

Creation as Deification (Creativity Ex Nihilo, Ex Amore, and Ex Fine)

Davor Džalto

Human creativity has long been theologically underappreciated or even completely ignored. And yet, it should be considered a vital aspect of the *Imago Dei* in the human being. It is not merely an (aesthetic) addition to what we *do*, but a way of becoming human. From an Orthodox theological perspective, creativity can be understood as something eschatologically rooted, something intimately related to the other crucial capacities of the human being: freedom and love. If the task of the human being is to become Godlike (to become gods by the grace of God), then creativity is a means to that end, together with freedom and love as the ontic “stuff” of our new (eschatological) being. The presentation will also explore the relationship between such a theological understanding of creativity and artistic practice.

The Creative Process: A Locus Where Anthropology, Theology, and Mission Meet

With Particular Reference to the 1st International Conference of People of Letters, “Inter-Balkan Literary Encounters: Understanding the Balkans Through Literature”

Evi Voulgaraki-Pissina

Christian mission can only lead to a fullness of life, a glorification of creation, and an anticipation of the resurrection. Mission cannot be conceived either as a monologue of teachings and words, nor as a one-way, top-down diaconal service. Mission is above all a shared living experience of the fullness of life — life in Christ, who inspires all aspects of social relations. Life itself begins with questions, and theology in the twenty-first century — described by the late Metropolitan Kallistos Ware as the “century of anthropology” — must learn to engage with questions rather than repeat ready-made answers.

The creative process is, *par excellence*, the locus in which questions are cultivated and where the search for answers unfolds. Literature and the arts embody this dialogical process: they address existential realities, give voice to wounds and hopes, and open new paths of freedom and human proximity.

With this in mind, since 2021, a group of people interested in mission, interfaith, and intercultural dialogue — primarily from a missiological perspective — organized themselves into a non-profit association, “Remembering the Vanguard, Opening New Paths” (Μνήμη και Πρωτοπορία). This group decided to organize a literary conference among the Balkan peoples. This initiative built upon a prior CEEAMS conference, where shared history, wounds, and hopes accompanied theological deliberations and created a profound sense of being at home among participants.

In this presentation, and with the help of a report and case study of the 1st International Conference of People of Letters, *Inter-Balkan Literary Encounters: Understanding the Balkans Through Literature*, we shall explore the necessity of creativity in missional work and new paths of freedom, reconciliation, and proximity to actual human actual that literature and the arts may offer.

Let the Spirit blow!

Creativity as a Relationship with the Living God. An Anthropological-Theological Journey

Gilija Žukauskienė

The presentation is an anthropological-theological journey exploring the relationship between art and faith, while also inviting one to look “through the window” - retrospectively reviewing art-related mission work in Lithuania. In order to do this, I will use ideas from Marcel Jousse, a French Jesuit and researcher of the oral culture in Jesus’ living environment (Palestine), in order to discover the creativity arising from specific human bodily mechanics and our embodied reactions to the moving cosmos and its Creator. In this way, the presentation will examine creativity in the context of a relationship with the living God. This will help raise the question regarding the purpose of human creativity. I will argue that the purpose of creativity is to inspire, to sustain our vitality, and to keep us open to life. This analysis will show how art both assists in this and obstacles which prevent it from achieving this existential goal. Accordingly, suggestions will be made as to how insights into creativity could influence church practice.

Music That Serves God and People

Guntars Pranis

The history of Western music cannot be separated from the music of the Christian Church. Without the spiritual and artistic legacy of sacred music, Western musical culture would scarcely exist. From the earliest centuries, Christian worship was founded on the sung Word—song as proclamation, testimony, and praise. The congregation of Christ was a singing community, where music served solely as the vessel for the Word of God. Even the anonymous creators of Gregorian chants understood themselves not as individual authors but as instruments through whom God shaped this sacred art.

In sacred song, the dimensions of word and sound are inseparable, forming a living unity—the *viva vox evangelii*, the living voice of the Gospel. As Martin Luther affirmed, the human voice and language were given so that humanity might praise God through melody and word. Sacred music thus becomes an act of participation and faith, awakening spiritual attention and sowing the Word in the heart.

Music reveals life’s deeper meaning to the degree that it points beyond itself. Sacred music directs this longing toward faith in Jesus Christ, offering assurance of a fulfillment that transcends the visible world. Even non-sacred music may hint at this dimension of hope and wholeness. As St. Augustine reminds us: “When your voice grows silent, let your life continue to sing.” True sacred music, then, calls for an authentic and joyful life that itself becomes praise—music that serves both God and humanity.

Imagining Mission and Fringe Dwelling

Jonny Baker

In his book the *Primal Vision*, John V Taylor describes mission as an adventure of the imagination. He wonders that if we were truly to go on such an adventure, could it be that the contextualisation would be so much from within the culture, it might not be recognisable to Western eyes? One of his own imaginings in relation to this adventure is that the practice of missional discipleship might be conceived of as fringe dwelling. I will reflect on a missiology that explores such an adventure of imagination in post-Christian contexts. I will also explore how an imaginative engagement with Jesus Christ the Fringe Dweller, through his encounters in the gospels, might afford possibilities for missional practice.

