

people in their continuing study of Merton, which in the crises of this world is still a worthwhile activity, one in which we so often discern that he has already got to the current ground zero ahead of us and is ready to offer stern prophecy and hope in equal measure' (p.iii). The generous ministry offered by Patricia and colleagues is finally given to us for private use as free downloadable files from:

<http://merton.org/Research/bibresources.aspx>

The editors of this journal encourage readers not only to peruse these fascinating and informative resources, but echo the author's hope that readers will show gratitude with a donation for the continuing work of the Thomas Merton Center.

Gary Hall

The Only Mind Worth Having: Thomas Merton and the Child Mind

Fiona Gardner

Forward by Rowan Williams

Cascade Books, Eugene, Oregon, 2015

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£21.00

Imagine becoming a child again. It might conjure up images of endless play, fun and freedom, as opposed to adult responsibility, failure and disappointment. The perceived contrasts are strikingly evident in William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* - the frontispiece of which is the appropriately chosen cover for this book - which compare the careworn adult world of corruption and repression with the pastoral, carefree world of childhood. But when we note Jesus' biblical injunction to the disciples and to us, to become like little children in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, he is not being sentimental or nostalgic. Rather we are being urged to find and re-connect with what Fiona Gardner calls our child mind which is present in everyone's psyche. Our attention is drawn to the process of discovering, recognising and integrating this consciousness; and it is imperative that we find it as ultimately it will lead to a breakthrough to a new mind - the beginner's mind, the renewed mind, the mind of the mystic.

Fiona Gardner's comprehensive exploration of Jesus' paradoxical and challenging command, and its implications for our spiritual practice, is at the heart of this insightful book. Drawing upon her skills as a

psychotherapist and spiritual director, she seeks to trace the concept of the child mind in the context of the life and thought of Thomas Merton and other spiritual masters, as a path towards our spiritual maturity.

The book is structured into three parts. The first part focuses on 'understanding' the child mind from spiritual and psychological perspectives. The mysterious world of childhood is explored through the writings of psychoanalysts such as Jung; mystics, including Julian of Norwich; the contemplative monk Thomas Merton; and by reference to the Zen tradition. The second part traces the process of us re-finding the spirit of the child and explores the voyage of our 'becoming': to reawaken and cultivate our mind and to be aware that our consciousness can change. The third part moves away from understanding the child mind and turns to centering attention on the enchanted world of childhood and the disenchanting world of the adult.

The book's title phrase, 'the only mind worth having', is taken from the ending of a letter written by Merton to John Wu in 1962, asking 'the Lord to give you every blessing and joy and to keep ever fresh and young your "child's mind" which is the only mind worth having.' In a later letter, after both men had met the Zen scholar D.T Suzuki, Merton reaffirms this concept, stating that Suzuki's child's mind and heart is his greatness. Incorporating Eastern wisdom, Gardner explores Merton's understanding of Zen principles, which encompass a sense detachment from family, status, money and gods, to emerge fully as oneself. Hence, paradoxically, to move towards the child mind there has to be a letting go of attachment to both past childhood and adult identity.

Gardner draws consistently upon Merton's spiritual guidance as a contemplative theologian and also his imaginative writing, especially his poetry, to deepen our understanding of child and adult consciousness. In Merton's experience the child mind involves a journey towards simplicity, trust and openness in one's relationship with God; about capturing qualities of attentiveness and receptivity, being present to the moment, and through contemplation, gaining an appreciation of all that is connected. For Gardner these ideas are exemplified by Merton's poem 'Grace's House' which is about recognition of an inward journey home, which for Merton was the actual simplicity of where God is present. The poem denotes an unselfconscious child's world and elicits Merton's contemplative and spiritual understanding of the inner life and spirit of the child. The child mind that Merton advocates and the mind towards which Gardner points us is a child mind that is a mind in communion with God and the world.

Yet Merton is also presented to us in this book as a critic of the seductive illusion of the adult self and the often flawed adult judgements we make, which are opposed to real childlikeness. Gardner intricately merges the concept of the child mind to Merton's understanding of an awakening to the true self: who we really are beyond the shadow and the disguise, the mask and persona we present to the world. It is the effort of keeping the shadow repressed and the disguise maintained that contributes to our separation from the spirit of the child and from God. Knowing more about ourselves can lead to moving closer to knowing and loving God. St. Augustine famously prayed that to know myself is to know God.

In this book Fiona Gardner successfully and skillfully fuses often complex psychological and spiritual concepts, making them accessible and illuminating for the reader and enriching our spiritual experience. She opens up the challenges and promises of this journey with conviction, sincerity and warmth, inviting us to believe that the sheer joy of attaining the child's mind truly *is* the only mind worth having.

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Selected Essays

Thomas Merton

Edited with an Introduction by Patrick F. O'Connell

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In his introduction O'Connell quotes Merton from 1961: 'People are now convinced that I secrete articles like perspiration. This is clearly more my fault than theirs, and something has to be done about it.' However it seems that his efforts were useless: he published on average eighteen essays a year over the last decade of his life, and his total output comes in at around two hundred and fifty. The thirty-three essays published here are presented in chronological order from the first in 1950 – his beautiful contribution to a book of conversion accounts – to the last in 1968 – his review of Arasteh's *Final Integration*. The great majority come from the 1960s with only four earlier. O'Connell gives the guiding principles for his choice: to represent the full range of subjects and the different voices that