

written by such as Bauckham, Giesen or Prigent. In all these, the authors show hard-won expertise in handling an extraordinarily sophisticated, and therefore demanding, piece of ancient literature. Witherington's stature as a New Testament specialist is amply confirmed by other published work, but in this commentary he relies on his mentors at almost every significant point, referring to them frequently and with nearly six hundred footnotes, mostly acknowledgements.

When viewed from the standpoint of specialised work on Revelation, the scholarly perspective and academic rigour of the back cover's hype are not especially in evidence. At a time of too many commentaries, this one resembles a sort of digest. By the end of my read, I still had no clear answers concerning what was so "innovative" about this contribution, what its author – as a non specialist – had added to the sum of Revelation scholarship to date, or what he had said better than the many who have recently gone before.

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***God and History in the Book of Revelation:
New Testament Studies in Dialogue with
Pannenberg and Moltmann
(Society for New Testament Studies Monograph
Series 124)***

Michael Gilbertson

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, xiii + 235 pp., £ 47.50, hb, ISBN 0-521-82466-4

SUMMARY

God and History in the book of Revelation, one of the fruits of the recent surge of interest in the relationship between biblical studies and systematic theology, places Jürgen Moltmann's and Wolfhart Pannenberg's respective views of history into a constructive dialogue with the way in which the Book of Revelation uses spatial and temporal categories to account for God's relationship to the world. The book is highly recommended, especially for its deft analysis of how John the Seer places the ambivalent situation of his audience within God's ultimate purposes for both heaven and earth.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce livre est l'un des fruits de l'intérêt que l'on porte ces temps-ci à la relation entre les études bibliques et la théologie systématique. Il considère la pensée de Moltmann et de Pannenberg sur l'histoire à la lumière de l'usage, dans le livre de l'Apocalypse, de catégories spatiales et temporelles pour présenter la relation de Dieu au monde. Nous avons trouvée profonde l'analyse de la manière dont Jean le visionnaire situe la condition ambivalente de ses lecteurs dans le cadre des desseins ultimes de Dieu pour le ciel et la terre.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

God and History in the book of Revelation ist eine Frucht

des gegenwärtigen Anstiegs des Interesses an der Beziehung zwischen Bibelwissenschaften und systematischer Theologie und bringt die jeweiligen Ansichten über Geschichte von Jürgen Moltmann und Wolfhart Pannenberg in einen konstruktiven Dialog mit der Art und Weise, auf der die Offenbarung räumliche und zeitliche Kategorien benutzt, um Gottes Beziehung zur Welt zu begründen. Das Buch ist sehr zu empfehlen, besonders wegen seiner geschickten Analyse des Weges, auf dem der Seher Johannes die ambivalente Situation seiner Adressaten mit Gottes letztendlichen Absichten mit Himmel und Erde verbindet.

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In *God and History in the Book of Revelation* Michael Gilbertson constructs a dialogue between the Book of Revelation and Wolfhart Pannenberg's and Jürgen Moltmann's respective views of history. In addition to this theological concern, a methodological question runs throughout the book: how can we relate biblical studies and systematic theology, which have usually been held at arms length in modern academia? The heart of Gilbertson's methodological argument is set out in the second chapter of the book, where he first clearly and concisely analyses a variety of attempts to account for the purpose of and relationship between the two disciplines, and then proposes a dynamic relationship where both the contemporary concerns of modern theology and the historical particularity of the text are given their due weight. Gilbertson justifies his method with an appeal to Alister McGrath's defence of a modified propositional approach to theology in which dogmatics is seen as an elaboration of what is found in Scripture, where "Christian doctrine is...concerned with the unfolding and uncovering of the history of Jesus of Nazareth, in the belief that this gives insight into the nature of reality." (McGrath, as quoted, 44) Apart from a not uncommon but unfortunate neglect of the church's tradition of reading and interpreting Scripture, Gilbertson approach is sensible; he neither diminishes the concerns for the historical contingencies which has been the emphasis of biblical studies nor downplays the role of theological construction within the social, cultural and philosophical circumstances in which we find ourselves. In Christian theology, biblical studies and systematic theology need one another because the former always draws us back to the particularity of the biblical texts that the latter is based upon while the latter seeks to articulate a Scriptural view of reality within which we ought to read the text. One may add, which Gilbertson does not state explicitly, that it is perhaps time for Christian scholars to stop viewing the two as distinct disciplines but see them as the exegetical and conceptual aspect of the one theological task—to speak the truth as informed by Scripture within and for the world in which we find ourselves.

Gilbertson concern to give biblical studies and systematics their due concern shapes the structure of the book's positive theological argument. In the first chapter Gilbertson sets out the modern philosophical and theo-

logical concerns which both Pannenberg and Moltmann respond to in their respective views of history, how they try to account for the God-world relation within their intellectual heritage (which basically amounts to accounting for God in history after Troeltsch). In this way the contemporary theological question Gilbertson desires to tackle has been set out in the open. In chapters 3-5, after he has methodologically defended the move in chapter 2, he then proceeds to show how Revelation accounts for the God-world relationship through the way it uses spatial and temporal categories. In the last chapter he then returns to Pannenberg and Moltmann, considering how his interpretation of Revelation may inform their respective views of history. This last chapter, although competent, is somewhat of an anti-climax of an otherwise brilliant study, diffused in comparison to the tight argument of the rest of the book.

Gilbertson has convincingly shows that despite vast conceptual differences, the fundamental concerns of the book of Revelation and those of Pannenberg and Moltmann are not simply consonant with each other but can be greatly enriched by one another. The central chapters (3-5) are undoubtedly the high point of the book. Here Gilbertson, through an analysis of the formal characteristics of Revelation and its use of spatial and temporal categories shows how the book "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." (i) Even apart from Gilbertson insightful methodological observations and his competent analysis of Pannenberg and Moltmann, the book is worth every penny of its heavy price tag just for this clear, concise and convincing analysis of how John places the difficult socio-political context of his audience within the larger purposes of God for heaven and earth.

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Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and Theological Studies,

Stanley E. Porter, A. R. Cross (eds.)

JSNT 234. Sheffield: SAP, 2002. 401 pp.
£80, hb. ISBN 0-8264-6203-0

SUMMARY

This collection of essays by North American and British authors covers various aspects of baptism in the New Testament (John the Baptist, household baptisms in Acts, Paul, Hebrews, Johannine literature), contains three essays on historical subjects and gathers some aspects of baptism in contemporary theology (the latter written by Baptists). The volume does not cover all relevant aspects but reminds its readers that there is more to Christian baptism than the question of when and how people should be baptised. It is a stimulating (and expensive!) "must" for all interested

in the current scholarly and interdisciplinary discussion of baptism.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage est une collection d'essais rédigés par des auteurs nord-américains et britanniques abordant divers aspects du baptême dans le Nouveau Testament : le baptême de Jean-Baptiste, les baptêmes de maisonnée, le baptême chez Paul, dans l'épître aux Hébreux et dans la littérature johannique. Trois études sont consacrées à des sujets historiques et considèrent certains aspects de la théologie contemporaine du baptême. Cet ouvrage ne couvre pas tous les aspects, mais il contribue à rappeler au lecteur que la question de savoir quand et comment l'on doit être baptisé n'est pas la seule qui se pose concernant le baptême. C'est un ouvrage stimulant (mais aussi coûteux) que ne doivent pas négliger ceux qui sont intéressés par le débat académique et interdisciplinaire actuel sur le baptême.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese Sammlung von Essays aus der Feder nordamerikanischer und britischer Autoren deckt verschiedene Aspekte der Taufe im Neuen Testament ab (Johannes der Täufer, Haustaufen in der Apostelgeschichte, Paulus, den Hebräerbrief und die johanneische Literatur), enthält drei Essays zu historischen Themen und sammelt einige Aspekte der Taufe in der gegenwärtigen Theologie (letzteres aus der Feder von Baptisten). Der Band deckt nicht alle relevanten Aspekte ab, aber er erinnert den Leser daran, dass die Frage der christlichen Taufe mehr umfasst als das Wann oder Wie der Taufe. Das Buch ist ein stimulierendes (und teures!) Muss für alle, die an der gegenwärtigen wissenschaftlichen und interdisziplinären Diskussion zur Taufe interessiert sind.

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For many years G. Beasley Murray's examination of *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) has been the one and only in-depth study of an important but neglected NT subject. Also in church history and systematic theology baptism has not been a major subject. This situation has changed with the appearance of a good number of studies in recent years of the whole field (listed on pp. 1f). The editors of the present volume already contributed to this renewed interest with their earlier volume *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church: Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R. E. O. White* (JSNT.S 171; Sheffield: SAP, 1999).

This interdisciplinary volume contains essays by seventeen international scholars and consists of three parts. After the list of contributors the editors provide an "Introduction: Baptism – An Ongoing Debate" (1-6) in which they summarise the following essays and observe that scholars from a Baptist tradition have not studied baptism the way one would have expected: "In short, in the last thirty years, Baptists have produced very little specifically on baptism/Christian initiation, an observation which belies their numerical strength. It is of particular note, then, that a number of the essays in the present