Editorial: New Beginnings

From the Ending of Worlds to the Vision of Futures

ENGLISH

Who does not wish for a chance to start anew when life is difficult? Especially in times of uncertainty and instability, the longing for new beginnings emerges with heightened intensity, to the point that it gives rise to calls and actions for revolutionary change. Which poses the question: Is it possible to start anew, to leave the past and status quo behind and create something entirely new? This issue of LIMINA investigates the key questions of "new beginnings" and explores different theological and cultural-scientific perspectives on the concept and possibility of new beginnings.

Our call for papers inspired several papers that address these questions from the field of Bible Studies and through a Bible-focussed systematic theological lens. Contributions from other fields, such as Peace Education and Peace Studies, Ecological Ethics integrating spirituality as well as an article on emerging forms of sexual behaviour through increasing interactions between the human and technology further enrich and enlighten this exploration.

The starting point of this issue of LIMINA is the biblical message of hope and promise "*Behold, I am making all things new!*". *Matthias Geigenfeind* and *Daniel Wiebe* offer two intersecting and mutual perspectives on the theme of new creation according to the Book of Revelation in their article "'Ecce, nova facio omnia' (Rev 21:5). Divine (and) Jerusalemite new beginnings in the Book of Revelation". First, they highlight the recent critical textual re-emphasis of this biblical passage according to the *Editio Critica Maior* of the Apocalypse (*ECM-Apk*). This new reading locates the promise of completion in God's creative self-presence. Based on this understanding,

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the article then analyses Rev 21:1–22:5 as the final vision of the revelation. The New Jerusalem emerges as God's new spatial order, the manifestation of a new reality beyond death, sorrow, pain and darkness.

Josef Pichler offers a further exegetic perspective on the premise of the Gospel of Mark. His interpretation looks beyond the grand proclamation of a reorganisation of religious and social practice heralded by Jesus the Messiah and opens up a narrative process for the reconceptualization of masculinity, spanning from the prologue (Mark 1:1–3) to the open ending (Mark 16:8). Drawing on Gérard Genette's narratology and Judith Butler's concept of performativity, he demonstrates how the key terms at the beginning of the Gospel—'beginning', 'Gospel' and 'Son of God'—can be detached from the context of Roman imperial propaganda and imbued with new meaning through Jewish-prophetic semantics. This is illustrated by three key passages: the anointing at Bethany, the Roman centurion's confession during the crucifixion, and the empty tomb. Through this, the narrative transformation of masculinity becomes a space of possibility for a redemptive and liberating process: "Rewriting Masculinity. Markan Soteriology and the Performative Subversion of Roman Gender Order".

Willibald Sandler outlines the framework for a biblically oriented dogmatics which understands God's action as a continuous renewal of creation through small and minute new beginnings presented by God. Jesus' parables of the seed in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 13) provide the hermeneutical key to this salvific action, in which Christology, anthropology, soteriology and eschatology converge. The eschatological Kingdom of God appears in small and only seemingly insignificant, yet also fragile, seed events. The people experiencing these events are nudged towards opening up to God in their innermost being and, at the same time, are confronted with situations requiring a decision—a kairos. This dramatic-kairological perspective opens up a new view of grace and freedom: God's power of grace offers new beginnings which do not overpower human freedom but allow it to flourish. Sin thus presents a rejection of the new beginnings offered up by every kairos. Grace and salvation, on the other hand, become not only theoretically plausible but can be directly experienced in the interplay between God's subtle and at times seemingly paradoxical acts of salvation and the human commitment to the possibility of salvation hidden within them.

Maike Domsel presents a Bible-inspired and peace-educational tapestry that allows us to see compassion as a 'performative and relational practice that weaves together affective perception of others' suffering with ethical

judgment and responsible action' (M. Domsel). In the face of increasing social polarisation and global crises, she argues for a reconsideration of the authority of those who are suffering. Theological reflections drawing on the biblical-prophetic tradition, New Testament ethics and the Islamic tradition of *raḥma* are interwoven with Johann Baptist Metz's theology of suffering to form an analytical framework within which compassion can become a productive impetus towards ethical action. Additional threads of relational anthropology and ethical approaches by Martha Nussbaum, Emmanuel Lévinas and Judith Butler provide more depth. The practical pedagogical section of Domsel's article illustrates how compassion can be integrated in school contexts through narrative, dialogical and interactive methods in order to reflect the tension between perception, judgment and situational actions. She thus offers an approach that supports students in developing their ethical sensibilities and their capacity for acting relationally responsibly.

Maximilian Lakitsch addresses the pressing question of how conflict resolution and peace-building efforts can be reconceived—following the failure of modern interventionist approaches—on an international level and with sustainable impact in his article "Towards an Ecology of Peace as a Political Topology after the End of History". He reveals the fundamental flaw in both liberal and illiberal strategies for conflict resolution in that they are based on universalist, state-centred and Eurocentric assumptions that exert epistemic violence. They impose external systems of knowledge that erase, delegitimise and silence local forms of knowledge and being, thereby misconstruing lived realities in post-conflict situations and paving the way for renewed violence. To break this cycle, Lakitsch proposes an ecology of peace as an alternative political topology. He draws on relational ontologies that recognise the enormous diversity of human and non-human relationships, positions and cosmologies as the constitutive foundations for sustainable peace-building interventions.

Antonina Wozna Urbanczak presents a programmatic outline for the integration of spiritual intelligence into the UN's global action plan for sustainable development (Agenda 2030) in her article "Spiritual Intelligence. An ethical principle for an extended Agenda 2030?". She argues that spiritual intelligence is an essential factor for sustainable development. Thus, Inner Development Goals must be developed and promoted as supportive pillars for Sustainable Development Goals in order to enable lasting and effective processes of transformation. Urbanczak illustrates this on the example of the care movement, where gender-equitable action and eco-

nomic practices have brought about sustainable improvements for individuals and social environments.
Christoph Großschädl investigates "Sexuality and the impact of technological developments". The ever tighter enmeshing of the human and technology in the life-altering age of digitisation creates new possibilities for sexual practices and communication. This paper shines a light on the optimization and customization of sex offered by teledildonic and electronic sex toys (remotely) controlled through digital channels that open up possibilities of touch and sexual interactions that transcend (spatial) distances. These developments facilitate the emergence of more fluid forms of sexuality. However, as Großschädl points out, they also necessitate new standards and safeguards in order to prevent coercion and violence and to ensure sexual consent.

The discussions, contemplations and insights offered in these articles demonstrate how diverse and heterogenous the concept of new beginnings is, spanning different fields. This is perhaps to no surprise. After all, new beginnings cannot be located or traced to one causality, neither in respect to an individual nor groups or even large social environments. Rather—and as tangibly evident in every contribution in this issue of LIMINA—we need to consider the inevitable interdependencies and relationalities between and across separate subjects as it is often a multiplicity of factors that define and significantly influence processes of transformation. New beginnings are not only difficult to set in motion, but require close tending to in order to prevent them from running aground and ensure the sustainable spread of their positive ripple effect as intended.

Although not a new beginning, we are excited to announce that LIMINA will continue its journey into the future under a new banner: "Theology in interdisciplinary dialogue | Theologie im interdisziplinären Dialog". This new heading sets out our established intentions and vision more clearly. We look forward to sharing this renewed focus with our readers and contributors and hope you continue to follow LIMINA, a publication by the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the University of Graz.
If you would like to stay up-to-date with new issues and topics, we invite you to sign up to our newsletter.

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