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# New Horizons Vol.6, Issue 2 2022

# Modern Crucifixion's:

## Responding to Suffering in God's Creation

Volume 6 Issue 2

# NEW HORIZONS

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# Letter from the Editor

By MyLan Metzger

In this issue of *New Horizons*, the board invited graduate students from throughout the country to respond to the ever present violence in this world. When we originally released the call for papers, the war in Ukraine was ever present on many American's minds. Only a few weeks later, mass shooting after mass shooting, often racial motivated, were making headlines. A few weeks after our board deliberated to review the submitted papers, the Supreme Court of the United Sates finally reversed a violent and detrimental court decision, *Roe v. Wade.* The backlash against this decision demonstrates how violence permeates not only far away countries, but even our own society and even our own wombs. It is into this reality that our board and authors share with you this new issue of *New Horizons.* True to its mission of releasing contextual theology, *New Horizons* explores the many different facets of violence, but also the many of possible Christian responses.

Dhinakaran Savariyar, SJ examines caste discrimination in India and argues that despite how the Catholic Church is sometimes intertwined in the caste system, Christian peace-making is still a necessary response to the violence. Ellie Martin looks at the violence human beings have inflicted upon the environment, particularly the soil. She calls Christians to a new eco-spirituality grounded in Genesis 2. In our final paper, Brendan Barnicle takes a more therapeutic and healing approach, arguing that a theology of healing is necessary for a Church that touches the wounds of trauma.

We are also grateful to share two additional creative pieces in this issue. Short, beautiful, and to the point, Jess Navarette's poetry draws parallels from those who exploit and dominate in the Bible to those who exploit and dominate in our current economic and political system. Finally, harkening back to the original impetus for this issue, Vitaliy Osmolovskyy, SJ, a Ukrainian doctorate student at the Jesuit School of Theology, sits down with Barbara Kozee to discuss his move back to Ukraine in order to serve the refugees of his home country.

This issue expands the perhaps standard conceptions of violence but presents a great call for people of faith to not turn a blind eye to violence in its many forms, but to instead engage their faith to walk with those who suffer.

# Editorial Board

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MyLan Metzger is an online Master in Theological Studies student. She has a bachelors degree from Georgetown University, and her interests are in the intersections of faith and politics and in Catholic social teaching education. Living in North Carolina, MyLan is a Catholic campus minister at Duke University.

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Josth Stenner is a MTS Candidate and Faith-based community organizer located in the Central Valley of California.
As a son of immigrant parents, Josth is a fervent advocate who fights against issues that impact disproportionately our communities of color.

# Acknowledgements

*The Editorial Board would like to thank JST faculty and staff who contributed to this issue of New Horizons. We are grateful for your support.*

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Thomas Cattoi

# Caste War and the Indian Church

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**Abstract:**
*The violent and persistent caste discrimination in India is nothing short of caste war. As destructive to the lives of those in the lowest caste, the Dalits, as international war, caste discrimination must be mediated through peace-making. Peace-making is a necessary step that Christianity can offer to the realities of caste division in India. Acknowledging that Christianity itself has been wrapped up in colonization and caste distinction, this paper ultimately argues that Christians are still called to be an agent for change in India.*

**Keywords:** India, caste discrimination, peace-making

## Introduction

The evil of caste discrimination in India has often been approached from anthropological, social, cultural, and religious viewpoints, although the level of adequacy with which it has been treated could still be debated. However, the conspicuous absence of its warlike devastation in terms of violence and cruelty towards the marginalized Dalits has successfully masked the need to bring the millennial oppression under scholarly scrutiny and the subsequent need to employ the discourse of peace-making. Is the notion of caste war far-fetched? I think not. Findings on caste rivalry and mushrooming atrocities against Dalits throw light on an increasingly divided India where caste-based internal enmity has far worsened in the modern times. Because a rendering other than 'caste war' would either minimize or belie its pernicious import, I hold that 'war' terminology lends credence to locate the social evil of caste with its ghastly grasp on Dalits as victims. As such, 'caste war' is not disproportionate but a needed corrective. My intent here is to demonstrate that the warlike hostility that caste has instantiated on a regular basis in the Indian society has to be urgently intervened by Christian peace-making. However, the Catholic Church itself has also sometimes fallen into caste division. To this end, I divide my paper into two unequal parts, with the first part

engaging the notion of caste war and the second concentrating on how Christian peace-making is necessary although complex.

## The Notion of Caste as A War

India fought its last war with China in 1962 which concluded with the Indian defeat in 1965. The Chinese aggression then cost the lives of 4000 Indian soldiers.[1] The periodical armed conflicts with Pakistan demonstrate that the tussle with the 'persistent offender' continues with no end in sight. The South Asia Terrorism Portal has reported a total number of deaths of civilians and security forces as 14107 and 7397 respectively between 2000-2021 (till May 21, 2022)[2] due to violent attacks from and armed conflicts with Pakistan. Kargil War (in which 500 Indian soldiers died),[3] cross-border terrorism, and Pakistan-incited terrorist attacks within India have certainly proved destructive in terms of collapsing the stability and infrastructural establishments of the country. Nevertheless, what is more ravaging is not what happens across Indian borders as what happens within them. In other words, we need to take our eyes off the overt forms of enmity to focus on covert forms (and overt forms too!) that endanger fraternity among citizens who are supposed to live as brothers and sisters.

With a population of more than 1.3 billion, India is the second most populous country in the world. It has more than tripled in size since the Partition in 1947. Despite its tremendous growth, India remains divided into different castes. The caste system has existed for over 3000 years, and it divides the people of India into hereditary social stratifications which often limit their

[1] See Amrita Nayak Dutta, "On This Day in 1962, India Learnt A Harsh Lesson From China," *The Print*, October 20, 2018. Available Online: theprint.in.
[2] See "Data Sheet - South Asia," South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP). Available Online: satp.org.
[3] See Ilyas M Khan, "Kargil: The Forgotten Victims of the World's Highest War," *BBC News*, July 26, 2019. Available Online: bbc.com.

social circles and occupation advancement. At the bottom of this social hierarchy are the Schedule Castes, or the Dalits, historically termed the "untouchables."[4]

National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights reports that a crime is committed against a Dalit every eighteen minutes; six Dalits are kidnapped or abducted every week; three Dalit women are raped every day; thirteen Dalits are murdered every week; twenty-seven atrocities are committed against Dalits every day.[5] *Religion Unplugged* claims that in the recent past "Nearly 46,000 crimes against Dalits were recorded nationwide, with the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh recording the highest number of cases at 11,829, or 25% of the cases."[6]

Given the data on fatalities resulting from armed conflicts and caste-based violence, one can discover the truth that the terror of caste trumps the terror across the Indian borders. Thanks to its notorious invisibility, more often than not, the warlike devastation of caste is either undermined or deliberately overlooked though the effects of this 'millennial and modern' war are heavy and grisly on Dalits as victims. Hence, uncovering the strategic invisibility of caste greatly aids the understanding of the evolution of caste war.

One of the manipulative strategies of dominant castes was to stifle the horror of caste to make it elusive but perpetual. Commenting on the asymmetrical reality of the hypervisibility of the lower castes and the invisibility of the upper castes, professor and activist Satish Deshpande remarks that, "Caste can be understood only if we pay as much attention to it when it is invisible or infra-visible as we do when it is hyper-visible or ultra-visible."[7] This sociological asymmetry exposes clearly the discrepancy between the abolition of caste and its intensification. Journalist

[4] "Population Growth and Religious Composition," Pew Research Center, September 21, 2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/09/21/population-growth-and-religious-composition/
[5] See National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR). Available Online: ncdhr.org.in.
[6] Hanan Zaffar and Danish Pandit, "Violence Against India's Marginalized Dalits Rising, New Data Shows," *Religion Unplugged*, October 26, 2020. Available Online: religionunplugged.com.
[7] Satish Deshpande, "Caste and Castelessness: Towards a Biography of the 'General Category,'" *Economic & Political Weekly* 48, no. 15 (2013): 33.

and writer Aatish Taseer highlights this modern paradox: "The spread of modernity in India has certainly undermined caste, but it has also made the need to assert it more vehement. And the unfolding story in India is not one about the disappearance of caste, but rather of its resilience."[8]

In the modern India, caste owes its success to its adaptive framework. Cultural anthropologist Deepa Reddy highlights two important and intimately related features of caste in contemporary India: "Its *fluidity,* in contrast to its presumed doctrinally-given rigidity, and *therefore* its capacity to strategically deploy established, essentialized notions of itself in a movement that seeks less to undermine caste than to restore dignity to re-claimed caste identities."[9] Likewise, to describe the subtle workings of caste, Amrita Ghosh, a researcher of cultural and postcolonial studies and Arun Kumar, a UK-based historian employ the concept of *habitus* by French philosopher and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu. As a normative world and set of dispositions, *habitus* shapes the instant cognitive response and bodily behaviour of individuals who practice it in order that such responses are natural, given, and unproblematic despite the division witnessed in the context.[10]

Successfully masking the divisive inworking of caste, then and now, the majoritarian consensus about the millennial evil is that caste discrimination (not caste as such!) is the unwanted side of the Hindu article of faith. Arundhati Roy in her essay on *Doctor and Saint,* an introduction to Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste,* brings out the heart of disagreement between Gandhi and Ambedkar over what they each respectively advocated relentlessly. When Ambedkar exposed the real violence of caste as the "*entitlement*: to land, to wealth, to knowledge, to equal opportunity,"[11]

[8] Aatish Taseer, "India's Eternal Inequality," *The New York Times*, 2016. Available Online: nytimes.com.
[9] Deepa S. Reddy, "The Ethnicity of Caste," *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (2005): 547.
[10] Amrita Ghosh and Arun Kumar, "Casteism Continues to Thrive Among Indians Abroad - Through Surnames," August 28, 2020. Available Online: scroll.in.
[11] Arundhati Roy, "The Doctor and the Saint," in *Annihilation of Caste: The Annotated Critical Edition*, ed. S. Anand (London: Verso, 2014), 98.

the Hindu reformers elided the question of entitlement and cleverly narrowed the question of caste to the issue of untouchability, citing the practice as an erroneous element of the religion in need of only reformation and not annihilation.[12]

Both kept elusive and sanctified by religion, caste spreads its vicious tentacles from policy making at the top-level of governance to a village level administration across India. One example could be the field of education. With the current push for unprecedented nationalism, Hindu ideologues intend to overtake Indian higher education and the 'saffronization of education' is already a project underway with most of its work already complete. Beginning with the death of Rohith Vemula,[13] integral to 'purifying' the Indian higher education is abolishing caste reservations, the single channel of justice for Dalit representation in the Indian civil service and education.[14] As a lecturer in colonial and post-colonial history, Shalini Sharma opines that the Hindutva activism has made possible an ideological sea change that not just accuses caste discrimination as a colonial construction (by Christians) but also minimizes the contribution of Muslim minorities to Indian history.[15]

Moreover, the push for aggressive Hindu nationalism rings a death knell for Dalits by its commitment to perpetuate the caste system with no respite. Seth Schoenhaus cautions how Hindutva strategies that target Dalits as its vote bank could well limit their role as just 'voters' and

[12] See Ibid., 100-101.

[13] See Rohith Vemula, a Dalit PhD candidate committed suicide on January 17, 2016. When the local unit of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student wing of Modi's BJP lodged a complaint against Rohit Vemula and four others for raising issues under the banner of the Ambedkar Student's Association (ASA), the young scholar's fellowship of INR 25000 at the University of Hyderabad was suspended and they were removed from their hostel rooms. Finding it difficult to manage their expenses, they set up a tent on the campus and began a relay hunger strike hoping to win justice for their cause. However, when Vemula's hopes had vanished following the dominant politics at the university against Dalits, he left behind a searing note that talked of his unfinished dreams and lamented "My birth is my fatal accident." From then on, Vemula has become the symbol of victimization of Dalits in Indian higher educational institutions. See "My Birth Is My Fatal Accident: Rohith Vemula's Searing Letter Is an Indictment of Social Prejudices," *The Wire*, 2019. Available Online: thewire.in.

[14] Shalini Sharma, "India: How Some Hindu Nationalists Are Rewriting Caste History in the Name of Decolonization," *The Conversation*, 2019. Available Online: theconversation.com.

[15] See Ibid.

not as 'Hindus' who have found perfect communion like any other upper caste Hindu.[16] The causal relationship between Hindu nationalism and the sustaining of caste system as its predominant agenda is clear from how Dalits are instrumentalized to oppose the fellow Dalits who fight the social evil. Representing quite well the automated, divisive, and hegemonic command of the workings of caste, American writer Isabel Wilkerson analogously speaks of it as "the wordless usher"[17] whose voice carefully monitors that we belong to where we should be, thus ensuring that we not just occupy 'only' 'our' seats but consciously refrain from occupying those of 'others' who symbolize the occupants of higher rungs in the social ladder.

Daltis have had some success in education and economics, but some of this has only stirred more anti-Dalit tension from the dominant upper castes. On the side of caution, we cannot feel overly optimistic about Dalit resurgence for the simple fact that Dalit life continues to remain vulnerable to ideological marginalization and vicious atrocities in the name of caste. Seth Schoenhaus maintains that "Caste tensions and even warfare, while nothing new in Hindu society, were undoubtedly exacerbated with the affirmative action policies toward the end of the twentieth century."[18] Echoing the same, the British social anthropologist David Mosse believes that the idea of Hindu nationalism is a reaction to the liberative missionary practices towards Dalits in the Indian context.[19] The upper caste anger that is directed against the minority Christians is thus the 'earned reward' for Christian liberative praxis within the context of India.

[16] Seth Schoenhaus, "Indian Dalits and Hindutva Strategies," *Denison Journal of Religion* 16, no. 1 (2017): 65.
[17] Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (New York: Random House, 2020), 17. It is fascinating to note that in her seminal and sensational work, Wilkerson talks of racism employing the category of caste as she finds the term 'race' inadequate to capture the misery of the people of color in all its magnitude. For this reason, including the title of her work, she replaces race with caste.
[18] Seth, Indian Dalits and Hindutva Strategies, 60.
[19] David Mosse, *The Saint in the Banyan Tree: Christianity and Caste Society in India* (California: University of California Press, 2012), 199.

The phenomenon of caste war is thus twin-faced: that when Dalits are left unempowered, they are oppressed; and when uplifted, they still encounter the hostility of the dominant castes. As Chandra Bhan Prasad, a Dalit writer rightly says, "There is a conflict between the past and the future that younger Dalits envision for themselves."[20] But in the event of sustained antagonism which manifests the bitter truth that "The aspirations of the Dalits are often resented by upper-caste Hindus,"[21] how can Christianity be the catalyst for change? In my opinion, the upper caste resistance to Dalit empowerment is an adequate indicator that something constructive and liberative that disturbs the *status quo* is happening in the lives of Dalits. As long as the everyday resentment to Dalit life haunts them, the Christian agenda of social justice and preferential option should be robustly advanced.

## The Struggle Within the Indian Church

To understand the phenomenon of caste war and the way in which Christian peace-making can effectively work, a brief analysis of the history of conversions in India could be of vital help. Historically, the conversion to Christianity in India occurred in at least three different phases, each having a different target group. The first phase was the conversion of the Syrian Christians of Kerala, also called St. Thomas Christians who were caste Hindus, some of them belonging to the Namboodiri Brahmins.[22] The second phase occurred during the Portuguese colonial period and the converts were a mixed group of upper and lower-caste people including the Brahmin Catholics of Tamilnadu.[23] The later colonial period witnessed two types of conversion movements under the influence of Anglo-Saxon, and other Western Protestant and Catholic missions which included

[20] Nirmala George, "India's Angry Dalits Rise Against Age-Old Caste Prejudices," *Associated Press*, 2016. Available Online: apnews.com.
[21] Ibid.
[22] See C.K. Mattom and C.K. Maltom, "Foreign Contribution to Kerala Culture Till the Islamic Period," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 21 (1958): 602–6.
[23] See Joseph Tharamangalam, "Whose Swadeshi? Contending Nationalisms among Indian Christians," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 32, no. 2 (2004): 232–46.

members from the upper-caste and urban communities who were in close contact with Western Christians in the metropolitan cities. Also this period witnessed the mass conversion movements among the lower castes and the Adivasis.[24] The predominant missionary strategy in all three phases was the idea of percolation which signified that the lower-castes will follow the upper-caste converts. This was true of Robert de Nobili who targeted the upper-caste Brahmins and described them as the "wise" of the Indian society.[25] Nevertheless, the move to convert caste Hindus (Brahmins) through the method of adaptation or accommodation[26] overlooked the need to challenge some of their social and civil customs like caste which were inherently discriminatory.[27] Noting how Nobili's method of adaptation that made Christians of Indians ensured the continuation of social and civil customs including caste, Tharamangalam comments that the "Type of Brahmin Catholicism was achieved at a high-cost acceptance of caste at the very heart of the church, and physical segregation of Catholics by caste."[28]

Regarding the conversion of lower castes to Christianity in the successive phases, scholars agree that although Dalits were converted *en masse* to Catholicism and Christianity, the success cannot be solely attributed to the efforts of missionaries and their strategy. On the contrary, Dalit scholars insist on an internal awakening among Dalits to embrace non-Hindu religions as a protest movement that began in the second half of the 19th century.[29] Although one cannot underestimate the agency of Dalits in opting for Christianity in their bid to liberate themselves from the clutches of the caste system, the historical accommodation of caste system within Christianity has

[24] See Ibid..
[25] See Peter Phan, "An Asian Christian? Or A Christian Asian? Or An Asian-Christian?: A Catholic Experiment in Christian Identity in Asia," in *Asian Christianities: History, Theology, Practice* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2018), 20–35.
[26] See Ibid.
[27] See Tharamangalam, "Whose Swadeshi? Contending Nationalisms among Indian Christians."
[28] Ibid, 237.
[29] See Joseph McQuade, "Protestant Missions and Dalit Mass Movements in Nineteenth Century India," *Saeculum Undergraduate Academic Journal* 7, no. 2 (2012): 1–12.

manifested itself at various levels of Indian Christian life. Segregation in churches and cemetery, exclusion in leadership and administration, and backwardness in empowerment are some of the evident forms of discrimination actively practised against the Dalit Christians across India.

Voices within Catholicism and Christianity are highly critical of Christians adhering to any divisive agenda or ideology like caste. Pope John Paul II condemned caste as a counter narrative to the gospel values when he uttered that "Any semblance of a caste-based prejudice in relations between Christians is a countersign to authentic human solidarity, a threat to genuine spirituality and a serious hindrance to the Church's mission of evangelization. Therefore, customs or traditions that perpetuate or reinforce caste division should be sensitively reformed so that they may become an expression of the solidarity of the whole Christian community."[30] Likewise, Pope Francis cautions against discriminatory structures that alienate and marginalize a section of the human community. "Those who look down on their own people tend to create within society categories of first and second class, people of greater or lesser dignity, people enjoying greater or fewer rights. In this way, they deny that there is room for everybody" (*Fratelli Tutti,* 99).

Despite such fervent calls to put an end to the evil of caste system, a radical recognition of Dalit marginalization and rendering it in a transformative and liberative praxis have encountered an internal pushback through expressions of inexplicable divide between belief and practices. "Caste is older than the Church"[31] writes Lancy Lobo. The rootedness of caste in the culture does not render Christians immune in order that it is fair to say "Christianity has no caste but Christians have caste."[32] There are disturbing accounts that ascertain that caste discrimination is extant in

[30] John Paul II, "Address of John Paul II to the Bishops of India on Their "AD LIMINA: Visit," November 17, 2003. Available Online: vatican.va.
[31] Lancy Lobo, "Vision, Illusions and Dilemmas of Dalit Christians in India," in *Dalit Identity and Politics* (New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd, 2001), 251.
[32] Ibid., 251.

context manifesting itself in upper-caste Christian organizations[33] and in outright denial of rights and privileges to the marginalized Dalits.[34]

As I am critical of the existence of the caste system, it is good to acknowledge the constructive steps taken by the Indian Church to counter the evil. On December 8, 2016, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) released *Policy of Dalit Empowerment in the Catholic Church in India: An Ethical Imperative to Build Inclusive Communities* wherein it declares that "The term 'Dalit' does not indicate a negative connotation or a caste identity. It rather seeks to restore an affirmative, humanizing, and empowering identity which is a demand of our faith. Thus, it is not only a matter of sociological and cultural category but a theological category as well" (*No. 81*). Sincere efforts are underway to promulgate the policy of Dalit empowerment in the context through affirmative action programs at diocesan, regional, and national levels. However, with clear vision and trajectories outlined, the message of the official Church still has a long way to go before it becomes fully internalized and integrated with the life and faith of Indian Christians.

The brief discussion on the internal struggle of the Indian Church to overcome casteism leads to an allied problem of external threats from the secular Indian society which has been resentful of the conversion of Dalits to Christianity, especially in the recent vogue of Hindu nationalism. From early on, the evangelization to convert caste Hindus, especially Dalits was resented by the majority Hindu community. If on the one hand, those converted were ostracized from the community,[35] the missionaries themselves encountered fierce opposition for their

[33] See TA Ameerudheen, "Is the Caste System Deep-Rooted among Christians in India? A Kerala Bishop Stirs Up a Hornet's Nest," *Scroll.In,* April 20, 2018.
[34] See "Discrimination Within the Church," *The Hindu*, June 6, 2016. See also Swaminathan Natarajan, "Indian Dalits Find No Refuge from Caste in Christianity," *BBC News*, September 14, 2010.
[35] See McQuade, "Protestant Missions and Dalit Mass Movements in Nineteenth Century India."

constructive mission among the downtrodden.[36] One can only say that the hatred towards Christians continues unabated - with the gruesome killing of the Australian missionary Graham Staines and his sons by burning them alive,[37] freezing of the accounts of Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity,[38] and the orchestration of the custodial death of the 83year old Jesuit tribal activist Stan Swamy,[39] to cite a few. The modern version of antagonism towards Christianity cannot be better expressed other than through these current examples. The continued threats to religious freedom only indicate how difficult it is to live as religious minorities in India.

Partly due to the colonial past, the historical prejudice against Christians as converters hampers any meaningful interreligious interface that should otherwise be possible and relevant in a multi-religious context like India. The element of distrust expressed towards Christians is thus a potential threat to engage in any interfaith exchange.[40] If the element of suspicion is one reason, the fear of Dalit Christians towards any aspect of inculturation or inter-religious dialogue is another. When Indian Christianity was experimenting inculturation in liturgy and theology, the Dalit and Adivasi Christians grew sceptical of "Sanskritic" and "Brahminical" brands of Indianization be it in theology or liturgy, but strongly espoused by the upper-caste Christians. Noting the symbols of Sanskritic Hinduism as symbols of oppression, Dalit scholars promoted a counter theology reflecting the experiences and aspirations of Dalit Christians.[41] Beyond the symbols of oppression, what they suspect is that the Church that is, at least, ideally opposed to the

[36] See Chakali Sekhar, "In Search of a Touchable Body: Christian Mission and Dalit Conversions," *Religions* 10, no. 644 (2019): 1–14.
[37] See Reuben Joe Joseph, "'The Graham Staines Story' A Grim Reminder of Horrors of Religious Persecution," *The Week*, April 1, 2019.
[38] See "Missionaries of Charity/ Why Did the Government Freeze Their Accounts?," *Outlook*, December 27, 2021.
[39] See Stanislaus Alla, "The Multiplier-Effect of Stan Swamy's Sufferings," *Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church*, September 2021, catholicethics.com.
[40] See Ashok Chowgule, "A Modern Hindu Concept of Inter-Religious Dialogue," *Journal of Religious Culture* 71 (2005): 1–6.
[41] See Tharamangalam, 240.

evil like caste system cannot join hands with a religion that considers it foundational.[42] With such ideological differences present, any interfaith exchange is doubtful although one can find the genuine attempts in the past and present to converse with other religions as ideal conversational partners.

**Conclusion**

Caste war is a multi-faceted issue that requires a careful study of its history in order to understand its pervasiveness in the Indian society and within the Church. The agenda of Christian peace-making should therefore aggressively pursue social justice, promotion of Dalit agency, and ultimately the annihilation of caste itself. The dream of a casteless society begins with the abolition of caste-based imparities and the virtue of recognition is a needed help to achieve the desired objective. "Reverting our gaze"[43] towards Dalits to find them as equal humans with *Imago Dei* forms an integral part of the moral response to the issue of caste within the Indian Church and society. Echoing the truth Lisa Cahill writes: "In the real world, peace-making or peace-building must *usually* proceed in circumstances where it is precisely justice, equal respect, and human rights are sorely lacking or entirely absent. To act when oppressive power makes action risky, or to take risks for those who have no power, is a hallmark of God's inbreaking reign."[44] In addition, the full-scale implementation of the Kingdom vision is only achievable when Christians disown caste identity before passing on the rhetoric to the secular society. Thus, the ideal way in which caste war can be resolved is by tirelessly advocating a casteless society where peace would reign supreme.

[42] See Abraham Ayrookuzhiel, "The Dalits, Religions, and Interfaith Dialogue," *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies* 7, no. 6 (1994): 13–19.
[43] James F Keenan, "The Color Line, Race, and Caste: Structures of Domination and the Ethics of Recognition," *Theological Studies* 82, no. 1 (2021): 73.
[44] Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Pacifism, Just War, and Peacebuilding* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019), 362.

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# Dirty Theology:
# Protecting the Soil as an Act of Worship

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**Abstract:**
*When considering the role of religion in the fight against violence and injustices, soil has not been a prominent, or even minor, focus for most Christians. However, we are currently witnessing the anthropogenic degradation of our soil, caused primarily by our industrialized agricultural practices. This violence perpetrated against the ground is critically important to address because our lives as human beings are deeply dependent upon healthy soil. As Christians, a soil-based theological anthropology connects us to the soil on an even deeper level, reminding us that we are formed from this ground and have a sacred responsibility to love and care for the soil.*

**Keywords:** Ecological theology, soil, *adamah*, Genesis 2, environmental justice, agriculture

## Introduction

What is dirt? This may feel like a simple question. However, the answer is surprisingly complex. The reality is that dirt is a complex network of life and death, simultaneously universal and unique. It is the basis of ninety-five percent of the food we consume and the home for billions of creatures.[1] Soil is involved in all of our global life cycles.[2] It is the land on which we walk, dance, and grow. Yet, since the beginning of human civilization, many societies have disrupted the natural cycles that protect and replenish our soil. With the advent of agriculture around ten thousand years ago, humans began to manipulate and manage their surrounding soil.[3] Throughout the centuries, many of our ancestors passed down a message that we could control the Earth beneath our feet. When our belief in soil domination met with the technological

[1] OCC, *Healthy Soils Are the Basis for Healthy Food Production* (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2015), http://www.fao.org/3/i4405e/i4405e.pdf.
[2] *Kiss the Ground*, directed by Josh Tickell and Rebecca Tickell (Ojai, California: Big Picture Ranch, 2020), https://www.netflix.com/title/81321999?s=i&trkid=13752289.
[3] David R. Montgomery, *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2012), 31.

advances of industrialization and later the "Green Revolution," the heinous abuse of our global soil system became common practice. Chemicals leach through our dirt, deforestation leaves our topsoil to simply blow away, and monocropping destroys natural balances of vital soil nutrients. However, we do not have to accept these damaging practices as merely "the way things are." We can choose a different narrative.

The creation story in Genesis 2-3 offers Christians a reminder of our integral connection to the soil. We are born out of the dust, shaped by the Creator's hands, and gifted with the breath of life. When our earthly lives come to an end, we are given back to the dust, absorbed into the soil which made us. Soil is not simply an organic material resting on the Earth's surface. It is the substance of life. When Christians reconnect to their earthy roots, they can embrace a heritage of loving the land and the soil. This love asks us to notice the violence our human family is causing towards dirt and the Earth more broadly, and it calls us to a shared responsibility of protection and care. We can practice our faith and uphold the Creator Spirit's divine indwelling in Earth and ourselves when we act to replenish, rebuild, and restore our soil.[4] Human action is violating the harmonious balance of the soil. We are called as Christians to protect and care for this ground from which we came.

## What is Happening Below Our Feet?

Soil is a basic building block of life, particularly our human lives. Soil is typically only one to three feet thick, with topsoil, the section responsible for growing most of our food, often only a few inches thick.[5] While our human skin makes up one-thousandth of our "height," the

[4] For further discussion on the Creator Spirit and ecology, see Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality 1993 (New York: Paulist Press, 1993).
[5] Montgomery, *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations*, 23.

soil only makes up a ten-millionth of the Earth's radius.[6] Soil is a shockingly delicate skin that is the difference between human flourishing and extinction. When soil is healthy, it is a "self-regulating biological factory."[7] Healthy topsoils can support diverse plant life, which, in turn, feeds the soil. The plants' root networks also help protect the soil from water or wind erosion.[8] As these plants naturally die, their organic material is slowly absorbed into the dirt and decomposed by the many microscopic creatures living in the soil, feeding our "underground livestock."[9] It is in these healthy soils that humans can grow the best possible food. The soil's natural ability to recycle organic material and harvest minerals locked within the Earth feeds plants a rich, nutrient-dense diet. When we eat these well-fed plants, we become well-fed ourselves. With healthy soil, the Earth gifts us healthy and flavorful food, representing the ground from which it grew.

Not only does healthy soil help to feed billions of creatures living in and on it, but it also provides support to many of our global life cycles. For example, when our ground is in equilibrium, it acts as a key member of the water cycle. The soil becomes a natural filter, purifying our freshwater.[10] Additionally, clean water vapor transpires off plants growing in healthy soil, which helps to create future rain.[11] This water vapor also protects us against solar radiation, helping to keep global temperatures in check.[12] Healthy soil also plays a significant role in the global carbon cycle. The Earth naturally distributes carbon–across the atmosphere, in living creatures, and within the soil–but the ground is by far the largest "carbon pool," containing

[6] Ibid.
[7] Daniel Hillel, *Out of the Earth: Civilization and the Life of the Soil* (London: Aurum Press, 1991), 23.
[8] Nicole Masters, *For the Love of Soil: Strategies to Regenerate Our Food Production Systems* (New Zealand: Printable Reality, 2019), 38.
[9] Ibid., 47.
[10] Mary E. McGann, *The Meal That Reconnects: Eucharistic Eating and the Global Food Crisis* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press Academic, 2020), 96.
[11] Tickell and Tickell, *Kiss the Ground*, 21:23.
[12] Masters, *For the Love of Soil*, 108.

more carbon than all plants and the atmosphere combined.[13] Carbon from decomposed organic matter is trapped in the soil and kept out of our atmosphere. Proper "sequestering" of carbon within our soil is potentially one of our most powerful solutions for global warming.[14] Carbon-rich soil is also healthier, "improving nutrient cycles, water holding and quality, [and] requiring less need for inputs and artificial props."[15]

Unfortunately for our Earth and all who live within it, humans have been mistreating the soil since settling into stationary communities approximately ten thousand years ago.[16] While many Indigenous communities have long worked to protect the balance of their ecosystems, including the soil, most societies have not been so thoughtful. Many of our human activities harm the ground, particularly those we have developed since the Industrial Revolution. The single largest contributor to unhealthy soil is our agricultural practices. It is no surprise that modern farming violates the soil it depends on, given that it grew out of the violence of war.

Industrial agriculture, born in America and Western Europe at the end of World War II, has systematically devalued and ravaged our soil: "when the war ended, all the energy that went into fighting the enemies in the world went into fighting the 'enemies' on the farm."[17] After the war, munitions factories that no longer needed to manufacture chemical-based bombs quickly transitioned to producing massive amounts of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.[18] The new dependency on these chemicals wholly reshaped the farmer's relationship with the ground. Meanwhile, the American farm subsidies program, which began as a protection for struggling family farms, transitioned in the 1960s to financially reward large-scale, conventional, and

[13] Ibid., 66-7.
[14] McGann, *The Meal That Reconnects*, 139.
[15] Masters, *For the Love of Soil*, 68.
[16] Montgomery, *Dirt*, 31.
[17] *Kiss the Ground*, Tickell and Tickell, 14:28.
[18] Montgomery, *Dirt*, 197.

monocropped agriculture.[19] As the "Green Revolution" barreled ahead with its genetically modified seeds, farms became larger and more dependent on mechanization and synthetic intervention. To make matters worse, Americans and Europeans exported these practices around the globe. We have long hailed industrialized farming as a savior. In reality, it is thinly veiled ecological injustice that destroys local and sustainable agricultural practices and forces many small farmers to join the urban poor.[20] Industrial agriculture capitalizes on short-term gains in crop output at the cost of the land's long-term health. The few farmers who are left no longer see soil as a delicate partner but instead as a dead resource to be managed and controlled.

Because of soil's intricate and sensitive relationship with all other members of our global ecosystem, the industrialization of agriculture causes a wide variety of deleterious effects. Every time a farmer chooses to spray toxic pesticides, heavily irrigate their land, or practice monocropping, they negatively affect the soil and a whole host of other creatures and systems that work together to keep our ecosystem in check. When we attempt to map the negative consequences of industrial agriculture's mistreatment of soil, we quickly realize that soil's relationship to Earth is incomprehensibly complex. Healthy soil maintains itself and sustains all life. In contrast, damaged soil creates unintended consequences that can harm and potentially destroy our human existence. As Wendell Berry says, "to damage the Earth is to damage your children. To despise the ground is to despise its fruit; to despise the fruit is to despise its eaters. The wholeness of health is broken by despite."[21] Perhaps it is time to leave this damage and despite behind and rebuild a relationship with our soil that rests in harmony, respect, and even love.

[19] Ibid., 210.
[20] McGann, *The Meal That Reconnects*, 66-8.
[21] Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977), 106.

**Adam out of Adamah**

Humans, particularly those living in North America, have knowingly or unknowingly accepted a story of soil exploitation. We have been led to believe that abusing the soil is not only our right but the way forward in a never-ending march of progress that promises bigger and better lives for all humans. However, this is not the only narrative available to us. Biblical traditions offer a different connection with and expectation for the soil. To begin, the story of Adam and Eve provides an understanding of human personhood that is integrally connected to the ground:

> The Lord God formed man (ā-ḏām) from the dust (‘ā-p̄ār) of the ground (’ă-ḏā-māh), and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being (Gen. 2:7, NRSV)[22]

Adam is formed out of adamah, out of the ground. This play on words highlights a deep understanding by the ancient Israelite authors that the human story begins with dirt. Without knowledge of modern science or the biological interconnectedness of all life, these Israelite authors still grasped a profound truth of our earthly nature. When God breathes the breath of life into Adam, humans become “soil inspired by spirit.”[23] The human identity is forever linked to our dirty beginnings.

In assembling a soil-based theological anthropology, Walter Brueggemann’s exegetical work on the second creation story provides us with many starting points to develop a deeper understanding of the human condition. Brueggemann emphasizes our “human creatureliness”

[22] All Scripture quotations are from The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version, copyright © 2018 by Oxford University Press.
[23] Ted Peters, “Markers of Human Creaturehood: Soil, Spirit and Salvation,” *Science and Christian Belief* 30, no. 2 (2018): 138, http://0-web.b.ebscohost.com.grace.gtu.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=14&sid=d73f0623-1cac-43d7-9071-4c6aa258fdc1%40pdc-v-sessmgr03&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=ATLAiFZU181022000455&db=lsdar.

and unpacks what this identity implies for our earthly lives.[24] The human is and always will be "genuinely an 'Earth-creature,' subject to all the realities and limitations of materiality."[25] Genesis reminds us that we are members of creation. We are earthlings. We are entirely dependent on these earthly bodies to live the life we were gifted. While our earthy existence is "very good" (Gen. 1:31, NRSV), it is also fragile, much like the soil from which we are formed. We are delicate in our dustiness. After the Fall, our earthly limitations became more evident:

> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground (ʾă-ḏā-māh), for out of it you were taken; you are dust (ʿā-p̄ār), and to dust (ʿā-p̄ār) you shall return (Gen. 3:19, NRSV)

Not only is the human formed from the dust of the ground, but she will return to dust when she dies. Humans are material creatures marked with the physical joys and struggles of bodily life. No amount of spiritual seeking will permanently elevate us beyond our dependency on the soil. Humans are of the Earth. Even the word "human" comes from the Latin word "humus," meaning Earth or soil.[26] We cannot be separated from our earthly origins.

Humans are not only creatures of the dirt, connected to all other members of creation through our earthly foundations. We are also given a sacred responsibility to care for and protect the soil from which we were formed:

> The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it (Gen. 2:15, NRSV)

This passage has often been interpreted in a similar negative manner as the call to "subdue" and "have dominion over" the Earth (Gen. 1:28, NRSV). As a result, many people implicitly believe in a divine right to destroy the soil for short-term human benefit. Our Earth is currently

[24] Walter Brueggemann, "Remember, You Are Dust," *Journal for Preachers* 14, no. 2 (1991): 5, http://0-search.ebscohost.com.grace.gtu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000837310&site=ehost-live.
[25] Ibid., 4.
[26] Thomas W Mundahl, "From Dust to Dust: An Exploration of Elemental Integrity," *Word & World* 6, no. 1 (1986): 96, http://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/6-1_Land/6-1_Mundahl.pdf.

witnessing the repercussions of this violent reading, whether that be the destruction of our soil, rising global temperatures, or any number of other ecological traumas. However, alternative interpretations are available. The commandment of Genesis 2:15 rejects any abuse perpetrated against the soil when we combine it with the belief that all creation comes from and depends on the very soil we are asked to till and keep. A soil-based theological anthropology instead asks humans to "accept the work of caring for the garden."[27] This looks like honoring the boundaries of the soil, limiting our human interference to ensure that the soil can renew itself naturally.[28] Care also means we must share the bounty of the soil with the rest of creation.[29] If all members of creation, including those too small for us to see, cannot access the healthy soil they need, humans have failed to fulfill their God-given role as the keepers of the Earth and the dirt.

The second creation story offers a narrative that yokes our lives to the life of the soil. We are formed from the dust and live in a fragile yet beautiful earthly glory. Our dusty bodies link us to the birds, flowers, rocks, and soil with whom we share our planet. As humans, we are given the task of caring for our kin, with specific attention paid to the care of the ground. We only properly perform our duty to the Earth and to God when we recognize the boundaries of human activity. Our role is not limitless exploitation but conscientious protection nourished by the intertwined nature of our relationship with the dirt. From dust to dust, we are only flourishing in our role as keepers of the Earth when we care for our soil.

## Care for Creation: Embodying Eco-theological Attitudes toward the Soil

[27] Brueggemann, "Remember, You Are Dust," 5.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

We must rebuild our connection with the soil. As Christians, we are gifted a different story that speaks of a deep relationship with and care for the ground. But we cannot simply admire the soil and all it has given us. Action must be taken around the world to right the destructive practices we continue to uphold. We must reintroduce many traditional and Indigenous agricultural and land management solutions if we want to save our soil. For those driven by Christian faith, these actions can be supported by our renewed narrative of a soil-based theological anthropology.

Many promising approaches exist to manage our soil resources sustainably, particularly as it pertains to agriculture. One rising solution rests on the rediscovery of regenerative agriculture, a system that mirrors the agricultural practices many Indigenous communities have long utilized. Regenerative agriculture focuses on practices that the best farmers throughout history used to protect and nurture their soil: no-till, cover crops, perennials and trees, and compost or mob grazing.[30] When these practices are combined, the natural strength of the soil can return, benefiting billions of creatures in and around the Earth, including us. Regenerative agriculture allows humans to care for the soil while the soil simultaneously cares for us. Extensive changes are needed in our global agricultural system, but the billions of people living in urban and suburban areas of the world also have a responsibility to change. We can choose to purchase our food from local farmers who make sustainable decisions for their soil.[31] We can also protect and connect with the soil on our own land, regardless of size, by shifting to "eco-lawns" or sustainably growing some of our own food.[32] Simply getting our hands in the dirt–learning what it needs to thrive–helps us to commit to better practices on a global scale. Finally,

[30] *Kiss the Ground*, Tickell and Tickell, 1:11:09.
[31] McGann, *The Meal That Reconnects*, 130.
[32] Montgomery, *Dirt*, 201.

we can demand better legal protections for the soil that require all members of our communities to treat the ground with respect and that fund the repairs needed for already damaged soil. It is not the task of farmers alone to fix the broken system humans have created. We are all responsible for our soil's health. It is an act of ecological justice to care for the ground, one to which we are all called.

The practices mentioned above (and many more) should be adopted by faith communities as well. Cultivating a love for the soil that formed us–and the Earth more broadly–must be reintegrated into the spiritual practices of Christians around the world. There are many ways in which a church community can nurture love, respect, and care for our dirt. Churches can source food for the Eucharist and other shared meals from reliable local producers or grow sustainable gardens themselves. Worship can be held outdoors to help our faith communities get to know their local surroundings, building appreciation for their ecosystem and the soil that supports it. In addition to external actions, we can internally cultivate a love for our Earth and our soil through worship and praise. As Pope Francis says in *Laudato Sí*, "When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them" (LS 87). Praising with the soil requires that our leaders preach on the many biblical stories related to the ground and on soil justice more broadly, connecting our sermons and faith narratives to the soil. We can include blessing ceremonies for the Earth and the soil into our weekly worship, uniting the churchly calendar with our seasonal one. Laments mirroring the cries of the Psalmists can also be offered. Integrating soil into our worship will open our hearts to this crucial and beloved member of God's creation.

Finally, we can include soil in our prayers and hymns, cultivating our love through our lyrical words. Each community can compose its own prayers and hymns that connect to the

specific soil of their area, either using existing texts as guides or creating original works. Below, I offer a prayer adapted from Saint Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Sun* and inspired by Pope Francis's reminder that "anyone who has grown up in the hills or used to sit by the spring to drink, or played outdoors in the neighbourhood square; going back to these places is a chance to recover something of their true selves" (LS 84). With these words, I give thanks for the soil of my childhood home, a small farm in Michigan:

> Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures,
> especially Sister Soil,
> who feeds and loves me, giving me sturdy ground below my feet.
> She is kind and patient,
> sharing life even with those who have not yet learned to love her in return.
> Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Roots,
> who you send through the soil to nurture our plants,
> offering his bounty of water and nutrients to the leaves above.
> Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Fungi,
> and the delicate tendrils she spins throughout the ground,
> holding the soil in perfect unity,
> both welcoming and secure.
> Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Carbon,
> brought to the soil through the creatures above,
> and resting there, safely tucked away in the dark.
> Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks, and serve him with great humility.

## Conclusion

Soil is more than a brown and black material hiding beneath our buildings, sidewalks, and lawns. We rely on soil to provide almost all our food. We depend on soil's contributions to the water and carbon cycles. Without soil, the Earth would be inhospitable to most complex life forms, especially the delicate and dusty *homo sapiens*. But soil is more than simply a resource. It is a member of God's creation. We are rooted in dirt, formed by the Creator from the dust of the ground and returning to dust when we die. Our identity is inseparable from the soil. Because of this interconnection, God tasked us with protecting the land. Yet, we as a global community have

failed to uphold our sacred responsibility. It is time for us to once again love the ground, to speak out against soil injustices, and to repair the harmed Earth. Our story began with dirt, but it will only continue if we restore our shared soil to its natural glory.

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# Responding to Trauma:
# A Theology of Healing

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**Abstract:**

*A theology of healing ministry is fundamentally relational, and it suggests that humans can honor God and the* imago dei *by assisting and supporting each other after traumatic experiences. Considering theology through the lens of healing ministry demonstrates the need for recognizing healing as one of the ongoing possibilities and eschatological imaginings of Christ's churches. By embracing a theology of healing ministry, churches can model and foster the healing that is needed by all of creation.*

**Keywords:** trauma, healing, ecclesiology, soteriology, healing ministry

In the spring of 2021, theologian and president of Union Theological Seminary Serene Jones met with a group of Episcopal cathedral deans to discuss the impacts of trauma.[1] Jones is one of the foremost authorities on trauma and theology, and wrote one of the very first books on the topic, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*.[2] In their meeting, she noted all of the recent traumatic events, and she provided a word of caution. Even as these events fade from the news, the trauma of these events will linger with people, and the impact of trauma will show up in congregations.[3] She encouraged her audience to consider how they might prepare for the pastoral challenges of caring for increasing numbers of traumatized people. A theology of

[1] Sam Candler, "Trauma," The Cathedral of St. Philip, May 16 2021. Trauma (cathedralatl.org). Accessed March 28, 2022.
[2] Serene Jones, *Trauma + Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), xi.
[3] Nathan LeRud, "Dean's Forum: Trauma, Grief & Grace, Trinity Cathedral, September 20, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fi-3oSBH_JM. Accessed March 28, 2022.

healing ministry is one way for churches to respond to trauma in their midst. Moreover, looking at theology through the lens of healing ministry can reinforce and even enhance classical understandings of grace, sacramentality, Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology.

Healing is defined as the process of becoming sound or healthy again. It is distinct from curing. In the New Testament, there are two Greek works that are translated into English as "heal": *therapeuo* and *iaomai*. *Therapeuo* connotes medical care and the healing by a physician. *Iaomai* connotes the desired result of healing, a cure. While they are generally used interchangeably, *iaomai* generally has a more positive connotation because it reflects a successful outcome from the healing process. A theology of healing ministry is not based on *iaomai*. It is based on *therapeuo*; it argues for a theological basis for assisting in the healing process. It also suggests the theological insights that can be gained from the hermeneutic lens of healing ministry. In this way, a theology of healing ministry builds on the existing theologies of trauma, but offers even greater emphasis on the healing process. A theology of healing ministry also extends beyond providing *therapeuo* to individuals. It includes assisting in the healing of communities, institutions, and all God's creation. Ultimately, the aim of a theology of healing ministry is the flourishing of all creation through the process of healing.

A theology of healing ministry descends from a theology of God and of salvation that results in the provision of healing for all of God's creation. It reflects the incarnation and embodiment of sacramental grace. However, it does not suggest that churches or their members will cure all ills. Churches and their members can assist in the healing process. They can journey with traumatized people, and perhaps even offer restorative and supportive services. They can contribute to the flourishing of creation, but they do not cure creation. A theology of healing ministry is fundamentally relational, and it suggests that humans can honor God and the *imago*

*dei* by assisting and supporting each other after traumatic experiences. Considering theology through the lens of healing ministry demonstrates the need for recognizing healing as one of the ongoing possibilities and eschatological imaginings of Christ's churches. By embracing a theology of healing ministry, churches can model and foster the healing that is needed by all of creation.

Looking at theology through the lens of healing ministry can reinforce and even enhance classical understandings of grace and soteriology. Serene Jones' theology of trauma informs a theology of healing ministry in which God's grace may be the only thing that truly enables traumatized people, traumatized communities and traumatized institutions to break free of their trauma. Looking at soteriology through the lens of healing ministry reinforces the persistence of God's grace. In Jones' work, she points out that traumatized people can be trapped in a psychological cycle. "The psychological material on trauma says that the hardest part of dealing with trauma is figuring out how to interrupt the pattern. Something must happen that breaks the community or the person out of the prison they have been trapped it."[4] Unfortunately, many traumatized individuals, communities and institutions cannot break the cycle. They are too frightened to let something new into their lives. As a result, they resist the very things that might help to break them free of the trauma.[5] However, Jones argues that God's grace is the one thing that can help people to break free. God's grace comes from outside of human reach. It is completely free. Jones notes that in Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, a world that is "imprisoned by violence" is "massively interrupted by the gift of God's love." [6] She points to the

[4] Jones, xv.
[5] Jones xv.
[6] Jones, xvi.

Christ's resurrection as the ultimate example of God's interrupting grace. In the resurrection, God's love "comes into the midst of violence and is not undone by it but creates another story."[7]

Similarly, traumatized people, communities and institutions are frequently "imprisoned by violence," and they need God's grace and love to break them free, so that they can create another story, a new story. In helping people, communities and institutions to overcome trauma, a theology of healing ministry suggests that with God's grace, they can break free of the past traumatic narrative and create another story. Grace viewed through the lens of healing ministry provides a way forward for traumatized people and their communities. For example, in his book, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, theologian James Cone describes the horrors and trauma inflicted on black bodies in the United States. Yet, despite the trauma, his family and his community experienced persistent love and vitality. Cone and his community were able to tell a story that overcame the trauma. To Cone and to Jones, that love and vitality is God's grace.[8] It is God's grace that enables traumatized people to imagine a new story for themselves.[9] Ultimately, Jones' view of grace is consistent with classical soteriology. It can also be applied more broadly than it has been applied in Jones' work. Jones' work focuses primarily on recovery for individuals but God's grace is also available to communities, institutions and all creation. Humanity may not be able to cure all creation, but with God's grace, humanity can start to journey with all that are in need of healing, including the planet. Too frequently, we underestimate the impact of God's grace. While Christians might acknowledge God's grace, they are reluctant to trust in it. Finding God's grace in the midst of trauma reinforces the persistence

[7] Jones, xvi.
[8] Jones. xvii.
[9] Jones, 22.

and the power of that grace, and the experience can boldly enrich one's spirituality and discipleship.

Frequently, traumatized people lose their sense of their own agency after a traumatic event.[10] Without a sense of agency, people have less control of their lives, and forego some of their own free will.[11] A theology of healing ministry observes that God's grace permits humans to exercise their free will and agency, even when they do it in ways that are destructive. Therefore, helping a traumatized person to understand the depth of God's grace helps them to re-develop their agency and ultimately, their resiliency. If they can see that God will love them, regardless of whether they deserve God's love, then they might understand that God will love them, even when they make mistakes. Therefore, God's unconditional love and grace may help them to develop agency.[12] With a sense of agency, traumatized people can begin to recover from the trauma.[13] Similarly, traumatized communities and institutions can start a recovery process, once they acknowledge the power of God's grace in their midst.

Jones' work focuses on the ways that God's grace can break in to the life of the traumatized person, but a theology of healing ministry recognizes that God's grace also benefits caregivers. In describing the experiences of the chaplains serving at Ground Zero in New York City after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, chaplain Storm Swain explains that the chaplains found that "God was with them and in what they were doing, in the prayers they prayed and the pastoral relationships that developed," when they were journeying with

[10] Jones, 18; Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 56; Bessel Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Viking, 2014), 97-100.
[11] Jennifer Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology: Thinking Theologically in the Era of Trauma* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 45-46; Herman, 90-91.
[12] Baldwin, 54.
[13] Jones, 18.

traumatized people.[14] A theology of healing ministry highlights the grace bestowed upon caregivers. Healing ministries demonstrates God's grace in two dramatic ways: God's ability to aid the traumatized person and God's ability to call upon another person to join the traumatized person on their journey toward flourishing.

A theology of healing ministry also illuminates sacramentality. For many people, the routine of the sacraments of Eucharist and baptism can lose their impact and importance. While God's grace is still at work in those sacraments, one might take the grace for granted. Healing ministry provides another way of recognizing God's grace in our midst. In fact, healing ministries could be even more impactful for all involved because of their more limited adoption. If adopted more fully, healing ministry provides another way of facilitating God's grace in the world. Moreover, applying healing ministry to communities, institutions and all of creation demonstrates the depth and breadth of God's grace. In recovery from a traumatic event, God may be made known to us. This is not to say that God wishes traumas for us, but that God can become known to us in any number of situations, even traumatic ones. Therefore, looking at sacraments through the lens of healing ministry reinforces the relentlessness of God's grace, which is available to both traumatized person and caregiver on their journey to wholeness. In this way, healing ministry shares the communal benefits of Eucharist and baptism.

Considering Christology through the lens of healing ministry also highlights the ways that Christ aids human transformation. In the resurrection, Jesus makes things new and creates new possibilities. Among other things, Jesus' ministry was a ministry of curing people. Where a theology of healing ministry focuses on assisting in healing, Jesus did not need human assistance

[14] Storm Swain, *Trauma and Transformation at Ground Zero: A Pastoral Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2011), 24.

to cure people. However, there is at least one example of Jesus engaging in the healing process, where he did not automatically cure someone. When Jesus first appeared to the disciples, he appeared in his broken body of the cross (John 20:19-31 NRSV). He did not necessarily need to appear to the disciples in that form. It is likely that they would have recognized him if he appeared without his wounds. (Matt. 28: 9-10; John 20:16-18 NRS). By appearing with his wounds, Jesus seems to empathize with the wounds of fear and disappointment that mark the disciples after his crucifixion. In that broken body, Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. In seeing Jesus' broken body, the disciples could more easily accept the reality of the crucifixion. They also had the opportunity to participate in the resurrection, and find themselves transformed by it.

Looking at Christology through the lens of healing ministry reinforces that Jesus was someone who understood the brokenness of human flesh. He demonstrates that brokenness is not a liability but an asset. Brokenness leads to transformation for himself and for the disciples. Jesus breathes forth the Holy Spirit from his broken body, not his pre-crucified body. Jesus did not cure the disciples of their psychological and emotional brokenness, but he journeyed with them in it. He met them in their brokenness and he assisted them in living with it and transforming it into something new. Jesus demonstrates the transformative power of God's grace and of the Holy Spirit. A theology of healing ministry challenges us to do the same. Our fleshly brokenness may always remain, and yet, transformation remains a possibility. In that process, our actions affirm a God whose "goal for creation is the ultimate transformation of pain, not its transmission."[15] The transformation of pain is a process. It rarely occurs in a single instance. Instead, it requires the kind of healing process that is reflected in healing ministry.

[15]Belden C. Lane, *Ravished by Beauty: The Surprising Legacy of Reformed Spirituality* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 221.

In casting Christ as one who not only cures illness but also assists in the healing process, classical Christology can reinforce the healing hermeneutic. Christ remains the mediator between God and humanity, and Christ also mediates in the midst of fleshly brokenness.[16] Christ also remains the hero, Christus Victor, and Christ's heroism includes the characteristics of fleshly brokenness.[17] Christ remains the "embodiment of fullness," as reflected in Colossians, even in the midst of his own brokenness.[18] Ultimately, brokenness in Christ aligns with the brokenness in humanity, and Christ provides the means of salvation regardless of our human condition. Looking to Christ as healer reinforces liberation theology's view that sees Christ as healing the suffering inflicted upon people by broken economic and political systems. Christ seeks to heal those systems and the traumas that they produce in the same ways that he seeks to reframe individual experiences of trauma.[19]

Connecting people despite brokenness also builds community and communion. In the late 20th century, communion ecclesiology won broad adoption among most Christian denominations.[20] Despite the strong consensus for communion ecclesiology, it can still create confusion, because it was developed from two different biblical meanings of the word *koinonia*. *Koinonia* can mean "common participation in the gifts of salvation won by Jesus Christ and bestowed by the Holy Spirit" and it can mean "the bond of fellowship of the community of Christians that results from our union with God."[21] Accordingly, it can suggest both a vertical

[16] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 209. Cites C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (London: Fontana, 1967), 286.
[17] McGrath, 292.
[18] Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *Christology: A Global Introduction*, 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2016), 35-36.
[19] Leonardo Boff & Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*. Trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 62.
[20]Scott MacDougall, *More Than Communion: Imagining an Eschatological Ecclesiology* (London: T&T Clark, 2015), 14.
[21] Patrick Granfield, "The Church Local and Universal: Realization of Communion," *The Jurist* 49 (1989), 451.

communion in grace with God, as in the first definition or a horizontal communion modeled in the three persons of the Trinity, as in the second definition. Understandably, some people have focused on the vertical dimension, which emphasizes grace and sacraments. Others have focused on the horizontal dimension, which focuses on fellowship and support among the members of a church.[22] A theology of healing ministry seeks to build on communion ecclesiology by embracing both definitions. A theology of healing ministry highlights the sacramental manifestation of grace present in healing ministries. In addition, a theology of healing ministry focuses on the fellowship and support; it builds upon relationality. A theology of healing ministry actively embraces the work of building connective tissue within all of God's creation. It seeks to address all brokenness, including the brokenness of the planet. As the planet's environment systems breakdown because of human impact, a theology of healing ministry seeks to prioritize transformation and healing of all of creation. Healing ministry is the antidote to the isolation and separation that so frequently accompany trauma.[23] A theology of healing ministry elaborates on communion ecclesiology, by suggesting that the healing process can help to bring people and all of creation together, so that creation can more fully resemble the Body of Christ.

The therapeutic treatments for traumatized people focus heavily on social reconnection and developing a sense of mission.[24] Churches can provide opportunities for both. The social reconnection in churches can also be progressive. Initially, the social interaction may be limited to worship or a class, but over time, those interactions might mature into genuine partnerships in which people can share and reframe their traumatic experiences. As trust grows, traumatized individuals might trust both their new friends and God more fully. Christ's ministry and the

[22] Susan K. Wood, "The Church as Communion," in *The Gift of the Church: A Textbook of Ecclesiology*, ed. Peter Phan (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 160.
[23] Herman, 121.
[24] Herman, 205-211.

Christian tradition articulate a strong mission. As theologian Kathryn Tanner notes in her description of theological anthropology, "the Father sends the Son on a mission, which involves his incarnation and earthly mission for our good, a mission that culminates with the Son's sending the Spirit to us."[25] Subsequently, "when we receive the Spirit, we therefore receive Christ to be the new shape of our lives, dying to ourselves and rising with him as participants in the Father's mission of love for the world."[26] A theology of healing ministry embraces such a sense of mission, and views it as critical to recovery and flourishing. It also provides us with a way to live into our mission of love for the world. Healing ministry offers the opportunity to put that faith into action, enabling the Holy Spirit to guide us.

Any meaningful change to ecclesiology needs to be informed by the underlying eschatology.[27] Any eschatology is going to be highly speculative because there is so little hard data to define the eschaton. Therefore, any understanding of the eschaton will require imagination. Theologian Trevor Hart posits four crucial functions for developing eschatological imagination: making the absent present; discerning meaning of things; envisioning new life; and activating hope.[28] Interestingly, these are also characteristics of healing from trauma. They are applicable to individual, community, institutional and planetary healing. A theology of healing ministry seeks to integrate a view of eschatology with the tools for the healing process.

Like a person envisioning the eschaton, the traumatized person is trying to make the absent present. Realized eschatology attempts to make the future present. While eschatologists

[25] Kathryn Tanner, "Theological Anthropology," in *The Vocation of Anglican Theology*, ed. Ralph McMichael (London: CMS Press, 2014), 122.
[26] Tanner, 124.
[27] MacDougall, 5-5.
[28] MacDougall, 144-146; Citing Trevor Hart, "Imagination for the Kingdom of God? Hope, Promise, and the Transformative Power of an Imagine Future," in Richard Bauckham (ed.), *God Will Be All in All: The Eschatology of Jurgen Moltmann* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 54, 75, 76.

debate the value of a realized eschatology, it has little value for traumatized people. For many traumatized people, the future is frightening and far from present to them. Rather than making the future present, trauma makes the past present. Traumatized people have difficulty planning for the future. Initially, traumatized people try to undo the past and make sense of the trauma. Frequently, when they cannot make the present absent, they make themselves absent. As a result, many traumatized people will forgo their agency, their speech, even their own feelings in response to trauma.[29] Consequently, it can be very difficult for traumatized people to think about the future.[30] Yet, traumatized people need to think about the future. A theology of healing ministry encourages traumatized people to re-engage with thoughts about the future, just like eschatology. Eschatology invites imagination. As churches imagine the eschaton, they model a behavior that traumatized people, communities and institutions can follow to enhance their own imaginations.

In recovering from trauma, people try to make sense of the traumatic event. They seek to find the meaning of things. In fact, the primary focus of post-traumatic therapy has been helping people to find meaning in their lives after trauma. Theology is a process that seeks to find meaning in things that seem inexplicable, particularly eschatology.[31] It is also a process that is contextual and autobiographical.[32] A theology of healing ministry seeks to discover meaning in the healing process for both the traumatized person and those that accompany them. Because a theology of healing ministry honors the experience of trauma, it also offers the flexibility to adapt to contextual and autobiographical differences. All people strive to find meaning and

[29] Jones, 107.
[30] Jones, 107.
[31] McGrath, 38.
[32] Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 5-7; Colby Dickinson, T*heology as Autobiography: The Centrality of Confession, Relationship, and Prayer to the Life of Faith* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020), 2.

mission for their lives. A theology of healing ministry offers a mission that can help individuals redefine their lives. A traumatized person and a conversation partner can start to reframe the trauma and envision a new life with the traumatic past event. They do not deny the past event, but reframe it, so that a new life becomes possible.[33] Looking at the eschaton through the lens of healing ministry reinforces the importance of imagination, context, autobiography and meaning in eschatological inquiry, which can both provide healing from trauma and a heightened awareness of the eschaton. This same imaginative process can be equally helpful for traumatized communities and institutions who are seeking to understanding their past traumas and find meaning in them.

The resurrection is the chief experience that informs current understandings of the eschaton, and the resurrection may be the ultimate traumatic experience, not only for Jesus, but for all of his followers as well. Theologians working on eschatology look to the resurrection as the grounding analogy for the eschaton.[34] The uncertainty, confusion, and doubt of Jesus followers after his crucifixion are similar to those of people who have experienced trauma. Looking at the eschaton through the lens of healing ministry validates the human uncertainty about the eschaton and our ambiguous position in anticipation of the eschaton. A theology of healing ministry seeks to create a space for that uncertainty. It honors the ambiguity and journeys with those who are questioning in order to find meaning for themselves in their new lives and in the promise of the eschaton.

A theology of healing ministry enhances the mission of all Christian churches. A theology of healing ministry makes room for all of these experiences, and provides an

[33] Herman, 203.
[34] MacDougall, 147.

opportunity for God's grace to enter in and transform individuals, communities, institutions and creation, by inspiring eschatological imaginations. Healing ministry aims to be a restorative and a transformative process. As people recover from trauma, they do not return to their past selves. They are transformed by their trauma and by their responses to it. In the same way that trauma limits an individual imagination, the theology of healing ministry must not limit ecclesial or eschatological imaginations. A theology of healing ministry might sound like it is envisioning a realized eschaton. However, as trauma experts demonstrate, healing from trauma is rarely a fully completed task.[35] It requires ongoing work. Frequently, it is too hard for traumatized people to escape the past trauma. Despite the challenges, with God's grace, they may start to affect transformation in their lives, and that transformation can produce flourishing.

Pastoral theologian Miroslav Volf sees a healing power in Christ's redemption. Volf suggests that "eschatology should take on the prophetic task of explicating hope for the future ultimate redemption and reading and changing the present in the light of that hope."[36] A theology of healing ministry is one response to Volf's challenge. It encourages all people to embrace the "light of that hope." Similar to liberation theologians, Volf sees change as the source of hope and as an affirmation of Christ's redemption. Applying healing ministries to individuals, communities, institutions and the planet could offer an additional source of hope and further hope for redemption. Redemption is available to all individuals, communities and institutions.

The eschaton is not a place that any person, traumatized or not, can reach in this world. Nevertheless, contemplation of the eschaton can start an imaginative process that begins to transform the brokenness that exists in individuals, communities, institutions and the planet. In

[35] Van der Kalk, 251-258.
[36] Miroslav Volf, "After Moltmann: Reflections on the Future of Eschatology," in Richard Bauckham (ed.), *God Will Be All in All: The Eschatology of Jurgen Moltmann* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 257.

the eschaton, restoration is available for everyone and for every community and institution. In the eschaton, God's creation is in its rightful place. As a result, contemplation of the eschaton can be a source of healing. A theology of healing ministry seeks to highlight such healing as a means of understanding and anticipating the eschaton, and reinforces the eschaton as a source of healing.

Finally, a theology of healing ministry seeks also to do more than just prepare one for the eschaton; it also encourages one to live one's earthly life as fully as possible. Theologian Jurgen Moltmann writes, "The notion that this life is not more than a preparation for a life beyond, is a theory of a refusal to live, and a religious fraud. It is inconsistent with the living God, who is 'a lover of life.'"[37] Healing cannot erase any traumatic event. However, healing can provide a way for people to embrace a love of life and to honor the gift of life that God provides to us each day. As a result, a theology of healing ministry looks at healing as expansively as possible. It seeks to support healing through physical, mental, spiritual and emotional support and engagement. It seeks the flourishing of all of God's creation and all of God's creatures.

The theology of healing ministry is firmly rooted in the Christian tradition, and it can reinforce and refine our understanding of grace, sacramentality, Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. It might be applied, not only to individuals, but also to communities, institutions and creation. Healing ministries can reframe past traumas, and provide additional support of the reframing and transformation of communities, institutions and all of creation. Therefore, a healing ministry provides a way for God's churches to more fully help the healing and transformation of God's people.

[37] Jurgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 50.

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# Holy Humanity

By Jess Navarette

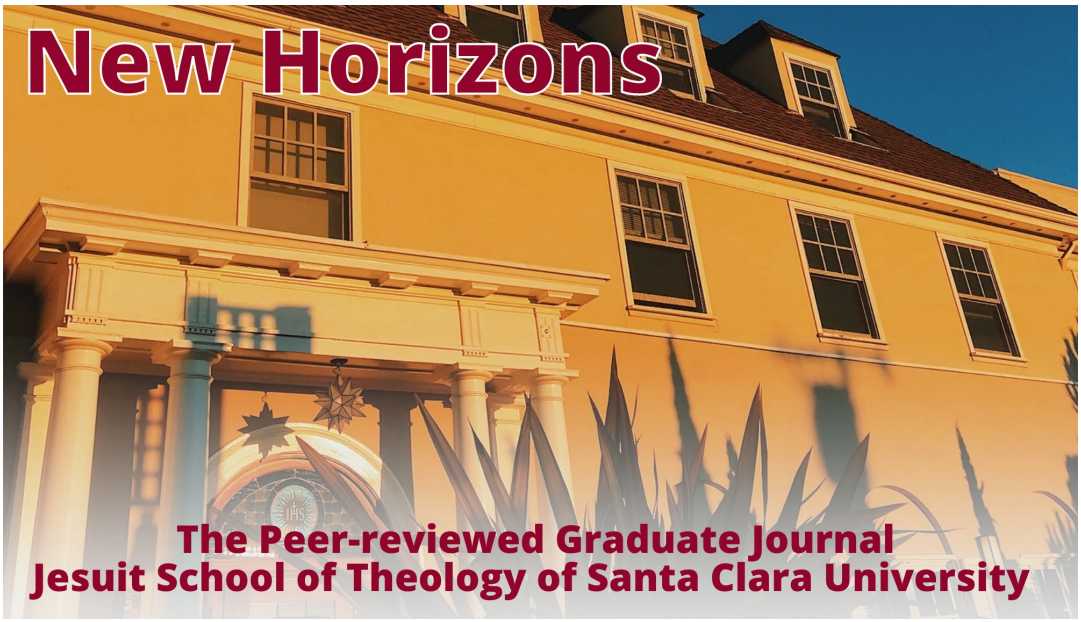
Carry on, you suffering child
you Holy beast of burden
you weary Sons and Daughters of God
The meek and the virtuous
Take shelter of the Shepherd and the Rock

Carry your cross, take your lashings
Crumble the empires, frighten the Pharaohs
Walk on the Water of your steadfast Faith

Seek Ye the Kingdom
and Pile Your Treasures
where bombs and corporations, crooked CEOS,
and territorial despots cannot reach

Be not afraid
of the Terror by Night(ly) (News)
and the Arrows of Division that fly
The pestilence and the destruction at noonday (lunchbreak)
The grinding colonialism
Materialistic societies
Rigged games of crooked kings

Weep with Mary for the dying child
Cry as Christ did for a fallen friend
And rise in Humble Power
True Devotion,
Community, empathy, worship
Compassion
Solidarity in Holy Humanity

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# Interview about the Ukrainian War and Refugee Crisis



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Barbara Anne Kozee
Vitaliy Osmolovskyy

**Abstract**
Former Jesuit School of Theology students discuss the war in Ukraine and the following refugee crisis. Barbara Anne Kozee is a doctoral student in Theological Ethics at Boston College and holds an M.Div. from Santa Clara University. Vitaliy Osmolovskyy is a Jesuit originally from Ukraine. Before returning to Poland to help with the Ukrainian refugee effort, Vitaliy was a doctoral student at Jesuit School of Theology. Vitaliy has experience working with European NGOs and his story has been featured in America magazine. He has recently been serving with Jesuit Refugee Service in Poland and around Europe to support Ukrainian refugees, which include friends and family.

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# Author Biographies

## Dhinakaran Savariyar

Dhinakaran Savariyar is a Catholic Priest of the Archdiocese of Madurai, Tamilnadu, India. Currently, he is pursuing his PhD in Catholic Theological Ethics at Boston College, Massachusetts.

## Ellie Martin

Ellie Martin graduated with honors in the Spring of 2022 from the MA program at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. She studied sociology of religion with an emphasis on food, culture, and the environment. Ellie grew up in a farming community outside Ann Arbor, Michigan, where she developed a love for the outdoors. She plans to continue her education, hoping to become a sociology professor so she can teach others about the relationship between our cultures and the ways we care for our Earth.

## Brendan Barnicle

The Rev. Dr. Brendan Barnicle is the Rector of St. Francis of Assisi Episcopal Church in Wilsonville, Oregon. Prior to St. Francis, he was the Rector of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in downtown Portland, Oregon, where his ministry was heavily focused on the unhoused. He is completing a ThM at the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University, and in the fall, he will begin a PhD in Practical Theology at Claremont School of Theology.

## Jess Navarette

Jess Navarette is a multi-religious practitioner, musician, and interfaith proponent. He is a graduate of Claremont School of Theology and a current PhD student at Boston College, focusing on Comparative Theology.

# Author Biographies

## Barbara Anne Kozee

Barbara Anne Kozee is a doctoral student in Theological Ethics at Boston College and holds an M.Div. from Santa Clara University. As a Queer Catholic, Barb researches sexual and family ethics, queer feminist theology, and political ethics.

## Vitaliy Osmolovskyy, SJ

Vitaliy Osmolovskyy is a Jesuit originally from Ukraine. Before returning to Poland to help with the Ukrainian refugee effort, Vitaliy was a doctoral student at Jesuit School of Theology. Vitaliy has experience working with European NGOs and his story has been featured in America magazine. He has recently been serving with Jesuit Refugee Service in Poland and around Europe to support Ukrainian refugees, which include friends and family.

# Call for Papers

## *New Horizons*:

A Peer-reviewed Graduate Journal
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University

### Volume 7 Issue 1: This is My Body

"Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Blood of Christ, inebriate me," St. Ignatius prays in the spiritual exercises. This prayer, the Anima Christi is often attributed to St. Ignatius for he refers to it in his exercises but the exact medieval origins of it remain unknown. Its words seem ever powerful in a broken world that needs salvation.

In the past issue of *New Horizons*, the journal discussed Christian responses to suffering and violence. In this issue, the journal seeks to better understand God's response: Jesus Christ. In conversation with the growing National Eucharistic Revival in the United States, the journal wishes to examine the Incarnation, the Eucharist, and sacramentality in the context of our modern word. What does it mean for Christ to give us His Body? What does the Last Supper or the Incarnation mean for the life of the Church today?

New Horizons invites invites pastoral, academic, and multimedia submissions that provide theological reflection on the Eucharist, sacramentality, liturgy, and the incarnation. While these prompts are meant to guide submissions, they are not limiting in their scope. The Journal warmly invites any papers emerging from reflections on the themes of sacramentality and Incarnation.

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Academic papers should be formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style, 17th. Ed., and comprise between 2,000-4,000 words. Homilies and pastoral reflections are held to the same word count. Poetry, prayer, artwork, and photography are highly welcomed components of the journal.

Submissions should be uploaded by 5pm on November 30, 2022 to newhorizonsjst@scu.edu. Accepted submissions will be published in February 2023. Please email mlmetzger@scu.edu with any questions or inquiries.

# NEW HORIZONS

Volume 6 Issue 2