

Mahanambrata Brahmachari and Thomas Merton

By **Richard V. Croghan**

In June 1938, Thomas Merton and Seymour Freedgood stood in New York City's Grand Central Station looking for a Hindu monk. The two Columbia University students were about to give up waiting when a strange-looking man appeared behind them. It was Mahanambrata Brahmachari. Merton describes him as "a shy little man, very happy, with a huge smile, all teeth, in the midst of his brown face. And on the top of his head was a yellow turban with Hindu prayers written all over it in red. And, on his feet, sure enough: sneakers."¹

The Journey

The journey that took Brahmachari from India to Chicago and finally to New York was unusual. It was at the monastery in Faridpur near Calcutta that his abbot selected Brahmachari to travel to Chicago to attend the World Congress of Religions. He was told to undertake the journey with limited funds. The abbot managed to raise some money to purchase a ticket for about half the distance to America. After that, heaven would take care of him. Brahmachari set sail from Bombay on an Italian ship, the *Cente-Rossee*, in August 1933. He could not afford a third-class ticket. He was a deck passenger bound for Venice. The ship supplied him with neither food nor berth. He later recalled:

I took with me two blankets to sleep on, a few seers of rice, some potatoes, some Misri (Sugar-candy) and some cheera (fried and flattened rice). This was all I had for my physical needs. In addition, I carried two boxes full of books on philosophy, two oil portraits of Prabhu Jagadbandhu (the Spiritual Lord of my monastic organization) and a Tulashi Plant. Two days I spent on candy and dried rice. On the third day one of the crew very kindly showed me a place where I could cook something if I so desired. I had with me a saucepan and began to prepare hot meals of rice and potatoes for myself. Before eating my single hot meal each day, usually at noon, I used to pray first and offer the food with a Tulashi leaf to Prabhu as our custom was in the monastery. In the evenings I ate candy and dried rice. Thus I spent thirteen days on board the ship.²

Brahmachari stayed two days in Venice, spending most of his remaining money. He spent his last farthing on a train ticket to Genoa. When he arrived there he slept on a bench in the railroad station until two policemen ejected him. When dawn came, he wandered about the streets of Genoa penniless. By chance he saw the offices of Thomas Cook and Sons and went inside. He discovered that a cabled money order for 450 rupees was waiting for him. "It appeared to be God-sent, since there was no name or signature on the Money order. It came from Bombay and that was all" (Brahmachari, *Lord's Grace* 6).

When Brahmachari tried to purchase his steamship ticket, he learned that the American immigration rules required that he have an additional \$100 as

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security. Since he did not have that amount his repeated attempts to purchase a ticket were refused. He tried three different steamship companies with the same result. After spending some four hours in a park, Brahmachari tried once again. An older agent at the Cunard White Star Lines listened sympathetically and issued him a ticket. He was told to take the train to Paris and remain at one of the company's hotels until he could catch the ship from Le Havre. In Paris, an agent took Brahmachari to a hotel where he was allowed to stay. At the main office of the steamship company, a manager told Brahmachari that he needed more than twenty dollars to go to New York. The American government required security money. "Who'll take care of you?" he was asked. "God will," Brahmachari said (Brahmachari, *Lord's Grace* 11). The ticket manager asked Brahmachari how a few monks praying in an obscure corner of Bengal could do any good for the world at large. Brahmachari answered: "In much the same way that a radio station broadcasting from one corner of the globe can be received almost anywhere. When prayer is done faithfully, lovingly and with great intensity, the devotion requires a tremendous power, percolating the entire realm in which mankind has its spiritual being" (Brahmachari, *Lord's Grace* 13).

After a cablegram was sent to New York, the office there approved Brahmachari's passage. He took the train for Le Havre and boarded the ship at midnight. The head steward of the ship knew Brahmachari's story and advised him about what he should tell the immigration inspector in New York. "Instead of saying that you have no money, please tell him that you have 120 Dollars deposited with Cunard White Star Line. . . . And when the Inspector asks you about your return to India, tell him your ticket is being held for you at Thomas Cook and Sons in New York" (Brahmachari, *Lord's Grace* 18). Brahmachari decided secretly that he could not follow these directions because they would force him to lie. He did not want to taint his mission from the start (Brahmachari, *Lord's Grace* 19). When the ship reached New York, the head steward came to Brahmachari's aid and told the immigration commissioner that Mr. Brahmachari had deposited \$120 with their company and his return ticket was in possession of Thomas Cook and Sons in New York (Brahmachari, *Lord's Grace* 22). Brahmachari did not have to tell a lie.

The head steward accompanied Brahmachari down the gangplank to secure his baggage. He instructed a taxi driver to take him to the large bus depot and put him on the Chicago bus. The steward arranged for the purchase of his ticket. The trip took about forty hours. On a beautiful clear morning in September 1933, Brahmachari finally arrived in Chicago. "Faith made its way all through" (Brahmachari, *Lord's Grace* 25).

The World Fellowship of Faiths, 1933

The World Fellowship of Faiths invited presentations from a great variety of beliefs, even including Marxists and Fascists, and did not restrict itself to eight or nine great religions of the world. The representatives of each faith, instead of attempting to demonstrate the exclusive truth of their positions, were required to solve certain human problems from the standpoint of their unique insights. More than 200 men and women contributed their best thoughts towards the solution of world problems.³ During the conference, Brahmachari was allowed to stay at the home of Carl F. Propson, a philosophy professor. In exchange for assisting some students in their efforts at spiritual advancement, Brahmachari was given free room and board. Brahmachari attended and addressed a number of meetings at the World Fellowship of Faiths. His teachings were presented as a new world savior's message, in the form of four lectures which were all well received.⁴

First Address – Ahimsa

Brahmachari's initial lecture discussed the concept of ahimsa (non-violence) as the first article in the teachings of the great religious reformer Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He explained how *ahimsa* involves love and respect for all living creatures, because they are manifestations of God. "One sees the expression of God in every person and by loving a person one loves God. Through *Ahimsa* one worships the Supreme Being and communes with Him" (Brahmachari, *Lord's Grace* 41). The positive side of *Ahimsa* requires one to live and make others live a full life. The true devotee seeks the spiritual liberation of his fellow-beings. This is benevolence, universal freedom or *Uddharana* (see Brahmachari, *Lectures* 8). The negative side is absolute harmlessness. "To work for life, the worker must avoid anything that will kill, or injure any form of life. A true devotee cannot do mischief or think mischief or speak such words as will injure others in any way. His thought and speech breathe always a spirit of universal comradeship. He feels for the whole world as a phase of his own life. This is non-violence" (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 8). To be non-violent, Brahmachari stressed that we have to arrive at the center – the Supreme God Himself, who is known as Hari: "He is the sum total of all Love. He is the one unity of life in which we are millions of small units. If we love the sum-total, we shall be able to love everything. With the love of God will come to us the love of everyone in the Universe" (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 9). Men are then seen not merely as men but as the manifestations of God; animals are seen not as animals but as manifestations of God. Then we cannot hurt anyone; we become non-violent (see Brahmachari, *Lectures* 10). The Supreme Being can be reached through the medium of the Great Sound manifestation – the hallowed Name of Hari. "Chant the hallowed Name day and night and be non-violent in thought, word and deed. This is the sum and substance of the holy teachings of Lord Gouranga, the Incarnation of Love, who came down on the holy soil of Bengal some four hundred and fifty years ago. Divine Love assumed body and dwelt with us" (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 11). Brahmachari concluded his presentation with this prayer: "Oh my beloved Lord! The different paths which we through different tendencies, have taken, let them all lead us to Thy Lotus Feet, just as all different streams, having their source in different places, all mingle their waters in the sea. May the Blessings of my Beloved Lord be showered upon you all" (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 11).

Second Address – Mahatma Gandhi and Universal Brotherhood

Brahmachari began his second lecture by stating that Mahatma Gandhi and universal brotherhood were one, since Gandhi devoted his life to work for the good of humanity. He then explained how the word *Mahatma* means "Great Soul." Brahmachari offered a philosophical explanation of how the human body is composed first of the external covering, secondly of the mind-body which consists of intellect and egoism, and finally of the Soul, the real self of man (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 12). He explained how true happiness consists only in renunciation. The foundation of all true happiness is *Prema*, an untranslatable Sanskrit term that for lack of a better word can be called "love." *Prema* is the spontaneous love of the human soul for the Great Universal One and for His Universe (see Brahmachari, *Lectures* 13). Brahmachari urged his audience to renounce the false world, the creator of their own ignorance, of their own weakness. What does exist is the manifestation of *Nityananda*, the God of Eternal Joy. "The whole world is the playground of this loving God – we are all players, brothers – children of the one Father. We play within one circle" (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 14). Once again Brahmachari ended his lecture with a prayer: "East and West are relative terms. There is

no East or West in the eyes of God. East is West and West is East. We must embrace each other” (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 16).

Third Address – Lord Jagadbandhu

In his third lecture, Brahmachari described the mysterious arrival of Lord Jagadbandhu. One early morning in May 1871, a well-known Brahmin scholar named Dinanatha Nyayaratna was performing his morning duties with his wife in the sacred River Ganges, when they found the Divine Baby, floating on the surface of the Ganges, shedding celestial luster all around. Thus he came, we know not how. He had no name. Brahmachari said one may call him “Hari-Purusha” or “Jagad-Bandhu” because He is identical with the Great or Holy Name (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 18). Jagadbandhu’s life was identical with his teaching. He believed that the true religion of the world is One and only One but the outward expressions of that One are many. According to his teaching, when we shall discover this One in many and many in One, we shall establish a world religion. His whole teaching may be summarized in two words: “Live” and “Love” (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 18). The word “Live” means to dwell in the All-embracing One, to think yourself one with the wide world, to believe that you, that each man and woman, are an inseparable part of the entire world. Do your daily duties, but do them not as your own work but as the inseparable part of the entire world’s work. Make the whole world your family. This is living a full life. Prabhu Jagadbandhu led this life. He was a model of piety and renunciation, an embodiment of universal love (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 19-20).

The other important aspect of His teaching, Brahmachari explained, is “*Hari Nama*.” This world, He taught, is the thought form of the Deity. The entire universe is God’s thought. We can help the world by constructive thought. We must think the most pure kind of thought. This is nothing but the hallowed Name of the Lord, “Hari-Purusha.” It is by the constant praying and chanting of that Name that we can create one universal constructive thought form for the good of the entire world. Prabhu Jagad-Bandhu died on September 17, 1921. According to his previous instructions, a band of young monks, called *Mahanama Sampradaya*, started the unique mission of constant prayer. He had renounced everything for the good of the world and He is really Jagad-Bandhu, the Friend of the World (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 22). His spiritual power and influence are still being generated each day and night. His monks offer this prayer for the world: “The whole world our family, / The sky our canopy, nature our bed, / Earth our world-mother, all beings brothers, / Hari-Purusha Jagad-Bandhu over our head” (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 23).

Fourth Address – “Hari Purusha Jagad-Bandhu Maha-Uddharan”

In his final lecture Brahmachari explained the meaning of the Mahanama Mahamantra, which is chanted ceaselessly in the Sree-Angana Monastery (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 23). He examined only the first line, which consists of three terms, Hari-Purusha, Jagad-Bandhu, and Maha-Uddharan. These terms are nothing but God, Man and Nature (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 25). In microcosm they are Soul, Mind and Body. How these entities exist on friendly terms is the problem of all problems. No one has given an adequate and satisfactory explanation. Only a few mystics know what the real truth is. They do not form a triangle. They form a cone and the crown; the apex of the cone is Hari. “Hari is God of God, He is man of man, He is nature of nature” (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 28). Purusha indicates the relation between macrocosm and microcosm, between “Hari” and man (see Brahmachari, *Lectures* 32). “The word Jagad-Bandhu means The One which eternally binds all these beings together by the tie of the transcendental Divine Love. Jagad-Bandhu is the *Shishu* (child) of all *Shishus*. Jagad-Bandhu means the Ocean of Love” (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 29). “As *Shishus* we

are above the suns, moons and stars – we transcend everything material, because while the whole Universe exists in the subconscious mind of Hari, we as *Shishus* exist in the Conscious Mind of Hari, the Eternal Abode of Peace” (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 30). Until and unless we realize this Oneness of ours – and find “Hari” as the Center of all life, the Embodiment of all love and beauty – we will never solve the mysteries of the Universe. From this standpoint we will find the satisfactory solution of all problems. The final term, Maha-Uddharan, is difficult to explain. “Maha” means the Great; but no one word explains Uddharan. It is the enjoyment of God in His family circle (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 31). So long as one friend is absent, the enjoyment is not complete. “Pray for all – take all home and make the family circle complete and truly enjoyable. Suns, moons and stars are workers in God’s office; we are players in God’s family” (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 32). In order to realize God we have to approach him with “love.” When we realize God in that way, this world of gross matter will be instantly transformed into Heaven. “Alas, that we do not realize that the world is Heaven – because Hari Purusha is here and now, waiting only to be appreciated by us. Only our appreciation or consciousness is needed” (Brahmachari, *Lectures* 33).

Brahmachari at the University of Chicago

In order to clarify his immigration status, Brahmachari told the immigration authorities that he intended to be a student at the University of Chicago. He attended all types of Christian and Jewish services in their various denominational churches. He was impressed by the hospitality he experienced in many American homes.⁵ In the summer of 1935 Brahmachari finally enrolled as a student in the University of Chicago. He enrolled in the Divinity School on a full scholarship. He was astonished at the tremendous facilities and privileges enjoyed by the students. The place where Brahmachari spent the best three years of his life was in Harpers’ Memorial Library. He was particularly impressed by a new professor, Dr. Paul Tillich, who had recently been exiled from Germany. From the University of Calcutta Brahmachari had earned Master’s degrees in Sanskrit and Western Philosophy. Now in 1937 at the University of Chicago Brahmachari completed his dissertation on the Philosophy of Sri Jiva Goswami and earned his doctorate.⁶ Jiva Goswami, considered as the greatest expounder of Bengal Vaisnavism, flourished from the middle of the sixteenth to the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁷ It was Sy Freegood’s wife Helen who had met Brahmachari in Chicago and then invited him to Long Island. This was not unusual, for Brahmachari was frequently invited to give lectures to religious and social clubs, and to schools and colleges. More than once he spoke from the pulpits of Protestant churches. In this way he managed to make a living for himself. Merton tells us that Brahmachari “financed the stages of his journey by artlessly leaving his purse lying open on the living room table, at night, before his departure” (*SSM* 194).

Brahmachari at Columbia University

Brahmachari stayed in the dorm at Columbia with Merton and his friends. Merton admits that “I became very fond of Brahmachari, and he of me. We got along very well together, especially since he sensed that I was trying to feel my way into a settled religious conviction, and into some kind of a life that was centered, as his was, on God” (*SSM* 195). Merton also describes Brahmachari as “never sarcastic, never ironical or unkind in his criticisms: in fact he did not make many judgements at all, especially adverse ones. He would simply make statements of fact, and then burst out laughing – his laughter was quiet and ingenuous, and it expressed his complete amazement at the very possibility that people should live the way he saw them living all around him” (*SSM* 196). Brahmachari had gone into a few Catholic Churches out of curiosity. He told Merton that they “were the only ones

in which he really felt that people were praying” (SSM 197). On one occasion, Brahmachari gave Merton this advice: “There are many beautiful mystical books written by the Christians. You should read St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, and *The Imitation of Christ*. . . . Yes, you must read those books” (SSM 198). Looking back at that moment, Merton writes: “it seems to me very probable that one of the reasons why God had brought him all the way from India, was that he might say just that” (SSM 198). Brahmachari stayed at Columbia University for about a year. But his impact on Merton and his friends was life-changing. It was during his stay that Merton was baptized as a Catholic on November 16, 1938. Merton went to see Brahmachari set sail on the *Rex* for India at the beginning of 1939. This was to be the last time that they saw each other, but they did stay in touch.

Return to India

When Brahmachari returned to India in 1939, his mission was to the poor and downtrodden. He traveled continually among remote villages and wrote articles for newspapers. He remained in East Bengal when it became East Pakistan. He hoped he could do something to stop the mass killings of Hindus by Muslims. His disciples later smuggled him out of East Pakistan into West Bengal. Later he returned to East Pakistan to rebuild Hindu temples destroyed by the Pakistani army. In a letter to Robert Lax dated January 9, 1940, Merton mentions that he had written a long letter to Brahmachari;⁸ and in his letter to Lax of December 6, 1941, just before entering the Trappists, Merton again mentions Brahmachari when he wrote: “And in Him while I sing in the big church, (I pray on my face He will let me!) in Him will be also: Lax, Gibney, Seymour . . . and Brahmachari and the whole mystical body of Christ, everybody” (RJ 164). We know that in 1948 Merton sent a copy of *The Seven Storey Mountain* to Brahmachari. Around 1960 Brahmachari settled in the Mahandharam Monastery in Calcutta. He continued to travel to remote villages to give spiritual sustenance to the poorest of the poor. He gradually developed heart trouble and had to wear a pace-maker.

Some years later, in 1964, in a tribute to honor Dr. Brahmachari on his sixtieth birthday, Merton wrote:

Dr. Brahmachari came into my life precisely at the moment when I stood at a crossroads, and my encounter with him helped me to decide upon the road I myself must take. This meeting was as I even then realized, quite providential. There was nothing of mere chance here. The fruits of the meeting clearly testified to a wisdom at work in mystery, which I could not then attempt to explain to myself. Indeed one of the main things I learned from Dr. Brahmachari was a lesson he taught not so much by his words as by his life: the lesson that one can and must entrust himself to a higher and unseen Wisdom, and that if one can relax his frantic hold on the illusory securities of everyday material existence and abandon himself peacefully to a Supreme Will, he will himself find freedom and peace in that Will. For it was in just such confidence as this that Brahmachari, in the pure tradition of monastic poverty and obedience had found his way to America when the journey might have appeared humanly impossible. (Buchanan 20)

In 1965 Merton sent Brahmachari a copy of his book *Seeds of Destruction*.⁹ Brahmachari responded with a thank-you letter in which he said: “Your book *The Seeds of Destruction* I read and found stimulating. Your boldness in asserting truth, as you realized it is certainly masterly. I do congratulate you heartily. I long to have your companionship again Let us meet again in old age and exchange ideas. How would you like it, Tom?” (Buchanan 14). He also asked Merton to pay his passage to the

United States. Merton's answer, the only surviving letter to Brahmachari, is dated August 8, 1965. Merton mentions that he did not have a practical way to get Brahmachari to the States but he would keep trying. "I would love to see you again and there are many things indeed we could talk about." The letter ends: "God bless you always, and I hope that perhaps next year some time we will be able to get together. It would indeed be a great grace" (*RJ* 123). Three years later, when Merton traveled to Asia he tried to get in touch with Brahmachari. Sadly, that meeting never took place.

In 1975, Brahmachari founded the "Bangladesh Sanatin Dharma Mahamandal" to preserve the religious and cultural interests of Hindus. In 1980 his disciples built him an ashram in a quieter place outside the city, near the Calcutta airport. Later Brahmachari asked his disciples to build him a thatched hut somewhat apart from the ashram where he would spend the rest of his days in solitude. In 1998 Brahmachari was honored with the title of Mahamahopadhyaya, which is the highest title for scholars of the Sanskrit scriptures. He died in Calcutta on October 18, 1999, at the age of 95.¹⁰ One of his main teachings was *Manab Dharma*. This means that every human being should aim to attain full humanity and help others to do the same. His life was dedicated to awaken *Manusyatta*, or humanity, in all people irrespective of caste, creed, country or religion. As a teacher Brahmachari influenced thousands of students. As a monk he inspired Thomas Merton and his friends at Columbia. Today Brahmachari lives on in the numerous books he wrote.

Some Concluding Thoughts

When we review the four addresses that Brahmachari delivered at the World Fellowship of Faiths, certain themes emerge that may remind us of Merton. Certainly *ahimsa* or non-violence was a major theme throughout Merton's life. From his letter to the Draft Board in 1941¹¹ to his *Cold War Letters*¹² of the 1960s Merton wrote often and forcefully about non-violence. His essays collected in *Passion for Peace*¹³ further expressed his strong feelings about peace, war and racism. The description of Hari as the sum total of all Love reminds us of Merton's expression "the hidden ground of Love."¹⁴ The importance of detachment is echoed in *New Seeds of Contemplation*.¹⁵ The embracing of Eastern and Western cultures is found in much of Merton's later writings.¹⁶ Our unity with the world and with each other is another constant theme for Merton. In his fourth address, where Brahmachari writes that Hari-Purusha is waiting to be appreciated by us, we are reminded of the thought beautifully expressed by Merton: "His inscrutable love seeks our awakening" (*NSC* 15). There are perhaps other areas of agreement between these two spiritual masters. But aside from their teachings, their lives were also similar. Both men searched for God and found Him in their studies, in prayer and in solitude. In his book *The Illustrated World's Religions*, Huston Smith writes that Thomas Merton once noted that God speaks to us in three places: in scripture, in our deepest selves and in the voice of the stranger.¹⁷ In many ways Mahanambrata Brahmachari was the voice of that stranger.

1. Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948) 195; subsequent references will be cited as "SSM" parenthetically in the text.
2. Dr. Mahanambrata Brahmachari, *Lord's Grace in My Race* (Assam: Mahanam Mela, 1987) 2; subsequent references will be cited as "Brahmachari, *Lord's Grace*" parenthetically in the text.
3. Eventually all of the lectures were collected by C. F. Weller, president of the society, and published under the title: *World Fellowship* (New York: Liveright, 1935).
4. Mahanambrata Brahmachari, *Lectures & Dissertation*, Four Lectures in the World Fellowship of Faith held at Chicago in 1933 (Calcutta: Shree Mahanambrata Cultural and Welfare Trust, 1985); subsequent references will be cited as

- “Brahmachari, *Lectures*” parenthetically in the text.
5. Robert Lax tells the story of how Brahmachari was invited to somebody’s Thanksgiving dinner and in the living room he saw a canary in a cage. His hosts told him that they loved birds. That pleased him. Then, it being Thanksgiving, dinner was served and in came the turkey on a platter. All he could do was think quietly, “If you like birds, what happened to this one?” He didn’t make a fuss at all about not eating meat, he just didn’t eat it. See William Buchanan, *Dr. Mahanambrata Brahmachari: My Impressions* (Ganges, MN: Vivekananda Monastery and Retreat, n.d.) 27; subsequent references will be cited as “Buchanan” parenthetically in the text.
 6. Brahmachari’s advisor was Charles W. Morris (1901-1979). He said of Brahmachari, “I respect very highly the keenness of his mind, the conscientious thoroughness of his scholarship, his moral integrity and the purity of his spirit which feed and sustain his endeavors” (Buchanan 11).
 7. A part of his dissertation is printed as the final section of *Lectures* (1-44 [separate pagination]).
 8. Thomas Merton, *The Road to Joy: Letters to New and Old Friends*, ed. Robert E. Daggy (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1989) 152; subsequent references will be cited as “RJ” parenthetically in the text.
 9. Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Destruction* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1964).
 10. See Francis X. Clooney, SJ, “In Memoriam: Mahanambrata Brahmachari (23 December 1904–18 October 1999),” *The Merton Annual* 13 (2000) 123-26.
 11. Thomas Merton, “Application for Conscientious Objector Status – March 1941,” *The Merton Annual* 28 (2015) 24-29.
 12. Thomas Merton, *Cold War Letters*, ed. Christine M. Bochen and William H. Shannon (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006).
 13. Thomas Merton, *Passion for Peace: The Social Essays*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Crossroad, 1995).
 14. Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love: Letters on Religious Experience and Social Concerns*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1985) 115 [April 13, 1967 letter to Amiya Chakravarty].
 15. Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1961); subsequent references will be cited as “NSC” parenthetically in the text.
 16. See Thomas Merton, *Mystics and Zen Masters* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967); Thomas Merton, *The Way of Chuang Tzu* (New York: New Directions, 1965); Thomas Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York: New Directions, 1968); Thomas Merton, *Thoughts on the East*, ed. George Woodcock (New York: New Directions, 1995) (which includes his essay “The Meaning of the *Bhagavad Gita*” [43-52]).
 17. Huston Smith, *The Illustrated World’s Religions* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995) 249; see “A Letter to Pablo Antonio Cuadra concerning Giants,” in Thomas Merton, *Emblems of a Season of Fury* (New York: New Directions, 1963) 82: “God speaks, and God is to be heard, not only on Sinai, not only in my own heart, but in the *voice of the stranger*.”