

# Thomas Merton's Vernacular Franciscan Theology

Daniel P. Horan OFM

## Introduction

Most forms of theology are understood within the context of a development of theory and scholarship. However, many of the most influential thinkers in the field of faith and spirituality develop their work outside the walls of the academy and rely on spiritual praxis as a starting point. One example of a praxis-based theologian is Francis of Assisi, a thirteenth-century mendicant who dramatically changed the Church and world by instituting a new way to live the Gospel. The second is Thomas Merton, a twentieth-century monk whose best-selling books have irrevocably impacted the Christian spiritual landscape.

Beginning in the Middle Ages the professionalizing of theology followed the rise in established centers of learning, namely Paris and Oxford. The emergence of a new form of theological inquiry called scholasticism served as the primary model for systematic theological reflection, a program that was intimately linked to the newly founded university structures. In recent years, theologians have discovered and subsequently distinguished another form of theology concurrently operating throughout Europe and existing outside the walls of the academy. Theologian Bernard McGinn coined the term 'vernacular theology' to describe this phe-

nomenon.<sup>1</sup> The recognition of a form of theology that transcended the limiting qualifications required to be ranked a master of theology opened the door to better appreciation of the significant contributions of many spiritual thinkers and mystics.

The aim of this essay is to convey the way in which Merton can be understood as a vernacular Franciscan theologian alongside his other varied designations. To say that Merton is a vernacular Franciscan theologian is not to limit the dynamic levels of appreciation one could have for the Christian thinker and spiritual writer. Nor does it suggest that he is less a monastic theologian or someone espoused to an eremitical way of life. Rather, I hope to expand the Mertonian analytical horizon in an effort to elucidate a particular aspect of the spirit in his life and work.

First, we will look at the term 'vernacular theologian' through the lens crafted by McGinn. To appreciate the import of such a qualification, we need to examine it alongside scholastic and monastic theology, and briefly trace its development through the modern era. Second, the work of Franciscan theologian Dominic Monti will provide a method for conceptualizing the proper application of the

term vernacular theology, while also illustrating what a 'vernacular Franciscan theologian' might look like with Monti's analysis of Francis. Finally, supported by our previous explication of vernacular theology, we will see how Merton fits the criteria of a vernacular Franciscan theologian.

## Vernacular Theology Then and Now

The opportunity to become a professional theologian has always been limited. If we reflect on medieval theological endeavors, it is difficult to recall a woman, a non-cleric, or someone unassociated with a major university. Generally one thinks of Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, John Duns Scotus, and the like. These masters have tremendously affected the theological, spiritual and ecclesiastical worlds they lived in and which we have inherited today. However, they do not account for all the contributions made to theology over the course of centuries.

In the mid-twentieth century Jean LeClercq responded to the tendency to focus solely on the scholastics of the Middle Ages with the rediscovery of so-called monastic theology. Drawing on the work of monastic writers of the period between 500 and 1500 A.D., such as Gregory the Great and Bernard of Clairvaux, LeClercq demonstrated that while scholasticism was in its primordial state arising from the nascent universities, monastic theologians had been long at work developing important theological and spiritual insights.<sup>2</sup> The recognition of the presence, influence and importance of monastic theology began the necessary deconstruction of the myopic theological paradigm that limited the practice of theology to scientific and analytic inquiry. LeClercq's study pro-

vided the demarcation necessary to rightfully acknowledge the manifold appearance of theology emerging in the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> McGinn summarizes the differences between the two models as residing in their respective sources, objects and methods. Whereas scholastic theologians relied on methods that were abstract and analytic, monastic theology employed an approach that was concrete and synthetic.<sup>4</sup> The divide between the two models is further widened by the scholastic incorporation of so-called pagan philosophers (i.e. Plato, Aristotle, etc.), while the monks relied heavily on patristic literature and Scripture.

LeClercq's scholarship and insight into the concurrently operating systems of theology in the Middle Ages led others to examine the developments in faith and spirituality of the time. This third model, vernacular theology, encompasses a variety of thinkers, spiritual writers and mystics that would otherwise not qualify as a 'theologian'. Drawing on LeClercq's characterizing categories (i.e., sources, objects and methods), Bernard McGinn outlined three areas that distinguish vernacular theology from both scholastic and monastic theologies. McGinn suggests that all three differ in language, audience, and presentation or literary genre.<sup>5</sup>

The language of the vernacular theologian, as one might assume from the model's title, is generally the local language of the time and place. This needs to be qualified with an understanding that it is also a matter of distinctive tone, not simply the absence of Latin in the Middle Ages. The tone of vernacular theology is generally more colloquial and pedestrian than the scholastic or monastic models that are steeped in the jargon of scientific

precision or Scripture. McGinn cites the examples of Francis of Assisi and Angela of Foligno, both of whose work survives primarily in Latin, as notable exceptions to the use of 'vernacular language' in the narrow sense.<sup>6</sup> The language, then, is less about a particular tongue as it is about a particular tone.

The distinction in audience is important as well. While the scholastic theologians,

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gians, operating from departments within the university systems, generally wrote for an audience of peers, and the monastic theologians often wrote for their own community's edification, the vernacular theologian wrote for a much broader audience. The easier dissemination of written material became, the more ideas of prayer, faith and Christian living could be circulated. Often the audience of the vernacular theologian was open-ended, and all who could read were invited to do so.

Finally, the organization and presenta-

tion of the vernacular theologian's material differs markedly from that of the scholastic or monastic theologian. McGinn observes that while scholastics were concerned with internal academic discourse presented in the form of either *lectio* or *quaestio/disputatio*, and the monks were generally focused on sermons or biblical commentaries, the vernacular theologians wrote in a wide variety of ways. These forms included popular sermons, 'little books' or brief treatises, hagiography, letters and poetry.<sup>7</sup> This was a method of sharing ideas, expanding the horizon of discourse and widening the gate of inclusion that was unprecedented, and yet undervalued for centuries.

The tradition of vernacular theology lives on today. David Tracy has explored the manner in which certain North American figures have impacted the contemporary spiritual landscape. His article, 'Recent Catholic Spirituality: Unity amid Diversity,' takes on the task of tracing the currents of spiritual development in the late twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> Like the work of LeClerc and McGinn that has greatly changed the way we view concurrently operating systems of theologizing, Tracy observed a similar trend in our own time. He first presents the foundations of the contemporary theological environment, especially as the Second Vatican Council shaped it. Here the big names in Catholic theology turn up; Rahner, Lonergan, von Balthasar, Congar and the other masters of academe. While he doesn't use McGinn's term, he does comment on the establishment of a new 'mystico-prophetic' spirituality that blossoms outside of the academy.<sup>9</sup> He includes Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day, Simone Weil, Therese of Lisieux, Charles de Foucauld,

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and the like in this category of mystico-prophetic spiritual writers. Tracy sees this new paradigm of spirituality as an authentic reflection on the central Christian understanding of action informed by *caritas*. What these writers do that the academic theologians of our day do not necessarily do is provide a system for the concrete and practical appreciation of God's presence in our world.<sup>10</sup> In other words, they speak the 'language' of the people (the vernacular) and make faith and spirituality relevant to a wider audience.

Theologian Ilia Delio, in her recent book, *Christ in Evolution*, observes that today this mystico-prophetic or vernacular theology rises out of the lived Christian experience.<sup>11</sup> She considers Thomas Merton to be one such vernacular theologian whose work helps to refocus popular attention from the distractions and triviality of our modern world to 'the love of God and the God who is love.'<sup>12</sup> She sees contemporary vernacular theology as not simply the *doing* of theology, but the *living* of theology. Like Tracy, Delio notes that this new way of going about the world leads to what we might call the emergence of contextual theologies. Once theology leaves the 'ivory tower' of academe, it is forced to appear clothed in the culture, struggles and history of the people that live it. These vernacular theologies rely on experiential foundations or praxis as their starting points. Vernacular theology, then, can be said to have always arisen from the reflective action of Christian living in a particular time and place.

### **The First Vernacular Franciscan Theologian**

Francis of Assisi lived in a small thir-

teenth-century Italian (Umbrian) town somewhat removed from the nascent science of theological inquiry known as scholasticism. While never university trained, Francis—the son of a wealthy cloth merchant—was educated at a level beyond most of his peers that provided him with a basic fluency in Latin. After his conversion, which sparked a zealous desire to live the Gospel, Francis began to attract followers who looked to him for example and instruction on how to live a life of authentic penance. As a result, Francis was pressed into writing his spiritual insights and direction for what was becoming a fast-growing movement.

Most of what remains preserved today of the work of Francis includes prayers, letters, exhortations, admonitions, and two versions of his Rule, or way of life. That so much of his personal work has been preserved for over eight centuries testifies to the fact that those who desired to follow his vision of Gospel life considered his insights on life and prayer to be of great value. To illustrate the significance in the preservation of an apparently small collection of written work, Monti compares Francis's corpus to that of his mendicant contemporary Dominic Guzman, the founder of the Order of Preachers. Where the collected works of Francis number thirty in critical edition, only one letter of Dominic, a well-educated priest, survives.<sup>13</sup>

If Francis did not receive the traditional tools for theological thought from the universities or monasteries like the scholars of his time, where did he develop his insight? Perhaps the theological and spiritual writing of Francis can be attributed to his lived experience of a deep relationship with his Creator. It was not a matter

of systematic inquiry, but praxis that served as his functioning *modus operandi*. Through an intimate prayer life, a close fraternal community, the ministerial relationships he developed with the poor and marginalized, and his steadfast focus on scripture, Francis came to many conclusions about God, creation and the relationship between the two.

McGinn says that written examples of vernacular theology include hagiography, letters, spiritual writing collected in the form of diaries or journals, and poetry.<sup>14</sup> Unlike the scholastic and monastic, the vernacular theologian relies on the lived experience of God in the world to ground his or her theological projects. The audience of a vernacular theologian also is quite different from the audience of other theologians; it is generally a more inclusive one, allowing for readership and dialogue outside the small circle of academic or monastic peers. This is how Francis's work has been received.

Monti identifies Francis's writing as a body of popular theological and spiritual work that is aimed at a wide audience.<sup>15</sup> The presentation of his work in the form of prayers, letters, admonitions, his Rules and the like, clearly qualify as the work of a vernacular theologian. Finally, his audience is amazingly inclusive. The readers of his writings included members of the highest echelon of the socio-political world such as the Roman Pontiff, to the simplest lay follower of the *Brothers and Sisters of Penance*, today known as the Third Order Secular Franciscans. From the beginning of his movement Francis established a tradition of vernacular theology that lives on today in writers like Thomas Merton.

### Merton as Vernacular Franciscan Theologian

There is little doubt of the impact the Franciscan spirit and theological perspective has had on Thomas Merton. One only needs to read one of the several studies that have been published in recent years on the latent and explicit presence of Franciscanism in the work and thought of Merton to get a taste of the rich spiritual connection the twentieth-century monk had with the thirteenth-century Saint.<sup>16</sup> Merton speaks highly of Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus throughout his work. In *The Seven Storey Mountain* he describes Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* as one of the greatest descriptions of the highest of all vocations, Francis as the great founder of his Order, and the stigmata of Francis as a tremendous event in the Church's history.<sup>17</sup> Merton made no secret of his admiration for Francis as well as other Franciscan Saints and personalities throughout the history of the Church.

Having been introduced to the work of two of the most notable Franciscan intellectuals, Bonaventure and Scotus, by Columbia Professor Daniel Walsh, Merton's Franciscan spirit was "brought to light" as the new convert to Catholicism discerned his Franciscan vocation.<sup>18</sup> While his pursuit of a Franciscan vocation would never be completely realized, Merton's draw to the Franciscan community, the initial fervor of Franciscan self-understanding identified by Walsh, and the charismatic Franciscanism that attracted Merton to study thinkers of the Franciscan intellectual tradition would have a formative and long-lasting effect on the future Trappist monk.

While it can be said that Merton was a monastic theologian by virtue of the monastic-related writing he was assigned to complete for his religious community,<sup>19</sup> his hardly resembles the style described by Leclercq. One of the clearest examples in opposition to an exclusive ascription of the title monastic theologian is the unprecedented market performance of Merton's spiritual autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*. The audience of his work was not limited to a clerical or religious readership, but was inclusive enough to attract readers that transcended all demographics. It did not stop with his autobiography, but continued with other popular works like *No Man is an Island*, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, and *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*. The readership of Merton's work, which is not limited to the spiritually savvy or theologically advanced, affirms his status as a vernacular theologian. He wrote in a language that was both approachable and spoke to the hearts of all.

Merton's lack of membership in the elite theological academy of his time also speaks to his status as a vernacular theologian. While certainly more educated than Francis, Merton's formal education was relatively minimal considering both the insightful and prolific nature of his work. Often cast as 'simply' a 'spiritual writer,' Merton has often been relegated to the realm of the non-theological in a heterogeneous and vague category known as 'inspirational writing'. Given the reach and depth of his work, it hardly seems appropriate to summarily dismiss the notion that Merton was a theologian, however, lacking the academic credentials, he simply does not qualify as a typical theologian. Where then does his authority

come? What is his source?

As McGinn asserts, authority as it is understood in the context of a vernacular theologian comes not from ecclesiastical or academic channels, but *ex beneficio* (from grace).<sup>20</sup> This authority might also be understood as the author's ability to articulate theological insight from experience. In the case of a vernacular theologian who writes eloquently on matters of spirituality, faith, and prayer, the authority *ex beneficio* may best be understood as rooted in the author's own spiritual praxis. As noted above, vernacular theologians often develop their work through the media of diaries or journals, poetry and letters. Merton, like Francis before him, expressed his theology through journals, collections of poetry and letters. Merton wrote in English and French, highly accessible and common languages, foregoing technical jargon that is so often employed by theologians of the academy. One reason his work was so popular is that most of the population was actually able to read it.

Like Francis of Assisi, Merton's source is his lived experience. Praxis serves as the foundation for Merton's writing as it is often the attempt to articulate those spiritual struggles the modern monk encountered, in addition to sharing insight gained through meditation and reflection.<sup>21</sup> Merton often found himself using Francis and Franciscan spirituality analogously while delving deeper into the struggle of understanding of his own vocation to religious life.

Take this entry from Merton's *The Sign of Jonas* for example, 'The Franciscan ideal of poverty seems to have something of the same function in the spiritual life as the ideal of silence and solitude in



the purely contemplative Orders.<sup>22</sup> The use of Franciscan spirituality allows Merton to better understand himself and his way of life. He makes another explicit Franciscan reference shortly thereafter in the same book, 'The Porticuncula always brings me great blessings – and that is the Franciscan side in me which continues to grow also... The feast brings graces of contemplation and spiritual joy, because every church becomes that tiny little church that Saint Francis loved above all others. Thus everyone in the world can share the bliss of his sanctity.'<sup>23</sup> Admitting a particular 'Franciscan side' in him, Merton identifies with the Saint from Assisi through the celebration of Francis's favorite place. Just two years before his untimely death in a letter to Anthony Bannon, a writer in Buffalo, New York, Merton recalls his motivation for working with Franciscan friars after the rejection of his application to the Order. 'I decided that I wanted to at least live with the Friars, in the atmosphere of a Franciscan college. St. Bonaventure was really ideal. I felt that I was in contact with the authentic simplicity, cordiality, and charity of St. Francis.'<sup>24</sup> The draw to be part of the spirit of Francis of Assisi was strong throughout his entire life.

Merton does not always use explicit references to identify himself within the context of Franciscan spirituality. More often his articulated insight and self-reflective notes resemble something that aligns comfortably with the Franciscan movement. One overtly Franciscan mode of relation is the manner with which Merton discusses creation, he wrote,

'The birds are all silent now except for some quiet bluebirds.

The frogs have begun singing their pleasure in all the waters and in the warm green places where the sunshine is wonderful. Praise Christ, all you living creatures. For Him you and I were created. With every breath we love Him. My psalms fulfill your dim, unconscious song, O brothers in this wood.'<sup>25</sup>

While not explicitly mentioning Francis, this passage resembles the famous *Cantic of the Creatures* which is perhaps the most famous of Francis's works and the most 'vernacular' in the truest sense, for it survives as the only complete work of the

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Saint's written entirely in the colloquial Italian of his time. Three characteristics stand out in Merton's journal entry which parallel the work of Francis: the focus on creation, the praise of God in and through creation and the naming of creation in fraternal terms. Francis names several elements of creation, the sun, moon, stars, wind, air, all kinds of weather, water, fire, earth, fruit and herbs, 'those who give pardon for [God's] love, and bear infirmity and tribulation,' and bodily death.<sup>26</sup>

Merton names birds, frogs, water, green places, sunshine and all living creatures including him. As Francis praises God through God's creation from the sun to bodily death, so too Merton praises God through creation and invites creation to praise God likewise.

Both vernacular theologians identify themselves relationally in a unique way calling creation in fraternal terms, Francis addressing each aspect of creation as brother or sister and Merton referring to all as 'brothers in this wood'. Both vernacular theologians articulated a lived experience, the spiritual praxis that is indicative of their intimate relationship with God and God's creation. Both included themselves among the created order and so identify a familial relationship rooted in an understanding of being a child of God, that they name other elements of creation in fraternal terms.

Jonathan Hill interprets the theological implications of the evangelical life of Francis as conscious identification with the poor. 'In a way, this idea that God is to be found through social action, in the world, not apart from it, anticipates the theology of...the 20th Century.'<sup>27</sup> Through the lens provided by Hill we see that Merton has implemented and integrated into his life the Franciscan charism that rests in social action. For Francis in the thirteenth century, social action involved promoting peaceful dialogue between Christians and Muslims, living among and ministering to the poor and marginalized, and proclaiming the Gospel to all in a manner beyond words. For Merton in the twentieth century, social action involved promoting peaceful dialogue between Christianity and Eastern religions, speaking out against the devel-

opment and proliferation of nuclear weapons at the dawn of the Cold War, and the promotion of a more equitable society through writing on issues of Civil Rights. Both vernacular theologians reflect the immediate needs of their times in their work. In addressing such pressing issues, they not only utilize vernacular language but timely issues that speak to a population entrenched in the very same issues.

As Michael Downey puts it, 'What Francis did and what Merton did was to demonstrate, that is witness, in a whole way of life that union with Christ and life in God are expressed in healing and in mercy, specifically in the face of social ills and cultural fragmentation.'<sup>28</sup> Through their lived experiences engaging the world of their time, both vernacular theologians identified existing issues that destroyed right relationship and forced people into the margins. Theirs is praxis of charity that is based in a loving relationship with God. In a very real way, Merton's work and life reflects the Franciscan understanding of God that, simply put, God is Love.

### Conclusion

In the introduction to his book, *Thomas Merton: The Development of a Spiritual Theologian*, Donald Grayston explains why the study of Thomas Merton appeals to him so strongly.

'...It is because I am one of those many who feels that Merton was writing to him very personally, but not individually; it is because Merton deals in his writings with the most critical aspects of contemporary society – the recovery

of the contemplative attitude in an activist world, peace and nonviolence, and the encounter of the great religions in a shrinking world; and it is because he offers to all persons of faith and all persons concerned for humanity such helpful perceptions and images of the way to wholeness in our time.<sup>29</sup>

This personal testimony summarizes the effect of a spiritual giant who continues to influence the lives of many. Merton was and is able to do this in great part by virtue of his vernacular theological method. Additionally, his ability to stand within the cloud of Franciscan spiritual masters who have helped guide the prayerful journeys of the faithful for nearly eight centuries helps explain his theological reach and attractiveness. As his audience continues to grow forty years after his death, it is my hope that we are able to better appreciate this particular nuance of his personality and spirituality, confidently identifying Merton as a vernacular Franciscan theologian.

## Notes

1. Bernard McGinn first develops the notion of vernacular theology in the introduction to his edited volume, *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*. His use of the term to denote that form of theology which does not fit into the previously accepted categories of post Medieval intellectual history—namely scholasticism and monastic theology—provided space for the consideration of thinkers and contributors to theology previously neglected or disregarded. See Bernard McGinn,

'Meister Eckhart and the Beguines in the Context of Vernacular Theology,' in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics: Hadewinch of Brabant, Mechthild of Magdeburg and Marguerite Porete*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: Continuum, 1994) pp.1-16.

2. The most thorough treatment of 'monastic theology' is found in the 1982 edition of LeClercq's *L'Amour des lettres et le desir de Dieu* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1957). For the English translation see Jean LeClercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. Catherine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982) especially pp.191-235. McGinn provides an accessible and succinct survey of the development of LeClercq's thesis in his article 'Jean LeClercq's Contribution to Monastic Spirituality and Theology,' *Monastic Studies* 16 (1985) pp.7-23.

3. LeClercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, pp.211-217.

4. McGinn, 'Jean LeClercq's Contribution to Monastic Spirituality and Theology,' p.14.

5. McGinn, 'Meister Eckhart and the Beguines in the Context of Vernacular Theology,' pp.6-10.

6. McGinn, 'Meister Eckhart and the Beguines in the Context of Vernacular Theology,' p.7.

7. McGinn, 'Meister Eckhart and the Beguines in the Context of Vernacular Theology,' p.9.

8. David Tracy, 'Recent Catholic Spirituality: Unity amid Diversity,' in *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern*, World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest vol. 18, eds. Luis Dupre and Don Saliers (New York: Crossroads, 1989) pp.143-173.

9. Tracy, 'Recent Catholic Spirituality,' pp.160-171.

10. Tracy, 'Recent Catholic Spirituality,' pp.164-165.

11. Ilia Delio, *Christ in Evolution* (New York: Orbis Books, 2008) pp.124-125.

12. Delio, *Christ in Evolution*, pp.124-125.

13. Dominic Monti, 'Francis as Vernacular Theologian: A Link to the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition?' in *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition*, Washington Theological Union Symposium Papers Vol. 1, ed. Elise Saggau (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2002) p.31.

14. Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism – 1200-1300*, The Presence of God: A History of Western Mysticism Volume 3 (New York: Crossroad-Herder, 1998) pp.20-21. For an interesting study on three women medieval theologians and their use of hagiography, see Marie Mayeski, *Women at the Table: Three Medieval Theologians* (Collegeville: Michael Glazier-Liturgical Press, 2004).

15. Monti, 'Francis as Vernacular Theologian,' p.32.

16. See Timothy J. Shaffer, 'Thomas Merton's Franciscan Spirituality,' *The Cord* 57 (January/February 2007) pp.63-81. This is an abbreviated version of Shaffer's masters thesis at the University of Dayton on Thomas Merton's Franciscan Spirituality. Also see Kathleen Deignan, 'Road to Rapture: Thomas Merton's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*,' Michael Downey, 'Merton's Franciscan Heart'; and Sean Edward Kinsella, "'Where the Grey Light Meets the Green Air': The Hermit as Pilgrim in the Franciscan Spirituality of Thomas Merton,'

*Franciscan Studies* 55 (1998) pp.281-322.

17. Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998) p.457.

18. Deignan, 'Road to Rapture,' p.283.

19. Christine Bochen, *Thomas Merton: Essential Writings*, Modern Spiritual Masters Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000) pp.27-28.

20. McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, p.22.

21. See Lawrence Cunningham, *Thomas Merton & The Monastic Vision* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999) pp.187-190. Here Cunningham presents a preliminary understanding of Merton as a vernacular theologian. He says, 'In a very profound way, Merton is a "theologian" in the oldest sense of the term—not as a professional thinker in the service of ideas and not as a person of systematic theological reflection, but as someone who knows how to speak of God authentically' (p.188).

22. Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt, 1981) p.64.

23. Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*, p.211. The Porticuncula is a chapel near Assisi, also known as St. Mary of the Angels. It is considered the main church of St. Francis and the 'mother church' of the Order of Friars Minor.

24. Thomas Merton, *Witness to Freedom: Letters in Times of Crisis*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Harcourt, 1994) p.163.

25. Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*, p.292.

26. Francis of Assisi, 'The Canticle of The Creatures,' in *Francis of Assisi: The Early Documents*, Vol. I, eds. R. Armstrong, W. Hellmann and W. Short (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999)

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p.113.

27. Jonathan Hill, *The History of Christian Thought* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003) pp.148.

28. Downey, 'Merton's Franciscan Heart,' p.308.

29. Donald Grayston, *Thomas Merton: The Development of a Spiritual Theologian* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985) p.viii.

**Daniel P. Horan OFM** is a Franciscan friar of Holy Name Province (New York), a member of the International Thomas Merton Society (ITMS), and a former ITMS Daggy Scholar. Dan is currently a graduate student at the Washington Theological Union (DC) and an instructor in the EPS program at Trinity University (DC).