belongs to a marginalized minority of conservative priests and Levites expressed against more permissive colleagues and their followers, which violated the Deuteronomic laws and participated in secret rituals in gardens near Jerusalem and necromantic night activities in tombs (p. 77). This probably occurred when the Jerusalem Temple was already rebuilt (see Isa 66.1, 6).

Green assumed a new perspective on literary genres, emphasizing the fluid nature of genres and the similarities between prophetic warnings and apocalypses. I find it very useful that the author calls under scrutiny the very definition of the apocalypse proposed by *the leading expert* in the field, John Collins, in the dedicated volume of Semeia 14 (p. 40).¹

The thematic approach of a biblical book seems to have a pervasive effect on the analysis of polemic discourses in the text. With well-defined themes, the author can easily follow the logic of the arguments, can proficiently identity the voices embedded into the text and the recipients of the addresses. But sometimes the methodology itself turned against the author, when a selected unit (a verse or a couple of verses) has, in fact, more sub-themes or when a theme is repeated in other units. The author is forced to follow the text sequence of the chapter and assigned a single thematic title to such a unit (see for example p. 99–105, where the title “Inheritance” is not sufficient for vv. 9-10 of chapter 65).

Green made an excellent job of articulating the literary roots for the apocalyptic ideas that gained full status in the Apocalypse of Enoch. His contribution is very well-argued on the literary level, while the historical elements are sometimes only sketched or insufficiently explained. The new interest in the post-exilic period led to a growing number of excellent monographs about the historical and social issues of the Second Temple community.

The author doesn't seem to be familiar with Beuken commentary on Isaiah 1-39 when he discusses the beginning and end of the Book of Isaiah (p. 13–18)² and the joint work of Berges and Beuken issued in 2016.³

¹ John J. Collins, ed., *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, Semeia 14 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 1979).

² Willem A.M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, HThKAT (Freiburg- Basel-Wien: Herder, 2003); idem, *Jesaja 13-27*, 2007; idem, *Jesaja 28-39*, 2010.

³ Ulrich Berges and Willem A.M. Beuken, *Das Buch Jesaja. Eine Einführung*, UTB, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2016).

Gabriele Boccaccini is never mentioned, although he dedicated some works on the apocalyptic literature, especially the Enochic Pentateuch. Despite these shortcomings, the bibliography is rich and updated and the research perspective is a fresh new one.

Stefan Green's contribution represents an important brick in the structure of the new research in apocalyptic literature and solid proof of the academic capacity of the Finnish university in Åbo.