

Exploding the Argument: The Mim Tea Estate and Polonnaruwa

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This paper focuses on the few days Thomas Merton spent at the Mim Tea Estate and the few hours he spent at Polonnaruwa. First, it presents three analogies to consider as we review these events. Second, it follows a chronological sequence, beginning November 4, 1968, the day the Dalai Lama recommended that Merton study *Madhyamika*, and ending with Merton's description of his December 2 visit to Polonnaruwa. Basic information about *Madhyamika* and my perceptions about Merton's text are interspersed throughout. The conclusion considers Merton's experiences at the Mim Tea Estate and Polonnaruwa in the light of the analogies first presented.

'Nondisintegrating Explosions' and New Clearings

Canon A.M. Allchin used the phrase "nondisintegrating explosion" during his wonderful Presidential Address at the 2006 Conference of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland. In *Silent Lamp*, Shannon used the following excerpt from Allchin:

"It seems to me that during these years there was an explosion of activity going on in Merton's heart and mind. But it was a very special kind of explosion, one that has no exact equivalent in the physical

world. It was a nondisintegrating explosion, and hence its effects were constructive and not destructive. The center did hold. He did not fall apart. Anyone less well integrated than he was might well have done so."¹

Do Allchin's words offer a metaphor that applies to Merton's experiences at the Mim Tea Estate (Mim) and Polonnaruwa?

Merton also used the word 'explosion' in a relevant context. Writing as an alumnus, for a Columbia University publication, in 1967, he proposed that the purpose of all education was to dispose a person to a specific type of experience. During the Middle Ages, universities 'by *scientia*, intellectual knowledge,' and monasteries 'by *sapientia*, or mystical contemplation' sought to activate certain qualities within persons.²

"[T]he fruit of education . . . was the activation of that inmost center, that *scintilla animae*, that 'apex' or 'spark' which is a freedom beyond freedom, an identity beyond essence, a self beyond all ego, a being beyond the created realm, and a consciousness that transcends all division, all separation . . . The 'spark' which is my true self is the

flash of the Absolute recognizing itself in me . . . This realization at the apex is a coincidence of all opposites . . . The 'spark' is not so much a stable entity which one finds but an event, an explosion which happens as all opposites clash within oneself . . . The purpose of all learning is to dispose man for this kind of event . . . The purpose of various disciplines is to provide ways or paths which lead to this capacity for ignition."³

Merton holds up to Columbia a goal for all education – to help people be receptive to an experience that ignites the spark within, that explosively unifies, at least momentarily, the conflicts and contradictions to which all of us are subject. Did Merton have this type of experience at Mim or Polonnaruwa?

Shortly before his trip to Asia, Merton used a quieter image – breaking through the woods into a new clearing. Does this pattern characterize what happened at Mim and Polonnaruwa? During a day of recollection he presented in Alaska, after referring to his own 'complex, self-contradictory temperament,' Merton said:

"If we really want to be saints in the full sense of the word, we must let God's power really work on us, and build us into one piece . . . [W]e know in our hearts that it should be possible and want it to be possible, but it is by the Divine power, not by our own power. We are afraid to believe that this power is in us. But if we do admit that this Divine force is present in our souls . . . we have to transcend ourselves – we will have to

go beyond our present level ...[O]ur life demands breakthroughs; not every day, not every week, not every month, but once in a while we must break through and go beyond where we are. You have to build up all you have done and push through with it, and then you find that you are out of the woods in a new clearing, you are somewhere else developing a new way."⁴

At the end of the paper, we will consider how these three models apply to Mim and Polonnaruwa.

"...[O]ur life demands breakthroughs; not every day, not every week, not every month, but once in a while we must break through and go beyond where we are..."

Madhyamika

The *Madhyamika*⁵ tradition of Mahayana Buddhism developed in an historical context marked by polarization between Hinduism and Buddhism. As Christianity, although it had developed within a Jewish culture, contradistinguished itself from Judaism, so Buddhism, although it had developed in a Hindu culture, contradistinguished itself from Hinduism. Nagarjuna, who lived in southern India in about the second century, roughly seven centuries after Buddha, saw that such polarization was harmful. His proposed cure was to acknowledge that human reason creates

multiple irreconcilable views of the absolute and to determine, therefore, to neither affirm nor deny any rational explanation. Reason is useful in the practical, phenomenal world but is simply unsuited for the purpose of ascertaining truth about the absolute. Nagarjuna developed the dialectic method of *Madhyamika*. Merton's friend Amiya Chakravarty said that *Madhyamika* 'stood halfway between Hinduism and Buddhism.'⁶

On November 4, 1968 Merton recorded in his journal that during their first visit, the Dalai Lama:

"advised me to get a good base in *Madhyamika* philosophy (Nagarjuna and other authentic Indian sources) and to consult qualified Tibetan scholars, uniting study and practice. Dzogchen was good, he said, provided one had a sufficient grounding in metaphysics – or anyway *Madhyamika*, which is beyond metaphysics."⁷

That same afternoon Merton started reading T. R. V. Murti's *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism – A Study of the Madhyamika System*.⁸ Merton wrote to his abbot that the Dalai Lama:

" . . . gave me some very good suggestions, so that I am going to study the philosophical groundwork which underlies both Tibetan meditation and Zen. This is *Madhyamika* philosophy, which is not speculative and abstract but very concrete and fits in with the kind of sweeping purification from conceptual thought which is essential for that kind of meditation."⁹

For the next two weeks Merton studied Murti's densely written scholarly text, copying several dozen excerpts into his journal and reading notebook. He also discussed *Madhyamika* with Tibetan lamas as well as with Sonam Kazi¹⁰ and Harold Talbott.¹¹ Merton was highly sensitive to the people and places he was near; *Madhyamika* permeated his environment for most of the month between his first visit with the Dalai Lama on November 4 and Polonnaruwa on December 2. There are definite correlations between the content of Merton's selections from Murti during this month and the content of Merton's writings about Mim and Polonnaruwa.

On November 15, 1968, Merton drove out from Darjeeling toward the Himalayas, passing by but not staying at the Mim Tea Estate. His journal that day includes a quotation from Murti:

" . . . [T]he [adherent] to *Madhyamika* does not deny the real; he only denies *doctrines* about the real. For him, the real as transcendent to thought can be reached only by the denial of the determinations which systems of philosophy ascribe to it . . . His denial of the *views* of the real is not denial of the real, and he makes the denial of views – the dialectic itself – the means for realizing the real."¹²

Madhyamika critiques all arguments without affirming or denying any argument. It does not deny that the real exists; it does deny that the real can ever be caught in any intellectual net. Merton copied into his reading notebook a story that illustrates why *Madhyamika* rejected

intellectual system-building. Speaking to Vaccha, a wandering monk, Buddha took a strong position:

"To hold that the world is eternal or to hold that it is not, or to agree to any other of the propositions you adduce, Vaccha, is the jungle of theorizing, the wilderness of theorizing, the tangle of theorizing, the bondage and the shackles of theorizing, attended by ill, distress, perturbation and fever; it conduces not to detachment, passionlessness, tranquility, peace, to knowledge and wisdom of Nirvana. This is the danger I perceive in these views which makes me discard them all."¹³

Merton notes that Buddhists see the 'I' as the 'ultimate illusion,' but if the interpreter of experience is illusory: "Who is it that interprets? . . . The answer of Buddha was silence – in the face of all attempts to conceive and formulate a speculative interpretation of reality. The dialectic of *Madhyamika* is the systematic form of the Buddha's silence."¹⁴ As Merton put it, "The purpose of *Madhyamika* is not to convince, but to explode the argument itself. Is this sadism? No, it is compassion! It exorcises the devil of dogmatism."¹⁵ Note Merton's use here of the 'explosion' metaphor.

In the face of such silence, how does one reach the absolute? "The death of thought is the birth of *Prajna*, knowledge devoid of distinction,' i.e. intuition of the unconditioned . . . *Madhyamika* is critical of thought, open to experience."¹⁶ Ignorance [*avidya*] lacks the insight necessary to apprehend ultimate reality. Merton, citing Murti, refers to *avidya* as "the op-

posite not of *knowledge* but of *insight*."¹⁷ The way to overcome *avidya* is through *prajna* [wisdom] and its corollary *karuna* [compassion]. The path from *avidya* to *prajna/karuna* is the path of acquiring not knowledge but insight. In Merton's words, *Madhyamika* is "not escape from the world into idealism, but the transformation of consciousness by a detached and compassionate acceptance of the empirical world in its interrelatedness. *To be part of this interrelatedness*."¹⁸

There is a corollary that follows from *Madhyamika's* stance on 'ignorance.' Looking at the vast array of objects in the world, an ignorant person would perceive that they are real. Western society gives great honor to the premise that things which have weight and occupy space are really real.

Madhyamika disagrees; it sees them as illusions and disguises. On a practical level we need to use reason and we need to act as if the ten thousand things matter. But *Madhyamika* reserves the status of the really real for 'emptiness,' the 'indeterminate,' the 'unconditioned,' the 'absolute'.

Joseph Quinn Raab offers a valuable perception which may well indicate the way in which Merton understood *Madhyamika*.

"The insight that engenders *Madhyamika* grasps that our ordinary language (or unenlightened mind) is falsely dichotomous because it implicitly accepts the subject/object division as foundational, primary and basic. When one grasps the unity that precedes, transcends, and conditions the subject-object division that emerges in con-

sciousness, one discovers a new freedom."¹⁹

Mim Tea Estate

Two weeks after he started reading Murti, Merton visits Chatral Rimpoche. Each acknowledged that they had not yet attained to perfect emptiness and each understood the other to be "somehow *on the edge* of great realization and knew it and were trying, somehow or other, to go out and get lost in it . . ."²⁰ On November 17 Merton again takes "the long silent ride in the Land Rover to the Mim Tea Estate,"²¹ this time with a bad cold and in a gloomy mood.

"On being tired of Kanchenjunga . . .
On being tired of blue domes . . .
Tired of mountains and pleasure domes. On having a cold in the pleasure domes. Having to use a Vicks inhaler in Xanadu. On being overcharged by the druggist (chemist) for the Vicks inhaler. On being given Dristan Nasal Mist by a Jesuit."²²

His mood turns. "I am glad to be here in this utterly quiet bungalow. A fire is lit . . . it is good . . . a big bed with covers and fresh sheets turned back . . . aside, apart, alone, silent . . . Books unpacked . . ."²³ The next morning, November 18, his journal begins:

"I'm glad I came here. All morning alone on the mountainside in the warm sun, now overclouded. Plenty of time to think. Reassessment of this whole Indian experience in more critical terms. Too much movement. Too much 'looking for'

something: an answer, a vision, 'something other.'"²⁴

In the preceding sentence Merton speaks negatively of the same phenomenon he had spoken of positively two days earlier. Then he was pleased that both he and Chatral were "somehow *on the edge* of great realization and knew it and were trying, somehow or other, to go out and get lost in it."²⁵ Although their tone differs, both sentences indicate that Merton was aware that he might be near a breakthrough.

At the Mim Tea Estate, Merton continues to reflect on his Asian trip, glad that he has been able to communicate with Tibetan monks.

"Meeting the Dalai Lama and the various Tibetans . . . has been the most significant thing of all, especially in the way we were able to communicate with one another and share an essentially spiritual experience of 'Buddhism' which is also somehow in harmony with Christianity."²⁶

The talk Merton prepared for the Calcutta conference clearly and succinctly states his goals and parameters for his trip to Asia.²⁷ He is deeply satisfied, indeed delighted that with the Tibetans he has been able to do what he hoped to do. In contrast, he is ambivalent about his time in the Darjeeling area, including time spent "shivering in the [Hotel] Windamere over the *Madhyamika* dialectic."²⁸

He spends the afternoon in the bungalow, sitting before the fire, looking at the view of Kanchenjunga. He is in a mellow mood. "The sun is warm. Everything falls

into place. Nothing is to be decided; nor is 'Asia' to be put in some category or other. There is nothing to be judged."²⁹ Significantly, he finishes Murti's book on *Madhyamika*, then "meditated, sometimes sleepily, and was entirely content."³⁰ For Merton's journals to indicate that he is 'entirely content' is a very rare occurrence! The next day, November 19, his journal begins:

"Last night I had a curious dream about Kanchenjunga. I was looking at the mountain and it was pure white, absolutely pure, especially the peaks that lie to the west. And I saw the pure beauty of their shape and outline, all in white. And I heard a voice saying – or got the clear idea of: 'There is another side to the mountain.' I realized that it was turned around and everything was lined up differently; I was seeing it from the Tibetan side . . . There is another side of Kanchenjunga and of every mountain – the side that has never been photographed and turned into post cards. That is the only side worth seeing."³¹

The first time I read that passage I made a note in the margin – 'no.' In his dream, the mountain was 'pure white,' 'absolutely pure' marked by 'the pure beauty of shape and outline, all in white.' In real life only gradations in light and color reveal shape and outline. In his dream Merton has divided the mountain into a front and a back view, reverse images, elevating the view that he can only dream about, denigrating the view that it is possible for him to see out the window. Good dream view. Bad daytime view. My perception of the

dream changed, as I considered its relationship to Merton's description of the mountain at the end of the day.

"Kanchenjunga this afternoon. The clouds of morning parted slightly and the mountain, the massif of attendant peaks, put on a great, slow, silent *dorje* dance of snow and mist, light and shadow, surface and sinew . . . It went on for hours . . . shape and line and shadow and form. O Tantric Mother Mountain! Yin-yang palace of opposites in unity! Palace of *anicca*, impermanence and patience, solidity and nonbeing, existence and wisdom. A great *consent* to be and not-be . . . The full beauty of the mountain is not seen until you too consent to the impossible paradox: it is and is not. When nothing more needs to be said, the smoke of ideas clears, the mountain is SEEN.

"Testament of Kanchenjunga."³²

I suggest that Merton capitalizes 'SEEN' because: "The essence of the *Madhyamika* attitude . . . consists in not allowing oneself to be entangled in views and theories, but just to observe the nature of things without standpoints."³³

In his view of the mountain, Merton makes one claim – the opposites are dancing together in harmony. He explicitly mentions many complementary pairs: snow and mist, light and shadow, surface and sinew, shape and line, shadow and form, yin and yang, impermanence and patience, solidity and nonbeing, existence and wisdom, and willingness to be and not to be. There is one problem. The

truth of the one claim can be seen only if the viewer accepts the 'impossible paradox' that the mountain simultaneously is and is not. Only after ceasing to insist on the logical proposition that 'that which is cannot simultaneously not be' can one see the unity of all that is. Only after accepting that reason cannot explain ultimate reality, is one able to intuit the unity which is truly present. It is only at that point that 'nothing more needs to be said' and the 'smoke of ideas clears.'

How did Merton get from an unconscious image of two sides that totally exclude each other to a conscious visualization of all opposites in unity? As All-

"The full beauty of the mountain is not seen until you too consent to the impossible paradox: it is and is not."

chin perceived, there was explosive activity going on in Merton's heart and mind. It seemed that Merton had moved from one position to its polar opposite in less than 24 hours. How did it happen? I re-read the dream and found a clue. Merton says: "I heard a voice saying – or got a clear idea of: 'There is another side of the mountain.' I realized I was turned around and everything was lined up differently; I was seeing it from the Tibetan side." I suggest that the Tibetan side is the *Madhyamika* side. As the passive voice indicates, Merton had been 'turned around.' In the dream he found himself on the side where he had never been in his waking life. He found himself looking at

the world with *Madhyamika* eyes.

That afternoon, by means of this *Madhyamika* viewpoint, he went past the 'impossible paradox,' at least long enough to see the 'full beauty of the mountain,' and the ancient 'Testament of Kanchenjunga.' Note that his conclusion conjoins the beautiful and the sacred.

My comments about Merton's reflections on 'the three doors' are brief. The item Merton entered into his reading journal immediately after he finished entering excerpts from Murti goes far to unlock this meditation.³⁴ Both in the reading notebook and in the journal he first uses a Buddhist framework and then moves to a Christian framework – at ease with both; disparaging neither.³⁵

Merton's last comment at the Mim Tea Estate expresses appreciation. "Whatever may be the answer, or nonanswer, to my question, this is a good retreat and I appreciate the quiet more than I can say."³⁶

Polonnaruwa

On December 2, two weeks after his retreat at Mim ended, Merton takes a day trip from Kandy, in the highlands of Sri Lanka, to the Theravada Buddhist site of Polonnaruwa. Three days later, while staying at the Raffles Hotel in Singapore, Merton cautiously begins to write about Polonnaruwa.³⁷ He first records factual details. He had set out in heavy rain with the bishop's driver and the vicar general of the diocese who acts as Merton's foil. The vicar's lack of interest in seeing the Buddhist site exemplifies the traditional, mainline Christian position, i.e., Christianity has nothing to learn from other traditions.

Merton's tone changes to that of a pilgrim as he approaches the stone figures

barefoot, his feet in the rain-drenched grass and sand. Grounded. Alone. No one else is at the site. A month earlier Merton had noted that the "purpose of *Madhyamika* is not to convince, but to explode the argument itself."³⁸ His perceptions at Polonnaruwa are not at all argumentative; they are visual and aesthetic. His photographs of the statues are among the best he ever took. He looks hard and he looks deep. First he SEES: "... the silence of the extraordinary faces. The great smiles. Huge and yet subtle. Filled with every possibility, questioning nothing, knowing everything, rejecting nothing..." Then he intuitively: the figures show "the peace not of emotional resignation but of *Madhyamika*, of *sunyata* [emptiness] that has seen through every question without trying to discredit anyone or anything - without refutation - without establishing some other argument."³⁹ Merton, having argued for so long, with self and others, is acutely aware of how unsettling it can be to end the argument: "For the doctrinaire, the mind that needs well-established positions, such peace, such silence, can be frightening." But Merton contrasts himself to the doctrinaire: "I was knocked over with a rush of relief and thankfulness at the *obvious* clarity of the figures." *Madhyamika* maintains that "rejection of theories..." is itself the *means* by which Buddha was led to the non-conceptual knowledge of the absolute."⁴⁰ Merton's language here is non-conceptual. It is visual and more than visual - it involves not only 'sight' but also *Madhyamika* 'insight.'

As he looks, he is "suddenly, almost forcibly, jerked clean out" of his habitual, practical, everyday perceptions. With explosive intensity he becomes sharply

aware of 'clearness,' 'clarity,' the 'evident,' the 'obvious.' An "inner clearness, clarity, as if exploding from the rocks themselves, became evident and obvious." On the basis of that evidence he claims that "there is no puzzle, no problem, and really no 'mystery.' All problems are resolved and everything is clear, simply because what matters is clear... everything is emptiness and everything is compassion." This is not a conclusion reached by reason and logic; Merton had been 'jerked clean out' of that ignorant way of looking at things. Here he speaks from a viewpoint that transcends reason. Throughout the rest of the account, Merton continues to conjoin the aesthetic with the sacred aspects: "beauty and spiritual validity running together in one aesthetic illumination... clear, pure, complete... a Zen garden..." His concluding words are: "a beautiful and holy vision."

Conclusion

Was there a 'nondisintegrating explosion' as Allchin used the term?

My answer is yes. Both Mim and Polonnaruwa exemplify Merton's ability to integrate opposites. In the course of his life he had had much experience with such integration. As he indicated in 1962,

"I have had to accept the fact that my life is almost totally paradoxical. I have also had to learn gradually to get along without apologizing for the fact, even to myself... All life tends to grow like this, in mystery inscaped with paradox and contradiction, yet centered, in its very heart, on the divine mercy... Without the grace

of God there could be no unity, no simplicity in our lives: only contradiction... we can impose on life our intellectual systems and we can enforce upon our minds a certain strained and artificial peace. But this is not peace... Those who continue to struggle are at peace."⁴¹

Merton had learned how to live with struggle without letting it tear him apart. He intensely desired to embody the qualities described in his essay "Final Integration."⁴² Allchin's perception of Merton's high level of integration would have pleased Merton very much. Allchin's phrase nicely describes Polonnaruwa, as it continues to do if the double negatives (non- and dis) are omitted.

Was there an 'explosion' as Merton used the term?

With respect to Mim - no. Time 'aside, apart, alone, silent' enabled Merton to be deeply productive, but the retreat lacked explosiveness and also closure, as indicated by his comment that it had been a good retreat, "[w]hatever may be the answer, or nonanswer, to my question."

With respect to Polonnaruwa - yes. There is definitive closure: "[M]y Asian pilgrimage has come clear and purified itself. I mean, I know and have seen what I was obscurely looking for."⁴³ Further, there is a very high correlation between what Merton described in the Columbia essay as the goal of all learning and the experience Merton had at Polonnaruwa. The 'spark' that was Merton's 'true self' was ignited; profound divisions and separations were transcended. It was a 'realization at the apex,' 'a coincidence of all opposites,' 'not so much a stable en-

tity' that would remain unchanged but 'an event, an explosion which happens as all opposites clash within oneself.' References to being 'knocked over with a rush of relief,' being 'suddenly, almost forcibly, jerked' and being imbued with clarity that seemed to be 'exploding from the rocks themselves' illustrate the intensity of the moment. In the Columbia essay Merton had declared that learning could dispose man for this kind of event and various disciplines could provide paths. Merton had worked long and hard to dispose himself. He had trod at least two paths to Polonnaruwa, the spiritual/religious/ecumenical and the aesthetic/poetic/artistic. Trying to follow both paths simultaneously had been a frequent source

The 'spark' that was Merton's 'true self' was ignited

of stress during his life. At times he felt them to be very much opposed to each other. At Polonnaruwa those opposites clashed like cymbals. This time, 'beauty and spiritual validity' ran together 'in one aesthetic illumination.'

Madhyamika greatly influenced both Mim and Polonnaruwa. As the title of this paper indicates, there was a direct link between Merton's perception that the goal of *Madhyamika* was to explode rational arguments and his subsequent non-conceptual perception of the absolute at Polonnaruwa. In Raab's words, Merton grasped 'the unity that precedes, transcends, and conditions the subject-object division.'

Was there a breakthrough into a new clearing?

Yes. Both Mim and Polonnaruwa were breakthroughs. Had Merton lived, his natural tendency would have been to continue on, heading back into the woods, going 'somewhere else developing a new way.' His comments in Alaska speak of his long habit and they speak to us.

"If we really want to be saints in the full sense of the word, we must let God's power really work on us, and build us into one piece . . . [W]e know in our hearts that it should be possible and want it to be possible, but it is by the Divine power, not by our own power. We are afraid to believe that this power is in us. But if we do admit that this Divine force is present in our souls . . . we will have to go beyond our present level."⁴⁴

Notes

1. William Shannon, *Silent Lamp*, (New York: Crossroad 1993) p. 287.
2. Thomas Merton, "Learning to Live," in *Love and Living*, edited by Naomi Burton Stone & Patrick Hart (New York: Harcourt Brace Harvest Edition 1985) p.
7. The essay was first published in *University on the Heights*, edited by Wesley First (Doubleday, 1969).
3. Merton, *Love and Living*, pp. 9-10.
4. Thomas Merton, *Thomas Merton in Alaska* (New York: New Directions 1998) pp. 150-51.
5. Thomas Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, edited by Naomi Burton, Patrick Hart, and James Laughlin, (New York: New Directions 1973) p.

385. Subsequently referenced as AJ. The editors made a great effort to make Merton's writings accessible to both Eastern and Western readers. They provided a glossary explaining unfamiliar terms, notes at the end of chapters explaining references within the chapter and a comprehensive index. Explanations of all non-English words in this paper can be found in those sources.

6. AJ, p. vii.
7. AJ, pp. 101-02.
8. T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, second edition (London: Allen & Unwin 1960.)
9. AJ, p. 179.
10. AJ, p. 172.
11. AJ, p. 71.
12. AJ, p. 140-41.
13. AJ, p. 276.
14. AJ, p. 275-76.
15. AJ, p. 118.
16. AJ, p. 115.
17. AJ, p. 267.
18. AJ, p. 116.
19. Joseph Quinn Raab, "Madhyamika and Dharmakaya: Some Notes on Thomas Merton's Epiphany at Polonnaruwa," in *The Merton Annual*, volume 17, 2004, edited by Victor A. Kramer, p. 198
20. AJ, p. 143.
21. AJ, p. 147.
22. AJ, p. 146.
23. AJ, p. 147.
24. AJ, p. 148.
25. AJ, p. 143.
26. AJ, p. 148.
27. AJ, pp. 309-17.
28. AJ, p. 150.
29. AJ, p. 151.
30. AJ, p. 151.
31. AJ, pp. 152-3.
32. AJ, pp. 155-57.

33. AJ, p. 137.

34. AJ, p. 284, citing S. B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press 1958), p. 94. See also AJ, p. 292.

35. AJ, pp. 284-5 and 153-5.

36. AJ, p. 158.

37. AJ, pp. 230-36. The following quotations from those pages are not cited individually.

38. AJ, pp. 118.

39. AJ, p. 233. Madhyamika philosophy does not seek to impose any rational explanation of the absolute. It does dispute the rational explanations of the absolute proposed by others.

40. AJ, p. 277.

41. Thomas Merton, *Thomas Merton Reader*, edited by Thomas P. McDonnell (New York: Doubleday 1974) pp 16-18.

42. Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press 1998) pp. 200-212

43. AJ, p. 236.

44. Thomas Merton, *Thomas Merton in Alaska* (New York: New Directions 1988) pp. 150-151.

Judith Hunter is an attorney who has given many presentations on Thomas Merton.

AN APOLOGY

A matter of concern has been drawn to our attention regarding an article in the Merton Journal in 2002.

It seems that substantial sections of the article, *Reflections on the Encounter between Christianity and Islam* by Anthony O'Mahony, pp. 4-16 of the Advent 2002 journal (volume 9 no.2), were taken without acknowledgement from an article by Professor Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 'The Abrogation of Judaism and Christianity in Islam: A Christian Perspective', in *Concilium* 1994/3 (ISBN 0 334 030269). Although Prof McAuliffe's paper is referred to in the MJ footnotes, these do not make clear how much of that paper has been used.

On behalf of the 2002 editorial team, we apologise that the Merton Journal has unwittingly carried unauthorized replication, and recommend to our readers Professor Jane McAuliffe's original article.

Gary Hall, Editor