

Ecological Conversion as Stigmata of the Heart

Sharon M. Gutkowski

Theology

Introduction

In May 2015, Pope Francis promulgated the papal encyclical, *Laudato Si*. Focusing primarily on the ecological crisis of today, he expounds on the ways humans negatively impact the earth, creation, and ultimately God. He underscores the suffering of the poor and couples it with the suffering of creation. Creation suffers from humans who are greedy and exploit natural resources and wildlife.¹ Pope Francis stresses that the remedy to this crisis rests in the call for humans to have an ecological conversion. He prays for an end to the situations where “the poor and the earth are crying out” for help.² Ecological conversion begins when humans realize their deep connection with creation and the plights of the poor. This connection leads humans to repent for their abuses to the environment and those living in poverty. As a result, humans firmly desire to alleviate these ecological problems. However, Pope Francis is not the first to discuss ecological conversion.

At the World Day of Peace in 1990, Pope John Paul II underscored that humans must realize, consider, and maintain “a new ecological awareness” for the sake of the future of the planet and all creation.³ He emphasized that the current exploitation of wildlife, natural resources, and human populations show a severe disrespect for the earth and God’s creation. To resolve this crisis, humans must undergo a complete transformation of self and community where they ultimately acknowledge and respect the environment and creation.⁴ As such, humans are called to preserve, protect, and revere where they live and how they use their resources. Humans must cultivate a deeper understanding of the beauty and shared usefulness of this planet in conjunction with what God intends for all creation.

Then, in January 2001, Pope John Paul II professed the phrase “ecological conversion” to his general audience as he reflected on human responsibility and the ways human sin and selfishness negatively affect the environment and creation.⁵ He notes how humanity must develop a sheer love of the earth, which is God’s creation, that begins with abandoning practices that contaminate and ruin the earth.⁶ The ecological conversion entails a profound human experience that fosters a spiritually transformed, lifestyle change.

Decades earlier, in 1979, Pope John Paul II named Saint Francis of Assisi the patron saint of ecology. St. Francis wrote *The Canticle of the Creatures* (also known as *The Canticle of Brother Sun*, among others) at the end of his life, when he was ill, and after he received the wounds of the stigmata on his hands, feet, and side in a mystical union with Jesus Christ. Amidst his suffering, St. Francis continued to be joyful, praising and thanking God, especially through and for creation. In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis admirably uses the *Canticle* as a motivating stepping stone for the ecological cause, but he never explicitly mentions the stigmata of St. Francis. However, this essay argues that Pope Francis implicitly refers to the stigmata of St. Francis in his call for ecological

conversion. This means that ecological conversion relates to the human relationship with God and creation as well as with the tenets of deep incarnation and Christology. The ensuing discussion concludes that ecological conversion represents itself in what this essay ultimately describes as “stigmata of the heart.”

Pope Francis and *Laudato Si*

With a strong appreciation for the life and work of St. Francis, including his namesake, Pope Francis references him 14 times in his 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si*. The title means “praise be to you” in the Umbrian Italian dialect, and, in addition to these words beginning the encyclical, serves as a tribute and reference to *The Canticle of the Creatures* by St. Francis of Assisi.⁷ Throughout *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis highlights St. Francis and the *Canticle*, and strives to bring humanity to a more dedicated and profound ecological awareness that aims to alleviate, and hopefully eliminate, the environmental issues that affect the earth today.

Considering the mentions of St. Francis throughout the encyclical, Pope Francis situates him from the beginning as “a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself.”⁸ This introduction produces a warm ripple effect throughout the encyclical which brings sobering awareness and hope as creation endures the human-induced ecological crisis. In light of this, Pope Francis offers four ways that St. Francis aids his appeal for ecological conversion.

First, Pope Francis admires the ecumenical and interreligious compatibility that St. Francis shares with all humans concerned about the ecological crisis.⁹ For perspective, those who are ecologically conscious and care about the earth do not have to necessarily be religious, whether Christian or non-Christian, or even spiritual. However, as head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis desires to underscore the meaning and beauty of God’s creation, along with its biblical

creation story counterparts, as reasons for all humanity, especially Catholics, to be ecologically concerned for the earth. Pope Francis believes St. Francis models these behaviors.

Second, Pope Francis cites the devotion St. Francis had to asceticism. St. Francis embodied a personal lifestyle of asceticism as well as an ecological asceticism that led to the way he “communed with all creation.”¹⁰ St. Francis worked with and through creation in respect and adoration. He prized land conservation in his “friary garden” when, as Pope Francis notes, he sectioned off a portion to preserve and observe the undisturbed beauty of God in that creation.¹¹

Third, Pope Francis recalls the Genesis 3 creation story account of the fall to sin by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden that continues to affect the world today. Pope Francis labels it a “rupture of sin” between God, humans, and the earth that results in “disharmony” of all creation.¹² He affirms that the life and *Canticle* of St. Francis comprise a saintly paradigm for humanity to follow to heal the rupture of sin and even return to a “state of original innocence.”¹³

Fourth, and finally, Pope Francis admonishes the tendency for humans to be abusive, exploitative, and destructive to their environment, creation, and vulnerable human populations. To combat this tendency, he encourages humans to have an “overall personal conversion.”¹⁴ The conversion takes place in stages, emanating from a certain awe in being captivated by creation, that then sparks notions to acknowledge the wrong-doing and sin humans inflict onto creation. Next, there is “heartfelt repentance and a desire to change” followed by “a change of heart” that inspires a “fraternity with all creation” similar to that of St. Francis.¹⁵ In other words, this conversion is not simply to wish for solutions to ecological problems or to merely lament that creation unjustly suffers from the human impact in the world. Instead, the ecological conversion involves human action coupled with a complete reconsideration of what is important in life and the meaning and value of God’s creation.

The human ecological conversion must have components of drastic change that are consistent with the abundant love of God in the three persons of the Trinity. St. Francis acknowledged a trinitarian theology as he admired a unity and relationship with God, humans, and creation. On Mount La Verna, St. Francis's prayer spiritually transformed him as he sought to imitate Christ. He ultimately received the physical evidence of the stigmata in that transformation. While he spent the rest of his life enduring the suffering of his illness, his awe of God's creation still inspired him to compose the *Canticle*. Later, the *Canticle* motivated Pope Francis to write *Laudato Si*. While this encyclical does not explicitly mention the stigmata of St. Francis, Pope Francis implicitly refers to the stigmata of St. Francis in the tenets of ecological conversion.

St. Francis of Assisi, His Stigmata, and *The Canticle of the Creatures*

In 1260, the General Chapter of Narbonne elected Bonaventure to assemble and compose a comprehensive biography of St. Francis.¹⁶ Less than a year before, in 1259, Bonaventure visited Mount La Verna, the location where, in 1224, St. Francis had the vision of the seraph that gave him the stigmata. Bonaventure's contemplative experience about St. Francis compelled him to write *The Soul's Journey into God* in which he describes the seven steps, or stages, "to the goal of ecstatic rapture" in God.¹⁷ The seventh chapter of this text, along with the thirteenth chapter of Bonaventure's, *The Life of St. Francis*, prayerfully and spiritually recount the occasion when St. Francis received the stigmata. Additionally, a year after he received the stigmata, St. Francis composed, in stages, *The Canticle of the Creatures*, the well-known hymn that praises the human-creation relationship with God. The stigmata and the *Canticle* substantiate St. Francis as the patron saint of ecology. His saintly example continues to promote ecological conversion today.

St. Francis (1181-1226) was born in Assisi, Italy to wealthy parents in the cloth business. His father, Pietro di Bernardone, taught St. Francis the business, which included a luxurious, yet

work-intensive, lifestyle. Years later, as he prayed in front of the crucifix of the San Damiano church, he received the spiritual calling from the crucifix to rebuild the church.¹⁸ He accepted the invitation and sold off a large portion of his father's business to pay for the costs. His disgusted father tried to recoup the losses through the bishop, but St. Francis argued with and renounced his father, along with all worldly pleasures, for a life with God.

In Chapter 13 of *The Life of St. Francis*, Bonaventure describes how St. Francis received the stigmata as a result of the vision of the seraph. In one particularly unique moment, as St. Francis prayed and fasted for 40 days on Mount La Verna, he experienced a peak of burning love and desire for God that humbled him. The encounter inspired him to perform three random gospel readings, all of which were from Christ's passion.¹⁹ This sparked a deep desire to imitate Christ more fully and to show that love through martyrdom.

On September 14, 1224, St. Francis witnessed a vision of a seraph with six wings, two of which were wrapped around Christ who was nailed to the cross. The seraph had two wings above Christ's head and two wings spread out at its sides. Bonaventure notes that St. Francis was "flooded with a mixture of joy and sorrow" at the sight because of the seemingly paradoxical nature of the immortal seraph in contrast to the "weakness of Christ's passion."²⁰ The immense, infinite love of the seraph coupled with the kenotic love he felt and shared with Christ on the cross resulted in "the fire of his love consummating his soul."²¹ This moment of miraculous, perfect union in love with God initiated the revealing marks of the stigmata on St. Francis's hands, feet and side. The bloody, sometimes painful, wounds were as real as those of the crucified Christ. Moreover, Bonaventure's account that St. Francis was "transformed" into the image of Christ through the stigmata, and therefore into Christ's likeness in glory by the Spirit, echoes 2 Corinthians 3:18.²²

Further, Bonaventure richly discusses how the stigmata St. Francis received on Mount La Verna signifies the crucified Christ. Bonaventure understands that the humanity of Christ, as crucified on the cross, was in the midst of an unfailing love between Christ and God.²³ The relationship represents the pinnacle of all love, where God desires to have this loving relationship with humans as well. The relationship is a compassionate love that, if desired, restores and transforms humanity into the image and likeness of Christ.²⁴ As Ilia Delio states, compassionate love involves imitating Christ in a spirit of poverty and humility tantamount to the crucified Christ on the cross.²⁵ The most sincere and profound testimony of the love of Christ is when he gave his own life on the cross. The love of Christ on the cross bears witness to his love for God and his love for creation, especially humanity. Bonaventure, therefore, affirms the crucified Christ as the center of Christian life.²⁶ The Christian life entails loving God and neighbor to the extent of sacrificing one's own life in that love.²⁷ Christ did this for all on the cross, and Bonaventure acknowledges this as the perfect love of Christ. St. Francis imitated that perfect love as he passed over into God upon receiving the stigmata.

After receiving the stigmata, St. Francis lived and displayed a profound humility and poverty of spirit that paralleled the perfect love of the crucified Christ.²⁸ The seraph on Mount La Verna affected St. Francis with such a burning love that he intensely suffered and loved at the same time. The stigmata, as the physical evidence of the five wounds of the crucified Christ, appeared on his hands, feet, and side, and show the intensity of this conformity to divine love.²⁹ His yearning to be like Christ allowed him to feel the love the crucified Christ felt with God. The experience was so impactful that it left him peaceful and speechless in this perfect love.³⁰ In *The Soul's Journey into God*, Bonaventure understands that the peace achieved in God is the ultimate goal of the six considerations, or stages, of the soul's journey into God.³¹ When humans connect

to the humanity of the crucified Christ in love, they achieve peace in God by passing through the stages of suffering and love. All Christians must strive to partake in this peace, which is perfect and synonymous with love, to fully live the gospel message and to be transformed into the image and likeness of Christ.³²

The stigmata model the burning love of the seraph to purify, illumine, and inflame humans to imitate St. Francis who, in turn, desired to imitate Christ.³³ Humans must desire and choose God for the crucified Christ to impact them. As Bret Thoman observes, “the spiritual life is not something we can acquire, conquer, or achieve. [...] It comes through fidelity and surrender.”³⁴ In the spiritual life, humanity pours out love for God in Christ and creation in the way that God pours out love to the crucified Christ, humanity, and creation. While the external marks of the stigmata of St. Francis physically indicate his union with the crucified Christ, there is also a human spiritual connection with Christ in the suffering and love of that union. Thomas of Celano, a biographer of St. Francis, recognizes that the first effects of the stigmata of St. Francis occurred internally, when St. Francis accepted the call of the San Damiano crucifix to rebuild the church. Regarding St. Francis, Celano writes, “From this moment on, compassion for the crucified one was anchored in his spirit; from this moment, too, the stigmata of the passion were imprinted very deeply in his heart before appearing in his flesh.”³⁵ The internal experience St. Francis had with the crucifix, a cross with the crucified Christ, initiated his future transformation in Christ. In a similar perspective, as Thoman notes, “the crucifix at San Damiano was imprinted interiorly within his soul.”³⁶ The desire to love and suffer for the crucified Christ reflects how St. Francis imitates Christ and chooses God, even unto martyrdom, when he embraces his new lifestyle in Christ with asceticism, fasting, and prayer.

With a worsening illness and the marks of the stigmata, St. Francis composed *The Cantic of the Creatures* in 1225. He was known to admire creation, even in his near blindness, by praying and preaching to the wildlife, all the while praising God for these relationships. The *Cantic* represents God's care and concern for the world, in that God's creation sufficiently and abundantly provides what is needed to thrive. It expresses God as almighty and good, deserving of praise in the goodness that reveals itself as beauty, nourishment, love, and forgiveness. St. Francis echoes the Old and New Testaments, particularly the Psalms and the Gospels, in his references to the power and beauty of light and fire.³⁷ St. Francis wrote the *Cantic* aware of Christ as part of creation and with the Trinity as "Most High."³⁸ He uniquely adds to the Christian tradition with the first mention of a Sister Mother Earth who intercedes to maintain the livelihood of creation.³⁹ In addition, he mentions the four earthly elements of wind, water, fire, and earth.

The second half of the *Cantic* implies the intimate relationship between God, humans, and creation. In this relationship, God equips creation with fruitfulness and sustainability with which humans depend on to survive. God also entrusts humans to rightfully, yet humbly, manage, protect, and respect creation. In other words, God intends creation for human dominion, not domination, where humans and creation prosper in harmony, patience, and peace.⁴⁰

The desire to simultaneously suffer with and love Jesus allowed St. Francis to conform to the crucified Jesus. The stigmata physically mark his union with Christ, while his *Cantic* offers a self-expression of that union. The *Cantic* represents harmony with God, humans, and creation, and Pope Francis echoes this harmony in *Laudato Si* when he asks humans to "praise the Lord" for creation.⁴¹ He urges Christians to connect their love for the suffering Jesus, who also suffers with creation, to a newfound, selfless love for creation.

Further, creation continues to endure and survive even with significant human abuse. In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis contrasts human abuse of creation, such as the rapid rate of consumer production and pollution increases, with the slower recovery and coping rates of the earth, its creation, and humans, especially the poor, from the effects of excess production and pollution.⁴² Humans must consider their impact on earth. As Denis Edwards discusses, humans have always defined their surroundings, such as creation, according to human usefulness. Instead, Pope Francis frames ecological conversion within the intrinsic and revelatory values in God's plan of creation.⁴³ Creation exhibits unconditional love for itself and for all humans much like the unconditional love Jesus pours out for humanity on the cross.

Deep Incarnation

In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis urges humans to read the Bible, such as the first creation story in Genesis, apart from the previous and typical anthropocentric approaches. He acknowledges that “unhealthy dualisms [...] left a mark on certain Christian thinkers in the course of history and disfigured the Gospel.”⁴⁴ Pope Francis, in essence, resists centuries upon centuries worth of anthropocentric, Christian mentalities that surmised creation as second to humans and necessarily conquerable. His call to ecological conversion encourages a love of creation separate from human control. He morally exhorts humans to recognize a “Christian spirituality” to the effect of “an interior impulse” that encourages a “profound interior conversion” regarding the ecological crisis.⁴⁵ Anna Rowlands states that “the ecological crisis lies in the failure to accept the idea of limits, and the truth of a Creator-creature relation.”⁴⁶ For Pope Francis, ecological conversion begins when humans become spiritually mindful and transformed in a newfound relationship between God, humans, and creation.

The best way to envision and embrace this three-fold relationship is through the intimate connection Christ has with the entire universe. In 2001, the theologian Niels Gregersen called this connection “deep incarnation.”⁴⁷ Deep incarnation incorporates Christ’s incarnation, cross, and resurrection within a trinitarian mindset, as well as evolutionary view, of the universe. The tenets of deep incarnation begin with John 1:1-3, 14, where the Word was with God and was God, brought forth all creation, and became flesh on earth as Jesus Christ. This means that Christ is eternally present and responsible for everything in creation, living and non-living, since the beginning of the known, material universe 13.7 billion years ago.⁴⁸ Further, various types of lifeforms have existed since 3.7 billion years ago, where the early stages of human life began to develop as early as 3 million years ago, but more recently as 200,000 years ago.⁴⁹ In this way, all creation intimately links with and partakes in Christ.

Deep incarnation, for Gregersen, states that God desired, and still desires, such a dynamic and interconnected relationship with creation that the Word of creation became incarnate as Jesus Christ, who is a union of the perfectly divine and perfectly human.⁵⁰ Christ became incarnate to atone for the moral sins of humans, and to radically integrate with the materiality of the physical world, such that the physical world receives its ultimate completion in God.⁵¹ Gregersen’s three reasons for the incarnation, as the human person of God in Christ, the sharing of humanity in Christ, and the finite existence of creation in Christ, show the depth of this physical and divine connection is more than merely anthropocentric.⁵² Here, God loves and admires the physical world and never minimalizes or despises it. In other words, God never intended to become incarnate reluctantly in order to fix some glaring problems with creation and humanity and then leave. As Gregersen writes, “God becomes involved with the world, appears within it, shares creaturely experiences from within, and [...] takes sides with the victims of evolution and social injustice.”⁵³

God's mission in Christ, then, means that Christ directly experiences what material creation experiences, "including aspects of suffering and anxiety."⁵⁴ It also means that Christ, through the Trinity, brings about a complete, and divine, transformation for all of creation.⁵⁵

The communal relationship present in the Trinity enhances the theology of deep incarnation. The incarnate Christ, sent by God through the power of the Holy Spirit, is a divinely social activity in itself, and combines with the social constructs of Christ living with and experiencing the human community and creation.⁵⁶ As Edwards explains, the Trinity is "endlessly dynamic mutual love," where the Word (Christ) creates freely through the Spirit, as the Spirit gives life and grace to all creation.⁵⁷ Christ is both divinely and humanly aware; he admonishes and empathizes, suffers and loves, to these ends. Gregersen recognizes the historical and eternal components of Christ in these social interactions and compares them to the bonds of kinship that humans and creation share with their predecessors and will continue to share with their offspring.⁵⁸ These trinitarian and communal notions advance the conversation of ecological conversion because they accentuate the nearness and presence of Christ in and with all creation.

Even more, Gregersen offers relevant insights when he connects deep incarnation to Bonaventure's theology concerning the unity between the divine and human natures of Christ. Gregersen notes the relationship between deep incarnation and the theology of Bonaventure is with "the universality of the particularity of Christ."⁵⁹ Bonaventure understands Christ as a unity of divine and human natures, as well as consistently and universally present and active in all creation.⁶⁰ Joseph Lenow observes that Gregersen's theological usage of Bonaventure also coincides with a Stoic view of theology, as well as that of Athanasius, where God is an inherent part of the physical world.⁶¹ This means that Gregersen is a compatibilist, that is, one who believes that "God's action in, with, and under natural processes is compatible with those natural processes,

even evolutionary processes.”⁶² Compatibilist notions cohere with the mission of Christ and the distinct and unique way Christ enters creation through the incarnation. In the tenets of deep incarnation, Christ is already involved in creation as the Word; and, as God’s Son, Christ accepts to suffer and die on the cross to redeem and renew creation in light of the Trinity. This divine-human connection complements how Bonaventure understands the stigmata of St. Francis. As described above, in the context of Bonaventure, St. Francis conformed to the crucified Christ in such humility and poverty that he underwent spiritual and physical transformation and received the stigmata. Deep incarnation, then, additionally applies to the cross and even the resurrection of Christ.

In the risen Christ, all of creation, not just humans, transform into new life. In his definition of deep resurrection, Edwards notes the resurrection of Christ is for humans and all creation where “all cosmic forces are taken up by Christ and transformed in the power of the resurrection.”⁶³ St. Francis “deeply felt cosmic kinship” with God and creation, which is especially evident in his *Canticle* and life story of conversion.⁶⁴ In essence, the life of the incarnate Christ is a call to conversion; the crucified Christ is an act of repentance in love; and the risen Christ is a new creation of forgiveness.

Ecological Conversion as Stigmata of the Heart

The stigmata of the heart happen as a result of the ecological conversion. It represents a spiritual mark that transforms the human to the very core, in conjunction with the theology of deep incarnation, upon the ecological conversion. The stigmata prepare the human physically, through the grace of the conversion, to think and act in a Christocentric and ecologically mindful way.

The ecological conversion happens when humans lovingly acknowledge the deep connection between God, humans, and creation that exceeds the anthropocentric tendencies of the

world. Humans, therefore, understand their integrative placement within this construct. This is consistent with the message of the *Canticle* of St. Francis that Pope Francis references in his encyclical.

Humans are complementary to creation, not a domineering force over it. Those who have ecological conversions understand the complexities of the world include a mutual relationship between the divine, the spiritual, and the physical. Further, God's creation, due to the creating power of Christ in the Spirit, also involves the divine, the spiritual, and the physical. In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis cites the *Canticle* and the life of St. Francis to stimulate the human conscience concerning the current ecological crisis, and to underscore the cohesive relationship St. Francis had with God and creation. St. Francis wrote the *Canticle* after he received the stigmata, when he conformed to the crucified Christ in suffering and love. He continued to live an intensely ascetic, religious lifestyle even as his health and vision deteriorated. As he admired the wonders of God's creation, he was spiritually and physically aware of the mission of the crucified Christ. The *Canticle* is the self-expression of the depth of his love for God and creation. In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis praises St. Francis as the epitome of ecological conversion.

The internal human transformation of St. Francis in Christ compares to ecological conversion as stigmata of the heart. Considering ecological conversion as stigmata of the heart is a powerful way to prepare all humans, especially the Catholics and Christians Pope Francis targets in *Laudato Si*, for a deeply transformative, ecological lifestyle change. It involves the human acknowledgement of a spectrum: from suffering and sacrifice to the ever-present unconditional love that creation and God, through Jesus, provide to human-creature relationships. Pope Francis implies the profound impact of the stigmata of St. Francis as he promotes ecological conversion in *Laudato Si*. Moreover, while not all humans are able to imitate Christ to receive the physical

stigmata like St. Francis, Pope Francis nevertheless understands the wider impact this conversion has on the “attitude of the heart.”⁶⁵ Meanwhile, he sees how comfortable, luxurious living and instant gratification like consumerism cause anxiety, a type of suffering; in what seems to make life better actually makes life worse. Humans may falsely believe that adding more comforts and things to their life will fix uneasy feelings, however, humans must realize that less material goods bring more peace and satisfaction in life. Humans more dramatically benefit from an attitude of sacrificing worldly possessions for a greater life of love consistent with the crucified Christ.

Pope Francis believes the negativity and ruin associated with “profit and gain” contrasts with the message of Jesus for “harmony, justice, fraternity, and peace.”⁶⁶ Humans who typically want many things must instead desire and strive to want less, out of love for the good and its benefits. As discussed above, St. Francis deeply desired to imitate and conform to Christ. He sincerely chose this, and he prayerfully poured himself out in love and surrender to God as he received the stigmata. He wrote his *Canticle* in the light of this peace as he experienced it in creation. Pope Francis wants humans to choose a Christ-centered perspective of creation that allows them to pour out love as they acknowledge and care for creation.

Whereas *Laudato Si* does not mention or affirm deep incarnation *per se*, the Christology of deep incarnation suggests the human transformation associated with an ecological conversion. Since Pope Francis recommends a proper “attitude of the heart” (§226) with all creation, as in the example of St. Francis, humans experience stigmata of the heart from an ecological conversion as they suffer and love in and through creation. The stigmata of the heart more fully grasp the framework of deep incarnation, and because Pope Francis never mentions it or the stigmata of St. Francis in *Laudato Si*, the stigmata of the heart bridge the gap from ecological conversion to deep incarnation. The stigmata of the heart cohere with the ecological conversion in the incarnate,

crucified, and risen Christ where the impact is as meaningful as the moment St. Francis received the stigmata. In this way, stigmata of the heart occur in the context of deep incarnation through the ecological conversion.

Conclusion

This discussion moved through several facets of Christology and worked with other disciplines such as ecology, ethics, and spirituality. This indicates that Christology in the 21st century will be substantially more than merely a subject limited to itself. Rather, Christology will continue to interact with various disciplines, especially with respect to its contribution in the framework of evolution and deep incarnation. While Gregersen began to develop the Christology of deep incarnation, many other theologians subsequently offered new insights, giving it widespread attention in the field.

For example, Edwards combines the Christology of deep incarnation with evolutionary science and the ethics of ecology; and, while he emphasizes ecological conversion, brings fuller meaning to Christ, creation, suffering, and love. In this light, Pope Francis also underscores ecological conversion, but limits the conversation when he only wants to “postulate a process of evolution” in *Laudato Si*.⁶⁷ He hints at entertaining evolution and deep incarnation in paragraph 83, when he states that “[t]he ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things.”⁶⁸ Also in this paragraph, he mentions all creation “moving forward [...] towards a common point of arrival, which is God,” which suggests an ever-changing, evolving world that has depth with and in God.⁶⁹ Further, Edwards notices that *Laudato Si* contains insufficient connections between Christ’s incarnation and creation.⁷⁰ Then, he rightly opines that *Laudato Si* needs the tenets of deep

incarnation to expand and support Pope Francis's Christological claims.⁷¹ These considerations would undoubtedly bring *Laudato Si* more into 21st century Christology.

When St. Francis received the stigmata, "his heart was flooded with a mixture of joy and sorrow" at the vision of the seraph with the crucified Christ.⁷² Similarly, in the last paragraph of *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis states that its composition "has been both joyful and troubling."⁷³ Here, Pope Francis implies the stigmata of St. Francis in conjunction with his call to ecological conversion. Humans across the globe must acknowledge that creation suffers due to various human activities. Humans need to evaluate and change the way they manage and incorporate creation into their lives. Pope Francis utilizes the *Canticle* of St. Francis to model how humans should interact with and praise God for creation.

The ecological conversion represents one important facet of Church teaching that shapes the future of Christology. The deep incarnation and deep resurrection of Christ function to establish and maintain the Christological connection with all creation and all humans. Pope Francis calls us to this caliber of conversion, so much so, that his ecological conversion suggests stigmata of the heart. In this way, the ecological conversion initiates a profound, internal transformation that humans spiritually and physically live in the world.

Notes:

- ¹ Pope Francis 2015, §48.
- ² *Ibid.*, §246.
- ³ Pope John Paul II 1990, §1.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, §5.
- ⁵ Pope John Paul II 2001, §§1, 4.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, §§4-5.
- ⁷ Zhang 2016.
- ⁸ Francis 2015, §10.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, §11.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, §12.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, §66.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, §218.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, §§218, 221.
- ¹⁶ Bonaventure 1978, 37.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.
- ¹⁸ Moloney 2013, 22-3.
- ¹⁹ Bonaventure 1979, 304.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 305.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 306.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 307.
- ²³ Delio 2001, 26.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.
- ²⁹ Delio 2014, 389.
- ³⁰ Delio 2001, 136.
- ³¹ Bonaventure 1978, 110.
- ³² Delio 2001, 154.
- ³³ Hammond 2014, 503.
- ³⁴ Thoman 2016, 203.
- ³⁵ Vorreux 2012, 41.
- ³⁶ Thoman 2016, 68.
- ³⁷ Moloney 2013, 129-133, 139.
- ³⁸ Delio 1992, 9-10.
- ³⁹ Moloney 2013, 134.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ Francis 2015, §87.

- ⁴² Pope Francis 2015, §18.
⁴³ Edwards 2016.
⁴⁴ Francis 2015, §98.
⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, §§216-7.
⁴⁶ Rowlands 2015.
⁴⁷ Gregersen 2016, 254.
⁴⁸ Edwards 2010, 16, 19.
⁴⁹ Edwards 2019, xvii.
⁵⁰ Gregersen 2016, 254-5.
⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 254.
⁵² *Ibid.*, 254.
⁵³ Gregersen 2016, 2.
⁵⁴ Gregersen 2016, 259.
⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 255.
⁵⁶ Lenow 2018, 571.
⁵⁷ Edwards 2010, 19.
⁵⁸ Gregersen 2016, 11.
⁵⁹ Gregersen 2016, 254.
⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 255, 257.
⁶¹ Lenow 2018, 564.
⁶² Peters 2013, 245.
⁶³ Edwards 2006, 56.
⁶⁴ Viviers 2014.
⁶⁵ Francis 2015, §226.
⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, §82.
⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, §81.
⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, §83.
⁶⁹ *Ibid.*
⁷⁰ Edwards 2019, 129.
⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 130.
⁷² Bonaventure 1978, 305.
⁷³ Francis 2015, §246.

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