

DEEPENING CHRISTIAN, HINDU, AND BUDDHIST PRAXIS FOR THE  
CARE OF THE PLANET AND PEOPLE – INVITED SESSION

- Topic: Deepening Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist Praxis for the Care of the Planet and People
- Conveners: Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College  
Rosina H. Simon, Catholic Theological Institute of Singapore
- Moderator: Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College
- Presenter: Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College  
Rosina H. Simon, Catholic Theological Institute of Singapore  
Michelle Voss, Emmanuel College of Victoria University in The University of Toronto

This invited session addressed prominent twenty-first century challenges, namely ecological devastation, mental health issues, and interfaith relations through innovative theological praxis and religio-cultural comparisons. Expanding on Vatican II's view of unity (with the divine and with humanity) and sacramentality (signs of reconciliation, hope, and peace) in *Gaudium et Spes*, this session aimed to foster global catholicity via multi-religious praxis and hope in times of interpersonal, structural, and ecological harms. Collectively, these papers highlighted important insights and practices from Hinduism and Buddhism that parallel and deepen Christian visions and praxis to care for the planet and people in the contemporary world.

In "Sacramentality in Soil and Seeds: Catholic and Hindu Ecofeminist Imaginaries and Communities," Rosemary P. Carbine synthesized Vatican II with feminist and womanist theological perspectives to propose that sacramentality not only signifies divine presence and divinely-endowed dignity, sacrality, and interrelationality of the world, but also includes embodied emancipatory witness to actualize a new more just world. From this anthropological and eschatological perspective, sacramentality encompasses signs, both personal and political, that enhance interconnective relations with the divine, one another, and a more liberative future. Taking this theologically expansive view of sacramentality as a starting point, Carbine engaged in a comparative study of salient Catholic and Hindu ecofeminist imaginaries and communities, illuminated by ecojustice theologies and practices to build more just and livable worlds particularly among US Catholic green nuns and Hindu eco-activist Vandana Shiva's Navdanya. Catholic and Hindu ecofeminists embrace integral eco-visions and enact nonviolent eco-practices to cultivate and vivify the common and cosmic good for thriving religious, cultural, and biodiversity. Catholic and Hindu feminist ecological imaginaries and praxis, grounded in what Carbine interpreted as the sacramentality of soil- and seed-based ecologies, revitalize a feminist approach to social and eco-belonging and solidarity in and with the Earth Community as well as for Earth Democracy.

In "When Buddhist Mindfulness Meets Christian Watchfulness," Rosina H. Simon addressed how contemporary research and practices increasingly point to the interconnectedness of body and mind and consequently engage Buddhist mindfulness-based interventions for psycho-somatic healing. Simon showed how Christian hesychastic spirituality offers a remarkable parallel with Buddhist mindfulness

meditation, especially in its emphasis on the essential sequence of “watch and pray.” Hesychasm’s embodied prayer cultivates stillness and watchfulness through breath, body, thoughts, and passions as preparation for the Jesus Prayer. Similar to Buddhist mindfulness, hesychasm involves inner stillness (*hesychia*) and watchfulness (*nepsis*) as integral parts of spiritual practice. Drawing on these two traditions, Simon elaborated a comparative theology of healing toward a therapeutic model of salvation by highlighting elements of Buddhist mindfulness and Christian watchfulness in attending and responding to sensations, thoughts, and feelings that may hinder spiritual growth toward albeit distinct goals in the two traditions (cessation of desire, union with God).

The prior two papers addressed ecological and health challenges at the intersections of diverse religions, and thus invited in the third paper some further theological reflection about how to practically and soteriologically connect across religious traditions, given the colonial history and effective history of interreligious relations. In “A Comparative, Trauma-Informed Soteriology for Interfaith Praxis,” Voss expanded on her prior work which engaged in a comparative theological exercise with non-dual *Śaiva* (Hindu) views of the human and cosmos as mirrors or reflections of the divine to offer a constructive Christian vision of the image of God in humanity that is multiple, fully embodied or material, and inclusive of limits. In this paper, Voss further developed this vision in relation to salvation from multiple different wounds within colonialist, racist, and ecologically destructive systems that western Christians have perpetuated. Voss imagined embodied soteriology on an interfaith level by critically and constructively reinterpreting healing as holistic re-membering through images of the divine, of wounds, and of salvation within Hindu and Indigenous Latin American religious traditions particularly in light of the works of Latina decolonial and queer feminist theorist Gloria Anzaldúa.

After the three presentations concluded, the fifteen attendees participated in small group discussion of major insights and questions inspired by the panel. The subsequent open-ended discussion among attendees and panelists focused on practices for living in and into a reimagined *imago Dei*, for reclaiming religio-cultural contexts of diverse ecological and prayer practices, and for engaging in multi-religious comparison that decolonizes Christian supremacy and resituates Christianity in a religiously pluralistic world.

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