

Merton, Moore, and the Carthusian Temptation

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*Dedicated to the memory of
Dom Raphael Diamond, O.Cart.*

I just learned that Dom T. Verner Moore, the Benedictine who gave us the retreat two years ago, became a Carthusian in Spain. The dog! When I went to him with my problem, he told me "Oh no, you don't want to be a Carthusian!"¹

Not that I am altogether surprised at Dom Moore's becoming a Carthusian. I remember him describing a Carthusian at work, pruning a fruit tree in his little garden and frequently pausing to pray. He spoke of Carthusians several times in his conferences and when he was receiving monks privately, all those with Carthusian temptations were buzzing around the door of Saint Gabriel's room like flies around a honey pot. I complained that I could not seem to get much more than three hours of private mental prayer a day here. Dom Moore said he thought that was quite enough and told me how the Carthusians had to say many extra vocal prayers and were always complaining that they had so little time for private mental prayer and contemplation. . . . And now, there he is, a Carthusian. And here I am.²

1. Thomas Merton, *Entering the Silence: Becoming a Monk & Writer*, ed. Jonathan Montaldo (New York: HarperCollins, 1995) 98.

2. Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953) 60-1. Hereafter referred to as *SJ*.

Thus writes Thomas Merton on the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, 15 August 1947, in *The Sign of Jonas* and in "The Whale and the Ivy." When Merton closed the doors of Gethsemani behind him in December of 1941, it was relatively easy for him to forget the world. The solemn perpetual vows he made on the feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1947, confirmed his decision to consecrate his life to God in the monastery. Yet, he writes in the introduction to Part One of *The Sign of Jonas*, "I often wondered if I should not go to some other monastery. This was what is known as a 'temptation'" (SJ, 13).

It is difficult to imagine a monastic journey that is at the same time so similar to and so different from that of Thomas Merton as that of Thomas Verner Moore. Like Merton, Moore was immensely gifted and full of energy and ideas; but also like Merton, he was full of restlessness and contradictory drives. Both men were prolific writers; both entered orders and became priests, and both were engaged in a life-long struggle to reconcile action and contemplation. Yet Merton lived a life that is difficult to envision Moore living. Born in Prades near the Franco-Spanish border, and shifting places among France, England, and the United States, Merton converted to Catholicism and finally settled down at Gethsemani. Moore, born into a Catholic family in Louisville, Kentucky, spent most of his active life in the United States, but lived his last years as a monk in a Spanish charterhouse. When, after his conversion, Merton entered an order, it was that of the Trappists, whose tradition of silence, manual labor, and liturgical worship set it radically apart from Moore's Paulists, the most active of orders. Finally, while Merton eventually resolved the possibility of a Carthusian vocation by remaining faithful to his vow of stability to stay at Gethsemani, Moore, after several unsuccessful appeals for admission starting as early as 1916, was accepted by the Carthusians at the age of seventy.

This essay³ is structured as follows: the first section highlights the episode in Merton's monastic journey during which he tried to dis-

3. I am greatly indebted to Fr. Benedict Neenan, O.S.B., for information on Thomas Verner Moore. He graciously shared his extensive Moore materials with me and gave me a copy of his 1996 dissertation on the life of Moore. I would also like to thank Dom Philip Dahl, O.Cart., of the Charterhouse of the Transfiguration and Dom Aidan Shea, O.S.B., abbot of St. Anselm's Abbey. This article originated as a lecture given at The Fourth Kansas Merton Conference on 10 November 1996. I am grateful for all the responses and encouragements I received from conference participants, in particular Sr. Noreen Hurter, O.S.B., and Sr. Johnette Putnam, O.S.B.

cern whether he should go to the Carthusians or stay at Gethsemani; the second section touches upon the essential facts of Father Moore's life; the decisive moments in Moore's Carthusian vocation are the subject of section three; and in the fourth and concluding section of this essay I speculate on the different ways in which Merton and Moore resolved the Carthusian temptation.

I. Merton and the Carthusians

In March 1941 Merton was getting ready for the Holy Week retreat at Gethsemani. Part of the preparations was a trip to the library where he came across the entries on the Carthusians in the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*. They made such an impression on him that he reflected:

What I saw on those pages pierced me to the heart like a knife. What wonderful happiness there was, then, in the world! There were still men on this miserable, noisy, cruel earth, who tasted the marvelous joy of silence and solitude, who dwelt in forgotten mountain cells, in secluded monasteries, where the news and desires and appetites and conflicts of the world no longer reached them.⁴

Three weeks later, a fellow-retreatant at Gethsemani mentioned the Carthusians at Parkminster. He told Merton that "[t]here were no longer any pure hermits or anchorites in the world: but the Carthusians were the ones who had gone the farthest, climbed the highest on the mountain of isolation that lifted them above the world and concealed them in God" (SSM, 327). The encounter prompted Merton to make a comparison between the Cistercians and the Carthusians.

We could see the Cistercians here going out to work in a long line with shovels tucked under their arms with a most quaint formality. But the Carthusian worked alone, in his cell, in his own garden or workshop, isolated. These monks slept in a common dormitory, the Carthusian slept in a hidden cell. These men ate together while someone read aloud to them in their refectory. The Carthusian ate alone, sitting in the window-alcove of his cell, with no one to speak to him but God. All day long and all night long the Cistercian was with his brothers. All day long and all night long,

4. Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948) 316. Hereafter referred to as SSM.

except for the offices in choir and other intervals, the Carthusian was with God alone. *O beata solitudo*. (SSM, 327)

The question of which order attracted him more was easily answered. The Carthusians came closer to the idea he had of a monastic vocation, but because there was no charterhouse in the United States in 1941 and the war made it impossible for him to cross the Atlantic and consider one of the Carthusian houses in Europe, he chose to enter Gethsemani. It was in a way his second choice and even though he threw himself into his new life as a Trappist with zeal and devotion, the Carthusian attraction remained in his thoughts.

All the time I was in the novitiate I had no temptation to leave the monastery. In fact, never since I have entered religion have I ever had the slightest desire to go back to the world. But when I was a novice I was not even bothered by the thought of leaving Gethsemani and going to any other Order. I say I was not *bothered* by the thought: I had it, but it never disturbed my peace because it was never anything but academic and speculative. (SSM, 383)

The period of relative peace he enjoyed during his first years at Gethsemani would come to an end on the eve of Merton's solemn profession as a monk. In the prologue to *The Sign of Jonas* he tells us:

for me, the vow of stability has been the belly of the whale. I have always felt a great attraction to the life of perfect solitude. It is an attraction I shall probably never entirely lose. During my years as a student at Gethsemani, I often wondered if this attraction was not a genuine vocation to some other religious Order. [. . .] Like the prophet Jonas, whom God ordered to go to Nineveh, I found myself with an almost uncontrollable desire to go in the opposite direction. God pointed one way and all my "ideals" pointed in the other. (SJ, 10)

He had made every possible effort to believe and obey those who told him he was supposed to be a Cistercian. But his efforts, he felt, had not produced the effect which they produce in those he saw around him. Without being exactly unhappy at Gethsemani, he had in fact been relying on concessions to lead a more solitary life than is the usual lot of the Cistercian. He was beginning to wonder whether he could continue in that way. Meanwhile the impediments to his becoming a Carthusian were for the most part removed: the war was over and it would be possible to go to Europe, and, more importantly,

in December 1950 a Carthusian foundation was started in the United States. In a letter to Dom Humphrey Pawsey, the superior of the new foundation in Vermont, he argues his case as follows:

My desires go out to the Charterhouse before anything else, first because if I had been able to become a Carthusian instead of a Trappist in 1941, I would certainly have done so. Secondly because I believe the Carthusian life is the safest and best way to find God in solitude—certainly safer than the business of being a hermit on my own, which nevertheless I will try if nothing else is possible. [. . .] The third reason why I want to be a Carthusian is that I am fairly sure you would discourage me from writing any more, and that is what I want.⁵

It is important to note that Merton wrote this letter while his abbot, Dom James Fox, was away at the General Chapter. Dom James was unyielding when it came to Merton's leaving Gethsemani for another Order. "The answer, his superiors and spiritual advisers told him over and over, was inner solitude, detachment, a hermitage of the heart: he needed no physical place of solitude."⁶ But already in 1949 Dom James had allowed him to take some of his intervals in the rare book vault to work on manuscripts. At the height of his stability crisis, Dom James, anxious to resolve the question of Merton's need for extended periods of silence and solitude, offered him a vacant toolshed in the woods as a refuge for certain hours of the day. This part-time hermitage, which he named St. Anne's, brought him the needed tranquility and the following realization:

I no longer need to travel. Half a mile away is the monastery with the landscape of hills which haunted me for 11 years with uncertainty. I knew I had come to stay but never really believed it, and the hills seemed to speak, at all times, of some other country. The quiet landscape of St. Anne's speaks of no other country. If they will let me, I am here to stay.⁷

5. Thomas Merton, *The School of Charity: The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Renewal and Spiritual Direction*, ed. Br. Patrick Hart, O.C.S.O. (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1990) 41.

6. Michael Mott, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984) 230.

7. Thomas Merton, *A Search for Solitude: Pursuing the Monk's True Life*, ed. Lawrence S. Cunningham (New York: HarperCollins, 1996) 32.

By the spring 1955, however, his hopes return to the Carthusians. On April 27, 1955, he writes to Dom Jean Leclercq that he has reached a point at which he thinks he cannot remain at Gethsemani and that he feels confident he would be allowed to go to the Carthusians. When, a few weeks later, a letter from Dom Jean-Baptiste Porion, the procurator general of the Carthusians in Rome, arrives discouraging him from this course, he consults Thomas Verner Moore at the Carthusian foundation in Vermont, who encourages him to transfer to the Camaldolese. His appeal for admission at Camaldoli makes it all the way to the Vatican, but again he receives no encouragement for a transfer.

It would last until the fall 1955 before Merton would finally be at peace with the idea of staying at Gethsemani. In a letter of October 18, 1955 to the abbot general, Dom Gabriel Sortais, he writes

that it would be most imprudent for me to leave Gethsemani or at least the Order and that there would not be much to gain. So I am quite sure I know God's will on this point, and I accept it willingly with the most complete peace and without regrets. This gives me the opportunity to sacrifice an appeal, a dream, an ideal, to embrace God's will in faith. Now it is over, and I promise you I will not worry you any more with this business.⁸

Much later, shortly before his trip to Asia, when reading about the Carthusians in Vermont, Merton reflects

Maybe I am no true solitary, and God knows I have certainly missed opportunities, made mistakes—and big ones too! Yet the road I am on is the right one for me and I hope I stay on it wisely—or that my luck holds.⁹

By 1955, then, Merton was no longer arguing with himself about the need to transfer to another order. His "Carthusian struggle"¹⁰ had gone through three stages. From his entrance in the monastery in 1941 to the time he made his solemn vows in 1947 the Carthusian life evoked interest and admiration in him but the attraction never caused any con-

8. Thomas Merton, *The School of Charity: The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Renewal and Spiritual Direction*, ed. Br. Patrick Hart, O.C.S.O. (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1990) 92.

9. Quoted in Mott, 532 [from the Restricted Journals, August 5, 1968].

10. This term and the threefold distinction in Merton's struggle I borrow from William H. Shannon, *Silent Lamp: the Thomas Merton Story* (New York: Crossroad, 1992) 148.

fusion about his life as a Trappist. The second phase was a period of vacillation that lasted from 1947 to the fall 1955, during which Merton became unsure about staying at Gethsemani and seriously considered a transfer to the Carthusians where he would have more solitude. The third stage was "a period of relatively peaceful acquiescence, extending from October 1955 to August 1965, when he became a hermit on the grounds of Gethsemani."¹¹

II. Thomas Verner Moore

To those who do not know him, Thomas Verner Moore is best introduced at the supreme moment of his public life, when in 1939, one month before his sixty-second birthday, he became prior of St. Anselm's, the Benedictine monastery he helped establish in Washington, D.C. His appointment coincided with the award of a large grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, which enabled him to expand the Child Guidance Center, a clinic specialized in treating nervous and mental diseases in children, whose founder and director he was. Earlier that year the board of trustees of The Catholic University of America, the educational institution the center was associated with, had readjusted the name of the department Moore headed from "Department of Psychology" to "Department of Psychology and Psychiatry" in accordance with the increased importance of the expanded facilities. These events are indicative of the many paradoxes we come across in Father Moore's rich and eventful life. He was a highly successful academic who combined a strong publication record with impressive teaching credentials. Thoroughly familiar, through long years of studying the works of his patron saint Thomas Aquinas, with the field of scholastic philosophy, he was also equally at home in the experimental laboratory and the techniques of psychological investigation. He managed to reconcile the demands of his scientific career with his duty as a medical doctor specialized in psychiatry. The foundation upon which his many accomplishments in research, teaching, and treatment of patients with mental problems rested was his monastic commitment. Not only had he conceived the idea of starting a community of Benedictine monks at The Catholic University of America where monastic practice could be blended in with scientific research, he was also a living example of its feasibility.

11. *Ibid.*

Thomas Verner Moore was born on 22 October 1877 in Louisville, Kentucky. He studied with the Jesuits at Fordham University and St. Francis Xavier College in New York. In December 1896 he entered the Paulist novitiate and was ordained a priest in December 1901. He took his Ph.D. in 1903 under Edward Pace, a pioneer of psychology at The Catholic University of America. A year after obtaining his doctorate in psychology he studied under Wilhelm Wundt at the University of Leipzig. Upon his return to the United States in 1906, Father Moore first served as chaplain to the Catholic students at the University of California in Berkeley, and, in 1910, joined the faculty of The Catholic University as instructor of psychology. He entered medical school at Georgetown University in 1911, and two years later received permission from his Paulist superiors to continue his medical and psychological studies at the University of Munich. He obtained his medical degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1915, returned to The Catholic University and opened his psychological clinic at Providence hospital in Washington, D.C. In the last year of World War I he took a leave of absence from the university to serve in the army medical corps in France. Shortly after his return from Europe, he replaced Pace as head of the department of Psychology. Dissatisfied with his life as a Paulist, a religious life without vows, he requested and obtained a transfer to the Benedictines. In September 1923 he took another leave of absence from the university and started his novitiate at St. Benedict's Abbey, Fort Augustus, Scotland. A year later he made solemn profession and returned to the United States to start the Benedictine community of St. Anselm's, under the jurisdiction of the abbot of Fort Augustus.

The twenty-three years between Moore's return from Scotland in 1924 and his entrance into the Carthusian Order in 1947 constituted the most productive years of his career as a psychologist and psychiatrist, during which he guided the psychology department at The Catholic University, expanded his clinic into an important center for treatment, training, and research, founded a school for mentally disadvantaged girls, and published his most important works in psychology and psychiatry.¹²

12. Benedict Neenan, O.S.B., *The Life of Thomas Verner Moore: Psychiatrist, Educator and Monk* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1996) 201.

In 1946 he received an invitation to lecture for a semester at the University of Madrid in Spain. At the end of his visiting appointment he entered the Charterhouse of Miraflores near Burgos in June 1947. He was accepted as a Carthusian novice on the vigil of the Feast of St. Luke, 17 October 1947. On the Feast of St. Bruno, October 6, 1949 he made his solemn profession and received the name of Dom Pablo Maria. In the fall of 1950 he returned to the United States to help establish the first American charterhouse near Whitingham, Vermont. After almost a decade in Vermont Dom Pablo was recalled to his house of profession, where he died on June 5, 1969.

III. Moore and the Carthusians

Father Moore traces his interest in the Carthusians to a period rather early in life when he read a work on the Fathers of the Desert.

Their example was an ideal that hovered before his mind ever afterwards, but which he could see no possibility of attaining. And though in the long tramps he took in the mountains in summer he saw from time to time an inviting cave, not far from a spring or clean running water, he could not see how, in the climate of the United States, he could live through the winter in one of these caves or supply himself or be supplied with the bare essentials of daily sustenance that even a hermit would require.¹³

In the summer of 1913, during his second period of study in Germany, he went to England during the intersemester break to work in the library of the British Museum. He recounts what happened that first week of September:

The library closed for a week early in September, so I concluded that I would get in my annual retreat. I dropped in to a Jesuit house and asked where I could make my retreat. The good father replied: "You must go to our house at Manresa, or the Fathers of Charity or to various places; but if you want to make a retreat that you will remember to the day of your death, go to the Carthusians at Parkminster." I concluded that that was the kind of retreat I wanted to make and so arranged with the Prior for the privilege. It was truly a solitary retreat; and I was left entirely to my own resources.

13. A Carthusian of Miraflores [Thomas Verner Moore], "Carthusian life and its inner spirit," *Messenger of the Sacred Heart* 85 (1950) 19.

The guest master visited me daily about noon to ask if there was anything I wanted. I rose for Matins and Lauds every night which I heard in the gallery or tribune of the church. My schedule for mental prayer, spiritual reading and other exercises was approved by the guest master. Sometime during the retreat I spoke hesitantly about the possibility of my becoming a Carthusian, but received no encouragement. I was profoundly impressed with Carthusian life, but left without any formulated resolve to be a Carthusian.¹⁴

The first written request for admission arrived at Parkminster in the fall 1916. In his answer the guest master pointed out that he could not resolve the question of Moore's Carthusian vocation and recommended him "to follow the advice of his spiritual director, to pray, and to wait until the will of God manifests itself more clearly either as an interior attraction or through the events or circumstances."¹⁵

A second letter, written in the summer 1919, received a much clearer answer. The novice master at St. Hugh's Charterhouse told him that his mind seemed absolutely opposite to the Carthusian spirit and that he could do nothing better than to bury completely the idea of ever becoming a Carthusian monk. He did what he was told, put the Charterhouse out of his mind, and turned all his energy to Benedictine channels. Looking back upon his years as a Benedictine he would later say: "From the time I entered Fort Augustus in 1923 up to about the year 1933 it never occurred to me that I should ever be anything else but a Benedictine."¹⁶

In 1933, however, the Carthusian temptation rebounded with a vengeance. While on retreat that year he thought he heard a voice telling him to become a Trappist. When he informed his superior about his desire to transfer to the Trappists he was told that his leaving St. Anselm's at a crucial point in its development would deal the fledgling community a devastating blow, but that, when the time should come, he should consider the Carthusians rather than the Trappists. This reopened the question of a Carthusian vocation.

14. Thomas Verner Moore, *My Carthusian Vocation*, unpublished manuscript, Archives of Trinity College, Washington, D.C.

15. "de suivre le conseil de votre Directeur, de prier et d'attendre que la Sainte Volonté de Dieu se manifeste plus clairement soit par l'attrait intérieur, soit par les événements et les circonstances." Paul Joseph Deltour to Thomas Verner Moore, 1 October 1916, unpublished letter, St. Anselm's Abbey Archives.

16. Thomas Verner Moore, *My Carthusian Vocation*, unpublished manuscript, Archives of Trinity College, Washington, D.C.

From then on he would not rest until he was finally permitted to give it a try. According to Fr. Benedict Neenan, "there were ten significant appeals by Moore for admission to the Carthusians between 1933 and August 1946, when he was finally accepted."¹⁷

In the spring of 1935 he was allowed to make an extended retreat at Parkminster. This time around his second stay at the charterhouse impressed the Carthusians so much that the Parkminster prior wrote to the prior at St. Anselm's: "I must confess that after having a long talk with him the determination not to dream of accepting him has been very much weakened."¹⁸ Moore interpreted the news as a sign that they were willing to let him try his vocation and wrote to his superior in Washington: "[i]t seems to be the opinion of both the Prior and the Novice Master that I should remain longer to try my vocation, and in all probability remain."¹⁹ The prior at St. Anselm's ordered him to return immediately reminding him again of the upset his departure would create both at the monastery and at the university. The abbot at Fort Augustus agreed, writing to Moore: "it seems to me that your secession, at the present and in the near future, would be detrimental—if not fatal—to St. Anselm's."²⁰ Moore was only slightly discouraged and at regular intervals made further requests to his superiors or the prior at Parkminster. Finally, in 1946, a year before his retirement from the university, the abbot of Fort Augustus informed him he would be relieved from his priorship at St. Anselm's. The abbot also indicated he would be willing to release him to join the Carthusians. After contacting Parkminster again Moore learned from the Carthusian prior that despite his courageous perseverance and successful trial at their charterhouse he would not be accepted there. His chances to be accepted at another charterhouse in Europe were scant. The charterhouse of Farneta in Italy, where the prior was an Englishman, gave him no hope of being able to join there. Along with his final refusal, however, the prior at Parkminster, had hesitantly suggested

17. Benedict Neenan, O.S.B., *The Life of Thomas Verner Moore: Psychiatrist, Educator and Monk* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1996) 286.

18. Adrian Weld-Blundell to Wulstan Knowles, 5 September 1935, unpublished letter, St. Anselm's Abbey Archives.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Wulstan Knowles to Thomas Verner Moore, 3 December 1935, unpublished letter, St. Anselm's Abbey Archives.

perhaps the Fr. Prior of our House of Miraflores, Burgos, Spain, who is an ex-missionary Bishop, might be willing. He knows a certain amount of English and has a Father Procurator who speaks it, I think. You will have to put your case to him very strongly, if you are to succeed! May God grant it if it is His Will.²¹

Moore wrote to Miraflores and to his surprise received a letter from the novice master with an affirmative answer. He was rewarded for the long years of patient and courageous perseverance and realized his lifelong dream when he entered Santa Maria de Miraflores in June 1947. He took to his new life with the enthusiasm of a young novice. The hard plank bed, the long fast, the three-hour night office, the absence of any kind of heat in the church—these austerities did not seem to bother the seventy-year old monk. It was no small edification for the Spanish community to see this former prior, this scholar, become simply one of the monks. Dom Pablo was not destined, however, to enjoy the stability he had hoped Miraflores would provide him. A year after his solemn vows he was sent back to the United States to help establish the first Carthusian foundation there. A decade later, in the summer 1960, he returned to Miraflores. Father Moore had stoutly borne up under this rather lengthy trial and his Carthusian calling emerged from it stronger and truer. Now more than ever, in the twilight of his days, he experienced the purgings that contemplation entails. The prior of Miraflores characterizes Moore's final years thus:

In his last years in Miraflores Dom Pablo showed signs of great virtue. He was always smiling and pleasant—full of goodness and humility. He had many things to suffer: a progressive blindness, difficulty in understanding Spanish, his difference of age with the rest of the community; but he never gave expression to any complaint. Until 1968 he was present at Matins every night; it must be kept in mind that in Miraflores, during two months of the year, the temperature in the Church drops to one or two degrees centigrade below the freezing point. He used to say: "The most beautiful part of the Carthusian day is Matins." Likewise he was present at the recreations, and although they were a penance for him, because he had so much difficulty understanding the others, he was always in good humor. During the last two years of his life he was not able to leave his cell due to arterio-sclerosis. He was not able to cele-

21. Hugh Weld to Thomas Verner Moore, 26 June 1946, unpublished letter, St. Anselm's Abbey Archives.

brate Mass during the very last year. Regardless of his pains he was always found smiling and optimistic. I used to ask him: "Dom Pablo, how are you?" He would smile and answer: "Oh, always very well." On June 1, 1969 he began to feel ill, and from that time on kept to his bed; little by little the light of his life waned and on the 5th, the feast of Corpus Christi, he passed away, at 6:00 in the evening. His countenance was resplendent with an expression of peace and serenity. In Miraflores everyone felt his death very much—he was very much loved by all because of his exceptional kindness and understanding.²²

What strikes one about this account is that Dom Pablo's last years in Spain were a severe period of trial, but that they brought about the holiness he had at his death. During those years he practiced what he theoretically held as the one thing he lived for. In the words of Dom Raphael Diamond, the former prior of the Vermont Charterhouse: "The spiritual value of his life is an example of what God will do to a man who has had a brilliant career, but one who has not allowed for those purifications that are necessary for really a life with God."²³

22. "Dom Pablo en los últimos años pasados en Miraflores, demostró una gran virtud. Siempre afable y sonriente. Siempre lleno de bondad y humildad. Tuvo que sufrir debido a su ceguera progresiva, a su dificultad para entender el castellano, a su diferencia de edad con el resto de la Comunidad, jamás se le notó ninguna queja. Hasta 1968 así[s]tió a Maitines todas las noches. Téngase en cuenta que en Miraflores durante 2 meses la iglesia está a temperaturas de uno o dos grados centígrados bajo cero. Solía repetir: "Los Maitines es lo más hermoso del día cartujano". Igualmente asistía a recreaciones con muy buen humor siempre, aunque eran una penitencia para él, pues le costaba mucho entenderse con los demás. Los dos últimos años de su vida, debido a la arteriosclerosis, no podía salir de la celda. El último año, no pudo celebrar la Santa Misa. A pesar de sus dolencias, siempre se le encontraba sonriente y optimista. Le preguntaba yo: ¿Dom Pablo, cómo está Vd.? Sonreía y siempre me contestaba: ¡Oh, siempre muy bien! El día 1 de junio de 1969, se sintió indispuerto, ya no se volvió a levantar; poco a poco se fue apagando y el día 5, fiesta del Corpus Christi, a las 6 de la tarde murió. Su rostro resplandecía con una expresión de paz y serenidad. En Miraflores todos sentimos muchísimo su muerte pues era muy querido de todos, por su excepcional bondad y simpatía." Prior of Miraflores to Dom Raphael Diamond, 1 November 1973, unpublished letter, Charterhouse of the Transfiguration Archives, Arlington, Vermont. English translation by Dom Benedict Kossman, O.Cart.

23. Raphael Diamond, O.Cart., interview with Benedict Neenan, O.S.B., Charterhouse of the Transfiguration, Arlington, Vt., 24 February 1995, St. Anselm's Abbey Archives.

IV. Conclusion

What can we learn from these two stories about the attraction to Carthusian solitude? When trying to answer this question, we have to keep in mind that the quest for the vision of God—the core of the monastic vocation—is fundamentally a matter of divine grace, “a gratuitous gift which God accords us. We can neither attain it nor possess it by ourselves, but we can desire it.”²⁴ Yet, at the same time, we cannot but notice the individual trials of these two monks, which arise from their longing for the life of solitude.

Father Moore’s life gives testimony to an extraordinary consistency. Never impatient with himself and the circumstances of his life, he came to the realization that only gradually and through continuous application could he reach the ideal to which he aspired. He manifested an astonishing constancy in persevering so long in his desire for solitude, despite opposition from both his abbot and the Carthusian prior. We know the importance he laid on motives according to which he taught that one has to purify one’s intentions and to decide one’s actions.²⁵ One does not see why he could not have applied these criteria in his own case. His many different vocations, his intense activity and his wide interests reveal one and the same source: his intense and honest desire to seek the encounter with God.

In contrast to Moore, who sought a life that witnessed values he could not find within the Paulist or Benedictine tradition, Merton was able to rediscover the eremitical dimension that lay buried within the Cistercian tradition. Life in community, so characteristic of the monastic vocation of Merton before he took his solemn vows, seems to have become more and more a testing and training ground for the contemplative vocation which, he was convinced in the years following his solemn profession, could best be realized in the solitude of hermitage. The spiritual and institutional renewal Merton helped further within the structure of his own order gradually appeased his desire for a tran-

24. Thomas Merton, *Honorable Reader*, ed. Robert E. Daggy (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 21.

25. “Moore’s life displays another driving force from within: the need to always strive for the highest possible level of attainment of which one is capable. It was a principle he instilled in his students, patients, monks, and retreatants. It was a principle he adopted in his own life, whether it has to do with a level of education, a level of professional achievement, or a level of the spiritual life.” Neenan, *The Life of Thomas Verner Moore*, 4.

sit from the cenobitic life of the Trappists to the semi-eremitical life of the Carthusians. In the prefaces to the Japanese editions of *The Seven Storey Mountain* (August 1963) and *Seeds of Contemplation* (March 1965) Merton writes:

I am still in the monastery, and intend to stay there. I have never had any doubt whatever of my monastic vocation. If I have ever had any desire for change, it has been for a more solitary, more “monastic” way.²⁶

And the author remains in the same monastery nearly twenty years later, still convinced of the reality of the way he seeks to travel, still seeking to understand better the illusions that are met within this way but not in order to abandon the way.²⁷

In the opening quote preceding this essay Merton records his reaction to Moore’s becoming a Carthusian and recalls that Moore dissuaded him from following the same path. The following anecdote related by two former students of Moore hints at the possible meaning of his discouragement:

One day, while a student was tussling with a Monroe calculator, he suddenly said, “Never leave your community for a contemplative order!” In utter amazement she replied, “But I never had such a thought!” Years later, we who heard the remark, realized it was probably an expression of his own inner struggle.²⁸

26. Merton, *Honorable Reader*, 65.

27. *Ibid.*, 87.

28. Sr. M. Corde Lorang and Msgr. Timothy J. Gannon, “Thomas Verner Moore: 1877–1969,” *Newsletter of the American Catholic Psychological Association* 19 (Autumn 1969) 6.