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0521824664 - God and History in the Book of Revelation: New Testament Studies  
in Dialogue with Pannenberg and Moltmann  
Michael Gilbertson  
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## GOD AND HISTORY IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

This is an interdisciplinary study which constructs a dialogue between biblical interpretation and systematic theology. It examines how far a reading of the Book of Revelation might either support or question the work of leading theologians Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jürgen Moltmann on the theology of history, exploring the way in which the author of Revelation uses the dimensions of space and time to make theological points about the relationship between God and history. The book argues that Revelation sets the present earthly experience of the reader in the context of God's ultimate purposes, by disclosing hidden dimensions of reality, both spatial – embracing heaven and earth – and temporal – extending into the ultimate future. Dr Gilbertson offers a detailed assessment of the theologies of history developed by Pannenberg and Moltmann, including their views on the nature of the historical process, and the use of apocalyptic ideas in eschatology.

MICHAEL GILBERTSON took his doctorate at the University of Durham. Ordained in the Church of England, he is now the Vicar of Stranton in Hartlepool, England.

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Pannenberg and Moltmann

**MICHAEL GILBERTSON**



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For Jenny

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## PREFACE

This interdisciplinary study brings together a reading of the Book of Revelation with an assessment of the work of Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jürgen Moltmann on the theology of history. Although both theologians have been influenced by apocalyptic, there has been no detailed study of their work in the light of Revelation, the most important Christian apocalypse.

Chapter 1 sets Pannenberg and Moltmann in their context, showing the influences which have shaped their work. Chapter 2 examines some of the methodological issues which arise in relating scripture and systematic theology together.

Chapters 3–5 form a detailed study of Revelation, exploring the way in which the author uses the dimensions of space and time to make theological points about the relationship between God and history. This in turn encourages faithfulness to God in the present.

Chapter 6 is a detailed assessment of the theologies of history developed by Pannenberg and Moltmann, including their views on the nature of the historical process, and the use of apocalyptic ideas in eschatology. Their proposals are analysed alongside conclusions from the reading of Revelation in chapters 3–5.

The study therefore constructs a dialogue between biblical interpretation and systematic theology, giving due weight to both disciplines.



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## ABBREVIATIONS

Unless otherwise indicated, scriptural references are to the Book of Revelation. References to 'Revelation' with an initial capital are to this text, rather than to divine disclosure in general, for which I have used lower case.

Abbreviations for canonical texts and for the Apocrypha follow usual conventions. Abbreviations for texts from the Old Testament pseudepigrapha are based on those used in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (2 vols., New York: Doubleday, 1983–85).

Where abbreviations for modern publications appear in the list set out in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107 (1988), pp. 579–96, I have followed that guide. Other abbreviations are listed below.

BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>IJPR</i>	<i>International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha, Supplement Series
<i>MTheol</i>	<i>Modern Theology</i>
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> , ed. C. Brown (3 vols. Exeter: Paternoster, 1975–78).
<i>Theol</i>	<i>Theology</i>