Wounded Life

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Abstract

The author brings the 16th-century apocalyptic preachers' "gospel of all creatures" into conversation with Jedediah Purdy's environmental politics project. This gospel breaks through anthropocentric theologies, views nonhuman creatures as agents of evangelism, offers a message of salvation, and sees baptism as a ritual of commitment to a movement of radical reformation, a struggle against oppressive dominions. The Anabaptist environmental theology the author explores recognizes the crucified body of Christ whose "tortured yet enduring love is a presence of consolation and strength." To know such love involves "solidarity with the wounded life of our kin," human and other-than-human alike.

Sequoias visit in my dreams. They've come to me ever since a camping trip in Northern California when I was in my early twenties. We arrived at night and pitched our tent in the darkness. At dawn, bleary-eyed, I stepped out of the tent and glimpsed towering figures around me. I blinked away the sleep and, with my gaze, followed their trunks until they disappeared into the fog above. Dizzied at the sight of their massive presence, I crouched to the ground, taking a seat on the remnants of their leaves, decomposed into the earth's skin. Their roots cradled my body.

Last night, here in North Carolina, on the opposite side of the continent, the trees visited me again. This time they were on fire.

I

In "Losing a Country," the middle chapter of *This Land Is Our Land*, Jedediah Purdy recounts the landscape of his dreams since moving from the mountains of West Virginia to the lowlands of central North Carolina. "In these dreams," he writes, "I started out walking up a wooded slope, and—departing from the low terrain of the Carolina Piedmont where I lived then—the slope rose

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through the loblolly pine into steep pastures. The pastures leveled out into high meadows, then rose to crests of stone." While the terrain varies slightly from dream to dream, he finds himself led to an elevated spot, "the highest landform," a vantage point from which to look across the landscape below, to see how the fields and valleys and hills fit together as a whole.[1]

"These dreams," Purdy interprets his subconscious, "sketch a geography of thinking, a way of seeing a place whole without being overcome by it . . . to get above a terrain without leaving it, to merge many small horizons into one image."[2] He experiences his own dreams as glimpses of a mind's "bafflement and fear" at the political "opacity" that ensued after the election of Donald Trump. The dreamscapes are a "personal way of talking about paths out of, or through, the dark wood where some of us woke up on November 9, 2016 and have been wandering since."[3] Lost in the forest, Purdy searches for clarity of vision, to make sense of what has become of our world.

I woke up lost in those same woods, wandering in the terror of Trump's regime. Those years were one crisis after another. I rushed from protest to rally, from marches to direct actions, from calling representatives to facilitating strategy sessions. The US federal administration unleashed political arsonists throughout society. This country was on fire, is on fire. That would explain the forest ablaze in my nightmare, where flames engulf trees as if I've dreamed myself into a scene from Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*.[4] With Butler's protagonist Lauren Olamina as my guide, together we watch the California landscape turn to ash.

Henry Thoreau guides Purdy through his restless dreams. Purdy takes an 1854 journal entry from Thoreau as a way into his sense of wandering, of looking for a vantage point to make sense of what has gone awry: "I did not know at first what ailed me. At last it occurred to me that what I had lost was a country."[5] Purdy resonates with Thoreau's disorientation, the disintegration of a political self: "He was describing a mind under pressure, flattened and

[1] Jedediah Purdy, *This Land Is Our Land: The Struggle for a New Commonwealth* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2019), 66.
[2] Ibid., 68.
[3] Ibid., 69.
[4] Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows (1993); Grand Central Publishing, 2000).
[5] Purdy, *This Land Is Our Land*, 57.

interrupted by outrage, lies that became law, laws that became facts, and fact that, uncontested, became the truth," Purdy writes. "Losing a country meant, for Thoreau, seeing these moral lies become legal and physical facts, knowing they were made in his name because he was part of the political power that made them."[6] Purdy names the tragic situation of a person—like himself, like Thoreau, like me—whose rights and privileges, whose status as a US citizen, depends on and participates in a federal government's subjugation of others.

In his journal entry, Thoreau grapples with US President Pierce's decision under the auspices of the Fugitive Slave Act to deport Anthony Burns from Massachusetts back to the estate of a slaveholder in Virginia, Charles Suttle, from whom he had escaped. Federal marshals had arrested and detained Burns in Boston, twenty miles from Thoreau's cabin near Walden pond. "The remembrance of my country spoils my walk," he writes. "My thoughts are murder to the state."[7] He names a condition of the mind common to all of us who have known the treachery of political authorities who claim to represent us yet crush our hopes for society.

Thoreau's nature walks were not an escape from political life. Alone at Walden, he was occupied with others. His country haunted his solitude. The ground under his feet remembered the impressions of past cultures, their absence a sign of the violence of civilization. Histories of destruction perdure in our surroundings: "nature and landscape are palimpsests of history and social violence more than they are respites from these things."[8] The environment bears witness to repressions. The unexamined life tries to forget what nature remembers. To "know thyself" is to know a place—the formation of a terrain, the histories of habitation. Self-knowledge involves politically aware environmental epistemologies: to see "in a landscape," Purdy writes, "the nonhuman body of the species, in which the history of economic and political life is written as vividly as in the laws."[9]

That Walden offers a vantage point into an anguished world is a theme Purdy develops in his earlier book, *After Nature*. He concludes a chapter on "Natural Utopias" with an account of Thoreau's "ecological mysticism,"

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[6] Ibid., 59.

[7] Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1997).

[8] Ibid.

[9] *This Land Is Our Land*, 66.

a contemplative mode of reflection that recognizes the woundedness of nature.[10] Purdy turns to the pages late in *Walden* where Thoreau meditates on the railroad—how workers split open the ground to lay the tracks, "a quarter-mile gash in the earth."[11] These sights and sounds of civilization are internal to his rural New England environs. "The Fitchburg Railroad touches the pond about a hundred rods south of where I dwell," Thoreau notes. "I usually go to the village along its causeway, and am, as it were, related to society by this link."[12] The outside is inside, the beyond is present, steel rails connect his life to Anthony Burns. In his backwoods cabin, Thoreau doesn't escape the world; instead, solitude is a confrontation with the cruelties of his country. He reads the signs of violence carved into the ground as he walks to his pond.

As he describes the spot where the railroad slices open the hillside, the register of Thoreau's language shifts to the vocabulary of the body—the ground depicted as wounded flesh. Purdy summarizes the imagery: "The bowels that show the harmony and aliveness of all matter have been spilled out, cut as if with the bodily violence that reveals literal bowels."[13] In Thoreau's own words: "I feel as if I were nearer to the vitals of the globe, for this sandy overflow is something such a foliaceous mass as the vitals of the animal body."[14] In the broken land, Purdy notes, Thoreau "achieves insight into the unity of things."[15] Earth's brokenness offers revelations. The wounds in nature disclose truths. Thoreau's contemplative gaze unearths the violations layered into the environment. "[P]rofanation is simply the condition of the world," Purdy concludes his reflection on Thoreau, "which is redeemed, if at all, by our deeper apprehension of that condition."[16]

When he returns to Thoreau in *This Land Is Our Land*, Purdy highlights this Thoreauvian imagination, the environmental experience as provoking political visions. "His nature tugs and jostles him to new

[10] Jedediah Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2015), 148.
[11] Ibid., 149.
[12] Thoreau, *Walden*, 109.
[13] Purdy, *After Nature*, 149.
[14] Thoreau, *Walden*, 286.
[15] Purdy, *After Nature*, 150.
[16] Ibid., 151.

vantage points."[17] Purdy's dream life internalizes this tugging and jostling, with landscapes visiting his subconscious. He intensifies Thoreau's intimacy with nature, where the self becomes a site of environmental presences, which include remnants of degradation, of harm. "The Thoreau I come to feels the accumulated violence of the country in his body."[18] These are the multitudes a human life contains. Purdy's environmental politics calls for an apprehension of this condition, as he puts it, an imagination that grows from recognizing our complicity in a profaned world.

"Listen," God instructs Cain in the book of Genesis, "your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground."[19] In this biblical narrative, violence haunts landscapes. The earth remembers, and speaks: "the ground makes known and responds to human violence," Mari Jørstad describes the soil's reaction to Abel's murder: "the ground assesses human conduct and responds accordingly."[20] Not only does the landscape indict the killer, Cain becomes subservient to the earth's agency. "Cain is no longer the protagonist of his story," Jørstad explicates the narrative's plot. "Instead the ground shapes his life."[21]

Like Thoreau gazing at the earth cut open, Genesis confronts readers with the condition of profanation, the ground bearing witness to human destruction—although the environmental imagination cultivated in Genesis claims more agency for the earth than Thoreau. At Walden the hillside prompts revelations for the seekers, whereas the landscape in Genesis 4 accosts God with a repressed truth. The biblical scene shocks the reader with possibilities for the ground to instigate conversation—for soil to give voice to the life received into the earth's care, to speak on behalf of the blood.

"Cain murdered Abel, and the blood cried out from the earth," Marilynne Robinson begins a chapter late in her novel *Housekeeping*.

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[17] Purdy, *This Land Is Our Land*, 74.

[18] Ibid., 75.

[19] Genesis 4:10, NRSV

[20] Mari Jørstad, *The Hebrew Bible and Environmental Ethics: Humans, Nonhumans, and the Living Landscape* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2019), 58, 60. For my review of Jørstad's book, see Isaac Villegas, "All earth is grieving," *The Christian Century* 137, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 30-33, https://www.christiancentury.org/review/books/what-if-we-treated-all-creation-plants-and-stars-soil-and-rivers-our-kin.

[21] Jørstad, *Hebrew Bible and Environmental Ethics*, 59.

"The force behind the movement of time is a mourning that will not be comforted."[22] All creation groans. Nature absorbs what has been lost, *who* has been lost—the materiality of the earth as an expression of the longing for redemption, the life of hillsides and rivers as demands for an impossible reconciliation. Robinson's narrator recounts the early chapters of Genesis as the comingling of human and environmental history, one storyline inseparable from the other.

> Cain became his children and their children and theirs, through a thousand generations, and all of them transients, and wherever they went everyone remembered that there had been a second creation, that the earth ran with blood and sang with sorrow. And let God purge this wicked sadness away with a flood, and let the waters recede to pools and ponds and ditches, and let every one of them mirror heaven. Still, they taste a bit of blood and hair.… Well, all that was purged away, and nothing is left of it after so many years but a certain pungency and savor in the water, and in the breath of creeks and lakes, which, however sad and wild, are clearly human.[23]

Nature, as displayed here in Robinson's biblical imagination, is bodily—tissue as soil, veins as mycelia, plasma in the water. The earth aches with loss and alienation.

Robinson's depiction of nature shares Thoreau's vision of an earth alive with human profanations, landscapes as sites for the apprehension of our condition, an opportunity for "insight into the unity of things," to borrow Purdy's description of Thoreau's experience of the hillside cut open. For Robinson, however, the unity coheres in a longing for the presence of the disappeared: "But every memory is turned over and over again, every word, however chance, written in the heart in the hope that memory will fulfill itself, and become flesh."[24] A desire for redemption, for healing, animates this natural world. Robinson's writing echoes with Pauline theology: "Creation waits with eager longing [to] be set free from its bondage to decay."[25]

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[22] Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1980), 192.
[23] Ibid., 193.
[24] Ibid., 195.
[25] Romans 8:19-21, NRSV

The German theologian and activist Dorothee Soelle would nudge the apostle Paul to clarify that natural disintegration is not the problem; instead, we need to be freed from the *fear* of decay: a psycho-spiritual liberation from death's torments. "The idea that I am a part of nature, that I fall down like a leaf and rot, is not an idea that instills terror in me," Soelle wrote from her deathbed, "the tree continues to grow, grass grows, birds sing, and I am part of this whole. I am at home in this cosmos."[26] Yet, to claim that creation experiences decay as bondage projects human sentiment onto other parts of nature. Death is an opportunity to yield the self to the whole, Soelle reasoned from her observations of the natural world, because we are all bound together in a network of gift exchange, which is called life. Conversely, she could be ignorant of the language of trees, which may scream in pain as the wind rips leaves from branches.[27]

II

This year, when the sequoias visit my dreams, their bodies ablaze as wildfires roar along the Sierra Nevada mountain range, they startle me awake—not with voices but with howls, with shrieks from the flames as their bark blisters. I do not have a lexicon for this interspecies communication, to render the expressions of trees intelligible for human beings. And I know that my psychology metabolizes the panic of our climate catastrophe through dreams. But I also know that peoples native to this continent—human communities that have grown up with these forests for generations—have said that the trees find ways to speak to us. "Did you know that trees talk?" asked Tatanga Mani (English: Walking Buffalo), a 20th-century leader of the Bearspaw First Nation, a band of the Nakoda people. "They talk to each other, and they'll talk to you if you listen," he continued. "I have learned a lot from trees;

[26] Dorothee Soelle, *They Mystery of Death*, trans. Nancy Lukens-Rumscheidt and Martin Lukens-Rumscheidt (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 117.

[27] Not only do we project human anxieties about death onto other species, we impose one person's experience of death onto others—as if there are proper and improper ways to die, adjudications in Western discourses as old as Socrates and Jesus. Thomas W. Laqueur provides accounts of the politics of determining the meaning of a life based on someone's attitude toward death in *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2015), 186-210.

sometimes about the weather, sometimes about animals, sometimes about the Great Spirit."[28]

From time to time stories about Anabaptists in spiritual communion among trees, with trees, emerge from European archives—"primarily in the form of reports in the records about secret worship services held in a neighboring forest," as French historian Jean Rott discovered in a cache of documents, including the following account.[29] In 1574 a Lutheran vicar in the Alsatian city of Strasbourg infiltrated a group of Anabaptists gathering for worship in the woods. "During the preaching (lest I forget to mention it)," Elias Schad reports, "some were leaning against trees." After the sermon "all knelt, each usually before an oak tree as if he were worshipping it." The women and men, two hundred of them, prayed for half an hour or so. "There was a great audible murmuring as if a nest of hornets were swarming," Schad notes. "I was unable to make out a single word, much less a sentence; for they never raised their heads and they sighed and groaned and moaned . . . they sighed and groaned for the Spirit."[30]

III

Thoreau guides Purdy into conversations with nature. My guides are not as prominent in the historical record, which offers only fragmentary insights into their epiphanies about the natural world.

In 16th-century central Europe, as the masses revolted against political and ecclesial hierarchies, theological sensibilities within peasant communities coalesced into a perspective that stressed the strength and solidarity of God through nature. Apocalyptic preachers wandered from

[28] Quoted in T.C. McLuhan, *Touch the Earth: A Self Portrait of Indian Existence* (New York, NY: Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, 1972), 23. Vine Deloria observes that "If the nature of the world is a 'single continuous stream of life,' there is no reason to reject the idea that one can learn to hear the trees talk. It would be strange if they did not have the power to communicate." —Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 93.

[29] See the editor's introduction to Elias Schad, "True Account of an Anabaptist Meeting at Night in a Forest and a Debate Held There with Them," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 58 (July 1984): 292-95. I'm grateful to Jamie Pitts for sharing this reference with me.

[30] Schad, "True Account of an Anabaptist Meeting," 294.

town to village, from countryside to city, spreading "the gospel of all creatures."[31] Their message turned hearers to other-than-human creation for revelations of Christ because, as the preachers declared, the flesh of nature remembers Jesus' sufferings. The gospel of all creatures takes a Christological vantage point into natural theology, with the particularity of Christ's life and death as the subject of nature's theophanies.

We glimpse early articulations of this theology in Thomas Müntzer and Hans Hut's sermons and reflections.[32] "Holy Scripture shows nothing else—as all the creatures bear witness—than the crucified Son of God," Müntzer wrote in his "A Highly Provoked Defense," a reply to Martin Luther's condemnation of the peasants.[33] This theology also appears in an anonymous tract from the same decade, *The Mystery of Baptism*, attributed to Hut. "In the gospel of all creatures nothing else is shown and preached but the crucified Christ alone," the author explained. "But not Christ as the head alone, rather the whole Christ with all his members—this is the Christ that all creatures preach and teach."[34] God commissions animals and rivers to preach and teach their kin—a gospel for human and other-than-human

[31] Werner O. Packull provides a helpful account of the 16th-century Radical Reformation movement in the Swiss-German context. See his "The Origins of Swiss Anabaptism in the Context of the Reformation of the Common Man," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 3 (1985): 36-58, and "In Search of the 'Common Man' in Early German Anabaptist Ideology," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 51-67. According to Packull this gospel fueled the egalitarian nature of the Anabaptist movement in contrast to the elitism of the magisterial Reformers: "What is important in this context is that [Hans] Hut directed his gospel of all creatures against any monopoly of divine revelation by clerical estate. The witness of the creatures opened to the very poor and the illiterate the possibility of hearing the gospel directly."—Packull, "In Search of the 'Common Man,'" 54.

[32] E. Gordon Rupp, "Thomas Müntzer, Hans Huth and the 'Gospel of all creatures,'" *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 43, no. 2 (1961): 492-519.

[33] Müntzer quoted in Rupp, 498. See *The Radical Reformation*, ed. and trans. Michael G. Baylor (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), 74-94, for the text of Müntzer's reply. He also mentions the "suffering of creatures" as revelatory in his "Prague Protest"—see Baylor, *Radical Reformation*, 5. Hans-Jürgen Goertz argues for the theological kinship between Müntzer and the leaders within the early Anabaptist movement: "'A common future conversation': a revisionist interpretation of the September 1524 Grebel Letters to Thomas Müntzer," in Werner O. Packull and Geoffrey L. Dipple (eds.), *Radical Reformation Studies: Essays Presented to James M. Stayer* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate 1999).

[34] Hans Hut, *On the Mystery of Baptism*, 156, in Baylor, *The Radical Reformation*.

creatures alike; for the body of Christ, the incarnation of God, includes members from all of creation.

This gospel breaks through anthropocentric theologies while pointing to an ecclesial center in that nonhuman creatures are agents of evangelism, offering a message of salvation, an invitation to the baptismal waters, a ritual that constitutes the church's identity.[35] This gospel beckons human beings to be baptized into Christ and all his relations. To join the Christian body is not a promise of escape but a union, ever deepened, with this life—to let the mourning and hope of this earth wash through us. "[T]he water of every grief is the true essence and meaning of baptism, in which the person sinks in the death of Christ," says *The Mystery of Baptism*, "Christ also accepted this covenant from God in the Jordan river . . . the baptism of every grief."[36] In baptism human flesh absorbs memories that long for redemption. The primordial oceans and ponds and creeks described in Robinson's novel—"they taste a bit of blood and hair"—swirl through this baptismal water.

However, the gospel of all creatures depicts baptism not as an invitation for individuals to contemplate the mysteries of profaned nature but as a practice of solidarity, a ritual of commitment to a movement of radical reformation—full immersion into the call of redemption. This baptism is a person's yieldedness (i.e., *Gelassenheit*) to the labor of hope, a sacrificial devotion to a struggle for another world to be born within this one, within Christ's body, a membership extending beyond human relationships.[37] From

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[35] In the same way that a contemporary appropriation of the gospel of all creatures resists anthropocentric tendencies in theology, Purdy's environmental vision seeks to dislodge the human being as the center of our politics—"a democracy open to the strange intuitions of post-humanism, intuitions of ethical affinity with other species, of the moral importance of landscapes and climates, of the permeable line between humans and the rest of the living world"—Purdy, *After Nature*, 282.

[36] Hut, *Mystery of Baptism*, 163.

[37] *Gelassenheit* is a term from German mysticism that becomes central to Anabaptist spirituality. See Walter Klaassen, "'Gelassenheit' and Creation," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 9, no. 1 (1991): 23-35. My use of the imagery of labor and birth follows the metaphors operating within Müntzer's apocalyptic spirituality: "For when [the word] is received, there immediately follow pains like those of a woman giving birth" (Müntzer, "Sermon to the Princes," in Baylor, *Radical Reformation*, 20). The figure of Mary echoes in *gelassenheit* spirituality, which Hans Urs von Balthasar notices in his "Drei Formen der Gelassenheit," *Geist und Leben* 54, no. 4 (1981): 270-75, translated as "The Serenity of the Surrendered Self: Three Variations on

God's perspective, according to *The Mystery of Baptism*, in baptism the Spirit bathes the body with Christ's presence and promises to comfort and strengthen the community.

> A true, genuine friend of God, who daily waits for the Lord and in consolation hopes in him, will have his heart strengthened, so that he can bear the will of the Lord under the cross. Everything that such a person suffers is called the suffering of Christ and not ours, for with Christ they who suffer are one body with many members, united and bound together through the bond of love. Therefore Christ takes care of such people as his own body.[38]

In baptismal waters the person joins nature's ache for redemption and discovers the crucified Jesus alive with consolation and hope.

The submersion of baptism, according to the gospel of all creatures, is union with the Christ who empowers a movement for liberation, a struggle against oppressive dominions whose power over life derives from the threat of death. The baptized commit to the life of Jesus, who did not let the threat of being killed determine his ethics, his political vision—his love. He loved this world to the end: gathering companions, caring for them as if they were part of his own body.

IV

To offer Anabaptist reflections as opening up a public conversation with Purdy's work feels awkward because he is a friend, which means this essay will function as notes for a future discussion. Part of the reason we are friends, I assume, is that we share a political vision for this world, our home—a politics that shapes our hopes and concerns about our environment. The clear-sightedness of Purdy's writing during the Trump administration has guided

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a Theme," in *Explorations in Theology, Vol. 5: Man Is Created*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2014). In contemporary Mennonite spirituality, Mary as exemplar of *Gelassenheit* before God resounds in a popular hymn by Gerhard Tersteegen, "God is here among us," Hymn 62 in *Voices Together* (Harrisonburg, VA: MennoMedia, 2020). The second verse begins "Come, abide within in me; let my soul, like Mary, be thine earthly sanctuary."

[38] Hut, *Mystery of Baptism*, 164.

my own grasp of our situation. Despite how terrible things have become in this country, Purdy has a vision for what might be possible around the corner. "If the problem is the world we have built, then it is in our power to build another," he writes in concluding *This Land Is Our Land*, which exhorts the reader to strive for the Green New Deal. "To make a safer, stabler world, we will have to shake the pillars of this one."[39] He writes with hope, for which I am grateful.

Hope is the theme of the final chapter of the first theological book I read about our environmental life as Christians: Dorothee Soelle's *To Work and To Love: A Theology of Creation*.[40] My teacher, professor Willie Jennings, had recommended it, perhaps as a gentle invitation to improve the questions I was asking in his course on the doctrine of creation. Soelle concludes with a call to the work of hope: "I think that struggle is the source of hope. There is no hope without struggle." She articulates the Christian faith refracted through Marxist commitments for social change: "There is no hope that drops from heaven through the intervention of God. Hope lies in the struggle."[41] Soelle strengthens the faithful in this struggle for the health of our environment, and Purdy outlines a hopeful rationale for a political program for a sustainable relationship between human society and the rest of nature. The promise and possibility of their discourses are similar.

And both end with a word of love. Purdy closes *After Nature* with a call to find in nature something to love, an impulse which "engages animist intuitions and carries us toward post-humanism."[42] On the last page of *To Work and To Love*, after Soelle also exhorts the reader to love ("become resisters and lovers of life"), she turns from the human ethics of love to the recognition that we are loved, that nature flows with the love who the Scriptures name as God: "'Lover of the living' is an old name for God (Wis. of Sol. 11:26)."[43] That seems to be the heart of the theological contribution

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[39] Purdy, *This Land Is Our Land*, 149-50.
[40] Dorothee Soelle, with Shirley A. Cloyes, *To Work and To Love: A Theology of Creation* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984).
[41] Ibid., 161.
[42] Purdy, *After Nature*, 288. Cf. Isaac S. Villegas, "Know the world, know yourself," *The Christian Century* 133, no. 18 (August 15, 2016): 36-37, https://www.christiancentury.org/reviews/2016-08/know-world-know-yourself.
[43] Soelle, *To Work and To Love*, 165.

to conversations about nature: the acknowledgement of a subject who loves all of life at once, from before the beginning until after the end, and whose solidarity manifests as a "bond of love," to borrow language from *The Mystery of Baptism*, never to be undone, because the materiality of existence has become internal to the life of God in Mary's womb: the creator as creature, a creaturehood bound together with all of nature.

This incarnation of God, according to the gospel of all creatures, is inseparable from the crucifixion. The one implies the other. When God's love became part of creation in Jesus, this world killed that life—and creation bears witness to that history of rejection, the otherness of God revealed in the violence of the cross, "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world."[44] The woundedness of life remembers the crucified love of God. The Anabaptist environmental theology I have explored, in conversation with Purdy's work, returns to the disemboweled hillside near Walden's pond, the rivers that mourn in Robinson's novel, the trees on fire in my dream, and recognizes the crucified body of Christ whose tortured yet enduring love is a presence of consolation and strength. To know such love involves the intimate work of solidarity with the wounded life of our kin, a baptism into a body whose membership includes the human and other-than-human alike, a union that promises the delight and heartache of love's embrace regardless of what the future holds.[45]

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[44] Revelation 13:8, NRSV, quoted in Hut, *Mystery of Baptism*, 164.

[45] I am grateful to Peter Dula and an anonymous reviewer for their feedback on an earlier version of this piece.