PREFACE

The present Handbook of Patristic Exegesis was in the making for over a decade. A first incentive for its conception came in the form of a circular letter from Brill inviting experts to collaborate on a number of projected handbooks. Soon after the signature of the contract the idea of a collection of essays dealing with the whole history of patristic exegesis revealed itself to be unworkable and counter-productive. The diversity of viewpoints in specialized approaches excluded a coherent oversight of biblical hermeneutics during the patristic period.

I made the risky decision to become solely responsible for the whole project under consideration, while calling on a number of friends and colleagues for help. Their sixteen “Special Contributions” enhance the present publication. One of these contributions, “Patristic Exegesis of the Books of the Bible,” by David L. Balás and D. Jeffrey Bingham is noteworthy in its sheer volume (here the entire chapter 4 of Part A) and its methodological complementarity: whereas the Handbook presents patristic authors with regard to the Bible, Balás and Bingham concentrate on the Books of the Bible as presented by patristic authors.

The unselfish commitment and extreme patience of the contributors are for me a source of intense gratitude. My comparatively recent familiarity with written English, together with the challenges of teaching commitments, as much as the amassing of bibliographic information needed for a synthesis never attempted before, underlies the over-long incubation of the Handbook.

Without the assistance of Deacon Phil Dunn, my former student at Concordia University, who relentlessly computerized all bibliographic data, and without the friendly welcome of Father Claude-Roger Nadeau, s. j. in the oasis of his Bibliothèque de Théologie in Montreal, the project would have failed. The full support of Dr. Martin Singer, Dean of the College of Arts and Science at Concordia University, and that of the Department of Theological Studies since 1992 were another vital input towards the conclusion of the project. Heartfelt gratitude goes to all helping hands from which the incubating handbook benefitted during the past decade: my Australian relatives and friends, Anne and John Bright, Maureen and Denis McNamara, Pauline Allen and her staff; my French family, especially Josèpha and Fernand Jenny; my Japanese colleagues; and closer to home, my colleague at Concordia University, Russel Moroziuk, in the last stages of proofreading, and Bernard Glover, also of Concordia, whose expertise with computers made miracles. In different ways they all allowed the project to reach completion. Last but not least, the publisher Brill, taking on for me a human face through the
enthusiastic commitment of Hans van der Meij, Pim Rietbroek and their staff (in particular, Edgar Smith and Michel Pauw) in Leiden (Holland) and of Patrick Alexander in Boston, Mass. (USA) never failed to provide a generous and highly competent support. Prof. D. Jeffrey Bingham, already mentioned as a special contributor, was also kindly helpful in the editorial stage. With four modest Latin words, the dedicatory formula tries to express the debt of gratitude beyond all words which I owe to my wife, my best friend and student for almost a quarter of a century, and my inspiration for years to come.

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