

Foreword

Und jedem Anfang wohnt ein Zauber inne
Der uns beschützt und der uns hilft zu leben.

In all beginnings dwells a magic force
For guarding us and helping us to live.

Hermann Hesse

“In all beginnings dwells a magic force.” Hermann Hesse was certainly right. Yet, it is never *only* magic in the beginning – often there is also labour, for instance, and sometimes downright confusion. The development of this volume involved some magic, extensive labour, and, if not confusion, the constant push for orientation – for if scholars from different academic, geographic, cultural and denominational backgrounds seek to talk with each other about Scripture and theology, initial orientation is essential.

This present anthology is witness to such a push towards initial orientation. It represents an unusual collection of peer reviewed essays in several respects. It does not only seek to bridge the two key domains in Divinity, biblical studies (or Scripture) and theology; it also includes contributions from senior and junior scholars of various professional and denominational backgrounds. The bulk of the twenty chapters included in the book stems from presentations at the Scripture & Theology workshops held in Bologna in 2019 and digitally in 2020 at the Annual Conferences of the European Academy of Religion (EuARE). The spectrum of theological and methodological style embraced spans a wide range of scholarly approaches. Some of the contributions employ traditional historical and literary methods, others are primarily constructive-theological or critical-emancipatory in their approach, while still other papers reflect a particular church context, or a wider ecumenical horizon, as the platform for theological and historical exploration. Thus, the book as a whole is a polyphonic response to the question how Scripture relates to theology. It collects voices from various disciplines and confessional backgrounds. Each of the authors is responsible for their own contribution.

In the process of completing the volume, we, the editors, made new friends. We are grateful towards the EuARE for their continuing efforts to foster dialogue where there was none. We thank the Scripture & Theology Advisory Board for their willingness to support our annual panels in various ways. We also thank the presenters and authors, as well as our reviewers and proofreaders – especially Dr. Mark Nixon – for their critical, yet constructive feedback on the papers. We further extend our thanks to NLA University College for funding proof-

reading of the present volume, and to de Gruyter – in particular, Dr. Albrecht Döhnert – for their willingness towards and support for this somewhat unusual volume. Likewise, we are grateful to our authors for following through with the demands and shifts connected with this publication. Finally, we want to thank Prof. Dr. Friederike Nüssel, Prof. Dr. Bruce McCormack and the late Prof. Dr. Christoph Schwöbel for their willingness and support to include the volume in the *Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann*. In line with this, we also want to acknowledge that one of our presenters – Prof. Dr. Corneliu Constantineanu, Professor of Theology at Arad University, Romania – sadly passed away due to a Covid-19-infection. Corneliu’s manuscript “Justice and Reconciliation: The Use of Scripture in Public Theology” could not be recovered. Corneliu himself is sincerely missed.

We see this volume as a first attempt to bring together Scripture and theology within a renewed discussion among a diversity of scholarly voices and interests. Future publications, we hope, will relate to this initial orientation, yet will not be able to reduce the complexity involved in the inherent connection between Scripture and theology. And it is this connection, with its potential for good scriptural, historical and constructive theology, that may also be “guarding us and helping us to live”.

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