

Foreword

With the publication of this book, a long-cherished wish has come true. Its initial ideas go back to the early days of the “Interdisciplinary Working Group for Human-Animal Studies” initiated by the Bündnis Mensch & Tier Foundation and founded in 2007. In the debates there, we kept coming back to the question of the role of Christianity in relation to animals and creation. And I realized that, as the only theologian in the group, I was able to give the first rudiments of an answer, but not a comprehensive and well-founded account. At the same time, everyone was aware of the enormous importance of the question of Christian anthropocentrism.

The project presented here required a great deal of preliminary thought and elaborate preparation. In particular, finding the relevant patristic texts was an enormously arduous task and certainly did not lead to their final and complete consideration. Nevertheless, the texts collected here provide a solid basis for tracing the development of the history of theology. In this respect, my student assistant at the time, Elena Deinhammer, has rendered invaluable services. Without her precise and meticulous research, this book would not have been possible. I would like to thank my current student assistant Viktoria Puchner for her profound research on the text-critical editions of the sources and secondary literature.

Scientific knowledge essentially lives from discourse. My colleagues from the aforementioned Interdisciplinary Working Group for Human-Animal Studies have repeatedly inspired me with their ideas, critically questioned me, enriched me with new perspectives and spurred me on with their collegiality and affinity. A symposium at the Catholic University of Eichstätt run by my colleagues Christoph Böttigheimer and Alexis Fritz on the question of God’s creation plan was also valuable for me. Especially with regard to the last chapter, I benefited greatly from this symposium, although I was unfortunately only able to participate via video link. Finally, many thanks go to my colleague Alfons Fürst in Münster, who was readily available to me as a patristic discussion partner and helped greatly to place my discoveries in the larger context of early Christian thought. Without his profound feedback, I would never have ventured so far into the territory of another theological discipline.

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