

## “By Bowing My Ear a Little, I Have Received Her” Presidential Address – ITMS Eighteenth General Meeting June 22, 2023

By **Christopher Pramuk**

Some 200 years before the birth of Christ, an elder sage from Jerusalem named Jesus Ben Sirā wrote of his lifelong yearning for Wisdom-Sophia. Allow me to begin with a kind of prayer, in the words of Ben Sirā, here taken from the Book of Sirach:

When I was a youth, before I went traveling, in my prayers I asked for Wisdom. Outside the sanctuary I would pray for her, and to the last, I shall continue to search for her. From her blossoming to the ripening grape, my heart has taken delight in her. . . . By bowing my ear a little, I have received her. . . . My whole being was stirred as I learned about her. . . . Glory be to God who has given me Wisdom!<sup>1</sup>

More than two thousand years later, on July 2, 1960, the Feast of the Visitation, Thomas Merton lay asleep in a hospital bed in Louisville, Kentucky, when he was awakened by the voice of a nurse:

At 5:30, as I was dreaming, in a very quiet hospital, the soft voice of the nurse awoke me gently from my dream – and it was like awakening for the first time from all the dreams of my life – as if the Blessed Virgin herself, as if Wisdom had awakened me. We do not hear the soft voice, the gentle voice, the feminine voice, the voice of the Mother: yet she speaks everywhere and in everything. Wisdom cries out in the market place – “if anyone is little let him come to me.”<sup>2</sup>

It wasn’t the first time he had encountered her, nor was it the last. By bowing his ear a little, Merton would awaken to her voice again and again, his whole being stirred as he was touched by her presence in the Scriptures, in strangers passing by on a street corner, in the splendor of the natural world.<sup>3</sup> And like Ben Sirā, thanks be to God, Merton would put the joy of his discovery into words, so that others might also bow the ear of their hearts, and be comforted by her presence. Nowhere did Merton do so more beautifully than in his wondrous prose-poem *Hagia Sophia*, now weaving a complex of biblical and patristic archetypes into his gentle “awakening” by the nurse:

There is in all visible things an invisible fecundity, a dimmed light, a meek namelessness, a hidden wholeness. This mysterious Unity and Integrity is Wisdom, the Mother of

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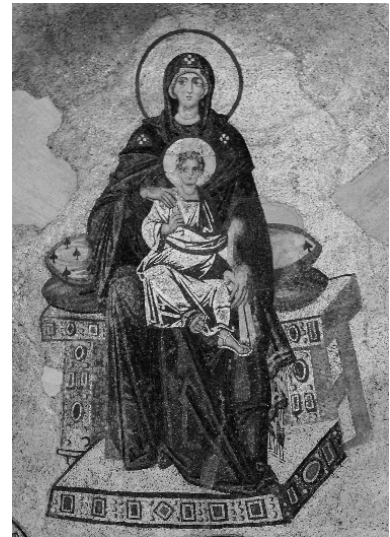
**Christopher Pramuk**

all, *Natura naturans*. . . . O blessed, silent one, who speaks everywhere! We do not hear the soft voice, the gentle voice, the merciful and feminine. . . . Yet she is the candor of God's light, the expression of His simplicity. We do not hear the uncomplaining pardon that bows down the innocent visages of flowers to the dewy earth. We do not see the Child who is prisoner in all the people, and who says nothing.<sup>4</sup>

When I was first puzzling over the figure of Sophia in Merton's writings during my doctoral work at the University of Notre Dame, I was intrigued, to be sure, but also, I don't mind saying, a bit disconcerted. *Who is this Sophia that Merton keeps talking about?*<sup>5</sup> She simply didn't fit into my predetermined, Western, Catholic, theological categories. The question itself would become the doorway into a long journey of discovery, like the key to the locked wing of a mansion that nobody tells you about. Yet I found that once you linger inside those locked rooms for a while, she stays with you, and you begin to trust this ancient remembrance of God in a feminine key, as Merton certainly did. You begin to trust your own experience.

You cannot unhear what you've heard, unsee what you've seen, unfeel what you've felt, unremember what you have remembered. Yet look away for a moment, or a year, or ten years, and she's gone. Wisdom-Sophia, as one scholar describes her, is like the Lilac Fairy, flitting around the edges of the canon, difficult to pin down, explain or talk about.<sup>6</sup> And this is why the organizing theme of our gathering, "Sophia Comes Forth, Reaching," is such an auspicious one, an unusual one, which I'm sure Merton would have loved. It is no small gift to be touched by God in a new way, an unexpected way, through another person's guidance. For me, as I know for many of you, that trustworthy guide into the tradition, those locked rooms inside the mansion, is Thomas Merton.

She appears in the book of Wisdom as "a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty" (Wis. 7:25-30) a kind of veil joining heaven and earth and animating all life with the power of God. In Proverbs 8, the text that most haunted Merton's imagination, she appears as a Wisdom-Child active in fashioning all that exists, at play before God at the dawn of creation (Prov. 8:22-31). In the New Testament, Jesus is often portrayed as Wisdom incarnate. Just as Ben Sira advises, "put your neck under [her] yoke and let your souls receive instruction" (Sir. 51:26), so does Jesus invite his followers, "take my yoke upon you and learn from me" (Matt. 11:28-30). Just as Wisdom experiences rejection, so too does Jesus. His invitation, like hers, is not coercive in any way; some will accept, many will not. Indeed, it is our capacity to hear and respond in freedom that is emphasized in the Wisdom tradition. "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it," says Jesus in Luke's Gospel (11:27-28).



**Virgin and Child Mosaic<sup>7</sup>  
Hagia Sophia, Istanbul**

The Orthodox and Catholic devotional tradition looks to Mary as the embodiment of creaturely Wisdom-Sophia – Mary, Seat of Wisdom, is one her titles – above all, for her courageous “yes,” her consent, as Merton writes, which “opens the door of created nature, of time, of history,” to the incarnation of God in the world (see *ESF* 68; Pramuk, *Sophia* 305). The twelfth-century Benedictine nun, mystic, musician and doctor of the church, Hildegard of Bingen, composed hymns to Sophia in allegorical texts and visual illuminations. Perhaps it is not surprising that the artists and poets down through the ages have been far more comfortable with Wisdom-Sophia than the theologians and church authorities. That Hildegard and Merton are both artists and theologians at once, poets of the presence of God, is not incidental.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, at times Merton, much like Hildegard, invokes Sophia without using words at all, as in his mysterious ink drawing, “Christ Unveils the Meaning of the Old Testament.”<sup>9</sup> In the drawing, Merton has Jesus, looking rather weather-worn and weary, standing behind a seated young woman with vibrant dark eyes and flowing dark hair, as Jesus draws back a veil to reveal her face. In her penetrating study of the image, scholar Margaret Betz describes it as indicative of “Merton’s intuitive grasp of a God more inclusive than the traditional patriarchal God, and, like the God of the Psalms, all-encompassing” (Betz 195). Can I hear the people say Amen?



**“Ecclesia and Sophia”  
Hildegard von Bingen**



**“Christ Unveils the Meaning  
of the Old Testament”  
Drawing by Thomas Merton**

Hebrew Bible scholar Walter Brueggemann describes Wisdom-Sophia as ancient Israel's "countertestimony" to a different way of experiencing the living God.<sup>10</sup> Brueggemann distinguishes Israel's "core testimony" in the Bible, where God is "highly visible, evoking terror in the enemy and praise in the beneficiaries of [that] 'action'" – from Israel's "countertestimony" as voiced in the Wisdom tradition, where God's presence is felt in three facets: *hiddenness*, *ambiguity* and *negativity* (Brueggemann, *Theology* 318). At moments of profound uncertainty and crisis, Wisdom cries out from the crossroads, giving reassurance especially to the "little," the "poor," the forgotten ones. Her Presence sustains and accompanies her children in exile. The sophiological impulse in the Jewish tradition, as one scholar suggests, "attaches very large meanings to very small signs,"<sup>11</sup> realities we habitually, sometimes tragically, overlook. How often do we *not see* the Child "who is prisoner in all the people," who is prisoner in each of us, and who says nothing? Yet Merton counters in a singular flash of hope: "She smiles, for though they have bound her, she cannot be a prisoner" (*ESF* 63-64; Pramuk, *Sophia* 302-303).

Nowhere have I seen this sophiological impulse – the reclaiming of the divine presence in what appears to be utterly God-forsaken places – practiced with greater beauty and more piercing anguish than in Jewish feminist theologian Melissa Raphael's study, *The Female Face of God in Auschwitz*. I hesitate to even attempt to describe Raphael's work, which mines the memoirs of Jewish women from the Nazi death camps to make the case for sacred presence, the inbreaking of the divine, in women's acts of bodily care for one another. The simplest gestures of compassion, Raphael argues – washing the body of another woman or another woman's child, sharing a crust of bread, brushing one another's hair to keep the lice at bay – these were acts of holy resistance, wholly sacred in their care for the person. To ask the question of God's presence in the midst of utter deprivation, says Raphael, is not only to ask, "How was God made present to us? . . . but also, and inseparably from that, 'how did we make ourselves present to God?'" (Raphael 122-23).



**Women await liberation from Ravensbrück in March 1945  
(Keystone-France/Getty Images)**

For Raphael, the love reflected "between the lines" of women's stories in the camps is the "love of a Mother-God, known to the tradition as [the] Shekhinah." Israel's God is "an accompanying God whose face or presence, as Shekhinah, 'She-Who-Dwells-Among-Us,' goes with Israel, in

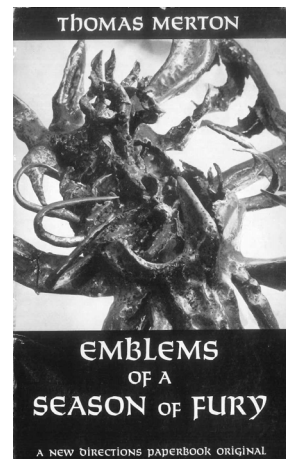
mourning, into her deepest exile, even if Israel cannot see her in the terrible crush.” From the Hebrew “shakhan” – to be present or dwell as in a tabernacle, sanctuary or tent – the Shekhinah emerges in rabbinic literature as “an image of the female aspect of God caring for her people in exile” (Raphael 82). By contrast, says Raphael, “the Father-God – the monarchical Man of War – was of little or no consolation or relevance” to the women whose memoirs form the ground of her study. Like very few writers that I have read, Raphael forces her reader to think deeply about the divine image in whose image we profess that human beings are made: which “god” are we really talking about?<sup>12</sup>

And when no person was capable of a kind word or compassionate touch amid the degradation of the camps, “inanimate natural objects could take on the functions of divine presence for women.” Raphael recounts Victor Frankl’s story of a girl who told him as she lay dying that a bare chestnut tree “was the only friend she had in her loneliness and that she often talked to it.” When Frankl asked the girl if the tree replied, she answered, “It said to me, ‘I am here – I am here – I am life, eternal life.’”<sup>13</sup> Here was a power, says Raphael, that “did not redeem by mighty intervention,” but by silent presence and care. Even the moon, as one woman wrote inside Auschwitz, could embody the “unfailing presence” of the divine Mother, whose “smooth, round face” is always turned towards us, “even if it is darkened by shadow and cloud.”<sup>14</sup>

The moment it appeared, peeping through the window into the sleeping block, I said a silent prayer to it. The cool, pale moonlight did not harm or taunt us; on the contrary, it soothed and comforted us. Its light was as pale as we, who were considered dead during our lifetime. On nights when I could not sleep I would unburden my heart to it. “Soon you will disappear from window, travelling over the city,” I whispered. “Please look in the windows of my little girls, caress their head with your cool lit light, because I cannot stroke them with a mother’s loving hand. Be kind to me, and when you return to my window tomorrow night tell me about my children. Are they sleeping peacefully in the strange house in that hostile city?” (Raphael 116)

While the thought that *God was there* may fill us with awe and trembling through the distant gaze of history, nevertheless, insists Raphael, the largest of meanings are sometimes hidden in the very smallest of signs – even in Auschwitz, especially in Auschwitz. Perhaps the mightiest face of God, like the face of a faithful parent, friend or lover, comes to us in our moments of greatest weakness, fragility and need.

All of this is to say that the question, Who is She? – or *She Who Is*, to borrow Elizabeth Johnson’s classic formulation<sup>15</sup> – is inseparable from how we make ourselves present to God, to one another, and to the natural world – and how we do not. Consider that Wisdom-Sophia broke into Merton’s consciousness in an era that he called a “season of fury,” a century that witnessed two devastating World Wars, the atomic bomb and technological industrialization at a massive scale – all devastations wrought not only on entire human populations, we mustn’t forget, but also on the earth, our common home.<sup>16</sup> The machinery of



war and commerce – the Father God, the monarchical Man of War – makes no distinction between persons and the planet. All are materials to be used and conquered. In other words, the question of God always turns back upon us: Are we awake to her call? Are we bowing the ears of our hearts just a little?

In her Madeleva Lecture here at St. Mary's College in 1986, renowned biblical scholar Sandra Schneiders suggests that just as images of the self and world can be healed, "so can the God-image. It cannot be healed, however, by rational intervention alone."<sup>17</sup> If "it is the imagination which governs our experience of God," and further, that our religious and social imaginaries cry out for the healing of patriarchal deformations, is not the remembrance of Sophia the most promising resource in the tradition for doing so? What the believing community sorely needs, Schneiders concludes, is a therapy of the religious imagination. Unlock those forbidden wings of the mansion; let her memory be unearthed, her story be told; let us pray with the Lilac Fairy, introduce her to our children.<sup>18</sup>

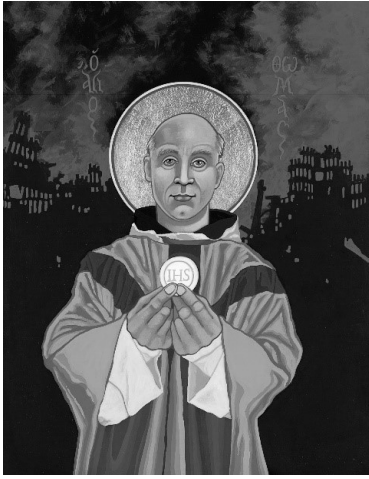
As I was writing this address several weeks before our gathering, the collapse of a major dam amid relentless shelling in southern Ukraine was sparking global fears of an ecological catastrophe, with Ukrainian President Zelensky describing the situation as "an environmental bomb of mass destruction."<sup>19</sup> Wildfires burned across several Canadian provinces, blanketing northern US cities under a haze of dangerous particulate smoke, while communities across the west wrestle with how to keep the ancient Colorado River, stressed by overuse and drought, from disappearing in our lifetimes. Meanwhile, Apple Inc. released its much-anticipated headset called Vision Pro, retailing at \$3500, which promises to dissolve the boundaries between "virtual" and "augmented" reality while immersing its wearer in "real world settings." This even as educators and parents around the country are sounding the alarm about perpetual screen exposure and cell-phone addiction among teenagers, and the US Surgeon General warns that social media carries "a profound risk of harm to the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents."<sup>20</sup>

And speaking of the well-being of our children: how many of us have children or grandchildren for whom the practice of live-shooter drills is now a "normal" and "expected" part of their elementary or high school experience? Carried out with a kind of obligatory, ritual devotion in our schools, the very womb of our kids' supposed nurturing, how can such drills not be deeply unsettling for our youngest generation? Of course, it hearkens back to Merton's Cold War era, when students were habitually directed by the adults in their world to hide under their desks in the event of a nuclear attack.<sup>21</sup> Yet somehow these live-shooter drills of our time seem much more immediate and more desperately necessary – in a word, more demonic.

Why does Thomas Merton remain such a compelling Wisdom teacher for our time? Again, I look to Walter Brueggemann, who takes his cues from the Bible:

Speech about hope cannot be explanatory and scientifically argumentative; rather, it must be lyrical in the sense that it touches the hopeless person at many different points. More than that, however, speech about hope must be primarily theological, which is to say that it must be in the language of covenant between a personal God and a community. Promise belongs to the world of trusting speech and faithful listening.<sup>22</sup>

"Hope," Brueggemann adds, "must be told in image, in figure, in poem, in vision. It must be told sideways, told as one who dwells with the others in the abyss."<sup>23</sup>



**“Holy Prophet Thomas Merton:  
Gaudete! Christus est Natus!”  
Icon by William Hart McNichols**

Merton, I want to suggest, dwells with us in the abyss, and from this place he offers us an image, a figure, a poem, a theological vision that touches our hopelessness at many different points. It is wisdom teachers like Hildegard and Merton, Melissa Raphael and Ben Sira, and surely, like Jesus of Nazareth, who urge us to bow the ear of our hearts, to look deeply and listen again to the skies and trees, to the creatures of the sea and the suffering earth, and above all, to our suffering neighbor. The woman who puts her last coin in the temple collection; the Samaritan who crosses the road when others pass by; Pope Francis, who, on bended knee, washes the feet of a young Muslim refugee woman; the Sioux Indians of Standing Rock who put their bodies in front of earthmovers, and welcomed thousands of young protestors from around the country in a movement to protect the land and water that is as deeply spiritual as it is existential.

To think prophetically in our times is to pray for a word of hope where things look hopeless, for a renewed sense of Presence where God feels absent, for a memory of healing and liberation where relationships seem broken or coercive beyond repair. This remembering of our deepest identity in God, I believe, is what Merton discovered in the music of the Wisdom tradition. Something new and wordlessly ancient ever waits to be born into the world, something beautiful, in the very flesh and spirit of our lives: *Sophia*. But can we believe it?

[For here] is an unspeakable secret: paradise is all around us and we do not understand. It is wide open. The sword is taken away, but we do not know it: we are off “one to his farm and another to his merchandise.” Lights on. Clocks ticking. Thermostats working. Stoves cooking. Electric shavers filling radios with static. “Wisdom,” cries the dawn deacon, but we do not attend. (CGB 118)

It still shocks, how such passages resonate so powerfully into our present historical moment.

Let me conclude with one more. In an essay published almost 60 years ago,<sup>24</sup> Merton cited the famous German physicist Werner Heisenberg, who suggested that the global human community now finds itself “in the position of a captain whose ship has been so securely built of iron and steel that his compass no longer points to the north but only towards the ship’s mass of iron” (*L&L* 60). The moral and spiritual peril of the “ship’s captain” can be allayed, says Heisenberg, only “if he recognizes what has gone wrong and tries to navigate by some other means – for instance, by the stars” (*L&L* 61). To navigate by the stars, suggests Merton, is to go beyond the limitations of a scientific and technological worldview and recover our sense of sacred story and symbol.

The power and pregnancy of sacred symbols and stories, suggests Merton, lay in their capacity to recover our primordial human dignity, to open “the believer’s inner eye, the eye of the heart, to the realization that he must come to be centered in God because that, in fact, is where his center is.” But that is not all. The religious symbol “also speaks to many believers in one: it awakens them to their communion with one another in God” (*L&L* 75) and in the natural world. Such an awakening, Merton adds, is not a matter of knowledge, nor of technical mastery, but of love.

In organizing this Eighteenth General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society around the image of Wisdom-Sophia in Merton's writings, the program committee is inviting us to discern together what it might look like to learn, or perhaps re-learn, how to navigate by the stars – indeed, to trust that we are still capable of doing so, even from the deck of this ill-fated, man-centered vessel of iron and steel. For it is precisely when we are most helpless and afraid, says Merton, that gentleness comes to awaken us, refreshed, beginning to be made whole. Sophia is “the protest of life itself, of humanity itself, of love,”<sup>25</sup> in the reign of numbers. She “is life as communion, life as thanksgiving, life as praise, life as festival, life as glory” (*ESF* 66-67; Pramuk, *Sophia* 304).

“*The Wisdom of God, Sophia, comes forth, reaching from ‘end to end mightily’*” (*ESF* 65; Pramuk, *Sophia* 304). Do not be afraid, she says, for you bear in your very selves the spark of the divine, the dignity and co-creativity of God. *Love takes us by the hand, and opens the doors of another life, another day.*

It is my great pleasure to welcome you and wish you all fullness in these days of fellowship!

1. Sirach 51:13-16, 21, 17.
2. Thomas Merton, *Turning Toward the World: The Pivotal Years. Journals, vol. 4: 1960-1963*, ed. Victor A. Kramer (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996) 17; subsequent references will be cited as “*TTW*” parenthetically in the text.
3. The impact of Wisdom-Sophia on Merton's theological imagination in the last decade of his life is especially evident in *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) (subsequent references will be cited as “*CGB*” parenthetically in the text) and in volumes 3 and 4 of the private journals, *A Search for Solitude: Pursuing the Monk's True Life. Journals, vol. 3: 1952-1960*, ed. Lawrence S. Cunningham (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996) and *Turning Toward the World*.
4. *Hagia Sophia*, in Thomas Merton, *Emblems of a Season of Fury* (New York: New Directions, 1963) 61-69 (subsequent references will be cited as “*ESF*” parenthetically in the text). For a close study of Merton's prose-poem and the Wisdom-Sophia tradition, see Christopher Pramuk, *At Play in Creation: Merton's Awakening to the Feminine Divine* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015) and Christopher Pramuk, *Sophia: The Hidden Christ of Thomas Merton* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009) (subsequent references will be cited as “Pramuk, *Sophia*” parenthetically in the text). The poem is also reprinted in full in Pramuk, *Sophia* 301-305.
5. Many other scholars had pointed the way to this question, including my dissertation director Lawrence Cunningham, who identifies Wisdom or Sophia as the unifying thread in Merton's religious imagination during his pivotal years of “turning toward the world” and of “crossing over” to other religious traditions; for Cunningham and other sources identifying Sophia as a significant theme in Merton, see Pramuk, *Sophia*, xxix n. 11. Another invaluable resource, published a year before I began my doctoral work, is William H. Shannon, Christine M. Bochen and Patrick F. O'Connell, *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002). It would be difficult to overstate the degree to which my own studies have depended on the meticulous and often groundbreaking work of others.
6. Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000) 306 (see Pramuk, *Sophia* 282-84).
7. See <https://www.pallasweb.com/deesis/virgin-and-child-hagia-sophia.html>.
8. The prevalence of Wisdom-Sophia in Merton's writings from 1958 onward corresponds with his close study of Russian Orthodox philosopher-poet-theologians like Vladimir Soloviev, Sergius Bulgakov, Georges Florovsky and Paul Evdokimov. For the outlines of their thought as a modern mystical-theological response to global events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Pramuk, *Sophia* chapter 6. Forged from the experience of war and dislocation, Bulgakov described his sophiology, or dogmatics of the humanity of God, as a “theology of crisis.”
9. See Margaret Bridget Betz, “Merton's Images of Elias, Wisdom, and the Inclusive God,” *The Merton Annual* 13 (2000) 190-207 (subsequent references will be cited as “Betz” parenthetically in the text). Just as compelling as the drawing itself is Betz's suggestion (see 196) that it may have been created as early as 1952, well before Merton began reading the Russian theologians of Sophia, suggesting that his enthusiasm for their work may partly have been due to their



- confirmation of spiritual insights – that is, remembrances and experiences of God – that had come to Merton in his own contemplation of the Hebrew scriptures. On biblical remembrance (*memoria*) and imagination and their link to the birthing of hope in theological discourse, see Pramuk, *Sophia* 111-20.
10. Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997) 346 (subsequent references will be cited as “Brueggemann, *Theology*” parenthetically in the text).
  11. Melissa Raphael, *The Female Face of God in Auschwitz: A Jewish Feminist Theology of the Holocaust* (New York: Routledge, 2003) 139 (subsequent references will be cited as “Raphael” parenthetically in the text).
  12. While affirming a necessary agnosticism in theological discourse on the Holocaust – we simply cannot say why such horrific things happened – Raphael insists the evidence does allow for her claim that patriarchal theological discourse fails to offer a persuasive response to the Shoah, much less consolation, “because it is predicated upon a model of God whose will and character shares significant elements of the alienated patriarchal worldview of its predicators. It does not and cannot mount a significant moral critique of the world that produced and inherited Auschwitz because it enjoys discursive and religious privileges within that world” (37). For more on Raphael in dialogue with Merton, see Christopher Pramuk, “The Grey Face of the Other: Sparks of the Divine in a Toppling World,” *The Merton Annual* 34 (2021) 92-106; and Christopher Pramuk, “Theodicy and the Feminine Divine: Thomas Merton’s ‘Hagia Sophia’ in Dialogue with Western Theology,” *Theological Studies* 77.1 (March 2016) 48-76.
  13. Raphael 58, citing Victor Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning*.
  14. Raphael 116, citing Bertha Ferderber-Salz.
  15. A nod to Elizabeth Johnson’s landmark work, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1991, 2017).
  16. The prominent placement of *Hagia Sophia* in *Emblems of a Season of Fury*, which includes devastating poems on racism (“And the Children of Birmingham” [33-35]), genocide (“Chant to Be Used in Processions around a Site with Furnaces” [43-47]) and political oppression (“A Picture of Lee Ying” [20-22]), calls to mind Merton’s journal entry of January 26, 1961, where he had written, “Faith in Sophia, *natura naturans*, the great stabilizer today – for peace” (*TTW* 91). On this point, and many others, I am much indebted to the late Christopher “Don” Nugent, “Pax Heraclitus: A Perspective on Merton’s Healing Wholeness” (unpublished, 2005) 4; revised as “Pax Heraclitus: Heraclitus, *Hagia Sophia* and a Hard Night’s Peace,” *The Merton Seasonal* 35.2 (2010) 14-21.
  17. Sandra Schneiders, *Women and the Word: The Gender of God in the New Testament and the Spirituality of Women* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986) 19; see also Pramuk, *Sophia* 210-12.
  18. In an address to the International Theological Commission of May 12, 2014, Pope Francis cites *Gaudium et Spes* to affirm the dialogical spirit of Vatican II as it comes to play in the vocation of the theologian. The theologian “is called to ‘hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our time, and judge them in the light of the word of God.’” Francis further asks the ITC to “take the best advantage” of the contributions of female theologians who “can detect, for the benefit of all, some unexplored aspects of the unfathomable mystery of Christ.” The address in the original Italian is available at: <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2014/12/05/0922/01994.html>.
  19. Reuters, June 6, 2023; available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraines-zelenskiy-says-dam-destruction-is-environmental-bomb-mass-destruction-2023-06-06/>.
  20. Office of the US Surgeon General, “Social Media and Youth Mental Health” (May 2023); available at: <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/youth-mental-health/social-media/index.html>.
  21. For some of his most incisive critiques of the cultural environment that would not only permit but seek to morally justify such a survival ethos as “business as usual,” see Merton’s essays, “The Shelter Ethic,” “Target Equals City” and “Red or Dead: The Anatomy of a Cliché,” in Thomas Merton, *Passion for Peace: The Social Essays*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Crossroad, 1997) 20-36, 48-52.
  22. Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001) 67.
  23. Walter Brueggemann, *Disruptive Grace: Reflections on God, Scripture and the Church*, ed. Carolyn J. Sharp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011) 153.
  24. “Symbolism: Communication or Communion?” (1966), in Thomas Merton, *Love and Living*, ed. Naomi Burton Stone and Patrick Hart (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979) 54-79 (subsequent references will be cited as “L&L” parenthetically in the text).
  25. “The Pasternak Affair,” in Thomas Merton, *Disputed Questions* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1960) 11.