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The Concept of the Anthropocene in the Perspective of Contemporary Theological Anthropology and Spirituality

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Abstract: In the following study some ways of working with the concept of the Anthropocene in theological anthropology and spirituality are developed. The article first introduces the concept and its background and then elaborates on five theological perspectives of its possible reception in theology. The first one is the notion of sin as a source of environmental crisis, proposing the term *Hamartiocene*. Then, following Daniel P. Horan, the study addresses the theological challenges of human exceptionalism, a contentious issue in secular philosophy. The third focus consists in the need for a new spirituality in the Anthropocene alongside a renewed hope that emerges only through an acceptance of hopelessness. Building on Pope Francis's "ecumenism of the blood," the article then proposes to establish an "ecumenism of a dying planet." Finally, it considers whether and how our interpretation of the person of Jesus Christ changes in the Anthropocene.

Keywords: Anthropocene; theological anthropology; spirituality; ecotheology; theology of creation

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Introduction

One[1] of the most pressing issues today is the conflict between humankind and nature.[2] Since the Industrial Revolution and the so-called Great Acceleration, humanity has aggressively exploited its resources to sustain its consumerist lifestyle and economic growth.[3] In turn, the increasingly depleted earth – often conceptualized in the humanities (since the 1970s) as

1 This work has been supported by Charles University Research Centre program No. UNCE/24/SSH/019.

2 This binary opposition is of course problematic. The theories underlying the Anthropocene prefer a network-based understanding of the world to binary oppositions.

3 For some basic observations on this development see Clayton Crockett, "Earth: What Can a Planet Do?" in Ward Blanton, Clayton Crockett, Jeffrey W. Robbins and Noëlle Vahanian, *An Insurrectionist Manifesto: Four New Gospels for a Radical Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 21–28.

a subject (Gaia)[4] – seems to be retaliating through rising temperatures and more frequent natural disasters. Jürgen Moltmann recognized this as early as the 1970s when he advocated for peace with nature and the development of new models for cooperation with it.[5] At the same time, it goes without saying, this conflict affects us all – we are, as Bruno Latour puts it, Earthlings.[6] This conflict is also frequently the root of more localized disputes, including resource wars and tensions resulting from climate migration and other related issues.

In this article, I will explore this critical situation through the lens of Christian theological anthropology and spirituality. Drawing on the concept of the Anthropocene, I will present five perspectives on how we might approach it. I will discuss the causal geological transformation of the planet in the context of the theological concept of sin, then the theological reception of criticism of human exceptionalism, spirituality in the Anthropocene, its possibilities in ecumenical dialogue, and in the last section, I will ask if the Anthropocene perspective influences our interpretation of Jesus Christ, the foundational figure of Christianity.

Since the concept of the Anthropocene is relatively young, I will introduce it at the beginning of this paper. Simultaneously, considering that on the one hand, in the Anglo-American context, the first large-scale monographs addressing this concept theologically have already appeared, and on the other hand, it has not yet entered the vocabularies in our Central European theology, I will limit myself to its introduction and the expanding on the five points of inspiration mentioned above that can be further developed in theological anthropology and spirituality. While certain topics in what follows call for a more detailed discussion and others can be sketched more

4 See, for example, Bruno Latour, "Agency at the time of the Anthropocene," *New Literary History* 45:1 (2014), 1. Similarly and prophetically Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 331. James Lovelock, for example, was a prominent proponent of the Gaia concept. At the same time, this concept has been interpreted in very different ways over the years. For a summary of the discussion, see, for example, Toby Tyrell, *On Gaia: A Critical Investigation of the Relationship between Life and Earth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). See also James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

5 See Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 331. Moltmann obviously could not have known at that time about Gaia theory or the concept of the Anthropocene, which makes it even more valuable that he was already addressing this topic in this way at that time.

6 Latour, "Agency at the time of the Anthropocene," 15.

concisely, I have kept the uneven scope of the sections to maintain thematic coherence and clarity.

1. The Anthropocene: the origin of the concept and its variants

Firstly, let me briefly introduce the meaning of the much-mentioned word *Anthropocene*. This term or concept, which has become very popular during the last fifteen years in the humanities, was coined by the geochemist Paul Crutzen and the biologist Eugene Stoermer, who published a short article in 2000, arguing:

> Since relatively recent times, humanity has been the dominant geological agent on this planet. This is said to be such a new situation in the history of the earth that it makes sense to define an entirely new geological epoch on the basis of it.[7]

The authors give this epoch the name Anthropocene.[8] Its causes are dated to the so-called Great Acceleration and the invention of the steam engine, associated with the large-scale mining and the use of coal.[9] Humans find that their own activity has already inscribed itself in the deepest structures of the planet,[10] and this gives them a new perspective on their relationship to the world and their conception of themselves. It transforms their anthropology and asks them new questions. The debate takes place on a new playing field.[11] For some, it represents a Jaspersian "spiritual situation of the times,"[12] for others, a catastrophe, and some see it as an opportunity or a political and intellectual challenge.[13]

7 Petr Pokorný and David Storch, "Předmluva: Kde jsme se to ocitli," in Petr Pokorný and David Storch (eds.), *Antropocén* (Praha: Academia, 2020), 19.

8 Some authors document the occurrence of this term even using quotation marks: see Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 40.

9 Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 4; Haraway, *Staying with the* Trouble, 44–45.

10 Zdeněk Konopásek, "Antropocén: Více než jeden, méně než dva," in Pokorný and Storch (eds.), *Antropocén*, 36. The crucial point is the man-made release of CO2. On the geological extent of the Anthropocene, cf. e.g. Jan Hošek, "Geologie lidstva?," in Pokorný and Storch (eds.), *Antropocén*, 220–50.

11 Clive Hamilton, "The Anthropocene Epoch and Its Meaning," in Peter Walker and Jonathan Cole (eds.), *Theology on a Defiant Earth: Seeking Hope in the Anthropocene* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022), 9.

12 Pokorný and Storch, "Předmluva: Kde jsme se to ocitli," 21.

13 Ibid., 24.

The radical novelty of our current situation can be illustrated by quoting the Australian philosopher and ethicist Clive Hamilton, who argues that the great Abrahamic religions are "Holocene religions" – humans in biblical times and the recipients of divine revelation could never have imagined a situation in which humanity becomes such a powerful geological agent. This factor justifies theology in thinking through a radically new theological anthropology that can and must abandon many of the assumptions that have been valid to this day.[14]

In recent years, however, critics have argued that the Anthropocene does not sufficiently distinguish between the origins of the planet's transformation and responsibility for it, or that this concept does not offer a solution to the crisis.[15] For this reason, various related concepts such as "the Capitalocene, the Technocene, the Econocene, the Anthrobscene, the Misanthropocene, the Mantropocene, the Necrocen, the Plantationocene, the Ecocene, or the Chthulucene" have emerged.[16]

2. Five proposals drawn from the dialogue between the concept of the Anthropocene and Christian theological anthropology and spirituality

2.1 Anthropocene understood as Hamartiocene

The last paragraph of the previous section mentioning different conceptual variants of the name Anthropocene leads us to the first potential theological response. If Jason W. Moore, first of all, speaks of the Capitalocene, because capitalism, according to him, is the source (or culprit) of the geological transformations of the world,[17] theological anthropology has its own tools to grasp this crisis and can introduce, as I suggest, the notion of Hamartiocene. The concept of sin (in biblical Greek ἁμαρτία) becomes relevant again in this context, and even recent publications on the topic cannot bypass it.

14 Hamilton, "The Anthropocene Epoch and Its Meaning," 9.

15 Patryk Szaj, "Antropocen i kapitałocen: w poszukiwaniu fuzji horyzontów," *Porównania* 29:2 (2021), 371–72.

16 Ibid., 371.

17 See Jason W. Moore, *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland: PM, 2016).

Jan-Olav Henriksen, in his book *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene: Reconsidering Human Agency and Its Limits*, discusses this topic in the wake of Paul Tillich. Tillich understands sin as both fact and act. Our sins grow out of sin. For him, sin as fact also implies the fundamental alienation of humankind and nature. Human beings' focus on themselves and, especially, their idolatry in the form of consumerism makes them an object of external forces, in which their "agency" (a key concept for thinking about the Anthropocene) in favour of the good is weakened;[18] the idolatry of consumerism then corresponds with the Greek meaning of *hamartia* in the sense of missing the target.

The Australian theologian Peter Walker, in his text *The Serpent in the Garden – Sin and the Anthropocene*, even speaks of the resurrection of the concept of sin.[19] The Genesis 3 narrative, he argues, can be read as an alienation from creation, a decision that led to humans claiming the earth as their own rather than seeing it as God's.[20] Jan-Olav Henriksen also urges caution against flattening the concept: different people and different societies on the planet are responsible for the climate crisis in different ways.[21] This, too, justifies my thesis that we are living in a Hamartiocene rather than an Anthropocene. Henriksen, however, rightly warns against a deductive conception that justifies this crisis in terms of sin in some kind of form of Christian self-righteousness and self-pride.[22]

The Anthropocene, philosophically associated with the so-called *relational turn*[23] and influenced by Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, also underlines the thesis that sin has a social dimension extending beyond personal

18 Jan-Olav Henriksen, *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene: Reconsidering Human Agency and Its Limits* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), especially 163–217.

19 Peter Walker, "The Serpent in the Garden – Sin and the Anthropocene," in Walker and Cole (eds.), *Theology on a Defiant Earth*, 164–66. Along with Peter Walker, Clive Hamilton also critically points to a certain hesitancy on the part of the church leaders to speak of land abuse as sin. See Clive Hamilton, "A Climate of Hope? Reflections on the Theology of the Anthropocene," in Walker and Cole (eds.), *Theology on a Defiant Earth*, 196.

20 Walker, "The Serpent in the Garden," 170.

21 Henriksen, *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene*, 211.

22 Ibid., 214.

23 In the context of theological anthropology, Tim Noble writes: "It is no accident that relationship is returning to the centre of theological interest." Tim Noble, "Člověk ve vztazích," in Ivana Noble and Zdenko Širka (eds.), *Kdo je člověk? Teologická antropologie ekumenicky* (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2021), 44.

matters.[24] Sin, like holiness, is no more an individual matter in an interconnected globalized world. The Czech Salesian priest Zdeněk Jančařík put it vividly in an issue of the journal *Salve* devoted to holiness:

> It seems that the way of personal example of holiness is no longer enough today. All the personal sins of every person on the planet have become global. My diet, my waste of water, heat, energy, my driving a car with an internal combustion engine to go shopping or to the seaside, my flying on a plane to the beach in Mallorca have become a threat to the whole planet. When I eat beef, I feel guilty because herds of cattle destined for slaughter somewhere in Argentina are overwhelming the entire planet with methane.[25]

Conversely,

> Again and again we canonize lone heroes of the faith, spiritual athletes, victors, while communities 'wipe out.' But contemporary sanctity can no longer consist in just going it alone, in playing 'on our own' and ascending to heaven ourselves, in looking at and contemplating the Trinity of God and rejoicing in personal happiness.[26]

As John Zizioulas writes,

> The protection of the natural environment is a fundamental religious obligation, demanded from humankind by God himself. This means that the Church will have to revise radically her concept of sin, which traditionally has been limited to the social and anthropological level, and start speaking of sin against nature as a matter of primary religious significance.[27]

Sin – leaving aside its metaphysical and spiritual validity – is also a powerful metaphor, and, within the Christian story, it also gives us a possible response to this crisis. Jesus says, "Change your minds and believe the good news."[28] It is no coincidence that Pope Francis speaks of an "ecological conversion,"[29] which is at the same time a communal conversion.[30]

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24 Walker, "The Serpent in the Garden," 164.

25 Zdeněk Jančařík, "Všichni nebo nikdo," in *Salve* 32:4 (2022), 22.

26 Ibid.

27 John Zizioulas, "Foreword," in John Chryssavgis (ed.), *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew I.* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), viii.

28 Cf. e.g. Mk 1,15. I present here my own translation following the meaning expressed in the original Greek text.

29 Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter: Laudato Si' of the Holy Father Francis on Care of Our Common Home* (Rome: Vatican Press, 2015), par. 217–218.

30 Ibid., par. 138.

This turn to the Hamartiocene also allows us to maintain hope in humanity, made in the image of God. However, we cannot overlook the sins committed not only against the planet, but also, for example, against the colonized nations of the Global South. As I will show below, giving up on any hope in the goodness of humankind and the possibility of its conversion would not be a fruitful outcome of the encounter between theology and the Anthropocene.

2.2 Anthropocene, theology of creation and the criticism of human exceptionalism

As I mentioned in the first part of this paper, the Anthropocene can also be read as an opportunity. Thus, rethinking the question of sin is not the only way to relate to the concept from a theological position, nor does the notion of sin exhaust the need to revise the place of human beings in the world. We now turn to models of the theology of creation that respond to the environmental crisis and the problem of the place of the human in creation related to it.

In his 2018 book *All God's Creatures: A Theology of Creation*, the American Franciscan[31] scholar of theological anthropology Daniel P. Horan explores the shift in theology since the twentieth century from a model of human domination over nature (the dominion model) to a stewardship model.[32] Nevertheless, Horan argues that even the latter model is inadequate.[33] In this model, the non-human parts of creation are seen as God's *oikos* for humanity,[34] and humans are elevated to the privileged role of the Creator's co-workers.[35]

31 Horan left the order in 2024. See Daniel P. Horan, "Always a Franciscan in spirit, but no longer a friar," in *National Catholic Reporter* (October 3, 2024), available at https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/ncr-voices/always-franciscan-spirit-no-longer-friar (accessed 30. 7. 2025).

32 In a specific version of "planetary stewardship" – i.e., a kind of all-encompassing responsibility – this is still held in 2017 by the German ethicist Christoph Baumgartner. See Christoph Baumgartner, "Transformations of Stewardship in the Anthropocene," in Celia Deane-Drummond, Sigurd Bergmann and Markus Vogt (eds.), *Religion in the Anthropocene* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2017), 53–66.

33 Criticism of the stewardship model appears already in the first decade of our century. See, for example, Ariane Conty, "Religion in the Age of the Anthropocene," *Environmental Values* 30:2 (2019), 7.

34 Daniel P. Horan, *All God's Creatures: A Theology of Creation* (Lanham: Lexington Books / Fortress Academic, 2018), 35.

35 Ibid., 39.

According to Horan, Pope Francis continues this stewardship model in his famous ecological encyclical *Laudato Si'*.[36] Horan emphasizes that the key issue lies in the human's relationship with the rest of creation and, ultimately, the theological response to anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism, which secular philosophy has often and strongly criticized.[37]

While the Pope, according to Horan, still singles out humanity over creation (thus creating a hierarchical dualism[38]), Horan himself is advocating a transition to a theology of creation based on a communal or kinship model of creation. Horan views humanity's relationship to the rest of creation as more familial than covenantal,[39] which he illustrates not only with broad biblical material but also with sources from the history of theology and the Franciscan tradition. Similarly, Jan-Olav Henriksen shares this view. In line with the Anglican theologian Richard Bauckham, Henriksen highlights the co-creation of humanity and all life, emphasizing that humanity's relationship with God does not exclude its relationship with the rest of creation.[40]

Humanity's position in creation and the critique of anthropocentrism are also connected to the term *agency*, a key term in Anthropocene thought.[41] It is no coincidence that Henriksen included it in the subtitle of his book (*Reconsidering Human Agency and its Limits*).[42] Human agency is on the one hand weakened by sin, on the other hand, sin is precisely the unwise

36 Ibid., 45–47.

37 See also Hamilton, "The Anthropocene Epoch and Its Meaning," 4–5.

38 Horan, *All God's Creatures*, 56.

39 Ibid., 85.

40 Henriksen, *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene*, 115.

41 The debate is mainly shaped by Bruno Latour's article "Agency at the time of the Anthropocene." Latour writes: "No, this time, we encounter, just as in the old pre-scientific and non-modern myths, an agent which gains its name of 'subject' because he or she might be *subjected* to the vagaries, bad humor, emotions, reactions, and even revenge of another agent, who also gains its quality of 'subject' because it is also *subjected* to his or her action. It is in this radical sense that humans are no longer submitted to the diktats of objective nature, since what comes to them is also an intensively subjective form of action. To be a subject is not to act autonomously in front of an objective background, but *to share agency with other subjects that have also lost their autonomy*. It is because we are now confronted with those subjects – or rather *quasi*-subjects – that we have to shift away from dreams of mastery as well as from the threat of being fully naturalized." Latour, "Agency at the time of the Anthropocene," 5. Italics Bruno Latour. With a certain amount of simplification, one could say that his conception of agency is distributive and relational.

42 Latour's understanding of agency is explained by Henriksen, *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene*, 41–45.

transgression of the limits of our agency. It is this abuse of human agency that has led from humanity, created for grace, with the freedom to love and enjoy the beauty and goodness of the world, to the Anthropocene world devastated by human activity.[43] Here we find ourselves in a Moltmannian vicious circle.[44] Human action is thus caught in an ambiguity between creativity and destruction, between the image of God and sin.[45]

Even though Henriksen, in line with Latour, postulates the thesis that we are dependent on and interconnected with the environment into which we are born, not only in its social but also in its natural dimension,[46] he considers humans – unlike others – as *responsible* creators of action.[47] According to Paul Ricoeur, to whom the Norwegian systematic theologian refers, humans are responsible for the moral dispositions on which their actions are based too.[48] Even in this context, then, the biblical notion of creation in the sense of the physical world cannot be exclusively understood (only) as the passive setting of the divine-human relationship; the non-human part of creation is also implied in the relationship between God and human.[49] The thesis of panentheism, the Moltmannian *via tertia* between pantheism and deism, tends toward the idea that God is present in creation.[50] As Henriksen writes,

> This understanding means that God is not only transcendent and separate from God's creation but deeply involved in it. It also means that God's agency and the agency of creation are interlinked: Creation not only is the object of God's will and work but participates in it. Non-human nature is not "dead matter" but exerts an agency (in the Latourian sense) that influences human life and God's will for the flourishing of creation. Human nature, with its partially different, specific modes of agency, impacts the rest of creation and its ability to display diversity, goodness, flourishing, and enjoyment.[51]

Similarly, we tend to reduce God's redemptive work in Christ to a reconciliation between God and human beings, thus marginalizing the non-human components of creation, relegating them to the status of mere objects,

43 Ibid., 219–220.
44 See Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 326.
45 Henriksen, *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene*, 221.
46 Ibid., 237.
47 Ibid., 228–229.
48 Ibid., 231.
49 Ibid., 257–258.
50 See Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 103.
51 Henriksen, *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene*, 258.

inconsequential circumstances. But the person of Christ, as the icon of God and the culmination of his self-revelation, shows us in his story the ways of God's action that also involve the non-human parts of creation. Such ways are care, compassion, and action against sin.[52]

Last but not least, Henriksen understands faith as participation in God, and a key component of that participation for him is the traditional Pauline triad of faith, hope, and love. The active pursuit and cultivation of these virtues should be the starting point and central task of humanity in its relationship to God and creation, especially in the Anthropocene.[53] However, from a theological perspective, God's agency – that is, the capacity to be an agent of action – cannot be bracketed either. Human "acting in faith, hope, and love means participating in God's action with and for the world. […] Faith means participation because it allows humans to relate to and take part in God's intentions for the world."[54] The human person as *imago Dei* is to act in God's way with the world on the basis of this participation. This co-negotiation with God can then lead to establishing what we call the good life.[55] The goal of human agency is thus participation in the life of God and acting in God's ways, through the virtues of faith, hope, and love.

Although Henriksen seeks to include non-human agents into the relationship between humans and God, and also to incorporate human ways of acting into such frameworks (the notion of virtue), so that they are not at odds with creation but instead act for its benefit, he differs from Latourian[56] concepts in his emphasis on humans as responsible and free. This brings us back to the question of anthropocentrism, which is closely linked to the concept of the Anthropocene.

Jürgen Moltmann had already undertaken pioneering work when he highlighted that the climax of the biblical story is not the creation of human beings, but rather the Sabbath of creation – a day of rest and peace between God and creation.[57] In the recent debate, Pope Francis does not overlook this dimension in *Laudato Si'*, in which he postulates a certain moderate

52 Ibid., 271.
53 Ibid., 231.
54 Ibid., 273.
55 Ibid., 274.
56 Ibid., 247.
57 See Moltmann, *God in Creation*, e.g. 5–7.

anthropocentrism or anthropo-relative approach. As Petr Štica writes with reference to Claus Dierksmeier,

> Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* can be said to occupy a kind of intermediate position between a 'despotic anthropocentrism that disregards other creatures' (LS 68) and a rigid biocentrism that tends 'to deny any specific value of the human being' (LS 118). Pope Francis thus rejects both radical anthropocentric and radical biocentric and physiocentric approaches.[58]

In the face of secular discourse, however, it is still an anthropocentric view. The position of humans within creation becomes a pressing theological issue. It is very well addressed by the aforementioned Daniel Horan in his previously discussed communal (or relational) theology of creation.

Horan relates anthropocentrism to the dominion model of creation and dates its origins to the philosophies of Bacon and Descartes.[59] The anthropocentric (or androcentric[60]) view is also present in the stewardship model of creation. While this is declared to be theocentric – it is God who created the world and to whom the world is directed – it is again the human who is entrusted with the role of steward, a kind of appointed viceroy or manager.[61] This is linked to a certain monarchical view of the world, but it is far from unproblematic.[62] Indeed, the non-human part of creation is seen as an *oikos* for humanity. Human beings are certainly responsible, but they are also privileged and thereby separated from the rest of creation.[63] Only human beings are created *imago Dei*,[64] and according

58 Petr Štica, "Péče o společný domov jako naléhavá etická výzva: Uvedení do encykliky Laudato si' papeže Františka," *Salve: Revue pro teologii a duchovní život* 27:4 (2017), 19.

59 Horan, *All God's Creatures*, 11–14. Horan provides an analysis of the primary texts, including highlighting some of the differences between them. For example, according to Descartes, animals not only have no reason, but they cannot even feel anything. Horan, *All God's Creatures*, 12. On this problem, see also Petr Gallus, *Člověk před Bohem: Teologická antropologie* (Praha: Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2024), 78–79.

60 This term is considered by some to be more appropriate; the Greek word ἀνήρ means man (male), and the term thus refers to the fact that in the periods referred to as anthropocentric, human "centrism" was always primarily male dominated. Cf. Horan, *All God's Creatures*, 60.

61 Horan, *All God's Creatures*, 33. Henriksen also criticizes the stewardship model from similar premises, see Henriksen, *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene*, 113–123.

62 Horan cites, for example, the criticism of Rowan Williams: see Horan, *All God's Creatures*, 34.

63 This is also the example of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, as Horan discusses: see Horan, *All God's Creatures*, 45–49.

64 Horan quotes theologians who are trying to revise this concept; see Horan, *All God's Creatures*, 124–134. On this concept, see also Gallus, *Člověk před Bohem*, 496–511. Gallus

to, for example, John Zizioulas, neglecting the task of caring for creation is a sin.[65]

In reality, however, creation is also an *oikos* for God; as Horan points out, referring to other authors, God also dwells in the midst of his creation.[66] Criticism can also be made towards other theses. Humans are not separated from creation; on the contrary, they are dependent on it for their survival. The authors also point out the dysfunctionality of binary oppositions and dualisms[67] or the problematic nature of stewardship metaphors, in which not infrequently God's bestowal of the earth upon humans can become a similar free hand to exploit the earth as in the dominion model.[68]

Horan then, following the Franciscan tradition, postulates the interdependence and harmony of creation. This is because it concordantly – whether human or non-human – emanates from a single source, namely the Triune God.[69] If everything then proceeds from God, everything also returns to him – the whole of creation, which is the subject of Irenaeus of Lyon's famous "recapitulation," is thus included in this eschatological movement.[70] Horan, however, follows above all the concept of *haecceitas*, originally developed by John Duns Scotus. This term denotes the principle of individuation, the basis on which the *individualis* is differentiated from the *natura communis*. This *haecceitas* is not added to the *natura communis* as an appendage, but, according to Duns Scotus, precedes it and is intrinsic to the singular subject. The point is that someone is just someone and not someone else, not something external but something identical with their being. This emphasis on the individuation principle then leads, for Scotus, to foregrounding the

first deconstructs the notion that the concept is originally biblical (496–98) but applies the concept explicitly only to humans (505–06). Henriksen also sees the concept as problematic; see Henriksen, *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene*, 89–112. Recently, many have tried to revise this notion and understand it as a category whose disjunctive feature is the possibility of the relationship, which is inherent in the human person and God, but to some extent in all creation. For Henriksen, to be the image of God is to be desirous and vulnerable. See Henriksen, *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene*, 92–93.

65 Horan, *All God's Creatures*, 39.

66 Ibid., 36. Similarly Henriksen, *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene*, 46–47.

67 Horan, *All God's Creatures*, 57–58.

68 Ibid., 63–64.

69 Horan refers here to Bonaventure. See ibid., 153–156.

70 Ibid., 156.

value and dignity of each individual, for it is his *haec* that God creates out of many possibilities.[71]

Thus, for Scotus, individuality rather than shared nature is appreciated, with the emphasis on God valuing the singular and particular (even the seemingly contingent) more than any overarching concepts and general categories. This *haec* is applied not only to human individuals, but also to every individual, including non-human entities such as animals, plants, grains of sand, etc.[72] Every individual is called into being by God, and if he did not will it, it would not exist, so its basis is God's creative act and relationship to God. This does not mean that a blade of grass has the same dignity as a human being. But it does mean that these entities are not dependent on humans, not derived from them, or required to rely on them. Their value is derived from their *haecceitas*, not from whether they benefit humans.[73] Thus, every tree is recognized by God, worthy of protection and reverence, regardless of whether it serves as fuel or building material, or whether it reveals God's presence in nature to humankind.[74] Horan claims that this way of thinking should be the beginning and the principle of ecological ethics and theology.[75]

Horan and Henriksen's reflections demonstrate that theological anthropology or theology of creation is able to thoughtfully respond to the secular Anthropocene discourse, particularly its call to rethink human exceptionalism.[76] Being connected to Duns Scotus, Horan's kinship model of creation seems resonant and fruitful.

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71 Ibid., 158–159.

72 Ibid., 159. Horan even writes "nonhuman animals".

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid., 160.

75 Ibid.

76 There is a visible tension between the emphasis on human sin and human responsibility and the need to abandon anthropocentrism. Therefore, some theologians and philosophers, such as Clive Hamilton, argue that anthropocentrism as a form of responsibility cannot be deconstructed. See Hamilton, "The Anthropocene Epoch and Its Meaning," 4–5. "The future of the entire planet, including many forms of life, is now contingent on the decisions made by humans. Every scientific study that corroborates human disturbance of the Earth System – including every new report on human-induced climate change – confirms the truth of our special place among life on the planet. Whatever the philosophical attractions of biocentrism, the fact that we have brought about a new geological epoch, and could have acted otherwise, instantiates humankind once and for all as the being at the center of the Earth. Unlike every other creature, we have the power to accelerate or decelerate the change in the functioning of the Earth system. It

2.3 Ecological spirituality, environmental grief and the need for a new spirituality and reimagined hope in the Anthropocene

Beyond the desire for a theologically honest rethinking of the place of the human on a trembling earth,[77] what is constantly emerging in theological reflection on the Anthropocene is the need for some spiritual response to the new framework in which our lives are unfolding. This is directly inscribed in the titles of some theological books, such as David T. Bradford's *Spiritual Life on a Burning Planet: A Christian Response to Climate Change* or the collective monograph edited by Peter Walker and Jonathan Cole, *Theology on a Defiant Earth: Seeking Hope in the Anthropocene*. Nevertheless, the effort to cultivate an internal human response to the new situation is, undeniably, also relevant to secular discourse.[78]

The relationship between ecology and (Christian) spirituality and its reflection has, of course, a long history. For example, ecological spirituality was already discussed in the classic work of spiritual theology, the Italian *Dictionary of Spirituality*, first published in Milan in 1994, with references to "Franciscan conservation" and "Benedictine organization."[79] Sandro Spinsati,

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is far too late to attempt to replace a human-centered understanding with a biocentric one in the hope that the Earth will return to the Holocene. There is no going back to the Holocene – our disruption of Earth system processes is beyond the point of no return – and stepping back would absolve ourselves of the *responsibility* to act in a way that remediates some of the damage now set in train. […] Implicit in what I am saying, and vital to it, is the need to draw a sharp distinction between human-centeredness as a scientific fact and human-centeredness as a moral claim to dominion over the Earth, whether that moral claim be God-given or self-assigned. If human specialness is not so easy to justify in moral terms, the practical and ontological importance of human beings must be accepted if we are to respond to the rupture in human and Earth history that our disturbance of the Earth's governing processes has brought about. Human beings are inescapably at the center of the future of Earth's geological evolution. This power in the Earth System gives humankind greater responsibility than we have ever possessed." Ibid.

77 I take the term "trembling earth" from the eminent Anthropocene theorist Bruno Latour. See Latour, "Agency at the time of the Anthropocene," 1–4.

78 In a secular context, see, for example, Sarah Jaquette Ray, *A Field Guide to Climate Anxiety: How to Keep Your Cool on a Warming Planet* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2020).

79 Sandro Spinsati, "Ekologie," in Stefano De Fiores and Tullo Goffi (eds.). *Slovník spirituality* (Praha: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 1999), 205–06. According to Spinsati, the Benedictines "by working with God to improve creation, praised the Lord and served the brethren." One must approach nature not only in the spirit of Franciscan "passionate contemplative reverence" but also in the spirit of building up nature. Ibid.

the author of the ecology entry, sets out two main tasks for Christianity in the face of the ecological crisis: healing the causes (Spinsati speaks of "positive intervention at the root of evil"[80]) and creating a new life practice in the face of the present situation. This practice, then, is a spiritual praxis, and will be characterized by the rejection of consumerism and the myth of progress, the integration of a relationship with nature into spirituality, a voluntary and rethought asceticism, and a spirit of beatitudes.[81] The new grasp of contemplation then allows one to "attune oneself to the peaceful breath of nature."[82] The need for meditation that is present in the countries of industrial civilization is then, according to Spinsanti, a sign of the times.[83]

It is significant that, more than 20 years later, Pope Francis in his encyclical similarly not only addresses the theme of creation through ethical or systematic-theological reflection, but also includes a chapter entitled "Ecological Education and Spirituality." Its central theme is ecological conversion: "So what they all need is an 'ecological conversion,' whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them."[84] Thus, for Pope Francis, spirituality precedes ethics. After all, the increase of external deserts is caused by the increase of internal deserts,[85] and human motivations emerge from human spirituality.[86] This ecological conversion has the classic requirements of conversion: it demands confession of guilt and a change of heart. However, all this happens within the context of reconciliation with creation.[87] A significant feature of ecological conversion is its indispensable communal dimension.

This conversion also entails new attitudes and lines of ecological spirituality that Pope Francis wants to introduce.[88] The first attitude is gratitude, which springs from the awareness that the world is a gift and leads to generosity.[89] Another is the recognition that, as human beings, we form with

80 Ibid., 207.
81 Ibid., 207–209. The times call for a "free Lent, a time of fasting, all year round." Ibid., 210. On consumerism in this context, cf. also Henriksen, *Theological Anthropology in the Anthropocene*, 176–187.
82 Ibid., 210.
83 Ibid.
84 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, par. 217.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., par. 216.
87 Ibid., par. 218.
88 Ibid., par. 216 and 220.
89 Ibid., par. 220.

other beings a "splendid universal communion."[90] "As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within,"[91] the pope writes. The meaning of ecological conversion is also made clear to Christians through the theological pillars of their faith, such as creation, the incarnation and the resurrection. In particular, the pope underlines the Christological basis of ecological conversion, since "Christ has taken unto himself this material world and now, risen, is intimately present to each being, surrounding it with his affection and penetrating it with his light."[92] Pope Francis goes on to speak of frugality, humility, political commitment and the contemplation of creation: "Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face."[93] In this context, the pope quotes the Sufi mystic Ali Al-Khawwas in a footnote, who writes in a similar vein about uncovering mystery: "There is a subtle mystery in each of the movements and sounds of this world."[94]

As respectable as both texts dealing with ecological spirituality are, the titles of the books cited at the beginning of this subsection clearly refer to the more radical shift that comes with the notion of the Anthropocene. The theologian Sigurd Bergmann names this shift, or rather shaking, as follows: "How can a human be at home on an Earth that is shaken at its foundations by humans themselves? And, how can one, in such a context, continue to believe in God as the Creator and Sustainer of all between Heaven and earth?"[95]

Life in the Anthropocene (or the Hamartiocene, or the ecological crisis), like every alienation, every conflict and every sin, brings us sorrow. The term "environmental grief" has been coined for it. In theology, publications exploring a spirituality for living on a trembling earth, as I mentioned above, are now emerging in response. While this term is disdained by some groups in society, and the persons who experience it are accused of being too sensitive, from a theological perspective, it is necessary to mention the classic place of Catholic theology for relating to the world. That is the first article of the pastoral constitution of the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, which

90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., par. 221.
93 Ibid., par. 233.
94 Ibid., note 159.
95 Sigurd Bergmann, "Religion at Work within Climate Change: Eight Perceptions about Its Where and How," in Deane-Drummond, Bergmann and Vogt (eds.), *Religion in the Anthropocene*, 76.

reads: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts."[96] Today, we gradually feel this connection more and more strongly with nature, too.

The more acutely we feel kinship with all creation,[97] the more we feel that we are dying with it. In this context, Douglas E. Christie observes that while most of the debate about the ecological crisis focuses on biological, economic, or political needs, there is little recognition of the profound need for a renewed spirituality.[98] For Christie, dialogue between ecology and spirituality would be mutually beneficial.[99]

He describes how at the end of an academic meeting devoted to the natural world, different academics began sharing stories about places that are dear to them, such as overgrown backyards of buildings, wetlands with rare species of animals, places of connection to nature that have disappeared during their lifetimes.[100] Such sense of loss is expressed in the same chapter in the words of Psalm 121: "I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."[101] With the same intention of loss-expression he quotes one of the Beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."[102]

The response of Christian theology and spirituality to this environmental grief (Christie connects it to the gift of tears mentioned in Christian monasticism[103]) reminds us of the need for a revived theology of hope and creative theological work in the face of the critical transformations of our world, a search for a "contemplative ecology," a turn to positively

96 Vatican Council II., *Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1965), par. 1.

97 The term "kinship" is used extensively by the theorist Donna Haraway in her reflection on the Anthropocene. See, for example, Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 99–103.

98 Douglas E. Christie, *The Blue Sapphire of the Mind: Notes for a Contemplative Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3. Christie draws heavily on sources from the tradition of early Christian monasticism to recover this spirituality.

99 Ibid., 4.

100 Ibid., 72–74.

101 Ps 121:1–2.

102 Mt 5:4.

103 Christie, *The Blue Sapphire of the Mind*, 70–101.

articulated values such as peaceful sobriety, care, and tenderness, as Pope Francis seeks it.[104] According to Christie, it is contemplation that not only deepens our consciousness of *koinonia* with our Creator, but also increases our attention and sensitivity to *koinonia* with creation.[105] This opens up new possibilities for a fuller and deeper life[106] in Moltmannian peace with creation and leads to a transformation of the relationship between the human and the world. It can thus become one of the possible spiritual resources for life on a shaken earth.

Similarly, it is an essential task to rethink the theology of hope, to seek "hope that does not lie"[107] in the face of a rapidly warming earth. In this context, maybe for the first time in the history of Christianity, there is a noteworthy new emphasis on hopelessness, among several theologians. Only its acceptance is a sign of inner truthfulness and a real possibility of a subsequent turn to hope. The pastoral theologian and psychotherapist Ryan LaMothe even accentuates a certain violence inherent in the feeling that hope must always exist.[108] LaMothe draws on Miguel De La Torre's book *Embracing Hopelessness*, according to which hopelessness is the beginning of a liberative practice. As LaMothe writes:

> Do not shower me with reminders of God's future promises; show me God's present grace through your loving mercy. Do not tempt me with riches of some afterlife; convince me of your sacrificial agape in the here and now. In the midst of unfathomable sufferings, the earth's marginalized no longer need pious pontifications about rewards

104 See Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, for example, par. 126, 223–226 etc.

105 Similarly, see *Laudato Si'* par. 220. "It also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures but joined in a splendid universal communion. As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings." According to Daniel Horan, as I mentioned above, the earlier turn from a dominion model of the human relationship to creation to a stewardship model is insufficient. He himself proposes a community of creation theological model. In doing so, he performs a successful reception of the postcolonial and deconstructionist philosopher Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. See Horan, *All God's Creatures*, 181–222. Horan even speaks directly of a kinship model of creation. Ibid., 85.

106 Christie, *The Blue Sapphire of the Mind*, 234.

107 Cf. Rom 5:5.

108 For example, Ryan LaMothe, *The Coming Jesus and the Anthropocene* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2024), 177. Or similarly in essay form Ryan LaMothe, "Hope in the Anthropocene Age," in *ROOM: A Sketchbook for Analytic Action* 2 (2022), 27. Available also online: https://analytic-room.com/essays/hope-in-the-anthropocene-age-by-ryan-lamothe/ (accessed 30. 7. 2025).

> of the hereafter. Nor do they need their oppressors providing the answers for their salvation.[109]

Clive Hamilton states that a new future will be born only with the death of old conceptions of the future. Therefore, he argues, we need to allow ourselves moments of hopelessness and sadness over the failure of the ways we have traditionally constructed our future. Only after this period of despair can genuine hope emerge. In his follow-up on Joanna Macy, he argues that we must have the courage to allow ourselves to descend into despair and resist the temptation to rush into new futures too quickly.[110]

Hope, in the spirit of what Moltmann wrote about it, must become a concrete and dynamic response to human experience rooted in the Easter faith in the victory of life over death and in the hopeful anticipation of an eschatological Sabbath of creation which is already taking place where love reigns. It is fitting to turn to the words of the author of the Book of Revelation about the "new earth and the new heaven."[111] These words take on a new and more literal meaning in the Anthropocene perspective, and become a source of new eschatological hope and strength for our actions, without absolving us of our responsibility for the present state of the earth of which we are a part. The shape of the future is already contained in our present.[112]

2.4 The Anthropocene as "the ecumenism of a dying planet"

Lyotard famously diagnosed the end of grand, unifying narratives as a hallmark of the postmodern condition. But with a degree of interpretive liberty, one might argue that in the Anthropocene a new kind of metanarrative is emerging – not one we have invented, but one into which we have been

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109 Miguel A. De La Torre, *Embracing Hopelessness* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 96.

110 Hamilton, "The Anthropocene Epoch and Its Meaning," 13.

111 Cf. Rev 21,1.

112 Hamilton, "A Climate of Hope? Reflections on the Theology of the Anthropocene," 193; "Using Paul Tillich's view of faith as ultimate concern, Moltmann believes that 'without hope for the ultimate' human beings turn violent. Add to this systematic theologian Edward Farley's view that human action is contingent on hope, and we begin to see that for many theologians, 'hope' is a fundamental reality of human existence and Christianity. It is not an accident that these theologians consider hope to be essential to action, because in the Christian traditions hope is considered an existential virtue." LaMothe, *The Coming Jesus and the Anthropocene*, 175.

thrown.[113] The Anthropocene establishes a new, inescapable framework, making it reasonable to anticipate the return of something resembling a grand narrative in the Lyotardian sense. Yet this return would not be the result of deliberate construction, but rather of reluctant recognition – or perhaps such a restoration is precisely what is needed.

This – albeit deeply unsettling – unifying force of the narrative of ecological catastrophe or the Anthropocene era has not gone unnoticed by Christian theology. The Anthropocene framework offers a reassessment of existing inter-denominational, inter-religious and inter-species relations. Pope Francis speaks of an "ecumenism of blood"[114] in the context of the persecution of Christians. Those who kill Christians do not distinguish between denominations. I believe it is possible to speak of the "ecumenism of a dying planet" – its trembling spares no one and can lead us to rethink and foster new relationships. Under these circumstances, existing conflicts have become – or must become – secondary.

This is already occurring in the joint call by Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomew, and the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, for ecological conversion.[115] In their 2021 document, they underline the imperative of cooperation. To quote from the document, "Again, we recall Scripture: 'choose life, so that you and your children may live' (Deut 30:19). Choosing life means making sacrifices and exercising self-determination."[116] Similarly, at the level of interreligious dialogue, we can point to the *Declaration Of VII Congress Of The Leaders Of World And Traditional Religions* from 2022[117] as well

113 In his *Einführung in das Christentum*, Joseph Ratzinger, in a polemic with Marxism, argues that the meaning of life cannot be created but only received. In this sense, the Anthropocene is clearly the received story. See Joseph Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum. Vorlesungen über das Apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis* (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1968), 27.

114 See e.g. Pope Francis, *Pellegrinaggio Ecumenico del Santo Padre Francesco a Ginevra in occasione del 70º anniversario della fondazione del Consiglio Ecumenico delle Chiese (21 giugno 2018) – Incontro Ecumenico nella Visser't Hooft Hall del Centro Ecumenico di Ginevra*, 21. 6. 2018, available online: https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2018/06/21/0466/00994.html (accessed 30. 7. 2025).

115 See *A Joint Message For The Protection Of Creation*, 1st September 2021, available online: https://ec-patr.org/a-joint-message-for-the-protection-of-creation2/ (accessed 30. 7. 2025).

116 Ibid.

117 See *Declaration Of VII Congress Of The Leaders Of World And Traditional Religions*, 15th September 2022, available online: https://religions-congress.org/en/page/deklaraciya-uchastnikov-VII.

as many other declarations.[118] A good example of this in practice can also be seen in the ecumenical services held on Earth Day, which are regularly organised by the Roman Catholic Academic Parish of Prague together with other organisations.[119]

2.5 Who is Jesus Christ in the Anthropocene?

In this last section, I want to discuss whether the geological changes to the planet caused by humankind, along with the ecological crisis, in some way impact the core of the Christian faith, namely the person of Jesus Christ and the call to follow him.[120] As Jaroslav Pelikan has demonstrated in his famous book *Jesus Through the Centuries*, we can find a wide variety of images of Christ in Christianity over the centuries.[121] So the logical question is: Is there any change in the interpretation of Jesus of Nazareth in the situation of the Anthropocene? "Who is Jesus Christ in the Anthropocene?," Michael S. Northcott and Peter M. Scott ask similarly in their *Introduction to Systematic Theology And Climate Change*.[122]

It is not without interest that Jürgen Moltmann placed his thesis on the need for peace with nature, which I mentioned at the beginning of this article, at the conclusion of his book on the Crucified God. According to Moltmann, "The memory of the passion and resurrection of Christ is at the same time both dangerous and liberating."[123] The freedom of Christ, revealed through his story culminating in death and resurrection, has the power to liberate humanity from the vicious circles of death. One such circle is the industrial destruction of nature.[124] A similar emphasis is evident in liberation

118 On interreligious dialogue in this context cf. Anthony Le Duc, "Interreligious Dialogue to Promote Environmental Flourishing: An Ongoing Imperative (June 25, 2023)," 20. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=4490844 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4490844 (accessed 31. 7. 2025).

119 See *Ekumenická bohoslužba ke Dni Země*, https://www.farnostsalvator.cz/clanek/3503/ekumenicka-bohosluzba-ke-dni-zeme (accessed 31. 7. 2025).

120 These positions and the question who Jesus is in the Anthropocene will need some time and precise and courageous theological work. I would like to pursue this topic in my future research.

121 Pelikan calculates 18 of them: see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

122 Michael S. Northcott and Peter M. Scott, "Introduction," in Michael S. Northcott and Peter M. Scott (eds.), *Systematic Theology and Climate Change: Ecumenical Perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 5.

123 Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 326.

124 Ibid., 334.

theology, which portrays Jesus as the liberator.[125] However, we can also find such concepts in contemporary discourse, albeit not explicitly linked to the issue of the ecological crisis. Lieven Boeve's theology of interruption introduces the idea that God's action in history functions as an intrusion of otherness, shaking up existing certainties. In this context, he describes Jesus as the interrupter par excellence, the one who interrupts our enclosures.[126] Similarly, John D. Caputo, in his book *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?* – a parody of the familiar question What Would Jesus Do? – portrays Jesus as a figure who critiques society, rejects the status quo, and fights for justice.[127]

Directly in the context of the Anthropocene, Ryan LaMothe in his book *The Coming Jesus and the Anthropocene,* depicts Jesus as a model of vulnerability and care open to all, having respect for the earth and abolishing the status quo of superiority and subordination.[128] These attitudes are well illustrated in a poem by the German theologian Dorothea Sölle, specifically in the following line: "Jesus does not satisfy our thirst / but intensifies it."[129] These approaches view Jesus of Nazareth, in the context of the environmental crisis,

125 See, for example, Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993).

126 See, for example, Lieven Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 2003), 147–162; Lieven Boeve, *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 47–48.

127 See John D. Caputo, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct? The Good News of Postmodernism for the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007).

128 Ryan LaMothe is heavily influenced by the anarchist tradition in his theologizing. "To continue with the story, the coming Jesus is not focused on loving or worshiping God – sovereign or otherwise – but on loving the world – the Earth and all its inhabitants. Similarly, this coming Jesus, in loving the world, has no interest in being worshiped or in Jesus-and-me relationships. Rather, the coming Jesus is interested in inviting people to develop unique anarchic caring relations with the world. In other words, the coming Jesus represents a form of life to be lived and practiced in all of its innumerable cultural and historical iterations, which means that the coming Jesus himself becomes inoperative with regard to religious ceremonies, narratives, or creeds. The focus of the coming Jesus is instead on practices of care (1) that render inoperative apparatuses of sovereignty and the ontological rift, (2) that recognize and respect the singularities of all living beings, which requires epistemologies marked by interspecific perspectivism and multinaturalism, and (3) that embrace the existential insignificance and impermanence of all living beings." LaMothe, *The Coming Jesus and the Anthropocene*, 173.

129 I have translated these verses from the Czech translation by Magdalena Šipka in the collection of poems: Dorothee Sölle, *Daruj mi dar plačícího boha* (Praha: Biblion, 2019), 51. The original poem titled *Antwort auf die frage der linken freunde warum wir beten* is contained in Dorothee Sölle, *Meditationen und Gebrauchstexte* (Berlin:

as the one who encourages action, the one who criticizes injustice, the one who teaches us to look creatively for new ways, not to fall into passivity and indifference. This represents one approach to interpreting and transforming the understanding of Jesus Christ in the Anthropocene.

The second approach is less focused on the humanity of Jesus but underlines his divinity. It speaks less of Jesus but more of Christ. Rather than the synoptic Jesus, it refers to the words of the letter to the Colossians, "He precedes all things, all things consist in him."[130] (Col. 1, 17) The key concept of this approach is his incarnation in matter (σάρξ) and the participation of all life in God's universal presence in the world. Christology is the place of the union of the creator and the created.[131]

An example of this perspective can be found in Richard Rohr's book *The Universal Christ*, which sees Christ in all things, including the natural world – it is not only the kinship of living creatures that connects us to the natural world, but also the fraternal kinship in Christ that we recognize in it.[132]

Conclusion

In addition to the many political, cultural, but, unfortunately, also military and religious conflicts of our time, humanity's consumerist way of life, particularly the reckless exploitation of the Earth as a resource and tool for economic growth by the people of the Global North, is now rebounding like a boomerang, affecting the entire planet. The term Anthropocene, widely

Wolgang Fietkau Verlag, 1969). The original verses are: "weil christus nicht der trank für uns ist sondern der der unsern durst verstärkt".

130 Cf. Niels Henrik Gregersen, "Christology," in Northcott and Scott (eds.). *Systematic Theology and Climate Change*, 36.

131 Ibid., 38. This author combines both approaches well.

132 Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe* (New York, NY: Convergent Books, 2019), 57. Rohr also, in reference to Bonaventure, notes: "Let us place our first step in the ascent at the bottom, presenting to ourselves the whole material world as a mirror, through which we may pass over to God, who is the Supreme Craftsman." And further, "The Creator's supreme power, wisdom and benevolence shine forth through all created things." "I encourage you to apply this spiritual insight quite literally. Don't start by trying to love God, or even people; love rocks and elements first, move to trees, then animals, and then humans. Angels will soon seem like a real possibility, and God is then just a short leap away. It works. In fact, it might be the only way to love, because *how you do anything is how you do everything.* As John's First Letter says, quite directly, 'Anyone who says he loves God and hates his brother [or sister] is a liar' (4:20)."

used and developed in the humanities, has been coined to refer to the period when these changes penetrated the very geological core of the planet. In this paper, I have attempted to outline several possibilities for a theological hermeneutic of the concept of the Anthropocene.

My intention in this paper was not only to introduce, but above all to develop the possibilities of dealing with it in theology. I have presented some perspectives from recent publications on this topic in the Anglo-American environment, which are not yet very well established in Central European theology. I consider the work of Daniel Horan and his theology of creation without human exceptionalism to be particularly valuable. Similarly, I have presented some inspirations for the search for spirituality on a shaken planet. I consider valuable the observation of the agreement among some mutually independent contemporary theologians on the very notion of hopelessness that must precede renewed hope.

Beyond this, I have tried to bring in some thoughts of my own. The key one is the notion of *Hamartiocene*, which is a theological-anthropological reception of the Anthropocene. Its strength, compared to all other variants (e.g., the Capitalocene), lies in the fact that its resolution is inherently embedded within it – what Pope Francis refers to as ecological conversion. I also draw on the pope's terminology, reformulating his well-known "ecumenism of blood" into the more contemporary and universally applicable "ecumenism of a dying planet." The issue that particularly interests me is the evolving interpretation of the person of Jesus Christ in the Anthropocene epoch. Although I may have touched upon a potential solution rather briefly thus far, I intend to develop this question further, for example in my dissertation, which I hope to complete in the near future.

Given the manifestations of the climate crisis we are facing, and the fact that many governments around the world are rather hesitant or not radical enough in their measures to slow down global warming, it is crucial to recognize that the preceding reflections are meant to inspire both theological thinking and practical engagement.[133] Theology and the churches are called to renew their prophetic voice and confront themselves and the world with their sin, that calls literally from the core of the earth to heaven and dare to make amends. We must become witnesses to genuine hope, striving to

133 A detailed presentation of the practical implications for action inspired by the Christian reception of the Anthropocene and the call for ecological conversion naturally exceeds the scope of this introductory study.

cultivate a spirituality that is responsive to the ecological crisis and the hopelessness that accompanies it. This includes rethinking our place within creation, moving beyond fruitless disputes, and discerning anew how our theological imagination can contribute to life in the Anthropocene.

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