

serve as pastoral encouragement for those who lived in the context of the cult.

As can be seen by these brief summaries, the essays address a broad range of issues and questions. Like most collections of essays, they are not necessarily coherent as a group, but they do challenge a number of consensus views in Johannine studies. Some of the questions addressed by these essays may require further investigation and at the least some rethinking of the majority view.

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***The Saving Righteousness of God:
Studies on Paul, Justification, and the New
Perspective
(Paternoster Biblical Monographs)***

Michael F. Bird

Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007, xvii + 230 pp.,
£19.99, pb, ISBN 978-1-84227-465-1

SUMMARY

Bird provides an insightful synthesis regarding Paul's understanding of righteousness and justification, with a fresh emphasis on resurrection and incorporation. Writing from a reformed perspective, he then presents an irenic synthesis of traditionally reformed and New Perspective readings, while offering a critique of the New Perspective. He concludes with a needed negative assessment of the scorn poured out on N.T. Wright by those in the Reformed tradition.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Bird bietet eine Synthese zu Paulus' Verständnis von Gerechtigkeit und Rechtfertigung, die reich an Einsichten ist und eine neue Betonung auf die Auferstehung und die Eingliederung legt. Er schreibt aus einer reformierten Perspektive und präsentiert dann eine vermittelnde Synthese aus traditionell reformierten Leseweisen und solchen aus der „New Perspektive“. Er schließt mit einer dringend nötigen negativen Bewertung des Hohnes und Spottes, den Autoren aus der reformierten Tradition über N. T. Wright ausgegossen haben.

RÉSUMÉ

Bird offre ici une synthèse intelligente quant aux notions pauliniennes de la justice et de la justification, en mettant l'accent de manière originale sur les thèmes de la résurrection et de l'incorporation. Se situant dans la perspective réformée, il présente une synthèse irénique de la compréhension réformée traditionnelle et de la « nouvelle perspective sur Paul », tout en exprimant ses points de désaccord avec cette dernière. Il conclut en exprimant sa désapprobation quant au mépris dont certains qui appartiennent à la tradition réformée ont fait preuve envers N.T. Wright.

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With debates about righteousness and the New Perspective on Paul (hereafter NPP) raging in evangelical circles, Mike Bird has offered a welcomed monograph seeking to help calm the storm. Bird, who currently lectures at Highland Theological College in Scotland, provides a critical, exegetical analysis of righteousness and justification in Paul's letters in light of current debates. As he sets forward his understanding of God's saving righteousness in Paul, he critiques elements of the NPP but also distinguishes the positive aspects of NPP thought. He then incorporates those positive aspects within more traditional reformed readings. Bird argues that Paul's forensic justification is primarily soteriological but that it cannot be separated from the sociological effects. Thus, he writes: 'According to Paul, faith *alone* in Jesus is the basis of eschatological vindication; and faith *alone* marks out the true people of God.' (p. 182, cf. p. 1). His audience is the academic community at large but with an eye to those specifically within the reformed tradition where the orthodoxy of NPP readings and authors has been repeatedly called into question. Accordingly, this monograph serves as a mediating position and responds to Guy Waters' and others' works against the NPP and N.T. Wright.

Bird's book is roughly divided into two parts. In the first part, he provides his general perspective on justification and the righteousness of God without much direct focus on the NPP. These chapters include his summary position on key debates about righteousness (chapter 2), 'the significance that Jesus' resurrection has for Paul's understanding of justification' (p. 4) (chapter 3), and the importance of union with Christ as *incorporated* righteousness over and above *imputed* righteousness (chapter 4). The second half of the book interacts much more directly with NPP issues. These chapters include an evaluation of the weaknesses and strengths of NPP readings (chapter 5), an argument that 'righteousness has both soteriological and social significance' (p. 5) (chapter 6), a discussion of works and eschatological vindication in light of Romans 2.12-16 (chapter 7), and, finally, he concludes with a critique of the castigation that N.T. Wright has received (chapter 8).

What makes Bird's work so compelling is that it challenges evangelical thinking on several fronts. In the first half of his book, his chapters on the significance of the resurrection and the role of incorporation or union with Christ focus on two of the most central aspects of Paul's soteriology often neglected by evangelicals. Bird does not downplay the role of the cross, but he clearly shows that any view of Christ's work that solely focuses on the cross is deficient. At the same time, his neologism 'incorporated righteousness' better captures the direction of Paul's language and helps us transcend old debates. In the second half of the book, he urges balanced and reasoned thinking with regard to the NPP. As with many debates, the best answer is most often a complex both/and rather than a simplistic either/or. Bird does a good job of incorporating the strengths of both

sides, presenting a helpful, irenic synthesis in this area. I find his critique of the tone of the reformed debate and critique of the charges against Wright beneficial and well timed. The bibliography reflects his balanced position where he topically presents central works both for and against the NPP. One typographical error of note within the bibliography is that Kevin Bush not Kevin Bywater is the webmaster of the NT Wright Page (<http://www.ntwrightpage.com>) (211).

Four of the seven main chapters – chapters three, four, five, and six – have been previously published in evangelical journals over the last several years. These republished chapters contain, I think, his most insightful work of the book, so it is beneficial to have them all in one place and set within a larger setting. However, this book does not suffer from the disjunction that collections of previously published essays sometimes do.

Bird has taken on the difficult task of presenting a nuanced position over against those who see issues as one-sided. This is especially helpful coming from one who is firmly within the reformed camp. However, this monograph is more important than just another discussion of NPP debates. It provides an insightful synthesis regarding Paul's understanding of justification, as his perceptive discussions of resurrection and incorporation show.

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***Paul and His World:
Interpreting the New Testament in Its Context*
Helmut Koester**

Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007, xi + 301 pp.,
– 19.44, hb, ISBN 978-0-8006-3890-0

SUMMARY

Helmut Koester has dedicated his life to the study of the New Testament world. This collection, made up of over two dozen essays derived from research that spans nearly half a century, walks the reader through his life's work. Koester is most impressive when he is dealing with issues of methodology and the appropriate use of tools and materials that are often utilised by NT scholars – particularly textual criticism, epistolography and archaeology. Additionally, he takes interest in the sociological and political aspects of the NT writings. Although occasionally an argument or theory of his is found wanting or misguided, we are in his debt for this excellent volume with much wisdom inside.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Helmut Koester hat sein Leben dem Studium der Welt des Neuen Testaments gewidmet. Diese Sammlung, die aus mehr als zwei Dutzend Aufsätzen aus einer Spanne von fast einem halben Jahrhundert besteht, führt den Leser durch sein Lebenswerk. Koester ist am beeindruckendsten, wenn es um Fragen der Methodologie und des angemessenen Gebrauchs von Werkzeugen und Materialien geht,

die oft von Neutestamentlern benutzt werden – insbesondere Textkritik, Epistelverfassung und Archäologie. Zusätzlich ist er an den soziologischen und politischen Aspekten der neutestamentlichen Schriften interessiert. Obwohl zum Teil eine seiner Argumentationen oder Theorien unzulänglich oder irregeleitet erscheint, stehen wir für diesen exzellenten Band, der viel Weisheit enthält, in seiner Schuld.

RÉSUMÉ

Helmut Koester a consacré sa vie à l'étude du monde dans lequel est né le Nouveau Testament. Cet ouvrage reprend plus de deux douzaines d'articles qui proviennent de près d'un demi siècle de recherche et donnent un aperçu de l'œuvre d'une vie. Koester est à son meilleur lorsqu'il traite des questions de méthodologie, de l'usage approprié des outils et documents sur lesquels les spécialistes du Nouveau Testament prennent souvent appui, notamment la critique textuelle, la rhétorique épistolaire et l'archéologie. En outre, il s'intéresse aux aspects sociologiques et politiques des textes du Nouveau Testament. Bien qu'on rencontre à l'occasion chez cet auteur un argument déficient ou une théorie erronée, on doit saluer ici un ouvrage excellent offrant beaucoup de sagesse.

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This collection of essays by New Testament scholar Helmut Koester, of Harvard Divinity School, is remarkable in many ways. First of all, the various journal articles and endowed lectures from which the chapters are derived span over half of a century. Second, Koester's interests and expertise are manifold and include epistolography, archaeology, classics, textual criticism, pauline theology, and early Christianity. The chapters are broken down into three main sections: 'Reading Paul: His Letters and Their Interpretation', 'Reading Paul's World: The Cultural and Religious Environment', and 'Reading Early Christianity'. The first section (on Paul) is made up of nine essays and is almost entirely dominated by discussions of the Thessalonian epistles. He demonstrates such hermeneutical acumen and methodological shrewdness that his forthcoming commentary on these letters (for the Hermeneia series) is eagerly anticipated. In chapter five he exposes the numerous errors and conclusions made by New Testament scholars who misuse/misunderstand ostensibly relevant archaeological materials. In particular, he makes a case out of Robert Jewett's 'chilastic movement' theory (based on materials about the Kabiroi) in Thessaloniki and demonstrates that Jewett works from too little evidence which often is *later* than Paul's time and/or *outside* of Thessaloniki. Koester, time and time again, pleads for methodological acuity and eschews exaggeration or *non sequiter* conclusions. However, one wonders if he does not commit the same fallacy in his hypothesis (in chapter seven) that the book of Philippians is a compilation of three authentically pauline letter fragments that were edited together into its canonical form as a 'testimony' to the Apostle's death – a death Koester thinks may have actually taken