Desert Fathers and Asian Masters: Thomas Merton's Outlaw Lineage

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I. The Search for a Teacher

At the end of his life, Thomas Merton was convinced that the key to unlocking the treasures of Christian as well as Asian spiritual traditions was the institution of the guru. Merton recognized great value in the lineage of teacher-student/master-disciple that existed among the early Christian Desert Fathers and continues to exist within various Asian spiritual traditions. He felt that the living presence, from generation to generation, of a specific quality and type of teacher-student relationship was an essential feature in fostering individual spiritual development.

Merton, therefore, saw the need, within the Christian tradition, for a wisdom lineage of spiritual practice, experience, and theoretical and methodological knowledge passed directly from accomplished practitioners to personal disciples. He also recognized that without the existence of such lineage-traditions each generation of sincere seekers was left largely to its own devices in its attempts to discover and experience the goal of enlightenment.

In undergoing training as a monk and priest, Merton went through the formation process at the Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani in which he was taught by the master of novices as well as having various confessors. However, this did not give him the kind of contemplative teaching and experience he sought. From his own long years of struggle toward spiritual growth, Merton came to feel acutely that neither his monastic order nor the Church provided adequate personal guidance and systematic practical training for a would-be saint. The concept of the need for an enlightened teacher as a crucial factor in true contemplative progress is therefore important to an understanding of Merton's mature thought.

As his life unfolded, Merton came to understand the purpose of monastic life and the nature of saintliness very much in terms of the realization, liberation and actualization of the true Self in a state of enlightenment. He viewed the master-disciple relation-

ship as an interpersonal approach to bridging the gap between the sincere but inexperienced seeker and those who have already found or possess more fully this state of enlightened holiness. On the eve of his departure for Asia, Merton told an audience in California,

> The real essence of monasticism is the handing down from master to disciple of an uncommunicable experience. That is to say, an experience that cannot be communicated . . . in words. It can only be communicated on the deepest possible level. And this, it seems to me, with all due respect to everything else that's going on, this to me is the most important thing. This is the only thing in which I am really interested. There is nothing else that seems to me to have the same kind of primary importance.[1]

Merton perceived a crucial advantage in the institution of a lineage of enlightened mentors available to sincere religious and spiritual seekers, not simply for inspirational value but more importantly to serve as adepts knowledgeable about practical methods for accessing the experiential potential of higher stages of spiritual development. He felt that Christianity had at one time upheld the value of such intimate practical mentorship and instruction in spiritual techniques as central to its larger tradition, but had somehow lost this focus, and he believed there was a great advantage to be gained from investigating the various Asian traditions in which the "handing down from master to disciple of an uncommunicable experience" was still a living reality. As he said in Thailand, at the very end of his journey,

> What . . . I think we have to learn from India, is the importance of the guru, the master, the spiritual master. . . . This is something we have lost in our Catholic tradition, and we have to return to it.[2]

The existence of mystical wisdom-practice lineages was an important presence in the life of the early Christian church. With the emergence of Christian monasticism and the Desert Father tradition of Egypt, Syria and Cappadocia in the third and fourth centuries, we find novice hermits seeking out and studying with older experienced hermits. As these novice disciple-hermits matured

spiritually they would in turn become mentors to the next generation of seekers. The younger desert hermit-monks grew toward saintliness by living closely with, and following the guidance and instruction of, older hermits who had already realized a more fully enlightened state of divine union.[3] Merton points out that the direct person-to-person charismatic transmission of traditional contemplative methods and teachings aimed at mystical enlightenment goes back through the early generations of Christian teacher-saints to the original apostles, and thus directly to Jesus, the divine-human master-teacher and lineage founder.[4] Thus the heritage of mystical wisdom and practices could be viewed as a kind of apostolic succession running parallel with, but not dependent upon, the ecclesiastical administrative and sacramental institution of apostolic succession in which generations of diocesan bishops ordain and supervise priests.

This understanding of a parallel apostolic succession of mystical wisdom-lineages is still present in the Greek and Russian Orthodox and other Eastern Churches. For a number of reasons, perhaps closely tied to the larger history of social and political exigencies and crises in Western Europe resulting in the general loss of intellectual and cultural continuity, this part of the Christian heritage fell into the background in the Western, Latin Church, even within the monastic communities. By the pre-Vatican II era of the mid-twentieth century, the concept of a living heritage of mystical wisdom-practice and teachers of the sort that once thrived among the early Desert Fathers was all but extinct. As Merton testified in his Alaskan conferences,

> We used to have in monastic life a sort of guru-disciple relationship, something like the idea of a spiritual father in the Desert tradition and in the Russian tradition, someone who knows intuitively how to bring out what is deepest in a person and, believe me, . . . that is what we really need—something where we don't get a lot of information but a release of all that is deepest in us that we would like to have access to. We know it is there and yet we can't get to it.[5]

The young Thomas Merton had not yet come to appreciate this gap between the historical ideal and contemporary reality when he entered the monastery. Through systematic practice of increasingly profound inward contemplative prayer, which he expected

to learn in the monastery, Merton hoped to achieve mystical union with God, that is, to become whole, to become holy. During the last years of his life, he would emphasize again and again his conviction regarding the supreme importance of this achievement of fully awakened holiness or saintliness in the life of monastics. Speaking in 1968 to a group of nuns gathered for a conference at Gethsemani, Merton made this clear:

> Our religious institutes exist to help form human beings, people who are complete persons. This is our work and our duty, to the human race as well as to God. Our monasteries should be producing people who are fully developed human beings and even saints.[6]

What he discovered not long after settling into life within the cloister, however, was that within his own community there was little if any mature guidance in the kind of effective methods of contemplative prayer in which he was interested, and that this situation prevailed within the monastic orders and the whole of the Western Church at large.

> We may think of ourselves as people who know how to meditate, but the Western Church doesn't really know what meditation is . . . . we have never really gone into it.[7]

The lack of true contemplative education within the monastic life was a continuing source of frustration and disappointment for Merton throughout his many years at Gethsemani. Although he grew quite critical of, and even cynical about, various shortcomings within institutional monasticism and the Western Church in general, this lack of a living heritage of practical assistance and enlightened guidance toward spiritual attainment was the principal issue for him. If life in the Church, particularly in the so-called "contemplative" monastic orders, wasn't a highly expedient, reliable means for developing expert teachers in the higher stages of mystical union, then it was not succeeding in its mission as a school for saints. Merton emphasized this point while addressing a conference of his fellow Catholic contemplatives in Alaska in 1968:

> There is no reason for contemplative monasteries to exist if you are not able, in a contemplative monastery, to develop a different kind of consciousness from that experienced outside.

> Not that the outside is bad, but I mean you specialize in a certain kind of awareness. . . . If there is no special advantage in our kind of life, if you don't get any special fruit from it, there is no point to it really. The fact that we just say prayers is not a sufficient justification. I think we have to be deeper people in a certain way. Not just deeper in the sense that we are much wiser than everybody else, but there has to be a deeper experience of life. Our education should lead to that deeper experience.[8]

II. To become a Saint

Before he had joined the Church, Merton expressed a decided interest in Asian as well as Christian mystical traditions. His interest in religion began in earnest during his early twenties while he was a student at Columbia University. While at Columbia, he discovered *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* by contemporary French Catholic philosopher Étienne Gilson. Prior to reading Gilson, Merton had found it difficult to embrace the concept of God. Through reading Gilson, Merton came to understand and accept a concept of God as pure Being, and he later claimed that Gilson's work was the first to teach him "a healthy respect for Catholicism."[9]

At around the same time that Merton first read Gilson, Aldous Huxley was enjoying a vogue in intellectual circles, and Merton and a group of his friends at Columbia avidly followed Huxley's developing thought. When Huxley, hitherto a fairly worldly figure associated with the bohemian *literati*, published a work advocating the goal of becoming a saint through the achievement of mystical union, Merton and friends took notice. Huxley's *Ends and Means*,[10] written during the build-up of tensions that erupted into World War II, proposes that it is inner peace achieved through mystical awareness that holds the world together. Huxley believed that if a sufficient percentage of the population came to experience the inner peace of mystical attainment achieved through contemplative practice, many of the world's problems, including the threat of war, could be solved. In *Ends and Means*, the emphasis is on both Asian and Catholic mystical sources. Merton and his Columbia friends were very excited by these ideas, and following Huxley's lead, began to be interested in both Asian and Catholic mysticism. Merton felt that the role which Huxley's book played in his subsequent "conversion" was "quite great."

Merton's interest in both Asian mysticism and Catholicism was further spurred by his pivotal encounter with Dr. M.B. Bramachari, a globe-travelling Hindu monk and scholar of world religions. On Bramachari's enthusiastic recommendation, Merton read the devotional classics of Christian spiritual theology by mystic saints such as Augustine and Thomas à Kempis.[11] The personal example of Dr. Bramachari as a mystic and a monk also helped to inspire Merton to center his life on dedication to the divine goal:

> I became very fond of Bramachari, and he of me. . . . 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.[12]

Another important source for Merton's evolving concept of a life dedicated to saintliness was the French philosopher Jacques Maritain, who Merton had met at a Catholic Book Club. Through Maritain's influence, worldly and sophisticated non-Catholic intellectuals began to view Catholicism as philosophically sound and intellectually provocative. Maritain believed that the major factor responsible for preventing the complete demise of Western civilization during the Dark Ages and for holding it together throughout the Middle Ages, was the influence of the contemplatives in the monastic communities, and he viewed these communities as lighthouses in the darkness and islands of orderliness in a sea of disorder. Along with Huxley, Maritain regarded mystic saints and contemplative communities as crucial energy sources for an enlightened and peace-creating influence in society. For Maritain, as for Huxley, the important thing in life was to be a saint. Merton was very much influenced by Maritain, and became both his student and his friend.

From Gilson, Merton gained a concept of God as pure Being, and through Huxley and Bramachari he came to view life's purpose as a movement toward sainthood and mystical union achieved largely through personal contemplative practice. From Huxley and Bramachari, he learned to value the insights of both Asian and Catholic mystic saints. Maritain reinforced this concept of mystic sainthood and dedication to the contemplative life, albeit with a decidedly Catholic emphasis, and this emphasis was in keeping with Bramachari's advice that Merton read works of the Western spiritual tradition, that is, the Catholic devotional classics. Gilson, Huxley, Bramachari, and Maritain all shared an em-

phasis on the great value of monasticism as a context for spiritual development. Through this cluster of influences, Merton decided to pursue the goal of mystical enlightenment and sainthood within the Christian monastic tradition.

While completing his studies at Columbia, Merton wrote a master's thesis on William Blake. In his thesis, Merton considered Indian mystical philosophy as an important historical parallel to Blake's vision, and presented Blake's highly individualistic work as a marriage of themes common to classical Indian philosophy and medieval scholasticism. In his preface to this 1939 thesis on Blake, Merton wrote:

> I think that the affinities between Christian thinkers and Oriental mystics are interesting in themselves. To break them up into influences in one direction or another always encourages arbitrary, false, and pigheaded statements, without adding anything at all to our understanding of the way these thinkers and mystics looked at life.[13]

Nonetheless, ten years would pass before his writings would show any evidence of a continuing interest in Asian mysticism and philosophy. In 1949 Merton mentions that he plans to write to a correspondent in India regarding Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*.[14] Another seven years pass with little further mention of Asian spirituality; then in 1956, Merton's journal records his recent reading of D.T. Suzuki on Zen, and a rich period of interest in both Asian mysticism and the writings of the Desert Fathers ensues.

During this period between his thesis on Blake and his reading of Suzuki, Merton set out on his own monastic path toward mystic sainthood, joining the Trappist community at Gethsemani in 1941. He moved beyond developing an abstract concept of sainthood and embarked on his own process of becoming a saint. At this point, his readings and writings on matters philosophical and spiritual were focused almost exclusively on Catholicism. Archbishop Jean Jadot, described the sequential unfolding of Merton's widening perspective:

> [h]e was a precursor to Vatican II by the way he was opening himself to the other religions. He started first with the very closed Trappist life; he wanted nothing to do with anything but his own faith, and then slowly he opened himself. He

> opened...first to non-Catholics and then to non-Christians, and was very much aware of the input and also the influx of the Eastern religions . . . in the United States and even in Europe. All that helped him to see at the beginning that there was something valuable to be found among those people.[15]

Prior to entering monastic life, Merton had developed a somewhat Franciscan approach to the subject of sainthood. He came to feel that certain persons who lived obscure lives of humble means in innocence and purity might very well be anonymous saints. Not surprisingly, his first attempt at entering a monastic order was directed at joining the Franciscans, who refused him, probably because some years earlier he had fathered a child out of wedlock. In the Trappist monastery at Gethsemani, he continued to expand his knowledge of Catholic history and theology. Merton had entered the monastery under the naïve understanding that he was entering a great school for saints. He assumed that the monks regularly engaged in deeply contemplative experience and that through joining this community he would learn a process of attaining deeper and deeper levels of contemplative union. What he found was quite different.

Among his fellow monks at Gethsemani, Merton discovered several that he considered to be saints. Initially, this was both comforting and inspiring, but Merton found that these saintly monks were usually disinclined or unable to express themselves in such a way as to provide others with instruction in achieving saintliness. He was unable to derive any useful guidance from them that could advance him toward his goal. Conversely, Merton discovered that there were a few scholars among the monks, but in general he did not find them to be particularly saintly. For the most part they tended to be academic legalists and formalists focusing on details of church dogma and doctrine, with little or no knowledge of, or interest in, mysticism or the practical aspects of inner spiritual development.

The prayer life at the monastery also proved to be quite different than Merton had imagined. The "contemplative" aspect of Trappist life seemed limited to gatherings in the chapel to sing psalms in Latin and recite traditional prayers. Other than the daily celebration of Mass and the collective singing, the life of Gethsemani monks revolved largely around outdoor farm labor and increasingly around the mechanized indoor factory labor re-

quired for the manufacturing of cheese. Merton came to feel that he was not growing in any noticeable way toward increasingly profound spiritual experience, and that no one at the monastery seemed interested, or qualified, to give him help in that direction. He felt that his interest in higher states of mystical development tended to annoy both his fellow monks and his superiors, and that the routine of life in the holy cheese factory was bringing him no closer to his goal. Merton came to realize that he would have to find the way on his own.

This disappointment and frustration with Trappist life eventually led Merton back to the writings of the great saints and mystic teachers. From them he sought a method of prayer and a systematic approach to higher states of mystical union. This was the quest that had originally drawn him toward monastic life. His trajectory had been from the writings of the mystics into the monastery, and now he returned to that original motivating source for guidance.

Merton began to read deeply in mystical Catholic literature and became very interested in mystical theologians such as St. John of the Cross and Meister Eckhart.[16] His investigation ranged across the entire history of Christianity: contemporary theology and living saints, the writers of the Counter-Reformation, medieval mysticism, and the era of the early Desert Fathers. At one point in this process, Merton was particularly attracted to the writings of St. John of the Cross. Part of this saint's special appeal for Merton was the fact that he was one of the few Christian mystical theologians who explicated a detailed account of the highest stages of mystical union and contemplative prayer yet whose orthodoxy remained unquestioned. Merton wrote extensively about the spirituality of this baroque-era mystic and doctor of the Church. A precious relic of St. John was among the few personal possessions he cherished in his hermitage. The saint remained personally significant to Merton as he worked through his own stages of spiritual growth. Nonetheless, Merton came to be publicly so identified with St. John's theology that he grew tired of being pigeonholed in this way. He realized that he need not limit himself to a single approach to sainthood, and that no thinker, even so great a mystical theologian as John of the Cross, represents the vast richness of Catholicism or Christianity, or for that matter, the spiritual traditions of humankind.

Merton then turned to the roots of the Christian monastic tradition and was particularly impressed by the example of the Desert Fathers. Theirs was largely a hermit tradition, and Merton felt that the glaring absence in contemporary monasticism of this crucial aspect of spirituality represented a tragic loss to the Western Christian heritage. In recent centuries the Church had produced plenty of large communal monastic orders, but very few hermits.

Merton felt that the hermit life was necessary to the overall health of the Church. Although he did not consider eremitic solitude to be an absolute prerequisite for the development of saintliness, he did feel that it could be an extremely important factor for many aspirants, including himself. As Merton began increasingly to appreciate the value of solitude as a context for silent contemplative practice, he began to see his own calling as even more specifically that of a hermit than that of a cenobitic monk. For many years he actively sought and was repeatedly refused permission to live as a hermit within the confines of his abbey, nor was he allowed to transfer to a more eremitic monastic order. It is obvious from Merton's writings that while he enjoyed solitude for its own sake, he primarily desired a hermit's life as an expedient means for achieving a profound state of contemplative union, and he viewed the hermit's solitude as the real heart of monastic life, defining the hermit as "the monk par excellence."[17]

For Merton, hermit life did not mean never having any contact with other people; it hadn't meant that for the Desert Fathers, and Merton did not perceive it as meaning that in his own life. For Merton, the hermit life was meant to provide an important benefit for the larger community. Addressing an audience of progressive theologians, academics and other intellectuals at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara just days before embarking on his journey to Asia in 1968, Merton offered this clear and important attempt to contextualize and justify the hermit life to a contemporary sensibility.

> The task of the solitary person and the hermit is to realize within himself, in a very special way, a universal consciousness and to contribute this, to feed this back insofar as he can, into the communal consciousness which is necessarily more involved in localized consciousness, and in such a way that there will be a kind of dialectical development toward a more universal consciousness.[18]

In Merton's view, the hermit life meant freedom from involvement with non-essential ecclesiastical structures and activities. Most of the early Desert Fathers were not priests, and their lifestyle did not depend on church politics or social structure. Their monasticism was chiefly a matter of personal practice and realization of mystical union under the guidance of a qualified and deeply experienced spiritual elder. Merton felt this valuable approach had been overlooked in the more recent history of the Christian Church. Recognizing that it still survived as a living tradition within various Asian spiritual approaches, he felt drawn to learn what he could from these non-Christian sources, viewing this as a possible means to help revive this neglected dimension within the Western Church.

III. The Outlaw Lineage

At about the same time that he was studying the Desert Fathers, Merton began reading works on Zen by D.T. Suzuki. Reading these two schools of mystical literature concurrently, he suddenly saw once again the kinds of parallels that had helped inspire him to join the Church and the monastery in the first place. He was so excited about both the Desert Fathers and his Zen readings that he decided to prepare a volume of translations from the Desert Fathers and sent a copy of it to Dr. Suzuki along with a request that the world-renowned Buddhist scholar write an introduction for the published edition. Suzuki responded favorably, but his response was not suited to the editorial purposes of publication. However, Merton and Suzuki kept up their dialogue through correspondence over the years, and Suzuki eventually invited Merton to visit him in New York. Surprisingly, Merton's abbot, singularly setting aside all his own precedence, gave him permission to accept this invitation. Traveling far from the monastery for the first time in many years Merton enjoyed a wonderful visit with the nonagenarian Suzuki, who joyfully confirmed Merton's intuitions about Zen.

In his pursuit of interfaith dialogue, Merton did not emphasize any need for conversion or change of religious affiliation, but simply wished to avail himself of experiential treasures preserved within the Asian spiritual heritage and to help make them accessible to the Western Catholic Church. At the time of his 1964 meet-

ing with Suzuki, Merton realized that those of a more conservative outlook might question why a Catholic monk would want to meet with someone as seemingly removed from his own religious context and outlook as a Zen master unless it was for the purpose of trying to convert him. Merton, however, saw no reason to necessarily assume that Suzuki was not already a saint, and he readily acknowledged that the great Zen scholar and lay-master had spiritual riches to offer him. Speculating in his journal on the promise of his upcoming meeting with Suzuki, he noted that any conversion process ought to be mutual, helping one another convert "upward" to experience dimensions less clearly brought out already in each other's existing viewpoints:

> [i]f I can meet him on a common ground of spiritual Truth, where we share a real and deep experience of God, and where we know in humility our own deepest selves—and if we can discuss and compare the formulas we use to describe this experience, then I certainly think Christ would be present and glorified in both of us and this would lead to a *conversion of us both*—an elevation, a development, a serious growth in Christ. This conversion "upwards" would be real and fruitful—and a conversion "downwards" (dragging him to a mediocre and exterior acceptance) would be hateful....[19]

Between their initial correspondence and their meeting, Merton had become very interested in the Chinese Taoist sage Chuang Tzu, whose works represent a source for various Zen and Buddhist teachings. When he met with Suzuki, the Zen master concurred with Merton's opinion that Chuang Tzu was in some ways the best of East Asian philosophers. Merton had begun work on his own version of translations from Chuang Tzu, published the following year.[20] The volume created a breakthrough in terms of Merton's literary following, introducing his name and thought to many outside his previous and largely Catholic reading audience, while at the same time serving to announce to both groups the official public beginning of his interest in Asian thought. Merton's dialogues with Prof. Suzuki were published in full four years after they had occurred, when they finally appeared as a major portion of Merton's popular volume *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*.[21]

From the beginning of his interest in spiritual matters, and throughout his many years of struggle with the limitations of monastic life, Merton regularly reminded himself that his ultimate purpose was to be a saint. In this spirit, Merton felt free to embrace a wide variety of sources including a return to his original interest in Asian mysticism. Merton felt acutely the absence of any technical guidance in contemplation from enlightened living teachers within the Church and he was willing to try whatever seemed efficacious in moving him toward becoming whole, becoming holy, even if that meant looking outside his own tradition for such assistance. He began adopting what he could from his readings of the Desert Fathers, Eastern Christianity, and Asian mysticism to help him toward his goal. In his journals of January 1950 he had noted,

> The emphasis on technique, on bodily control, on interior discipline in both Oriental and Orthodox mysticism makes me realize how supremely indifferent we are to techniques. I have never had any method of contemplation. . . . Yet I find I had discovered all by myself many things they talk about and insist on, especially that Hesychian business about attention concentrated in the "heart" and all energies flowing down united there to produce a smooth and effortless absorption that is held in being by God "within our own heart...."[22]

Merton had little or no interest in those aspects of Asian spiritual heritage concerned with religious institutional structure, in-house stylistic politics, theoretical dogmatics, and ceremonial ritual. He was intensely interested, however, in the hermit tradition, the enlightened master-disciple lineage, and any potentially efficacious practices and methodologies leading to mystic union that might be preserved within the semi-independent Asian spiritual traditions. Merton did not feel that any particular religion held a monopoly on sainthood; he acknowledged Hindu saints and Buddhist saints, for instance, as well as Christian saints.

With increasing regularity, Merton's journals began to reflect readings in Yoga, Buddhism, Eastern Christianity, Judaism and Islam. He mentions that he is engaging in Yoga meditation and exercises and in Zen meditation and *koan* practice, all of which he had learned or guessed at only from his readings. He writes of attempting to pass along his growing understanding of Yoga medi-

tation and other Asian spiritual practices to a young fellow Trappist with whom he shared a similar frustration in regard to personal spiritual growth within the monastery. Merton also adopted the central practice of Eastern Christian hesychastic mysticism known as "the Prayer of the Heart" or "the Jesus Prayer" which he recognized as similar to Asian meditative prayer methods. He found these readings in various spiritual traditions very relevant to his personal circumstances and to the general situation in Catholic monastic life and he began corresponding with some of the authors of these works. Merton did not always understand this literature as much as he had hoped, and at times he makes comments that display a Catholic chauvinism or Western insensitivity in regard to one or another of these traditions; yet from the beginning of his exposure to this literature, Merton seems to have recognized a profound value in Asian spiritual traditions. This oddly ambivalent response continued throughout Merton's life.

He did not see this interest as a matter of outwardly "becoming" a Sufi, a Buddhist, or Hindu; rather he sought to take advantage of whatever these traditions might have to offer him as a Christian and a monk. As he noted in his journal,

> It is surprising how much Yoga has in common with St. Bernard—at least in the psychology of mysticism. Self-knowledge is the first step in the ascent. The problem of liberating our deeper energies from base preoccupations which enfeeble and dissipate them....[23]

Merton believed that this commonality of mystical insight among diverse spiritual traditions offered the potential for supplementing Christian spiritual practice, without in any way replacing the unique values at the core of Christian belief. Merton's acquaintance, Papal Nuncio Archbishop Jean Jadot remarked upon this distinction:

> My impression in speaking with him, and reflecting on what he told me, was that he was more convinced that we had something to find in those non-Christian religions on *ways* and *means* rather than on real religious *truths*. If I may make use of an expression: We had more to find from them about *how* to pray than *what* to pray.[24]

Merton was very attracted by the concept of the enlightened person as presented in Chuang Tzu, Suzuki and various other Zen and Taoist sources. The Zen and Taoist model of the saintly or integral person is often expressed in terms of freedom from all boundaries while living immersed in the ultimate dimension. This combination appealed immensely to Merton. He came to view the holiness of the saint as a condition in which, whatever one's outward affiliations and intellectual particularities, one's innermost experience was of freedom from all limitations and integration with divine Reality. Merton recognized that this was also what many of the Christian mystics were saying, if one could understand them correctly. Yet the official attitude of the Christian Church, both historically and in Merton's day, was that one was a saint to the degree that one lived happily—or suffered heroically—within the boundaries prescribed by the Church. An important prerequisite to official (and, of course, posthumous) recognition of candidacy for Catholic sainthood was evidence of overall intellectual and emotional, as well as moral and doctrinal, conformity to the cultural conventions prevailing at a given time and place within the Church. In such a context, sainthood depended to a large degree upon how orthodox and orthopractical one was, whereas from the Taoist and Zen perspectives, the true purpose and goal of orthodoxy and orthopraxy is to produce people who have transcended the boundaries of these and all other outward forms. This transcendence of all boundaries is understood as a process wherein one ultimately becomes both fully individuated and universalized. Merton wryly acknowledged these contrasting standpoints:

> The [Zen] school, with its meditation on the enigmatic and sometimes frankly absurd *koan* riddles, with its resort to violent and unpredictable responses on the part of the master, with its deliberate impieties (one Zen master actually burned a wooden statue of Buddha in order to keep himself warm on a cold winter night), is hardly calculated to inspire confidence in the Christian who is looking for the kind of pious behavior that is traditionally expected in the modern novice or the budding contemplative in a Christian religious order.[25]

From the viewpoints of Taoism and Zen, in spite of whatever wildly idiosyncratic and even seemingly impious behavior may sometimes be in evidence, one is a saint to the degree to which one is

truly immersed in, and integrated with, the divine ultimate dimension, such that the saint proves the Church rather than the Church proving or approving the saint. As Merton learned to his joy, this viewpoint is, to a very large extent, both standard and central to most other major classical Asian mystical religious traditions, such as the Yoga, Vedanta and Tantra schools in Hinduism and Buddhism, as well to the somewhat more "Western" schools of Islamic Sufism, Hasidic Judaism, and Hesychastic Eastern Christianity.

One of the great appeals that these traditions, especially Zen and Taoism, held for Merton was that part of their self-identified purpose and value was to transcend their own systems and structures in an experiential realization of the non-dual nature of authentic being:

> The ultimate resolution of the problem of authority, for Zen, is this: "In Zen, true authority is that Self which is itself authority and does not rely on anything.
> . . . True authority is where there is no distinction between that which relies and that which is relied upon."[26]

In our own, as in many an earlier period, this has clearly not been the official attitude of the Catholic Church toward its own systems and structures. Yet Merton would point to historical Christian precedents in support of the Zen-like freedom necessary and inherent to a self-liberating holiness whether of East or West, past or present:

> The least that can be said about some of the Zen masters . . . is that they would hardly meet the norms set up for the canonization of saints by the Church of Rome. . . . But if we take another look, and if we remember some of the stories told of the Christian saints and mystics (the Desert Fathers and the first Franciscans, for example), we will have to admit that they show a spirit of freedom and abandon which is to us less disconcerting only because we have heard the stories so often and they fit into a familiar context. But rather than speculate on the stories that are told about these people, be they Christian mystics or Chinese Zen masters, it is more profitable to examine . . . the ultimate "illumination."[27]

Merton's strong interest in the Desert Fathers was based in part on the fact that they had turned their backs and walked away not only from secular civilization but also from the outward structure of the increasingly decadent Church of the Constantinian empire. They did not view themselves as rejecting the Church itself; on the contrary, they walked into the desert with the quiet realization that they constituted the true remnant and living core of the Church of the apostles and martyrs. The pre-Constantinian Church had been outlawed and persecuted throughout the realm, and the hermit Desert Fathers deliberately resumed a kind of outlaw status as a means of preserving the original spirit and truth of the early Church. Merton would eventually recognize a need to become, in his own way, a similar kind of outlaw and hermit, stepping beyond the boundaries of conventional ideas prevalent within the Church of his day in order to preserve and nurture what he had come to regard as the deeper and fuller spirit of the Church.

For Merton, an immense appeal of Asian religious traditions lay in the fact that they presented an orthodoxy and orthopraxy centered on the concept of a divine ultimate dimension that was beyond all theological constructs, philosophical concepts, and conditioned emotional states, and had preserved a living master-disciple tradition as a means for effectively accessing that dimension. Merton was aware that a very similar mystical understanding and experience of the divine ultimate dimension cropped up again and again in the history of the Christian Church as well. This was not something that had existed only with the Desert Fathers—numerous later Christian saints and mystics also had, by one means or another, arrived at a point where they stepped beyond categories and conditions into a boundless and sanctifying freedom. Many of these individuals had felt no particular need to alter outward conditions and affiliations and often continued to live within the structures designated by their Church, monastic order, or secular society. They lived in a state of inner freedom that they recognized as the true goal and purpose for which both Church and society existed. As Merton explained in his Bangkok address,

> [o]nce [you] penetrate by detachment and purity of heart to the inner secret of the ground of your ordinary experience, you attain to a liberty that nobody can touch, that nobody can affect, that no political change of circumstances can do anything

> to. . . . [s]omewhere behind our monasticism, and behind Buddhist monasticism, is the belief that this kind of freedom and transcendence is somehow attainable.[28]

Some Christian mystics did respond to this condition of inner freedom by ceasing to bother with society or Church structure; others were prevented by society or by the Church from making any such choices. Some were condemned, some were canonized. The response of society and/or the Church varied greatly in the cases of individual mystics: Marguerite Porete was burned at the stake and her name all but erased from history; Eckhart was censored, silenced, and ordered to appear in Avignon before the Inquisition. He died before his case was settled, and to date has not been canonized or even officially cleared of all suspicion of heresy. Jan van Ruysbroeck was able to lead a quiet and respectable monastic existence in the forest until a ripe old age, and after his death was beatified. John of the Cross was arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and starved by the "brothers" and "superior" of his own monastic community. He would have undoubtedly died at their hands had he not escaped; yet, he was ultimately canonized. It would seem that for a mystic saint, affiliation with the Christian tradition is very much a matter of taking one's chances.

As an admirer of Eckhart, Ruysbroeck, and St. John of the Cross, Merton was of course aware of the history of the Church's reaction to their mysticism. It is little wonder, therefore, that he found something to admire in Asian spiritual traditions in which mystical realization is an accepted and expected part of religious life, and the saint's state of inner freedom and enlightenment defines the heights of the tradition rather than the tradition defining the saint.

Following his meeting with Suzuki, Merton began to meet with various other Asian seekers and teachers who came to visit him at Gethsemani, but was denied permission by his abbot and other officials of the order when he sought to travel outside the monastery to pursue such interests. This door was suddenly and unexpectedly opened late in Merton's life when—much to everyone's astonishment—his longtime abbot, James Fox, resigned his abbacy and became a hermit living on the grounds of Gethsemani monastery. Flavian Burns, a former student of Merton's from his days as Master of Novices, was elected as the new abbot. As abbot, Burns encouraged Merton to further pursue his studies of Asian spiri-

tual traditions and to look into the potential usefulness of adopting Asian meditative contemplative methods within the Catholic monastic community. Merton was allowed to accept an invitation to travel to Asia and attend conferences there, and was given permission and encouragement to avail himself of opportunities to meet and study with Asian contemplative masters.

During his trip to Asia, Merton was able to meet with various Buddhist masters, including the Dalai Lama, as well as various teachers of Hindu and Sufi traditions. At the time of his death, Merton was strongly considering the feasibility of settling for a while in India or Nepal in order to study intensively with one or more appropriate masters, especially from the Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist tradition. In this regard, he seems to have had particularly in mind Chatral Rinpoche (Chadral Rimpoche), a married lama (guru) widely-recognized as an expert practitioner and teacher of the ancient Zen-like *Dzogchen* system of meditation and realization still lively at the core of Tibetan Vajrayana practice. A living legend among his peers for his capabilities in subtly transmitting something of the essence of his own comprehensive spiritual realization and understanding, Chadral Rinpoche is also regarded with a certain amount of awe within the Tibetan cultural community because of his unconventional life-style as a freewheeling and sometimes formidable saint-errant much like the ancient *mahasiddhas* ("great perfected yogis"), the revered "outlaw" poet-saints and "crazy-wisdom" masters of early Indian and Tibetan legends. With the encouragement and advice of the Dalai Lama and other advanced lamas, Merton sought out Chadral Rinpoche. Their meeting forms one of the most intimate and stirring episodes in Merton's journal of his Asian pilgrimage.

Although Merton was convinced of many actual and potential benefits to be derived from Asian spiritual traditions, his conversations and private journals record a few reservations and concerns. He realized that these spiritual lineages frequently have historical ties to religious and monastic institutions and social and cultural structures and, therefore, are often replete with in-house politics and intrigue no different from those frequently prevailing in their Western counterparts. This situation extended to aspects of the scene existing around the Dalai Lama, and Merton warned Harold Talbott, his American Catholic friend who was studying at the Dalai Lama's compound, that he should take care not to get caught up in the machinery that is an unfortunate but nonetheless

inevitable part of such structures. He advised his friend to adhere to the deeper purpose of deriving inner benefits from the master-disciple relationship and the practice of inward silent meditative techniques. On the eve of his departure for Asia, Merton acknowledged that Western and Eastern traditions alike have these sorts of limitations and extraneous dimensions:

> [y]ou can't base [a monastic] education purely and simply on the rule because a lot of the things in the rule have become irrelevant, a lot of them accidental . . . That is the result of eight hundred years of nonsense. . . . In India, too, there is a lot of this stuff, a mish-mash, but they have preserved much more of the depth. If you go to Asia, a lot of people say you have to break through a lot of superficial stuff in order to get to the real thing, and it isn't easy.[29]

From time to time over the years Merton had experienced periods of concern that his pursuit of Asian practices and methods might be indicative of a loss of faith, that he might be losing his vocation and indeed risking his salvation, moving toward no longer being a Christian. But he ultimately concluded that such concerns were unfounded. Not long before his trip to Asia, during some of the worst periods of his struggles with his longtime abbot, Merton went through a crisis in which he questioned whether there was any advantage to being affiliated with the institutional aspects of the monastery or the Church and any of its theological underpinnings—apart, that is, from the direct, naked, personal experience of a divine dimension, which he never questioned. This crisis was precipitated to a certain degree by his study of Asian spirituality, but even more so by his growing awareness of what he perceived as the moral bankruptcy within the Church. He felt, for instance, that the Papacy's willingness to sell out the Jews to Hitler during World War Two was directly related to the support later given by the Church hierarchy to American military aggression in Vietnam and to various corrupt political power structures around the world. For Merton, this was all of a piece with his personal efforts to rectify the lack of effective and authentically edifying contemplation within the monastery, and his struggles with his abbot and the hierarchy over official censorship of his writings on social, moral, political, racial, and peace issues as well as theological and interfaith subjects:

> It all falls into place. Pope Pius XII and the Jews, the Church in South America, the treatment of Negroes in the U.S., the Catholics on the French right in the Algerian affair, the German Catholics under Hitler. All this fits into one big picture and our contemplative recollection is not very impressive when it is seen only as another little piece fitted into the puzzle.[30]

Merton's understanding of Christianity, Catholicism, the priesthood, and the function, purpose and identity of a monk, had all been transformed "upwards" several times since he had first entered the monastery. It had become increasingly internalized, increasingly universalized, less and less institutional, formal, and legalistic. In Merton's mature view, saintliness was not tied to doctrine, dogma, or other sectarian concerns, nor was it necessarily dependent upon the solitude and silence of the hermit's life. Rather, he came to believe that what it all comes down to in the end is that either you have direct experiential access to the divine Reality in some growing, evolving way in your life or you do not, and that the only irreducibly important aspect of a given religious structure or tradition is whether it provides that access and nurtures self-liberation in divine union, that final integration of the human personality which is the holiness of the enlightened saint.

As Merton came increasingly to view true holiness as having little to do with Church structure or monastic routine, so likewise he began more strongly to see the true monk as the marginal person. To be a contemplative was always to be an outlaw because to contemplate successfully is to step *outside* of all laws and structures:

> You realize that prayer takes us beyond the law. When you are praying you are, in a certain sense, an outlaw. There is no law between the heart and God.[31]

Society views its main function as activity, and demands that its members self-identify with that activity—family life, profit-making, war, preoccupation with materiality and related concepts and categories. Contemplation requires that one move beyond social and self-imposed identification with such categories and activities and take a stand on the margins, become a witness. Choosing to live the contemplative life is in itself a criticism of structures.

One stands witness to the transcendent value. Merton saw this contemplative stance, taken early in the history of the West by the Desert Fathers, not only as a criticism of secular values, but of ecclesiastical ones, as well.

> The desert life was a life of non-conformity, it was a protest.... When the Church became a respectable establishment, people started going into the desery.... [T]hey simply wanted to get out because they thought that things weren't authentic anymore. They were certainly trying to get away from bishops, although the propaganda never admitted it.... Of course, historians play that *down*. The whole picture has really been turned inside out.[32]

For Merton, the contemplative and the saint are the true revolutionaries and, in the spirit of the Desert Fathers, today's contemplatives might also be seen in this special sense as constituting the "authentic church."

> The Church is made up of people who have all different degrees of this kind of awareness of God.... [R]eligious should be, whether or not they are saints, people who are striving to keep alive this deepest kind of consciousness in the Church. This is especially so of contemplatives.... [They are] recognized instantly by others as somebody who knows, somebody who is tuned in. Here is the Church ... they have the real "mind of the Church" because they pray and prayer gives them this sense of the realities.[33]

As with the Desert Fathers, Merton felt that an outward official break with all established structures was not necessarily a requirement for continued or renewed personal authenticity and integrity, because the contemplative ultimately transcends categories and structures. The role of the desert hermit, the true monk, the true contemplative, and the true saint is that of the outlaw, the self-liberated sage, the whole person. Once one has grown beyond the conventional institutional and mental categories in an inward way and is living in the divine dimension, then one is living the true meaning of being a Christian, a Hindu, a Taoist, a Buddhist:

> The monastic movement is marginal in its denial of the thesis that society has the right answers. . . . The monk has nothing to do with an establishment. But of course as soon as the monk gets into the desert, he discovers a desert establishment, and there is the same problem. You know, in the lifetime of the originators, this problem had already arisen. . . . And it seems to me that, perhaps, what I am doing in this breakthrough to Asia might be a sort of protest in reaction to the present situation within Christian monasticism in this country.[34]

For Merton, the contemplative is the true spiritual revolutionary, the principled outsider, the witness to the Gospel who stands at the margins of conventional secular and ecclesiastical society, often teaching and inspiring others more through the example of his or her life than by verbal preaching.

> It is the question of why one becomes a monk, what you become a monk for, and I say this without any qualification: it is an unconditional breaking through the limitations that are imposed by normal society. You become a completely marginal person in order to break through the inevitable artificiality of social life.[35]

By the time he left for Asia, Merton had long since come to feel that being a Catholic hermit-monk and saint-in-training, a decades-long seeker of the divine gift of universal or cosmic unity underlying all duality, made him an honorary Buddhist, Hindu, Jew, Taoist, and Sufi.

> You have to experience duality for a long time until you see it's not there. In this respect I am a Hindu. . . . Any moment you can break through to the underlying unity which is God's gift in Christ. . . . Openness is all.[36]

One might think that a person as positively interested in the value of other religious traditions, and as critical of his own tradition as Merton had come to be, might view Asian spirituality as an escape from the strictures of Catholic monasticism. But Merton felt that his own increasingly universal perspective allowed him to be more fully and truly what he already was. Not only did he see no problem with reaching out to embrace, internalize, and integrate

teachings, practical disciplines, and methodologies drawn from these other traditions, but he viewed this approach as a move toward fulfillment of his role as a Christian and a Catholic monk and priest.

> I believe that by openness to Buddhism, to Hinduism, and to these great Asian traditions, we stand a wonderful chance of learning more about the potentiality of our own traditions, because they have gone, from the natural point of view, so much deeper into this than we have. The combination of the natural techniques and the graces and the other things that have been manifested in Asia and the Christian liberty of the gospel should bring us all at last to that full and transcendent liberty which is beyond mere cultural differences and mere externals—and mere this or that.[37]

Merton believed strongly that Catholicism would fulfill its role as a genuinely efficacious vehicle for realizing spiritual enlightenment only if it reached beyond its own current limitations to become cross-fertilized by these riches held in trust by other traditions. He felt that his own pursuit of this project was undertaken as a faithful self-identifying Catholic, a Catholic who, in order to live honestly within the Church, the community, and contemporary culture, had been forced to live in some sense as both a stranger and an outlaw. His interest in learning from other traditions was not limited to his own personal spiritual development; beyond this, he sought to bring about a wider integration of these complementary approaches and practices as part of a renewal of Catholic monasticism and Christian spiritual living:

> I need not add that I think we have now reached a stage of (long-overdue) religious maturity at which it may be possible for someone to remain perfectly faithful to a Christian and Western monastic commitment, and yet to learn in depth from, say, a Buddhist or Hindu discipline and experience. I believe that some of us need to do this in order to improve the quality of our own monastic life and even to help in the task of monastic renewal which has been undertaken within the Western Church.[38]

While observing sculptures of the Buddha at an ancient pilgrimage site at Polonnaruwa on the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Merton experienced what he seems to have regarded as the most profound mystical episode of his life, signifying in many ways the culmination of his long search. Standing at the feet of monumental images carved from the rock-face at Polonnaruwa, Merton perceived beyond all categories to the wholeness of reality itself.

> Looking at these figures I was suddenly, almost forcibly, jerked clean out of the habitual, half-tied vision of things, and an inner clearness, clarity, as if exploding from the rocks themselves, became evident and obvious. . . . The thing about all this is that there is no puzzle, no problem, and really no "mystery." All problems are resolved and everything is clear, simply because what matters is clear. The rock, all matter, all life, is charged with dharmakaya...everything is emptiness and everything is compassion. I don't know when in my life I have ever had such a sense of beauty and spiritual validity running together in one aesthetic illumination. Surely, with . . . Polonnaruwa my Asian pilgrimage has come clear and purified itself. I mean, I know and have seen what I was obscurely looking for. I don't know what else remains but I have now seen and have pierced through the surface and have got beyond the shadow and the disguise.[39]

Merton's path to sainthood through becoming and being more fully his true self had taken him beyond boundaries, categories, and problems into unity with divine wholeness, the original unity, and he had come full circle at last. Speaking in those last days in Asia to an audience of Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, and other delegates gathered to exchange thoughts on the future of monasticism, he offered his fully-ripened perspective:

> [t]he deepest level of communication is not communication, but communion. It is wordless. It is beyond words, and it is beyond speech, and it is beyond concept. Not that we discover a new unity. We discover an older unity. My dear brothers, we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are.[40]

This liberating unity, which he encountered so personally and directly at Polonnaruwa, was in Merton's view, the true goal of both Christian and Buddhist monasticism:

> [The Buddhist monk] is simply opening himself in this interdependence, this mutual interdependence, in which they all recognize that they all are immersed in illusion together, but that the illusion is also an empirical reality that has to be fully accepted, and that in this illusion, which is nevertheless empirically real, nirvana is present and it is all there, if you but see it. I think . . . that this kind of view of reality is essentially very close to the Christian monastic view of reality. It is the view that if you once penetrate by detachment and purity of heart to the inner secret of the ground of your ordinary experience, you attain to a liberty that nobody can touch, that nobody can affect, that no political change of circumstances can do anything to. . . .[41]

In Merton's view, the contemplative monk stands at the margins of society as an outlaw and iconoclast, penetrating the ordinary, going beneath the illusion and discovering the real. His liberation is not a selfish act, for the monk-outlaw distances himself from ordinary engagement in the world, the better to free himself and thereby help his fellow humans to freedom:

> The monk belongs to the world, but the world belongs to him insofar as he has dedicated himself totally to liberation from it in order to liberate it. You can't just immerse yourself in the world and get carried away with it. That is no salvation.[42]

After his epiphany at the Sri Lankan shrine, Merton at first considered that perhaps now he could simply return home, having fulfilled his spiritual quest. He concluded, however, that for the sake of the Christian monastic tradition it was more important than ever that he continue with his plans to study with Asian spiritual masters so as to be able to help make their teachings and techniques available to others in the West. His continuing commitment to this mission was one of the things he spoke of on the day he died, emphasizing the need for a tradition of spiritual masters who can guide others toward freedom and divine union.

> [S]omewhere behind our monasticism, and behind Buddhist monasticism, is the belief that this kind of freedom and transcendence is somehow attainable. The essential thing for this, in the Buddhist tradition, is the formation of spiritual masters who can bring it out in the hearts of people who are as yet unformed. Wherever you have somebody capable of giving some kind of direction and instruction to a small group attempting to do this thing, attempting to love and serve God and reach union with him, you are bound to have some kind of monasticism. This kind of monasticism cannot be extinguished. It is imperishable.... I, as a monk—and, I think, you as monks—can agree that we believe this to be the deepest and most essential thing in our lives, and because we believe this, we have given ourselves to the kind of life we have adopted. I believe that our renewal consists precisely in deepening this understanding and this grasp of that which is most real.[43]

Notes

1. Thomas Merton, *Thomas Merton; Preview of the Asian Journey*, ed. Walter Capps (New York: Crossroads, 1991), pp. 34-35.

2. Paul Wilkes, ed., *Merton By Those Who Knew Him Best* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 156.

3. Thomas Merton, *The Springs of Contemplation: A Retreat at the Abbey of Gethsemani*, ed. Jane Marie Richardson (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1992), pp. 193-94.

4. Thomas Merton, *Thomas Merton in Alaska: Prelude to The Asian Journal; The Alaskan Conferences, Journals and Letters* (New York: New Directions, 1988), pp.120-24.

5. Merton, *Thomas Merton in Alaska*, p. 122.

6. Merton, *The Springs of Contemplation*, p.12.

7. Merton, *Thomas Merton in Alaska*, p. 81.

8. Merton, *Thomas Merton in Alaska*, pp. 126-127.

9. Thomas Merton, *Run to the Mountain* (Journals 1; 1939-41; ed. Patrick Hart; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 455.

10. See Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means: An Enquiry into the Nature of Ideals and into the Methods Employed for Their Realization* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1937).

11. Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948), p.198.

12. Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, p. 195.

13. Thomas Merton, *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton* (ed. Br. Patrick Hart; New York: New Directions, 1985), p. 391.

14. Thomas Merton, *Entering the Silence: Becoming a Monk and Writer* (Journals 2;1941-1952; ed. Jonathan Montaldo; New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), p. 373.

15. Archbishop Jean Jadot quoted in Wilkes, p.156

16. See Anne E. Carr, *A Search for Wisdom and Spirit: Thomas Merton's Theology of the Self* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), p. 96.

17. Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), p. 296.

18. Merton, in Capps, p. 69.

19. Thomas Merton, *A Search for Solitude* (Journals 3; 1952-60; ed. Lawrence S. Cunningham; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), p. 273.

20. See Thomas Merton, *The Way of Chuang Tzu* (New York: New Directions, 1965).

21. See Thomas Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York: New Directions, 1968), pp. 99-138.

22. Thomas Merton, *Entering the Silence* (Journals 2; 1942-52; ed. Jonathan Montaldo; San Francisco: HarpersSanFrancisco, 1997), p. 402.

23. Thomas Merton, *Entering the Silence*, p. 402.

24. Jadot, in Wilkes, p.156.

25. Thomas Merton, *Mystics & Zen Masters* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967), p. 37-38.

26. Merton, *Mystics and Zen* Masters, p.283. Merton is quoting in this passage from Prof. Shin'ichi Hisamatsu.

27. Merton, *Mystics and Zen Masters*, p. 38.

28. Thomas Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, ed. Naomi Burton, Patrick Hart, James Laughlin, and Amiya Chakravarty (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 342.

29. Merton, *Thomas Merton in Alaska*, pp.124-125.

30. Thomas Merton, *Dancing in the Waters of Life* (Journals 5; 1963-65; ed. Robert Daggy; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), p. 84.

31. Merton, *Thomas Merton in Alaska*, p. 118.

32. Merton, *Springs of Contemplation*, pp. 137-138.

33. Merton, *Thomas Merton in Alaska*, pp. 140-141.

34. Merton, in Capps, pp. 48-49.

35. Merton, in Capps, pp. 42.

36. Thomas Merton, quoted in William H. Shannon, *Thomas Merton's Dark Path: The Inner Experience of a Contemplative* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1981), p. 224.

37. Merton, *The Asian Journal*, p. 243.

38. Merton, *The Asian Journal*, p. 313.

39. Merton, *The Asian Journal*, p. 233, pp. 235-236.
40. Merton, *The Asian Journal*, p. 308.
41. Merton, *The Asian Journal*, p. 342.
42. Merton, *The Asian Journal*, p. 341.
43. Merton, *The Asian Journal*, pp. 342-343.