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Peacemaker

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I think that Thomas Merton could easily be called the greatest spiritual writer and spiritual master of the twentieth century in English speaking America. There is no other person who has such a profound influence on those writing on spiritual topics, not only on Catholics but non-Catholics, as Merton has.¹

With Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton (1915-1968) personified the potential of the Catholic peace tradition in America. Merton stands out as one of the most brilliant peacemakers in the entire Catholic tradition.²

Merton never fully embraced pacifism. Like Thomas More and Erasmus, he believed in the theoretical applicability of the just war. Yet, like the Renaissance Humanists, he looked at the horrors of contemporary warfare and concluded that the just war theory was irrelevant in practice. He was, in fact, one of the first "nuclear pacifists."³

Thomas Merton began his best selling autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948), with these poignant and telling words: "On the last day of January 1915, under the sign of the Water Bearer, in a year of great war, and down in the shadow of some French mountains on the border of Spain, I came into the world."⁴ Merton, indeed, came into the world "in a year of great war." World War I dominated Europe when Merton was born. Later, he lived through the carnage of WW II, the Korean War, the McCarthy/Cold War years and the emergence and devastating nature of the Vietnam War. Merton's social conscience became more public with the civil rights movement in the late 1950s, the nuclear threat, the rise of ecological consciousness and much American domestic violence

in the 1950s and 1960s. In short, Merton lived through a period in 20th century history in which war and violence were the order of the day, and he sought, through a variety of means, to be a moderate and peacemaking voice and presence. How did Merton become the significant peacemaker that he did, and what was his understanding of peacemaking?

Merton's life journey can be divided into four distinct yet overlapping phases, and it is in the fourth season of Merton's life that his peacemaking vocation became the clearest and most mature. According to Merton's own estimation in *The Seven Storey Mountain*, the first phase (1915-1938) was a rather indulgent and narcissistic period in Merton's life that can be partially explained by a reaction to the loss of both parents when he was young together with an inheritance that paid for schooling at Cambridge and Columbia universities. Merton was well provided for throughout the depression of the 1930s (unlike many who weathered the depression in dire need), and he was rarely in need of finances. The fact that he made a woman pregnant when in England and his meager commitment to his studies at Clare College led to his guardian in London having him return to New York where his maternal grandparents could monitor his activities. It would have been impossible, though, in the 1930s to ignore the fact that war was afoot, and one of Merton's earliest novels, *My Argument with the Gestapo*, ponders the events of the 1930s in Germany, England and the U.S.A. The book is not particularly profound, and it tends to adopt more of an aloof posture than a probing and exacting moral path. There is, in fact, in the novel, a form of literary aestheticism divorced from ethics that undermines the deeper possibilities of the novel. There is no doubt, though, that Merton was preoccupied with the significance of war at the time, and his conversations with close friends such as Bob Lax, Ed Rice and others often turned to this topic. Merton came to see, though, that his rather wayward life lacked substance, and he was in desperate need for boundaries to discipline his rather undisciplined and ill directed desires and longings.

The second phase (1938-1948) can be seen as a counterpoint

and reaction to his initial phase. Merton turned to the Roman Catholic tradition in 1938, but he was convinced, increasingly so, that the role of a lay Catholic was not his vocation. He received his M.A. in February 1939 (his thesis was on William Blake, who certainly had firm views on war and peace), and he began doctoral studies on Gerard Manley Hopkins in 1939. He was not convinced the academic path was to be his, and he applied to the Franciscans only to be rejected when he was too honest about his questionable youth. During an Easter retreat at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky in 1941 Merton reflected on whether or not he had a religious vocation.

He wavered for a few months in the autumn of 1941 between working with Catherine de Hueck Doherty at Friendship House in Harlem and becoming a Cistercian monk at Gethsemani. Merton was quite aware at the time of the Catholic Action movement and considered ways of being a justice activist. The correspondence between Merton and Doherty in the autumn of 1941 is most telling and instructive. Merton seriously pondered in 1941 whether his vocation was to be a social justice activist, as can be seen in the collection, *Compassionate Fire: The Letters of Thomas Merton & Catherine de Hueck Doherty*. It is significant that Merton, after months of pondering, was interviewed by Abbot Dom Frederick Dunne on December 13, 1941, after which he became a postulant choir monk. The attack on Pearl Harbour occurred December 7, 1941, and on December 8, 1941, Congress declared war on Japan. The dogs of war had certainly been unleashed when Merton joined the Cistercian order. If Merton's earliest phase was one of indulgence, then his second phase was definitely a lean and ascetic one. The Cistercians were, at the time, one of the strictest orders in the Roman Catholic tradition, and they turned far away from the madding crowd. Merton joined the Cistercian Order at a time when the world was at war, and throughout the duration of World War II, he seemed dead to the world.

Was Merton a pacifist at the time? Such a position cannot be argued with any surety. We do know, though, that Merton was

committed to the contemplative way of the Cistercians. The *vita activa* had led the West into the carnage and tragedy of war. Could the *vita contemplativa* offer an alternate way? These were the deeper questions that Merton had to ponder and live through in the 1940s. World War II ended in 1945, and Merton was growing in his monastic vocation. Many were returning from the war badly bruised in soul and body, and Merton's writings on the contemplative way spoke to a generation of people who had seen the darkest and most brutal aspects of the human condition. The publication of *The Seven Storey Mountain* in 1948 catapulted Merton to prominence; 100,000 copies of *The Seven Storey Mountain* had been printed by the spring of 1949. Merton spoke to a generation hungry for something more meaningful than war, killing and lost lives. There is a sense that with the vivid tale told by Merton about his early life in *The Seven Storey Mountain* he could not be a secluded monk hidden away and dead to the world. Many were now looking to Merton for spiritual guidance, wisdom and a north star to live by.

Merton's third phase (1948-1958) was a period of time in which he emerged as one of the most significant writers in the U.S. and beyond on the contemplative life, poetry, the monastic way, prayer, the role of the saints, liturgy, interior transformation, and the mystical life in God. He was Master of Students (Scholastics) from 1951-1955 and Master of Novices from 1955-1965, and his articles, books and correspondence increased. *The Ascent to Truth* (1951), *Bread in the Wilderness* (1953), *The Last of the Fathers* (1954), *No Man is an Island* (1955), *Praying the Psalms* (1956), and *The Living Bread* (1956) were just some of the books that were published on contemplative life in the 1950s from Merton's prolific pen. Gethsemani prospered because of Merton's lucrative publishing, and many were the novices who came to Gethsemani to study with Merton. Merton had become for many a spiritual director who understood the core of the religious journey rather than merely the ornaments and externals. The inner digging that Merton did throughout most of the 1940s and 1950s clearly defined and distinguished him as on the cutting edge of a new way of being Roman Catholic. Merton was keenly aware that at the core of

the mystical, contemplative and meditative life was the *agon* or struggle between the false and true self, the old and new Adam. The process of authentic self understanding meant that many a death and resurrection, phoenix-like, had to occur on the journey to Merton's spiritual transformation. James Finley, a monastic student under Merton, has written insightfully about the core of Merton's transformative and razor sharp probes into the false-true self in *Merton's Palace of Nowhere: A Search for God through the Awareness of the True Self*. The deeper journey to inner peace and outer peacemaking had to begin and end with a genuine understanding of the counterfeits of the true self. If this did not occur, peacemaking could just become a more subtle form of a will to power and egoism.

Merton became aware that the inner life should not be divorced from the outer life, that contemplation should not be separated from public responsibility. The Cistercian order originally had contemplative roots, but was also engaged in many challenging social issues. Bernard of Clairvaux, Aelrid of Rievaulx and William of St. Thierry were front and centre in the hot button issues of their era. The more Merton dug into the origins of the Cistercians, the more he came to see that the monastery he was in had retreated from the world in a way that the early Cistercians had not. In fact, the Cistercian order in origin emerged at a time in which issues of war and peace could not be missed or ignored. But, there was a sticky dilemma in this for Merton. This was faced in Merton's book on Bernard, *The Last of the Fathers: Saint Bernard of Clairvaux and the Encyclical Letter* (1954). There was no doubt that Bernard was the driving force and visionary of the first generation of Cistercians.

The problem was that Bernard came down firmly in a hawkish way in favor of the first crusade, and he strongly encouraged a former monk in the order (then the Pope) to preach a convincing sermon on going to war against the infidels. Merton held Bernard in high regard when it came to most of his exegetical and mystical writings, but his warlike politics and his treatment of Peter Abelard he saw as problematic. Merton was very much finding his way in the

1950s, and he was, in many ways, outgrowing the Cistercian order. Nonetheless, he was committed to remaining a faithful Roman Catholic and Cistercian. Much was happening in the broader world and in the U.S. at the time, and Merton was alert and attuned to the shifts in the political and cultural tectonic plates. Many were quite displeased with Merton's turning towards the world, and others were delighted by it, but there can be no doubt Merton had become, by the late 1950s, much more unified in his thinking and activism.

In sum, the first season of Merton's life tended to be rather indulgent and narcissistic, whereas the second season of his journey was ascetic and decidedly inward. The publication of *The Seven Storey Mountain* in 1948 (and its immediate success) meant that Merton had become a public monk, and a monk in much demand. Merton became well known in the 1950s, in the third season of his life, as an insightful and incisive writer on the contemplative life, poetry and mysticism. He was one of the best, and he was consulted by many for his spiritual wisdom and insights. The fourth and final season (1958-1968) was about to emerge, and the seeds of such a transition had been germinating for many a year. In *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, begun in 1956, there is the oft recounted March 18, 1958 'Fourth and Walnut Street' experience in which Merton realized, in a poignant way, that he was connected to the fate and lives of all he saw at the time.⁵ The dated notion that a monk could retreat from the world was shattered in this illuminating moment for Merton. There were, of course, contributing causes to such a transformative moment, but the Walnut Street epiphany was significant for Merton. He now knew his fate: his future and his salvation were knit together with the human family.

Merton would be a bystander no more. He had to discern, though, how his activism would be interpreted, thought through and lived. If the contemplative way constituted the roots from which the fruit of prophetic thought and action should emerge, where would Merton's peacemaking path take him? The dilemma for many American Roman Catholics in the 1950s and 1960s was that the public expression of their faith was often hitched to either

Republican or Democratic politics. Many a Roman Catholic school or parish had *Pro Deo et Patria* (for God and country) etched on the mantel. Kennedy had come to power in 1961 as a Democrat, and there were Roman Catholics who were more than pleased to shift their alliance from the Republican tradition to the Democratic. Were these the only two options, though?

Merton had reached a definite fork in the road in the late 1950s. The issues that were coming his way could no longer be ignored. Ernesto Cardenal, for example, had been a novice with Merton from 1957-1959, and he brought to Merton tragic tales of the social injustices in Latin America. It was, in fact, Merton's encounter with an article written by Cardenal that stirred his social conscience and awoke much within him. In August 1957 Merton read one of the Mexican magazines in which Ernesto Cardenal had a poem attacking the United Fruit Company. After sixteen years of isolation from social issues, Merton was beginning to feel cut off from what he needed to know. I was on the staff of Amnesty International in the 1980s, and I had to interview Cardenal to get his reaction to an Amnesty report on Nicaragua. After we finished the interview, I asked Cardenal about Merton. Cardenal spoke enthusiastically for more than an hour about Merton's impact on his life and Merton's sensitivity to the situation in Central America. Merton became, in the 1950s and 1960s, one of the leading North American literary critics of many Central and South American novelists and poets.

American foreign policy in Latin America was wreaking havoc on the poor and marginalized. Merton could not, in good conscience, be blind to such searing stories, and Cardenal was one of the more important novices who deepened and informed his conscience on social justice issues. Afro-Americans in the southern states were opposing segregation and the Cold War presented an ominous political situation. The publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) signaled a new shift in ecological awareness, and Merton's interest in aboriginal people was highlighted in *Ishi Means Man: Essays on Native Americans*. Moreover, there are hints of Merton's political awakening in his poem, "The Guns of

Fort Knox" (1957). Fort Knox was in Kentucky (quite close to the monastery), and Merton could not help but be aware of the shattering of monastic silence by the nearby military gunfire. There was, in short, fragmentation, alienation and much violence afoot in a variety of places. Those who sought peace were often called communists or unpatriotic. Where could and did Merton turn for guidance as a peacemaker in such a time?

Merton had written Pope John XXIII in 1958 a few weeks after he had been elected Pope. Pope John XXIII responded to Merton's letter on February 11, 1960. Merton was somewhat surprised on April 11, 1960 when Lorenzo Barbate brought him a gift from the Pope: it was the stole that John XXIII wore at his installation as Pope. Merton's work in peacemaking had many affinities with the "peace Pope," and it was these explicit affinities that bore much fruit at Vatican II. The recent book by James Douglass, *JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters*, makes it abundantly clear that John F. Kennedy, as a Roman Catholic, had a passion for peace, like the Pope and Merton, and as Kennedy moved more in a dovish direction in his foreign policy, his life became expendable for many of those in power. Douglass has done an admirable job in *JFK and the Unspeakable* in highlighting the Roman Catholic peace tradition of which Merton, Pope John XXIII and Kennedy played a significant role, and the role they played brought much peace and avoided war with the Soviet Union in the early 1960s.

Merton was fortunate, also, in having a living precedent and yet another presence to guide him on his peacemaking journey. Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement had been active since the 1930s in the area of peacemaking and justice issues amongst the poor in the inner city of large urban centers. Day and the Catholic Worker modeled a way of being more radical in understanding the public aspect of the faith journey. Merton began a correspondence with Day in July 1959, and he wrote twenty-nine letters to her between 1959 and 1968. Jim Forest, a friend of Merton's, has noted that Merton was one of those who had a high opinion of Dorothy

Day and the movement she led. In the summer of 1961 he submitted the first of a series of articles—"The Root of War is Fear"—to the *Catholic Worker*.⁶

The Roman Catholic peace movement in the 1960s was a mixture of people with complex motives and erratic impulses. Merton and Day were aware of this, and saw their task as shaping and directing peacemaking in a meaningful and less reactionary direction. Michael Mott, true to the mark, summed up the dilemma of Day and Merton:

Merton sent letters of support for the non-violent peace strike organized by *The Catholic Worker* to Dorothy Day and Jim Forest in the spring of 1962. The letter to Forest appeared in *The Catholic Worker* in February. In the private letters between Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton, the two shared anxieties about the future of the movement. Both agreed on Forest's integrity and intelligence, but for Dorothy Day there were too many young people who wanted to help who seemed consumed by violent personal conflicts.⁷

It was these 'violent personal conflicts' between many within the peace movement that, understandably so, worried Day and Merton. Both knew that if the peace movement was not grounded in something deeper than mere protest and reaction, more harm would be done than good.

Merton was also impacted by the rising Beat and counter-culture tradition that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s in the U.S. Many of the Beats and those who anticipated the Beats such as William Carlos Williams, Kenneth Rexroth, Cid Corman, Henry Miller, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder had definite views about America and its tendency towards war and military aggressiveness. Merton corresponded with most of these people, and some of his thinking about peace was shaped and formed by them. The emerging countercultural movement within the U.S. was drawn to Merton's writings on peace. New Directions Press and Lawrence Ferlinghetti were keen to publish Merton's

prose and poetry on peace.

There had not been many solid books written on the Christian tradition of peacemaking when Merton entered his peacemaking phase. William Shannon has rightly suggested in *Passion for Peace: The Social Essays* that Merton's commitment to peacemaking entered a white heat phase between 1961 and 1962. It was at this period of time that Merton's *Cold War Letters* were written and eventually published. There are 111 letters written by Merton between October, 1961 and October, 1962, and each of these letters, from a variety of insightful perspectives, deals with issues of war and peace. It was at this period of time also that Merton was working on a book on the history of Christian peacemaking. The book, *Peace in the Post-Christian Era*, was completed in April 1962, and Merton hoped the book would be published in the autumn of 1962. The Abbot General of the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance, Dom Gabriel Sortais, insisted that Merton not publish the book. Sortais was convinced it was not the role of a monk to be writing on peace and war, public issues and politics. Needless to say, Merton was frustrated by the censuring of his emerging vision of the public role of a monk. Sortais would not back down. Merton, however, was fortunate that his Abbot, Dom James Fox, made it somewhat possible for him to circumvent this ban by distributing mimeographed editions of the book.⁸

Peace in the Post-Christian Era was not formally published until 2004, and the foreword by Jim Forest and the introduction by Patricia Burton, tell the story of Merton's journey to be a published peacemaker. The interior reaction of Merton to the command of Sortais is recounted in an honest and vulnerable manner in the letters that passed between Merton and Jim Forest. Merton was certainly learning what it meant to be at peace in a context in which his passion for peace was being subverted, denied and negated. It is significant to note, though, that at much higher levels than Sortais and the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance (Trappists), Vatican II was underway, and much of Merton's thinking on peace was having an impact on the Council. The publication in April

1963 of the encyclical, *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth) by Pope John XXIII, was almost step for step in line with Merton's thinking about the arms race and nuclear weapons.

Merton's thinking on peace in the nuclear era was grounded in the Christian tradition of peacemaking, but many of his conclusions meant that he had become allied with those within the much broader peacemaking community in the U.S. and beyond. Merton turned to Asia for leads on peacemaking. His book, *Gandhi on Non-Violence* (1964), made it abundantly clear that his peacemaking bucket could be dipped in different wells for life-giving waters. Merton's impact on the larger peace movement spread in a diversity of directions, and the fact that he had grounded his understanding of peace in a deeper contemplative and communal way of knowing and being earned the respect of many within the more activist wing of peacemaking. Merton had joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation in 1961. F.O.R.'s statement of purpose is clear. Those who join the organization are committed not to fight in war or assist those engaged in combat. Merton was more than willing to sign the pledge as the U.S. intensified the war in Vietnam and the hawks in the arms race continued to build up their machines of war.

The initial publication of *Original Child Bomb* in 1961 dealt with the bombing of Hiroshima and was published in Robert Lax's magazine, *Pax*, but the sheer power and insights of the prose poem called for much wider attention and circulation. This is why New Directions republished this lengthy and incisive prose poem in 1962. Needless to say, such an approach and interpretation of the American bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki did not go over with hawkish and patriotic Americans who thought the bombs had to be dropped to end World War II. I have a copy of the 1962 New Directions publication of *Original Child Bomb* with all the black ink sketches that illuminate the graphic and vivid text. Those who take the meditative time to sit with the text and sketches cannot but be internally transformed by what Merton was trying to say and do.

There is a rather stark and poignant transition in Merton's thinking in *The Tower of Babel* (1957) and Merton's Auschwitz

poem, "Chant to be Used in Processions Around a Site with Furnaces" (1961). *The Tower of Babel* is a rather crude and simplistic, detached and disengaged version of More's *Utopia*, whereas the publication by Lawrence Ferlinghetti (City Lights) in 1961 of "Chant to be Used in Processions Around a Site with Furnaces" is rooted in real history, real people and in particular in the gruesome events in Germany in World War II. There is a maturing of Merton's thought and poetic/prophetic vision between his more apocalyptic and dualistic vision in *Tower of Babel* and his more compassionate, informed, and engaged commitments in *Original Child Bomb* and "Chant." The ascent to truth had given way to the descent into the prophetic truths of history.

The most recent edition of Jim Forest's biography of Merton, *Living with Wisdom: A Life of Thomas Merton* has a fine chapter entitled "Pastor to Peacemakers." Forest knew Merton from 1961-1968, and he has internalized Merton's peacemaking message in a way that few have done. Jim Forest is now a member of the Orthodox Church, and he founded the Orthodox Peace Fellowship. He worked with both Dorothy Day and Merton, and he was the director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation for many years. "Pastor to Peacemakers" is laced with passages from Merton that deal primarily with the need for peace in the inner life if peace in the outer world is going to have much meaning. Merton was a master of dissecting the complex and often contradictory motives that brought people from a variety of backgrounds to the peacemaking vocation.

Merton led a retreat for peacemakers in November 1964 that was organized by the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The theme of the retreat was the spiritual roots of protest. Some important leaders of the peace movement attended the event: A. J. Muste, Jim Forest, J. H. Yoder, Daniel and Philip Berrigan, John Oliver Nelson, Tom Cornell, W. H. Ferry and Tony Walsh. The fact that the group was a mix of Protestants and Catholics meant that historic divisions between these groups had to be overcome and peace between them initiated. The Berrigan brothers put together what

Merton called an uncanonical Mass in English in which the bread and wine were offered to one and all. This was rather radical, but Merton found it simple and impressive. At the retreat Merton spoke about Franz Jagerstatter's resistance to the Nazis and the fine work Gordon Zahn had done on uncovering the historic peace tradition. The retreat was a historic event for a number of significant reasons: the inner roots of peace were probed, peacemakers from various faith traditions were brought together, and there was an uncanonical Mass that brought ecclesial peace between different Christians.

Merton's passion for peace, as I briefly mentioned above, drew from the almost forgotten Christian peace tradition, but Merton's vision for peace also spoke to peacemakers from other religious traditions. The Vietnam War had certainly reached a feverish pitch by 1967, and in May 1967 Thich Nhat Hanh (a Buddhist monk from Vietnam) visited Merton at Gethsemani for a couple of days. Merton declared that Thich Nhat Hanh was his brother. Daniel Berrigan suggested to Merton in 1967 that he go to Vietnam as a hostage for peace. Merton was open to the suggestion, but the idea never became a reality. Berrigan published a book with Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Raft Is Not the Shore: Conversations Toward A Buddhist/Christian Awareness* (1975) that demonstrated the direction more radical Roman Catholics were going on the path of interfaith awareness. Merton had meetings with the much younger Dalai Lama when he was in India in the late autumn of 1968, and *Signs of Peace: The Interfaith Letters of Thomas Merton* (2006) illustrate in ten compact chapters how wide-ranging was Merton's commitment to peace in his dialogue with leaders of other faith traditions.

Merton, although not aware of it, was closing in on the final few steps of his life in 1968. He had dreamed of becoming a hermit for many years, and he had become one at Gethsemani, but his popularity made it virtually impossible for him to be a hermit. Many were the visitors to his hermitage, and Merton longed for a more isolated and secluded hermitage. He was given permission in 1968 to look for a hermitage far from Gethsemani, and his final

few books, *Woods, Shore, Desert: A Notebook May 1968*, *Thomas Merton in Alaska: The Alaskan Conferences, Journals, and Letters* and *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* embody and reflect his quest for deeper silence and a hermitage where the meaning of inner peace could be more meaningfully explored. Sadly and tragically so, Merton died in Thailand after giving a lecture on Marxism and monasticism in December 1968, the issue of justice and peace ever before him. I was fortunate in the autumn of 2008 to visit the site of the convent where Merton led his final retreat in Eagle River in Alaska. My trek to Alaska was organized to coincide with the exact days Merton had been in Alaska forty years earlier. I used *Thomas Merton in Alaska: The Alaskan Conferences, Journals, and Letters* as my guide. This book is often ignored in considering the final phase of Merton's journey, but the retreat he led brought together, in an evocative, compact and probing way, his commitment to contemplation and action, peacemaking in the inner and outer life. It is, in many ways, a more judicious and informed book than *The Asian Journal*.⁹

As has been suggested, Merton's peacemaking journey can be summed up in four phases. The first season (1915-1938) tended to be a more indulgent and narcissistic phase in which Merton was young and egoistic. There were hints in his early years of something deeper, but not much more than erratic and undeveloped pointers to the path he would walk. The second season (1938-1948) was, in some ways, a penitential and ascetic phase in Merton's journey. The quest went much deeper for an inner peace that was definitely lacking in Merton's scattered and fragmented youth. The publication and immense popularity of *The Seven Storey Mountain* in 1948 brought to an end the more insulated and isolated phase of Merton's life. The third season (1948-1958) of Merton's life was a combination of Merton uncovering the relationship of contemplation to peace and, equally important but in a more hesitant way, the relationship between contemplation and public responsibility.

It was in the fourth and final season (1958-1968) of Merton's journey that his various approaches to peace were fully integrated,

thought through, and lived forth in the most meaningful manner. In this final season, he integrated the inner peace of the contemplative way, peace and renewed concord between different forms of Christianity, peace in the larger political, social, ecological and economic realms, and peace between Christianity and other religions. It is in this final phase that, in the words of the epigraphs that began this essay, Merton stands out as one of the "most brilliant peacemakers in the entire Catholic tradition" and one of the "first nuclear pacifists."

Endnotes

1. Lawrence Cunningham qtd. in *Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton*, ed. Morgan Atkinson (Collegeville, MN: 2008), 183.
2. Ronald Musto, *The Catholic Peace Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 249.
3. Musto, *Catholic Peace Tradition*, 250.
4. Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, 1998), 3.
5. See Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 140-41.
6. Jim Forest, "Foreword," in Thomas Merton, *Peace in the Post-Christian Era*, ed. Patricia Burton (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), ix.
7. Michael Mott, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 377.
8. See Merton's letter to John Heidbrink, Oct. 30, 1961, in Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love*, ed. William Shannon (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1985), 402-403.
9. See my article "In the Footsteps of Thomas Merton: Alaska," *Merton Seasonal* 33:4 (2008).

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