

A “Religionless” Mission? — Reflecting on Creation’s Place in Mission Theology with Reference to the Croatian Context¹

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Abstract

Our world continues to change as a result of things such as rapid technological and scientific advances, the rapidly spiraling climate crisis, and shifting geopolitical dynamics. If mission is defined as God’s ongoing work to reconcile, heal, and renew all of creation, the Church must spend serious time reflecting on what God might be currently doing and how to best participate in it. Dynamic missional praxis emerges from a robust missional theology reflecting upon the realities in both local and global contexts—thus, missional praxis must always be creatively adapting. This paper urges evangelical churches in Croatia to reflect on their past understanding of mission and engage in a missional hermeneutic involving the witness of scripture, the context, and the theology of the church. In this regard, it highlights a central issue in current mission theology and praxis—a missing doctrine of creation in evangelical theology. This has contributed to a church with a disembodied mission ill-equipped to speak to the crises of today. However, because of the current challenges, there is also a significant opportunity for missional engagement in Croatia.

Keywords: *mission theology, doctrine of creation, dualism, Croatia, context*

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Introduction

The world continues to change as a result of things such as rapid technological and scientific advances, ongoing wars, and shifting geopolitical dynamics. In addition, there is the threat of massive biodiversity loss and climate change. There are now nearly eight billion people on the planet, and in the developed world, humans consume several planets' worth of resources every year, meaning many others go without. There are eight million known animal and plant species, with at least a million of those species threatened with extinction. For example, 50 percent of tropical rainforests have disappeared, which means 50 percent loss of biodiversity. Meanwhile, humans have reduced soil productivity by 23 percent, dumping 400 million tons of toxic waste into oceans every year. Climate change perpetuates the growing divide between the rich and poor—since the 1960s it has increased by 25 percent (Hayhoe 2020, Forward). Millions of people are leaving their homes because of war, violence, economic hardship, and climate change.

Such statistics are grim and overwhelming and thus can result in a variety of Christian responses ranging from prayer, intentional engagement, and theological reflection, to confusion, willful ignorance, or apathy. At a grassroots level, there is often an implicit dualism in evangelical orthopraxy—a subtle message that Christians should just focus on their personal salvation and holiness until going to heaven. This kind of thinking, according to Jonathan R. Wilson, can beget a religious system critiqued by Dietrich Bonhoeffer when he writes about a “religionless” Christianity—“religion” is something that accepts the way things are and offers rituals and management to cope (Wilson 2013, 70; Bonhoeffer 2010, 362–364).

Part of theological work is disentangling ideas from competing interpretative frameworks for one's theology to fuel an orthopraxy suited for the challenges of the current times. In this vein, one reason humans face such a crisis today is the natural consequences emerging from a set of ideas about the world that emerged in modernity and the Industrial Revolution. As Katherine Hayhoe puts it, inherent in modernity was the myth of the infinite earth and limitless human progress and development (Hayhoe 2020, Forward). This problematic ideology all too often became a lens by which evangelical churches in the West interpreted the Genesis mandate to subdue the earth and have dominion, intertwined with an eschatology asserting that the heavens and earth will completely burn up—resulting in a Christian perspective that is at best careless or apathetic towards God's beloved creation and at worst, just as exploitive as certain secular forces. Naturally, at least some of this theology would have been exported to Southeastern Europe by the waves of evangelical missionaries from the West sent over after Croatia's Homeland War.

Without careful theological reflection on the importance of physicality—matter, the world, our bodies—Jonathan R. Wilson (2013, 8) argues that this missing doctrine in evangelicalism has resulted in what he terms “church pathologies” of Gnosticism, de-emphasis on our bodies, and a narrowed concept of salvation. He argues that mission must be a “matter of witnessing to God’s whole work in Christ for the salvation of the cosmos.” These issues go to the very heart of the gospel as it has implications regarding our posture toward the world and our neighbor in terms of justice, love, and holistic action. Thus, if evangelicals take into consideration some of the current realities mentioned above, this requires a careful reevaluation of our mission theology and praxis just as has been the case in other eras when missiologists have been forced to disentangle a biblical concept of mission with the reigning philosophy or socio-cultural values of the day.

Fortunately, there are increasingly numerous theological resources that emphasize the importance of embodiment, creation, and a non-dualistic eschatology reorienting the church’s engagement with the material world.² In addition, there has been a notable shift in the last few decades in which Christian traditions, denominations, ecumenical initiatives, and parachurch organizations promote the inextricable connection between Christian mission and care for the earth as our common home.³ However, how well has this shift in mission theology moved into the grassroots of local church praxis? If the local church has no thoughtful response or engagement to the multitude of crises, that means the church cannot offer a convincing narrative to the surrounding community by which people can interpret the signs of the times—that is, the story of God’s creation, reconciliation, redemption, and renewal of God’s beloved world.

This paper first discusses the importance of understanding how context and ideas have influenced mission theory and praxis, highlighting the gap that often exists between theory and praxis. Second, it summarizes ideas and factors contributing to how the doctrine of creation gradually became de-emphasized in theology. Third, it focuses on one aspect of the doctrine of creation—the intertwining of creation and redemption and how that is of critical importance to mission theology. Finally, the paper brings these discussions together, suggesting the need for an analysis of mission theology in the Croatian evangelical context and arguing that global realities and contextual questions are an opportunity for deep reflection, asking the question of what would a “religionless” mission look like in the

2 See, for example, Volf and McAnnally-Linz 2022; Wright 2011; Willard 2009.

3 See, for example, the 5 Anglican Marks of Mission: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/mtag-the-5-marks-of-mission.pdf>; the Capetown Commitment: <https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctcommitment#p1-7>; Pope Francis’s encyclical “*Laudato Si*”: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html, and the global work and publishing of A Rocha: <https://arocha.org/en/>.

Croatian context in which the church lived as if salvation and redemption mattered for the whole cosmos?

1. The Interaction of Mission, Theology, and Context

Christian mission flows from our theology—our beliefs about God and God’s relationship to the world through history. Although the Church’s call to participate in God’s mission has not changed—in every generation and cultural context, new questions and challenges should compel the Church to revisit her theology undergirding her mission praxis as well as the missional praxis itself. Mission theology necessarily changes in different contexts and historical periods, as it seeks to discern what the Trinitarian God wants to do in a particular time and place through God’s people (Van Engen 2017). Thus, constant discerning and critical analysis is needed.⁴

In addition, there is always a need for a critique of past approaches to mission; through the trajectory of history, at times the church operated captive to the dominant socio-cultural and philosophical paradigms or subsumed faith within nationalism. The study of mission history is replete with examples, although a thoughtful critique is not so much about harshly condemning past mistakes, but rather about learning from the past as well as understanding the process by which the church becomes captive to the dominant interpretative paradigms. As a term, “mission” has been developed in different contexts and periods, sometimes holding unwieldy baggage as a result. For example, the concept of “mission” became fused with empire, power, and conquest during the era of Constantine, and this kind of entanglement resurfaced again as mission became intertwined with colonial conquest in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Van Engen 2010, 13). As Stephen Neill (1964, 450) summarized this period,

Whether we like it or not, it is the historic fact that the great expansion of Christianity coincided in time with the world-wide and explosive expansion of Europe that followed the Renaissance; that the colonizing powers have been the Christian powers; that a whole variety of compromising relationships have existed between missionaries and governments; and that in the main Christianity has been carried forward on the wave of western prestige and power.

As another example, in the nineteenth century, spurred on by William Carey’s writings and the evangelical awakenings, Protestants used what became known as the “Great Commission” in Matthew’s gospel as an impetus for the mission. However, because of philosophical and cultural norms of the time, their interpretation carried the assumptions of individualistic salvation and assumed that the new

4 Charles Van Engen (2017) suggests as a helpful model that this analysis transpires within the nexus of concentric circles which include the Bible, church reflection, culture, and personal experience.

churches in the South and East should resemble the particular sending church from the North and West—Western culture was considered to be the height of civilization and that assumption became inextricably connected to Christianity (Van Engen 2010, 15). In the later twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, in response to some of the entanglement of mission and power and increasing individualism, evangelical missiologists emphasized a kingdom of God approach which is qualitatively holistic and purposes transformation. This is based on the *Missio Dei* or the mission of God.⁵ As David Bosch (1991, 10) explains it, the *Missio Dei* is “God’s self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God’s involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate.”⁶

Despite the need of every era and generation to evaluate the idea of mission according to the questions and issues in both the local and global context, often mission theology and mission praxis are operating in different spheres—mission praxis continues to operate from old paradigms and thus becomes irrelevant or ineffective. For example, the concept of polycentric mission—that is, mission is from everyone to everywhere, based on radical shifts in global Christianity—has been an accepted fact and researched phenomenon for years. However, in some places, the word mission still too often conjures up a geographic understanding of mission being missionaries from the “Christian West” going out to the non-West (Goheen 2014). Some churches in America might still be deeply shocked to run into missionaries from other places in the world. There are some mission organizations or missionaries sent from churches in America who have not deeply reflected on their mission theology or praxis in light of the dramatic global changes in the last fifty years. Conversely, some nations who have been traditional “receivers” of mission, such as Croatia, are also often locked into this idea of geographic mission—that mission is something that happens “out there,” from “us to them” or “them to us.”

Secondly, another gap between praxis and theory is the missiological discussions on the quality of mission regarding the focus on word or deed. More than a century ago, missiologists did not separate the two concepts; however, in response to sweeping changes resulting from war, social upheavals, and the birth of new nations, evangelicals began to emphasize personal salvation and preaching instead of ecumenical approaches to socio-political goals fostered by other Prot-

5 *Missio Dei* was first used by Karl Barth in 1932 and was connected to a Trinitarian theology in 1952 at an IMC conference. It has since become a foundational concept in mission discussions (Van Engen 2004, 98).

6 I summarize some of this history in another article: Wachsmuth, Melody. 2013. Missional Insights: Exploring the Foundations of Mission in the Southeastern Context. *Kairos* 7/1: 69–78. However, there are many excellent summaries of the evolution of mission as a concept. See, for example, Van Engen 2010; Bosch 1991.

estants. However, as the church in the West continued shrinking, the church in other places was often poorer and more oppressed, thus making “mission as only proclamation” less contextually relevant. In the mid-twentieth century, missiologists such as René Padilla developed the concept of “integral mission” emphasizing a more holistic approach to mission (Van Engen 2004) and the first Lausanne Congress in 1974 tried to seriously bring these two foci together. Today, some missiologists prefer the concept of “mission as transformation,” defining it as the “change from a condition of human existence contrary to God’s purposes to one in which people can enjoy the fullness of life in harmony with God” (Tizon 2008, 5).⁷

As mentioned earlier, care for God’s creation as intrinsic to mission has come increasingly into focus—from various Christian traditions and denominations—through conferences, books, theological education, and organizations. However, at the grassroots level in numerous contexts, it still all too often remains a “side issue” at best, secondary to the real issue of personal salvation.⁸ I contend that it is not just our rapidly changing world that calls for more analysis and reflection, but a deeper reflection on how an absence of a doctrine of creation impacts the theology of evangelical churches in Croatia and the church’s mission to the world.

2. A Diminished Creation

A robust doctrine of creation poses the reality that the whole cosmos is created for God’s glory, God loves his world and non-human creation has value to God outside of humanity. The diminishment of the implications of this doctrine has historical roots. Richard Bauckham (2012, 20–24) traces Christian attitudes toward nature through history, arguing that the concept of “dominion” in Genesis was interpreted through Greek philosophy from the Church Fathers to the early modern period, which emphasized a utilitarian view that creation was only created for the benefit of humanity. This was a hierarchical view in which creatures were irrational and thus questions of justice or morality were not relevant regarding human relationship with non-human creation. However, this view also empha-

7 This term also has its own history of development in missiology, with missiologists and institutions from Latin America, England, Africa, Philippines, and the USA. This idea was most prominently developed by Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, and they developed key elements to expound on this holistic missiology to demonstrate what holistic mission in a particular context means. The eight elements are as follows: “1. An integral relationship between evangelism and social change 2. Mission as witness and journey in the world 3. Mission in context 4. Truth, commitment to change and imagination 5. Theology, Christian mission and understanding are always local 6. Freedom and power for the poor 7. Reconciliation and solidarity 8. Building communities of change” (Tizon 2008, 5).

8 I’ve written on this issue already, see: Wachsmuth 2021.

sized God's supremacy over angels, humans, and the rest of creation's role in glorifying God (Bauckham 2012, 29) and thus is still distinguishable from the modern technological view and its aggressive expansion of nature. Moreover, there was also a parallel view, evidenced by those saints and mystics who went to live among nature and the animals as they strove to live lives dedicated to God.⁹

Bauckham (2012, 43) roots the modernist spirit of domination over nature in Renaissance humanism, which emphasized the dignity of humanity, highlighting people's divinely inspired creativity. However, the primary catalyst, according to Bauckham, was Francis Bacon's ideas regarding the role of science and technology in increasing human dominion over nature to alleviate the troubles of humanity in the sixteenth century. Bacon believed it was a human duty to use and even exploit nature as much as possible for the benefit of humanity (Bauckham 2012, 50). He believed that religion—which was more for a disembodied spiritual concern—had little relevance to the practical concerns of life which instead could be answered and addressed by technology (Wirzba 2003, 66). This gradually shifted the idea that humanity was part of creation, rather humanity became separate and an interpreter of creation's meaning (Wirzba 2003, 67).

The separation of humanity from creation, the so-called "spiritual" from matter, placed humanity as the "meaning-maker" through science and technology. This had significant future repercussions, influencing an aggressive domination over nature which developed from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. The contributing philosophical factors were complex, for example, the development of nominalism, which emphasized the omnipotence of God to the point where no connection to God's creation could be made resulting in the reality that "we could no longer speak of creation in terms of God's concern, delight, and involvement in a rationally defensible manner" (Wirzba 2003, 67). In terms of economic changes, Wirzba (2003, 69) points to a shift of economies driven more by the quest for personal wealth rather than some "transcendent vision of justice and the good." The loss of a doctrine of creation gave way to this anthropocentric view of a vertical, hierarchical, and utilitarian relationship between humans and nature. Heaven and earth became "objects" that were made for humanity and creation had no value to God outside of humanity. In Wirzba's (2003, 70) summation: "The sense of humans as microcosms of creation, as containing within themselves the responsibility to bring creation to its perfection in God, is eclipsed by the autonomous

9 Bauckham (2013, 36) tells the story of one such saint: "The Saxon saint Benno of Meissen (d. 1106) was disturbed in his contemplation by the loud croaking of a frog, and so he commanded it to be silent. But he then remembered the words of the *Benedicite*, which, among its exhortations to all creatures to worship God, includes, 'Bless the Lord you whales and all that swim in the waters' (Dan. 3:79). Reflecting that God might prefer the singing of the frogs to his own prayer, he commanded the frogs to continue praising God in their own way."

self who, with the aid of scientific technique, transforms the world according to a human plan.”

This resulted in an “amputated” view of salvation, a kind of weak Gnosticism in which matter is not evil, but not that important. Christians continued to retreat from science and eventually, became focused on personal “redemption” displaced from the cosmos. It also resulted in a disembodied mission, rather than an “integral” or holistic mission. If bodies are not that relevant and separated from mind and spirit, then surely one must prioritize the spirit for salvation. Not only that, one must question to what extent these values of progress and development contributed to the mission enterprise, rather than a Trinitarian view of mission. Certainly, even today there are echoes in triumphalist plans of “finishing” the Great Commission or exploding church growth schemes regardless of contextual factors. Finally, a Christianity only suited to personal spirituality effectively removes theology from the public forum—material matters can be addressed by science and technology. Our ability to live the “with-God” life is removed from work, play, art, beauty, life, and death (Wirzba 2004, 70).

3. Creation and Redemption – A Kingdom Dialectic

To introduce a doctrine of creation back into our working theology, a helpful place to start is to meditate on the inextricable connection between creation and redemption. This relationship is what Jonathan R. Wilson (2013, 51) calls the dialectic of the kingdom – the kingdom being the “reality of God’s redemption in creation.” As he writes: “Apart from redemption, creation loses its purpose as declared in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Apart from creation, redemption has no purpose in the gospel” (Wilson 2013, 49). In Moltmann’s (1985, 56) words, salvation history has no meaning outside of new creation because the ultimate meaning of history is the consummated creation. In other words, we cannot address the formidable challenges of our time apart from answers rooted in Christ; on the other hand, we cannot understand the true meaning of Christ’s death and resurrection without applying it to the material world, the entire cosmos. This dialectic finally comes together in the new creation when the *telos* or purpose of creation is ultimately fulfilled (Wilson 2013, 53). The *telos* of creation, for which it was created is life— life sustained, rooted, and made possible by the Trinitarian God. Often in evangelical thinking, as Wilson points out, we think of God’s redemption saving us from our life *in* creation as if creation is merely a stage for the play of salvation history—a static place where a cosmic drama is played out before whisking the drama to another reality, rather than creation also being an actor in God’s redemptive work (Wilson 2013, 60). God’s final renewal is made complete in the eschaton, when God, in all his holiness, dwells with all that he has made. Miroslav Volf (2022, 212) articulates the *telos* of the relationship between creation

and God in this final consummation: “Though indwelt by God, the world is not the divine other of God; precisely as the holy of holies, the world is the nondivine reality become itself by being indwelt by God.”

What does this creation-redemption dialectic mean for mission theology? It means re-conceptualizing the word “mission” with this in mind. For eco-theologians, the mission begins with creation (Bookless 2023). Our identity as image bearers was intimately related to our relationship to God’s beloved creation. As eco-theologians have noted, Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15 is the first Great Commission—that is, to rule over our fellow creatures, to work and take care of the garden. The word “rule” must be placed within the framework of Jesus’ model of leadership, which is “to serve.” This first Great Commission can be connected to the second in Matthew 28—we are to make disciples in every tribe and tongue. These disciples are embedded in God’s beloved world, in their own cultures and contexts—one foot planted in the beginning with God’s reign in the garden and the second foot planted in the eschatological new creation of God’s reign.

In terms of mission as transformation, part of community transformation is the ecosystems around the people. In the Bible, the land’s desecration and suffering are often tied to the people’s idolatry or practice of injustice. For example, in Jeremiah, Hosea, and Isaiah, the prophets decry the effects of sin not just on the people, but also on the land and animals, and the land itself goes into mourning.¹⁰ In the present day, revivals and renewals in different contexts have also documented a return of wildlife or marine life.¹¹ An almost-extinct species coming back to life or rehabilitation of the ocean’s coral reefs should compel Christians into worship a redemptive God in action—a small foretaste of a consummated creation teaming with the joyful cacophony of species freed from the curse. As Dave Bookless (2023) puts it: “Anything less than an integral approach to mission – seeking God’s kingdom rule in every dimension of society and creation – is ultimately a denial of the lordship of Christ.”

4. Mission in Croatia - Research Questions and Possible Trajectories

In light of global realities and this discussion on mission theology and the doctrine of creation, what are the implications for the Croatian context? Before engaging with questions of context, however, one must step back further and question what is the current mission theology or theologies undergirding evangelical churches in Croatia. This question is too large for this present discussion but suffice to say that it is a vitally important question in need of further research. As noted earlier,

10 See, for example, Hosea 4:1-4 detailing the people’s sin and the effect on the land.

11 See, for example, documentaries of transformation on Fiji and the Inuit made by the Sentinel Group: <https://www.sentinelgroup.org/>.

Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has been a receiving region of numerous missionaries in the last decades.¹² Macelaru (2021, 81) points out that often there was a significant sacred-secular divide, that the concern was people's souls without a more encompassing view of the Christian life.

In Croatia's case, there was an explosion of missionaries just after the Homeland War, primarily, although not exclusively, from the West (America, Australia, Western Europe). Even as Croatian evangelicals were active on many fronts (advocating for their legal status in the new democracy, theological education, humanitarian aid, evangelism, and church planting), undoubtedly Croatian evangelicals were also profoundly influenced by this mission-receiver, mission-sender relationship, and therefore concepts of mission were at least partially shaped by this relationship and influenced by values and theology bound up in Western mission organizations. To what extent this happened would be difficult to assess without substantive qualitative research. It would be an interesting research focus to ask regular members of evangelical churches in Croatia how they define "mission" and "missionary." For those who are in churches that have hosted short-term mission groups and/or long-term missionaries, certainly, answers would be shaped by these relationships and experiences and one could compare them to answers from churches that did not receive many missionaries.

A second question critical for this discussion of mission-in-context is understanding the critical questions emerging from Croatian culture and, given the tightly globalized world, the world at large. Is the evangelical church reflecting on the questions the culture is asking, or is it having a different discussion altogether? If, for example, some young people are concerned about the state of the earth, but the church's theology does not speak or cannot speak to that concern, they would likely be drawn to an alternative narrative that does address this question. As Dave Bookless writes about the history of A Rocha, an international Christian organization concerned with creation care, when A Rocha began 40 years ago, many thought its practice of studying and conserving birds and flowers was absurd since it was not evangelism. However, when this model of mission began spreading, he writes, "People of many backgrounds were attracted to an expression of Christian faith, often lived in community, and demonstrated by integrated care for people and planet undergirded by Bible study and prayer. As evangelist Rob Frost later explained, 'When Christians take the earth seriously, people take the gospel seriously'" (Bookless 2023).

12 Marcel Macelaru (2021, 80) writes that some missionaries and agencies operated from the premise that they were bringing Christ to "Eastern European 'godless' lands" despite the ongoing witness of the Church in times of Communism.

Thirdly, how can the evangelical church in Croatia connect these two Great Commissions—bringing together redemption and creation—as relates practically to mission in Croatia? Croatia is a highly relational context, so perhaps Moltmann’s idea of a community of creation—human and non-human creation engaged with dialogue and praise to the Creator (1985, 5) is a helpful image. Caring for creation is not so much a *task* to be done, but a relationship to foster, honor, and enjoy as we move into our full expression as image-bearers.¹³ This moves us away from the drive of progress and development that has so dominated modernity and modern missions—not being focused on results as our motivation. As Bauma-Prediger notes, “Many things are worth doing simply because they honor the intrinsic value of another creature or shape us into good people” (2020, chapter 2).

Part of this is making explicit connections between these areas of mission praxis, spirituality, theology, Bible, and relationship. For example, many people are unhappy when they see others treating creation with contempt—but perhaps do not know what to do with that other than get angry at people or the government. Or, for example, groups such as BIOM in Croatia which are doing wonderful work regarding conservation but are puzzled regarding how Christian faith could be connected to their work.¹⁴ In addition, there are other groups with different guiding meta-narratives providing answers and actions to the questions people are asking, such as the radical group “Extinction Rebellion.”¹⁵ In this regard, there are tremendous opportunities and creative openings for evangelicals to engage in mission—to reconnect redemption and creation in a way that provides community, truth, nourishment, and ultimately the full picture of the good news of the gospel.

However, there are also more implicit connections. As mentioned in the introduction, it needs to be recognized that our posture with creation is related to the love of neighbor. Injustice, structural inequality, and racism can often play out in the environmental sphere—and there are many examples of this in Southeastern Europe within the general population but more potently with minority groups such as refugees, migrants, and Roma communities. Those without power are fre-

13 David Warners and Matthew Heun (2019, Introduction) refer to this in the book *Beyond Stewardship* when they told the story of the garbage in Plaster Creek. When the attitude was just on the task of removing the garbage, this did not solve the problem. Rather, they realized that people were treating the creek like an abusive relationship. Thus, the goal became about repairing the relationship between the creek and the people. In their words: “Plaster creek didn’t need cleaning, it needed reconciliation!”

14 <https://www.biom.hr/>.

15 Extinction rebellion just held a gathering on the island of Krk in August 2023. I merely want to point out that although goals to conserve the environment may be similar, the view of reality and what will be in the future is different from a Christian perspective.

quently at the mercy of corporations, particularly when they are in alliance with political parties, and the poor lose access to quality land, water, and air.¹⁶ As I have written about previously, a concrete example of this is when a displaced Roma community, from the war in Kosovo, was relocated to the grounds around the Trepça mine—a place polluted with dangerous lead levels. Although the global community eventually realized the danger in the lead levels (thus removing their personnel), the 600 Roma families were kept there for 10 years, eventually resulting in long-term disabilities and illnesses in the children (see Wachsmuth 2021). A biblical concept of justice is intertwined with the poor and marginalized and the land.

Final Words

A “religionless” mission is, among other things, rooted in the doctrine of creation—the dialectic of creation and redemption through which the Trinitarian God is bringing about the ultimate purpose of all creation. This is not a religion that manages our holiness, but simply an orientation toward true life, a daily *being* with God that frees us to honor, care for, and love our neighbors and non-human creation. The consummation of creation is eternal life—that is, God, dwelling in his full glory with humanity in creation. We are at home here in God’s world, embedded in a complex web of life that testifies to the Trinitarian God’s glory in diversity, creativity, and unity, but we are also pilgrims, waiting for the fullness of life. Such a theology connected to mission praxis could truly be a salty-seasoned witness of hope in a complicated world.

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16 Many international examples of this were given in an A Rocha online seminar on Environmental Racism on May 29, 2023 by Lourdes Brazil of *Friend Centro Gênesis*. Further, a Zoom interview with Beradi Dušan on August 22, 2023, offered many examples from the Serbian context of how political parties and corporations exploit public land at the expense of the people.

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Melody Wachsmuth

„Bezreligijska” misija? — Promišljanje o mjestu tvorevine u misijskoj teologiji u hrvatskom kontekstu

Sažetak

Naš je svijet pod utjecajem munjevitih promjena potaknutih velikim otkrićima u tehnologiji i znanosti, sve većim klimatskim problemima i pomacima u geopolitičkoj dinamici. Ako misiju definiramo kao stalan Božji rad na pomirenju, iscjeljenju i obnovi svega stvorenog, Crkva se mora ozbiljno posvetiti razmišljanju o tome što Bog trenutno čini i kako najbolje sudjelovati u tome. Dinamična misijska praksa proizlazi iz robusne misijske teologije koja promišlja o stvarnostima u lokalnom i globalnom kontekstu i stoga se uvijek mora kreativno prilagođavati. Ovaj članak evanđeoskim crkvama u Hrvatskoj predlaže da promisle o vlastitom razumijevanju misije u prošlosti i upuste se u misijsku hermeneutiku koja uključuje svjedočanstvo Svetoga pisma, kontekst i teologiju Crkve. U tom pogledu,

naglašava glavno pitanje u sadašnjoj misijskoj teologiji i praksi, naime, izostanak nauka o tvorevini u evanđeoskoj teologiji. Ovo je stvorilo Crkvu s bestjelesnom misijom koja nije spremna progovoriti o današnjim krizama. Međutim, u svjetlu sadašnjih izazova, postoji i značajna mogućnost za misijski utjecaj u Hrvatskoj.