

Book Reviews – Recensions – Buchbesprechungen

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Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission

Michael F. Bird

Library of New Testament Studies 331

London & New York: T. & T. Clark/Continuum, 2006,
212 pp., £ 80.00, hb; ISBN 978 0567 044730

SUMMARY

Bird convincingly argues that for Jesus a mission to the Gentiles was closely linked to the restoration of Israel. Jesus advocated a particular brand of Jewish restoration eschatology which held that the Gentiles would be saved as a sequel to the restoration of Israel. This explains Jesus' concentration on Israel. Without passing by Israel, salvation goes to the ends of the earth. Bird concludes that 'The propulsion and momentum for the origin of the various Gentile missions in the early church ultimately derive from the effective history of the historical Jesus' (177).

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Bird argumentiert überzeugend, dass eine Heidenmission für Jesus eng mit der Wiederherstellung Israels verbunden war. Jesus verteidigte eine bestimmte Art von jüdischer Wiederherstellungseschatologie, die besagte, dass die Heiden als Konsequenz der Wiederherstellung Israel gerettet würden. Dies erklärt sehr gut Jesu Konzentration auf Israel. Die Erlösung geht zu den Enden der Erde, ohne Israel zu übergehen. Bird schließt, dass „der Antrieb und das Momentum für den Ursprung der verschiedenen Heidenmissionen letztendlich von der wirksamen Geschichte des historischen Jesus abgeleitet sind.“ (177).

RÉSUMÉ

Bird montre de manière convaincante que, dans la pensée de Jésus, la mission envers les non Juifs était étroitement liée à la restauration d'Israël. Jésus se rattachait à l'un des courants particuliers de l'eschatologie juive selon lequel les non Juifs seraient sauvés en conséquence de cette restauration. C'est ce qui explique qu'il a consacré son ministère à Israël. Sans délaisser Israël, le salut doit s'étendre aux extrémités de la terre. Bird conclut que l'élan donné aux diverses entreprises missionnaires auprès des non Juifs dans l'Église primitive avait pour moteur l'histoire réelle du Jésus historique (177).

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For many decades, exegetes and missiologists have examined the complex relationship between Jesus, Gentiles and the later Gentile mission. How is the pre-Easter life and ministry of Jesus to be related to his commissions of the disciples for mission and to the mission of the early church? Some studies of early Christian mission start with sections on Jesus, e.g. E. J. Schnabel, *Early Chris-*

tian Mission I: Jesus and the Twelve (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004) 177–386.

In this discussion the Australian Michael Bird, who taught in Scotland, follows a fresh approach in linking the salvation of the Gentiles to the restoration of Israel. He begins with a fine introduction to the problems at hand and a survey of research on Jesus and the Gentiles. Chapter two examines early Jewish restoration eschatology and the Gentiles, Jesus as a prophet of Jewish restoration eschatology and the character of this restoration. Bird argues that Jesus advocated a particular brand of Jewish restoration eschatology which held that the Gentiles would be saved as a sequel to the restoration of Israel.

Next come Jesus' negative remarks about Gentiles and the restriction of Jesus' own mission to Israel, neither of which negates Jesus' interest in the Gentiles via the link of restoration eschatology. Chapter four surveys various sayings of Jesus about Gentiles (the positive example of Gentiles from the Scriptures, parables and the many who will come from the East and the West). In the chapter "I have not found such faith in Israel", Bird examines narrative material about Gentiles in the Gospels (Gentiles in Galilee, Jesus' journeys to Gentile areas and his table fellowship with them as well as other encounters). The sayings and narratives suggest that Jesus advocated a view of restoration as partially realised and as pointing to the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's salvific design.

Chapter six addresses the rationale for the salvation of the Gentiles in the mission of Jesus: the election of Israel and the Gentiles, the temple and the Gentiles, the pre-Easter antecedents to the post-Easter Gentile mission. The basis of the future Gentile mission rests on the mission of the disciples in approximating and appropriating the role of Israel and the temple as a 'light to the nations'. Bird summarises the results and concludes that

Jesus' intention was to renew and to restore Israel, so that a restored Israel would extent God's salvation to the world. Since this restoration was already being realized in Jesus' ministry, it was becoming possible for Gentiles to share in the benefits of Israel's restoration. Furthermore, Jesus understood himself and his followers as the beginning of the new temple and the vanguard of restored Israel who would appropriate for themselves the mission of Israel and the temple in being a light to the nations. Hence, a Gentile mission is implied in the aims and intentions of Jesus and was pursued in a transformed context by members of the early Christian movement (3).

Bird persuasively argues that the emergence of the Gentile mission in the early church was the logical outcome of the hope for the final admission of Gentiles in

Jewish restoration eschatology and in Jesus' own expression of a partially realised restoration eschatology. A bibliography and indexes round off the volume.

I am not fully convinced by Bird's thesis concerning the temple. As Jews, the disciples did not have to appropriate the mission of Israel: it was theirs. The fact that the Gentiles would benefit *as Gentiles* from the Christian mission without following the OT pattern of becoming proselytes is not sufficiently discussed.

Bird's study is one of several that rightly emphasise the close link between Jesus, the restoration of Israel and the nations. His presentation fits well with the picture of early Christian mission in Acts. This is an important contribution to the historical Jesus, mission in the early church, NT eschatology and our understanding of early Judaism. Bird has shown once more that this is the backdrop against which as well as the stage on which Jesus should be understood. Several of the issues raised invite further theological reflection.

Christoph Stenschke

Deliver Us from Evil: Interpreting the Redemption from the Power of Satan in New Testament Theology

Richard H. Bell

WUNT 216. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007, xxiii + 439 pp., € 99.00, hb, ISBN 978-3-16-149452-9

SUMMARY

Bell's book is an interpretation of how the NT presents salvation as deliverance from the power of Satan. He uses the distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal realms to argue that Jesus' exorcisms were fundamentally noumenal realities with corresponding actions in the phenomenal world, and that in redemption a human being's 'soul' participates in the death and resurrection of Christ. These two points, Jesus' exorcisms and Satan's defeat, comprise the 'Satan myth' of the NT which is reversed by the Christ event. This work is a welcome reminder of an often forgotten aspect of NT soteriology.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Bells Buch ist eine Interpretation, die zeigt, wie das NT Erlösung als Befreiung von der Macht Satans präsentiert. Er benutzt die Unterscheidung zwischen der phänomenalen und der noumenalen Welt (von Kant und Schopenhauer), um zu argumentieren, dass Jesu Exorzismen grundlegend noumenale Realitäten waren, mit entsprechenden Handlungen in der phänomenalen Welt, und dass die „Seele“ eines Menschen in der Erlösung am Tod und an der Auferstehung Christi Anteil hat. Diese zwei Punkte, Jesu Exorzismen und Satans Niederlage, bilden den „Satanmythos“ des NT, der durch das Christusergebnis umgekehrt wird. Das Werk ist eine willkommene Erinnerung an einen oft vergessenen Aspekt der NT-Soteriologie.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage vise à interpréter la présentation du salut comme délivrance du pouvoir de Satan dans le Nouveau Testament. L'auteur fait appel à la distinction entre le phénoménal et le nouménal que l'on trouve chez Kant et Schopenhauer, pour soutenir que les exorcismes de Jésus étaient fondamentalement des réalités nouménaux auxquelles correspondaient des actes dans le monde du phénoménal. Il considère que la rédemption consiste en une participation de l'âme humaine à la mort et à la résurrection de Christ. À ces deux thèmes des exorcismes effectués par Jésus et de la défaite de Satan se rattache le « mythe de Satan » auquel le Nouveau Testament oppose l'événement Jésus-Christ. Ce livre peut nous rappeler un aspect souvent négligé de la sotériologie néotestamentaire.

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The fundamental question addressed in *Deliver Us from Evil* is 'how the redemption of the human being from Satan in New Testament Theology is to be interpreted' (341). To address this issue Bell develops a philosophical framework in which he interprets Jesus' exorcisms and the death and resurrection of Christ as deliverance from Satan's power.

In the opening chapter, Bell discusses the roles of the devil and demons in the Old and New Testaments as well as in ancient Judaism more broadly. He then develops at length his thesis that myth, properly understood, is fundamental to interpreting how the NT presents redemption from the power of Satan. After an overview of the basics of myth, Bell adds further elements to his working definition of myth: time, eschatology, history and ritual. This multifaceted definition of myth, he argues, with its unique 'subject-object relationship' that allows it to transcend all other narrative types, is key to interpreting the Satan myth 'because the work of Christ can be... seen as a reversal of the work of the devil' (64). This reversal is apparent in two ways in the NT: the exorcisms in the Synoptics and Acts (chapter two) and the death and resurrection of Christ (chapter five).

According to Bell, Jesus' exorcisms were understood as a form of healing and, given that in the NT period illness was believed to be a result of satanic attack, as deliverance from Satan. The further significance of exorcisms in the NT is discussed in the following chapter in which Bell introduces, somewhat unexpectedly since the previous chapter already discussed the content of the exorcism passages, his 'philosophical framework' for interpreting exorcisms. Drawing on the distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds (from Kant and Schopenhauer), including how myth relates to the noumenal, Bell suggests that Jesus' exorcisms should be understood along this distinction: when Satan is cast out or a demon is bound in the noumenal realm, a physical healing or exorcism takes place in the phenomenal world.

Before discussing the second way in which redemption is viewed as deliverance from Satan (chapter five), Bell develops a theology of participation and anthropol-