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# **Political Asceticism**

On the Environmental Thought of Henry  
Thoreau and Thomas Merton

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## Political Asceticism

On the Environmental Thought of Henry Thoreau and Thomas Merton<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

This paper is about ascetic, contemplative traditions of Christian life and the ways those traditions might be related to environmental politics. Asceticism – as that practiced in monasteries – is an ongoing interest of mine. I use the word, asceticism, to refer to forms of spirituality that are often characterized by renunciation or other spiritual exercises. This paper emerged from a fascination with these practices, on the hypothesis that humans who do them have sometimes found ways to build peaceable communities founded on economic equality and productive cooperation with the ecologies in which they are set. In communities like these, members have successfully disciplined themselves to a life shaped by just labour and integration in flourishing ecologies.

### Keywords

Asceticism,  
contemplative traditions,  
spirituality, ecology,  
environmental politics,  
Henry Thoreau, Thomas  
Merton

This interest in just labour and practices for flourishing ecology runs in other directions, too. Since I moved to Australia from the United States in 2015, it has run toward examples of Indigenous cultural traditions of land management and spiritual life, traditions which have been ongoing in Australia for at least 65,000 years. They are likely the Earth's oldest, most stable cultural, religious, and ecological traditions. Denis Edwards argued, almost 40 years ago in 1986, that Christians in Australia should consider themselves "apprentices" to Aboriginal views of the land.<sup>1</sup>

In his article, "Apprentices in Faith to the Aboriginal View of the Land", Edwards describes a visit he made to Uluru (a site called Ayres Rock by settlers until 1993) in 1985, soon after the place was restored to Anangu ownership. Edwards writes that as he stood at the base of the rock, among the sacred waterholes, caves, and extraordinary rock formations, he "became aware of the mystery of the place" and of "the Spirit's quiet activity in this land, touching the hearts and lives of men and women here for forty thousand years."<sup>2</sup> He explains that the experience inspired him to feel that being Christian in Australia, a place subjected to Christian imperial domination, required contemporary Christians "to approach Aboriginal experience of the land with humility, and as apprentices in faith."<sup>3</sup> His suggestion was that if non-Aboriginal people would take this view of themselves, would see themselves as learners from the way the Spirit has spoken and is speaking through Aboriginal relationships to land, then Christian settlers would learn something important about God's calling for us.

1. This LSRI Research Paper is based on a public lecture given on 11th of May 2023 hosted by the LSRI in Denis Edwards's honour. The talk was entitled "What to Give Up for the Climate: Asceticism and Ecological Justice".

I have taken Edwards's advice to heart, and I do consider myself an apprentice to Aboriginal views of the land. These First Nations traditions have proved themselves incredibly resilient and conducive to human flourishing across a timescale deeper than any other human community on Earth. As Bruce Pascoe has described in the widely-read book *Dark Emu*, precolonial Aboriginal nations lived within peaceable boundaries, managed fire for ecological purposes, raised food sustainably, and followed the law of the land.<sup>4</sup> Experts in Indigenous knowledge systems like Tyson Yunkaporta, Indigenous land management like Victor Steffensen, Indigenous theology like Garry Deverell, and Aboriginal political theory like Mary Graham are transforming my own understanding of human responsibilities in the context of our ecological communities.<sup>5</sup>

But while, following Denis Edwards, I consider myself an apprentice to these traditions, they are not mine. I view attention to them as an obligation I hold as a settler in Australia, and yet, tutored by the writings of Indigenous academics, I am also attentive to the risks of cultural appropriation.<sup>6</sup> I have a European American settler heritage, one characterized by a history of colonization, enslavement, and empire. I have ancestors on both sides of this history, some who were empire builders and others who were subjected to imperial domination, plus some just caught in the middle. Needless to say, I often find the story of my own ancestors' histories less inspiring with respect to ecological insight than the Indigenous ones I have been learning about in Australia.

Still, as someone aiming to make something of my own heritage, I nonetheless think that Christian traditions have promise for those of us – like me – searching for wisdom about human possibilities for egalitarian communities, just labour, productive cooperation with our habitats, and a life built around praise. Indeed, communities of Indigenous Christians around the world have themselves found this possible. After all, Christians of every kind worship a God unjustly sacrificed at the hands of imperial power, whose last act was to serve an egalitarian meal at which all shared in the produce of the land. And there are resources in Christian traditions that describe the attempt Christians have made to follow his example, reject unjust economies, and establish cooperative communities in peace.

In light of this, the following paper explores an ascetic, contemplative tradition of Christian life and argues that ascetic traditions are sometimes a kind of politics for just economy. In the first section, I describe the question that my research often focuses on – what are the political implications of ascetic practice? – and I describe how I addressed that question in my first book, *Thoreau's Religion*. In the second section, I suggest that the question might be interesting to consider in the context of a longer Christian tradition. In the third section I describe the next example I am working on with respect to this question: the twentieth-century North American monk, Thomas Merton. Throughout, I argue that Christian ascetic traditions are also traditions with insight about what environmental justice might require.

## [On the Political Implications of Ascetic Practice](#)

Both my first book on Henry David Thoreau and my current project on Thomas Merton are driven by one central question: what are the political implications of ascetic practice? As described above, I use the word “asceticism” to refer to forms of spirituality that are often characterized by renunciation or other

spiritual exercises. In Christian theological traditions, especially traditions of monasticism and religious life, asceticism is often given shape by three vows – of poverty, chastity, and obedience – and these vows help to form a life dedicated to prayer and labour.<sup>7</sup>

Those who do not practice such asceticism tend to think of it as rather foreign. Modern worries about asceticism are diverse, but the negative view of asceticism that interests me most is the idea that asceticism is bad for the world. According to this view, ascetic practices offer practitioners reassurance that they are good but do not actually do any good in themselves. Asceticism becomes a sort of virtue signaling. Practically speaking, this perspective asks how *my* self-denial would benefit *you*, or the community I am a part of? To the extent that I convince myself that ascetic practice is good, these skeptics think, I excuse myself from the actually good work I could do for my community. In this way, these critics understand asceticism as a form of political quietism. Under this view, asceticism helpfully acknowledges that there are problems in human society that need to be addressed and it does aim to address them, but does so in such an ineffective manner that the ultimate result is support of the status quo. By refusing to engage with the world, therefore, ascetics give the world up to the suffering it currently holds.

My view is that, depending on the practice and context, asceticism can be quietist in this sense, but it does not have to be. Indeed, my research describes important examples that demonstrate asceticism is often politically invested. One of these examples is Henry David Thoreau, the subject of my book, *Thoreau's Religion*. Thoreau was a nineteenth-century author from the United States who wrote what became a famous book, *Walden*, and who became a kind of saint for the environmental movement. Scholars in English literature, history, politics, and philosophy have tended to ignore Thoreau's interest in religion, and scholars in religious studies and theology are only beginning to notice the ways in which Thoreau participated in and shaped theological traditions that came before and after him. *Thoreau's Religion* examines the politics of asceticism in his life and thought, exposing the religious traditions in which Thoreau was invested.

In addition, some readers of Thoreau have wondered if he ought to be as admired and venerated as he sometimes is among those with environmental concern. Thoreau's *Walden*, and its emphasis on living the simple life in nature, has sometimes been taken as a paradigmatic icon for an environmentalism of the rich that tends to ignore the intersection of empire, race, gender, and economic injustice with environmental harm.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, Thoreau seems a very unlikely contributor to thinking about environmental justice, a term I understand as describing environmental ethics and politics that attempt to coordinate social and ecological concern.<sup>9</sup>

*Thoreau's Religion* offers a new interpretation of *Walden* that suggests that where Thoreau's legacy for environmentalism has been viewed as apolitical and lacking in consciousness of empire, class, race, gender and other forms of systemic injustice, this has been the result of a misreading of some of Thoreau's most important work. For Thoreau, nature piety of the kind he expressed in *Walden* was integrally tied to the pursuit of justice. This convergence becomes especially clear when we attend to the way Thoreau views religion. Furthermore, Thoreau's vision of religious simplicity, which has sometimes been read as overly austere, was – perhaps surprisingly – more deeply invested in delight than in sacrifice for its own



sake.<sup>10</sup> Thoreau models what I describe as “political asceticism,” which refers to asceticism that is driven by a political commitment to just economy, including ecological flourishing for all beings.<sup>11</sup> I demonstrate that Thoreau was a “political ascetic”: his religious practice was conceptually and practically tied to his politics against slavery, industrial capitalism, and wars for territorial expansion.<sup>12</sup> Voluntary poverty, he thought, could contribute to new forms of just economy and government.<sup>13</sup>

Asking about the politics of asceticism with an open mind is itself a contribution to both theology and the study of religion. Too often, ascetic life has been characterized as first, wholly negative and self-denying, and second, retreating from politics. The last few decades have seen scholars across academic fields – from Michel Foucault to Sarah Coakley – correct the first point about asceticism being self-denying, especially by drawing attention to the positive self-formation such practices often pursue.<sup>14</sup> This corrective, however, has in some cases had its own distorting consequences. The focus placed on *individual* formation has sometimes obscured the constructive significance ascetic practices have had with respect to wider social, political, and economic worlds. Attention to the context out of which ascetic practice is born often uncovers that the practices in question are not only formative for the practitioner but arise out of and feed back into the society from which the practitioner withdraws. I am trying to uncover and emphasize the broader social significance of ascetic practice. I do this here, briefly, by way of attention to a longer story of the Christian ascetic tradition and to Thomas Merton’s life and works.

### [A Longer Christian Tradition](#)

Thoreau’s political asceticism is related to a longer Christian tradition. Thoreau knew his asceticism was drawing upon ancient forms. He even made jokes about cenobites, the word that describes monks who live in communities as opposed to living as solitary hermits.<sup>15</sup> Uncovering Thoreau’s asceticism can show us one way in which the influence of these old Christian traditions has been wider than we usually see. One of my main aims in *Thoreau’s Religion*, though it is mainly subterranean in the book itself, is to show one place where the (roughly Thomistic) common good tradition stretches further than either theorists of liberal democracy or communitarians usually notice. Seeing the ways in which Thoreau’s asceticism was drawing ascetic life toward just politics has helped me to think more deeply about ascetic traditions of religious life that came before and after him.

The tendency to view contemplative life and its attendant renunciations apart from their broader context affects views of more traditional Christian ascetics, too. Even people who admire the theologians and religious brothers and sisters who gave shape to Christian asceticism often depoliticize those figures. They take them as contemplative geniuses, neglecting the radical economic critique at the heart of their apostolic living. For example, consider Lynn White Jr’s appeal to St. Francis of Assisi in his now classic article from 1967, “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis.” The article has had an enormous impact on the way the academic study of religion and ecology has developed, including among theologians.<sup>16</sup> Famously, White attributes dominative views of nature to Christian theology, but offers, as an antidote, Francis of Assisi. White described Francis as a “spiritual revolutionary,” whose view of nature as a co-equal part of creation would have brought about a different and more ecologically-friendly history if it

had been the theology of nature adopted in the West.<sup>17</sup> Focusing on Francis's theology of nature to the exclusion of his practice of poverty, however, White contributed to a long history in which Francis's poverty has been depoliticized.

What White missed, which I argue makes Francis of Assisi even more important for our time than White described, is that like the other poverty movements which emerged in the 13th century such as the Dominicans and mendicant orders, Francis did not only have a different view of nature; he also pushed back against the accumulation of wealth that was shaping the power structures of Europe at the time and driving economic injustice.<sup>18</sup> The current environmental movement, when it is successful, is less and less about doctrines of nature, important as those are, and more and more about achieving the democratic political power required to push back against financial interests and capital accumulation that contribute to environmental harms. In appealing to Francis, we should remember that he had something to say about accumulated wealth too.

Before and after Francis of Assisi, monastic, ascetic contemplatives had economic concerns. Benedict's 6<sup>th</sup> century Rule was, as one of my students once pointed out in class, preoccupied with the practical matters required for people coming from different class positions to live together peaceably. The 16<sup>th</sup> century saint Teresa of Avila founded her first convent in strict poverty, conscientiously following the reform movements of Francis's period. She enacted egalitarianism among the sisters who joined her. She rejected standard ways religious orders of her period made money, did not require dowries, and insisted that all her religious houses be economically self-sufficient. Rowan Williams writes that Teresa's teaching insisted that "we must become strangers to the tyrannies of honour and dignity; the ascetic life in a community of equals initiates this process, and teaches us a new solidarity with the dispossessed and powerless."<sup>19</sup>

The tradition of Christian spirituality represented by these figures and their ascetic practice has an economic critique at its heart. When Jesus told the rich man that he would have to sell everything he had in order to inherit eternal life, Mark's gospel tells us that "his face fell and he went away sad" (Mk. 10:22). Jesus told the disciples how hard it would be for the rich to enter the kingdom of God, and then he finished the speech, explaining, "Many who are first will be last, and the last, first" (Mk. 10: 31). This prophetic critique of wealth runs right through the tradition of Christian spirituality, but elite theological scholarship, like the rich man, has a tendency to ignore the message. In an age where wealth and its pursuit seems to be killing life on earth, it's a feature of the gospel we would do well to remember.

Where scholarly writing about the geniuses of contemplation neglects the social, economic, and political significance of their poverty, it spiritualizes (in the bad sense) the great contemplatives and ignores the important economic critique that was so often enmeshed in their contemplative practice. The life of poverty that Jesus lived, that the monastic tradition is always being called back to, that Thoreau drew upon in his ecological classic, *Walden*, also continually speaks a new word against political domination and economic exploitation. This Christian tradition of poverty and contemplation has representatives in our own time, as well.



## Thomas Merton and the Politics of Asceticism

My ongoing work continues to ask the big question with which I began: what are the political implications of ascetic practice? It does this by examining a figure who draws together the long story of Christian asceticism with Thoreau's insight that love of nature and social justice are intertwined. By analyzing the life and thought of Thomas Merton, I aim to uncover resources for the contemporary pursuit of "integral ecology" as it was called in *Laudato Si*, an encyclical on the environment promulgated by Pope Francis in 2015.<sup>20</sup> Jorge Bergoglio took Francis of Assisi as his papal namesake when elected Bishop of Rome because he considers Francis "the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically."<sup>21</sup> In this, Pope Francis is insisting that Francis of Assisi integrated ecology with social concern for the vulnerable. "Integral ecology" is the name *Laudato Si* gave to this very old idea. Thomas Merton was a 20<sup>th</sup> century figure working to articulate a similar idea.

Merton was a Trappist monk, an author, and an heir of Henry David Thoreau's political asceticism.<sup>22</sup> Like Thoreau, Merton saw contemplative life and social and political movements for justice as deeply related. But despite Merton's own best efforts, his readers have also sometimes interpreted the apostolic life of poverty as *merely* contemplative and thus silenced its attendant economic, social, and political critique. Merton's own superiors seem to have fallen prey to such an understanding of the life of contemplation when they forbade Merton for a time from writing about war, one of his central theological and political concerns.<sup>23</sup> Merton's impression was that, as he wrote to his editor Robert Giroux, it is a "kind of scandal for a contemplative monk to be known to follow world events."<sup>24</sup>

This dynamic, that contemplative life is sometimes viewed as other-worldly and unrelated to more mundane political concerns, was thus familiar to Merton. And many of his writings specifically highlight this by insisting that monasticism was not meant to be disconnected from the broader political and social world. Especially in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Merton began to realize how deeply social justice was tied to the life of contemplation.<sup>25</sup> His spiritual classic from 1949, *Seeds of Contemplation*, was republished in 1961 as *New Seeds of Contemplation* and directly addresses the concern that contemplation has an exclusively other-worldly image. The preface of the 1961 revised edition suggests that the word 'contemplation' "is misleading in many respects."<sup>26</sup> It even goes so far as to raise the possibility that a proper revision would have excised the word from the text. Much of the additional material in the revised book aims to correct the misapprehension Merton worried readers might experience. The chapter entitled "Solitude Is Not Separation" suggests that deliberate solitude was in fact *for* fellowship, both with God and with other humans. Merton writes: "the only justification for a life of deliberate solitude is the conviction that it will help you to love not only God but also other men."<sup>27</sup>

Merton's way of loving both God and, in the language he used, other "men," has special significance for theology now. It is commonplace in environmental studies to point out that the environmental movement of the twentieth century was often tightly bound to racial and social hierarchies. In the United States, for instance, the context in which I know this political history best, many of the canonical white thinkers of the classic conservation movement – figures like John Muir and Aldo Leopold – were either inattentive to or in some cases in league with white supremacist understandings of human nature.<sup>28</sup> The

early environmental movement in the United States was often implicitly understood as a conversation among elite white people, and one that too often neglected social injustice along lines of race and class, or that worked to reinforce their dominance. It was not until the late 1980s that environmentalists of that sort began to realize how tightly tied social, economic, and racial inequities were to environmental inequities. In the years since, the movement that can keep its eye on *both* ecological concerns *and* the social, economic, and racial inequities that travel alongside them has come to be called the environmental justice movement, and much work in environmental studies has focused on the reformation required to build a more inclusive politics.<sup>29</sup>

In this context, Merton's own attention to both racism in the United States and the new and growing ecological consciousness of his period are instructive and prescient. Here, I offer two examples of moments in which Merton exhibited the sense that these two political issues were part of one spiritual and theological problem.

First, in Merton's last published essay, a review of Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind* in 1968, he wrote that humans without right relationships to the natural world are perverted into purveyors of American injustice.<sup>30</sup> A man like this enacts what Merton called elsewhere the sin of the white man.<sup>31</sup> Merton wrote that such a man, apart from a sacramental relationship to nature, becomes sinful wherever he lives or works. Merton wrote, "In a ghetto he is a policeman shooting every black man who gives him a dirty look."<sup>32</sup> In this way, Merton integrated concern for environmental wholeness and racial justice, two concerns that race and class segregation in America often cast as divergent.

Where some in the period imagined that concern for ecology was distinct from concern for social justice, Merton thought that love for God's creatures could be whole. Too often in contemporary economic understandings of environmental problems the interests of *humans* – conceived as a uniform class – continue to be pitted against the interests of broader ecological communities. This rhetorical form usually fails to name the fact that wealth inequality *among humans* is itself part of the exploitative economies that are also the cause of ecological harm. Merton resisted this picture, believing that the competitive picture – the one pitting humans against nature – was itself part of a spiritual sickness.

A cure from this sickness would offer a noncompetitive picture of ecological and social wholeness. In imagining what that would look like, the second example I want to offer is from Merton's journal from 1962. When reflecting on having read Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, he writes that his own environmental concern was on behalf of both nature and humanity as an integral part of it:

Someone will say: you worry about birds: why not worry about people? I worry about *both* birds and people. We are in the world and part of it and we are destroying everything because we are destroying ourselves, spiritually, morally and in every way. It is all part of the same sickness, and it all hangs together.<sup>33</sup>

My current work aims to uncover the theological and spiritual motivation for Merton's belief that, as he wrote, "it all hangs together." Such work can enable the church's pursuit of integral ecology that Pope Francis called for in *Laudato Si'*, and it can show that the idea of environmental justice has a longer history



than is usually told. My research on Merton's life and works may also show ways in which ascetic, contemplative life can offer alternatives to the economic vision that drives contemporary environmental exploitation and social injustice of other kinds.

## Conclusion

Interest in the significance of asceticism to environmental thought and practice reaches beyond Christians invested in the tradition of Christian monasticism. We're all wondering what our lives ought to look like in a finite world. This broader context led me to entitle this paper "What to Give up for the Climate" when I delivered it as a lecture. However, as you may have noticed, I have not explained which carbon intensive activities you should stop and which you can excuse, for which you should pay the advertised carbon offsets. I suppose each of us must discern these things for ourselves, for our families, for our communities, and for the institutions or businesses for which we work. We all do this within the constraints and opportunities we find in our own contexts.

But it may be that the question itself is often a distraction from the most important ecological and political facts. I recently read an article written by a schoolteacher in Oregon titled "Ecological Footprint Calculators Are Bad for the Environment." In it, the author Ursula Wolfe-Rocca outlines why an activity that asks 14-year-olds to reduce their individual consumption is often a distraction. She writes:

The activity left my students feeling vaguely guilty — even ashamed; but that shame should not be theirs to carry. My students did not build this world. And the footprint calculator does nothing to help them ask who did, why it is shaped as it is, and how it might be redesigned and rebuilt more justly. The footprint calculator foregrounds "choices" while obscuring their social determinants.<sup>34</sup>

Wolfe-Rocca points out that asking what each of us ought to give up for the climate may distract us from the political work we must do to build a more just society.


The fact that Thoreau's retreat to Walden Woods in 19<sup>th</sup> century Massachusetts and Merton's life at the Abbey of Gethsemani in 20<sup>th</sup> century Kentucky are not blueprints for a 21<sup>st</sup> century ecologically sustainable economy does not mean that traditions of asceticism are irrelevant to contemporary environmental politics. As my work aims to show, these traditions have often been oriented by a bigger vision of justice than the footprint calculator can imagine, and by a hope for a way of life that can enact such justice. More than offering the most efficacious means to a sustainable economy, they constitute a sort of prefigurative politics.<sup>35</sup> They aim to convince us that we can transform our lives. And they aim to demonstrate that such transformations can be good for us. Merton said as much about Thoreau when he wrote about *Walden* in "The Wild Places." Thoreau, he wrote, "proved what he set out to prove: that one could not only survive outside the perimeter of town or farm life, but that one could live better and happier there... There were other and better values."<sup>36</sup> In this, Merton was consciously appealing to Thoreau as an example for current thinking about ecological life.

In analysing Merton's engagement with secular political thought, my writing may sometimes seem

far from what scholars are accustomed to calling ecotheology. In the planned chapters of my current book project, which are organized around Merton's reading of other 1960s thinkers, only one - Rachel Carson - is usually counted among environmental thinkers. None are Christian theologians. And yet, this may be a problem with what gets counted as "ecotheology" or "environmental thought" rather than an accurate rendering of the importance of these thinkers to it, among them political philosopher Hannah Arendt, essayist James Baldwin, novelist William Melvin Kelley, as well as Rachel Carson. All of these figures cared about a sustainable, life-giving future for our worlds. I aim to explain how they transformed Thomas Merton's understanding of contemplation, and what that understanding of contemplation can teach us.

I hope this work on the significance of asceticism for environmental thought will also reflect my indebtedness to Denis Edwards. As early as 1974, Edwards suggested that Australian contextual theology ought to take up the theme of dispossession, which he glossed as "letting go of the attempt to grasp and clutch at what we have no right to possess."<sup>37</sup> He was clear that this was particularly important among the elite in wealthy societies like Australia. Edwards writes:

We find ourselves living in abundance, while others die because they have nothing. We know that there is a real and direct connection between the fact that we have so much and they have so little. It is because we have used economic, political and military power to grab more than our share of what is available.<sup>38</sup>

The importance of dispossession in Christian life was, for him, also a political insight, a call not only to a personal spirituality, but also to a politics that would support the most vulnerable among us. 

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- 6 See Leane, Jeanine. 2018. “Subjects of the Imagination: On Dropping the Settler Pen.” *Overland Literary Journal*; and Keene, Adrienne. 2016. “Engaging Indigeneity and Avoiding Appropriation: An Interview with Adrienne Keene.” *The English Journal* 106 (1): 55–57.
- 7 The paragraphs that follow draw on my own work in Balthrop-Lewis, Alda. 2021. *Thoreau’s Religion: Walden Woods, Social Justice, and the Politics of Asceticism*. New Cambridge Studies in Religion and Critical Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 8 The phrase, “environmentalism of the rich,” is a contrast with Rob Nixon’s “environmentalism of the poor” in his now classic 2011 work *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard University Press.
- 9 “Environmental Justice” is a phrase that is now widely used outside of the context in which it emerged, but remembering the activists and sociologists in the United States who brought the concept into use is an important act of piety to their hard work. See, for example, Bullard, Robert D., ed. 1996. *Unequal Protection: Environmental Justice and Communities of Color*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books. Taylor, Dorceta E. 1997. “American Environmentalism: The Role of Race, Class and Gender in Shaping Activism, 1820-1995.” *Race, Gender & Class* 5 (1): 16–62. Bullard, Robert D., ed. 1999. *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices From the Grassroots*. 1st edition. Boston, Mass: South End Press.
- 10 See Balthrop-Lewis, *Thoreau’s Religion*, Chapter 5.
- 11 See Balthrop-Lewis, *Thoreau’s Religion*, Chapter 4.
- 12 See Balthrop-Lewis, *Thoreau’s Religion*, 120
- 13 See Balthrop-Lewis, *Thoreau’s Religion*, 163.
- 14 For examples, see Foucault, Michel. 1988. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3: The Care of the Self*. Translated by Robert Hurley. Reprint edition. New York: Vintage; and Coakley, Sarah. 2002. *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- 15 See Balthrop-Lewis, *Thoreau’s Religion*, 21.
- 16 See White, Lynn, Jr, 1967. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis” in *Science, New Series*, 155 (3767): 1203–07.
- 17 White, “The Historical Roots”, 1206–07.
- 18 This paragraph and those that follow draw on my article, Balthrop-Lewis, Alda. 2019. “Exemplarist Environmental Ethics.” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 47 (3): 525–50.
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- 20 Francis. 2015. *Laudato si’*. Vatican City: Vatican Press, sec. 137–162
- 21 Francis, *Laudato si’*, sec. 10.

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- 27 Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 52.
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- 32 Merton, “The Wild Places”, 4, 6.
- 33 Merton, Thomas. 1996. *Turning Toward the World: The Pivotal Years*, vol. 4/7 in *The Journals of Thomas Merton*. New York: HarperCollins, 274.
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- 38 Edwards, “Dispossession”, 11. Cf. Paul VI. 1967. *Populorum Progressio*. Vatican City: Vatican Press, sec. 20–21.