Thomas Merton on the Challenge of the 'Post-Christian' World

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In the spring of 1962, Thomas Merton wrote a reflective essay, 'Loretto and Gethsemani', to celebrate the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the neighboring Sisters of Loretto. Their Motherhouse today stands less than fifteen miles from his monastery in central Kentucky. In 1812, this first religious congregation of United States women was founded. Graves of some of these pioneers rest undisturbed in the lay cemetery at the Abbey of Gethsemani. In 1848, French Cistercian monks purchased from the Sisters of Loretto the property they had cultivated and tamed in the American wilderness. The Lorettines then transplanted themselves to their new environs of Nerinx. A second attempt to establish a monastery (the first party of French Cistercians tried but failed in 1803) took root and an Abbey was born in the rural heartland where the Sisters of Loretto had preceded them.

Merton points to "a quiet mixture of wisdom and madness, a triumph of hope and despair" that both of these religious communities embrace. He reflects upon their shared dissatisfaction with the status quo. He remarks how they avoid the temptation in the United States "to identify holiness with prosperity." Rather than turn the Beatitudes inside out, he sees that their vocation as Lorettines and Cistercians serve as the conscience of "a

confused and increasingly conscienceless world of pragmatism and laissez-faire." Merton insists that such a counter-cultural stance not be viewed as an anachronism but as "a kind of dissent which is necessary for genuine growth." He insists that such Christian spiritual dissent "is all the more essential as we enter what C.S. Lewis has called the *post-Christian era*."[1]

Readers find this telltale of Lewis's neologism, "post-Christian," near the end of Merton's Loretto essay. It appeared during a period of transition and intellectual ferment for him, a moment when he was negotiating a series of converging events and insights. He argues against barricading ourselves in a Catholic ghetto and cultivating "a little smug fortress of security in a world of pagans." Faith and the love of truth now obligate us to Christ's message and, in the monk's words, "to all that is valid in human culture and civilization."[2] Perhaps unlike other terms "post-Christian" defined both the challenges and the new possibilities for Thomas Merton during the final decade of his life. Indeed, the reality of a "post-Christian" world prompted the urgent need he discerned to reinterpret meaning amid a multi-faceted pluralism. Given the horizon of this new hermeneutic, I will explore: (1) C.S. Lewis's coining of the term "post-Christian" and Merton's appropriation of

it; (2) Merton's enthusiasm for George Tavard's critique of Christendom and contemporary prospects for a Christian culture; and (3) Gabriel Vahanian's influence on Merton's late understanding of the "post-Christian" world.

C.S. Lewis: the 'pre-Christian,' the "Christian," and the 'post-Christian'

C. S. Lewis (1893-1963) is appropriately known as a twentieth century Christian apologist. His *Mere Christianity* (1952) is a mid-twentieth century exemplar in this tradition. The nature and success of Merton's work compares in significant ways with Lewis's impressive writings and their popularity. Lewis converted to Christianity in 1931 while at Oxford University—just as Merton later converted to Catholicism in 1938 while a student at Columbia University. Both Merton and Lewis thrived in the culture of the secular university with classical models of virtue and art. Lewis (like Merton) did not hesitate to speak autobiographically to post-World War II society, as evidenced in *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (1955). He proved highly successful with his imaginative fantasy works: the overtly religious *The Screwtape Letters* (1942) and an implicitly religious series of the seven Narnia stories for children, with the especially popular *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) among his most popular works. While Merton left behind the novel genre and fiction when he entered the monastery, over one thousand pages of his poetry[3] cultivate his unique *mythos* and a rich imaginative world that parallels, in certain ways, Lewis'.

There is a certain irony to the fact that C.S. Lewis first publicly employed his

newly coined expression, "post-Christian," in the 1954 inaugural lecture he delivered as Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English Literature at Cambridge University. Twenty years earlier, in 1934, Thomas Merton had departed abruptly from England for a future in America when he withdrew from studies in Clare College at the same Cambridge University, shamed by low grades and a riotous personal life that apparently included being responsible for an out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Lewis's lecture was entitled "*De Descriptione Temporum,*" or "A Description of the Times." He recalled that Europe's conversion to Christianity had once been judged an irreversible event. Yet, in fact, Lewis admitted that Europe was experiencing an "un-christening". "All history was for our ancestors," he admitted, "divided into only two periods, the pre-Christian and the Christian." However, he judged, we now need to speak of a third period, the "post-Christian." Lewis considered these periods from the point of view of cultural changes, not from a theological perspective. In this regard he resembled Friedrich Nietzsche, whose Parable of the Madman spoke more of the "death of God" as a cultural lapse, not a metaphysical statement of reality.

> "[I]t appears to me that the second change is even more radical than the first. Christians and Pagans had much more in common with each other than either has with a post-Christian. The gap between those who worship different gods is not so wide as that between those who worship and those who do not."[4]

Lewis returned to this main point later in the lecture. Unfortunately, he indulged too often in patriarchal language when attempting to interpret his terms; but beneath the ugly misogyny lay a crucial distinction: "A post-Christian man is not a Pagan; you might as well think that a married woman recovers her virginity by divorce. The post-Christian is cut off from the Christian past and therefore doubly from the Pagan past."[5]

Lewis's 1954 essay "Is God in the Dock?" countered widespread fear that in the wake of World War II England was relapsing into Paganism and joining Europe in abandoning Christianity. He viewed the Pagan or "pre-Christian . . . religious man" as a person "eminently convertible to Christianity." Lewis created a conspicuous metaphor to describe the difference: "The post-Christian man of our day differs from [the pre-Christian man] as much as a *divorcee* differs from a virgin." In early March 1953, C.S. Lewis had already used "post-Christian man" in a letter with equally striking imagery. To those who claimed that the world was reverting to pagan culture, Lewis responded in this context, "Would that it were! The truth is we are falling into a much worse state." He insisted that "pre-Christian man" was in no way the same as "post-Christian man." Another metaphor was coined: "He [the post-Christian person] is as far removed as a virgin is from a widow: there is nothing in common except want of a spouse: but there is a great difference between a spouse-to-come and a spouse lost." In a letter six months later to the same correspondent, Lewis returned to marriage imagery to make even more boldly his point. "[T]he difference between a pagan and an apostate is the

difference between an unmarried woman and an adulteress." For Lewis, this meant that faith lost contradicts the faith that perfects human nature, for apostasy "corrupts nature". "Therefore many men of our time have lost not only the supernatural light but also the natural light which pagans possessed."[6]

When Merton appropriates the term "post-Christian," he applies it to the culture and society of both Europe (where he had spent a considerable part of his youth) and the United States of America (where he had lived since mid-1934 and which he had embraced through citizenship in 1951). He brings a unique élan to the diagnosis of his adopted country's "post-Christian" malaise. More importantly, Lewis and Merton, as adult converts to Christianity (despite being baptized as infants, they were *de facto* "baptized unbelievers"), found much in common with those who had not drifted into a secularizing "post-Christian" identity. It comes as no surprise that Merton appropriates Lewis's "pre-Christian" category. Properly understood in light of the affinity between the Pagan and the Christian, it contributes to the monk's outreach to the religious Other, the political Other, the socio-cultural Other, and the geographic Other. So Merton would flourish in a network of dialogue and exchange on ecumenical, interreligious, cross-cultural and international levels.

In 1968, Merton received a letter from John B. Brown, a student at Union Seminary in New York City. The letter reported that shortly before his death C.S. Lewis had corresponded with the student to state that he had just discovered the monk's writing and recommended that Brown read Merton's work. Brown quotes

Lewis, who remarked that he "found it quite the best spiritual writing he had come across in a long time".[7] While Merton fails to reciprocate C.S. Lewis's generous praise with similar esteem, the Cambridge don's neologisms, "pre-Christian" and "post-Christian", appear throughout the 1960s as an important hermeneutical key to the monk's understanding and critique of Western culture.

George Tavard on Christian Culture and Pluralism

The February 9 1962 entry in Merton's journal begins with enthusiastic reading notes on an essay by theologian George Tavard,[8] remarking how Christian culture thrives on dialogue. He describes Tavard's prognosis of "rebuilding Xtian [sic] culture on the cosmic scale in cooperation with non-Christians…a cooperation he believes can become possible if [the] post-Christian technological world realize, in time, the need for Xtian [sic] wisdom."[9]

Merton transformed such often terse journal remarks from the late 1950s and early 1960s into the edited and expanded *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, published in late 1966. These carefully revised texts differ significantly from the raw, often cryptic material in the journals. They comprise his personal worldview in the early 1960s. It is a time in his life when he was renegotiating the appropriate role for himself as a contemplative monk in concert with the Second Vatican Council's initiatives to reconcile with the modern world. (The title, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, plays ironically on an understanding of the cloister as a withdrawal or flight from the world, *fuga

mundi.*)

In this elaboration on the journal entry in *Conjectures*, Merton reflects upon the dialogue with non-Christians [meaning pre-Christians, as distinct from 'post-Christians] leading to a convergence that can resurrect Christian values in a predominantly secular [post-Christian] culture. On this point, he distances himself from the "progressives". Their effort, he laments, would omit any explicitly religious horizon of the Christian values that persist in secular society. "There are many who call for a frank 'secularization' of Christianity," Merton reports, "on the ground that Christian values have persisted in the secular milieu and do not necessarily have to have an explicit 'religious' orientation." Tavard had pointed to the intellectual developments of the thirteenth century when Western Christianity openly dialogued with Jews and Muslims. He concluded, "This shows that Christian culture can reach its peak only in dialogue". Merton lauds John XXIII's renewal of the church according to the Socratic principle in a similar vein. The Johannine renewal and reforms were demonstrating how truth developed in conversation with the religious Other.

This means respect for *persons*, to the point where the person of the adversary demands a hearing even when the authority of one's own ecclesial institution might appear to be temporarily questioned. Actually, this Socratic confidence in dialogue implies a deeper faith in the Church than you find in a merely rigid, defensive, and negative attitude which refuses all dialogue. The negative view really

suggests that the Church has *something to lose* by engaging with her adversaries. This in turn is a rejection of the Christian Socratism which sees that truth develops in conversation.... Those who are open to Christ and the Apostles received the Truth. Those who refused dialogue or who engaged in it only with political intentions, with pragmatic reservations and tactical subtlety, end by crucifying Christ and slaying the Apostles.

Merton finds that such readiness to meet an adversary as one's equal, a brother or sister, creates the conditions where the adversary ceases to be an adversary. He reminds readers that such dialogue meets the religious Other on Christian ground. He rhetorically questions whether a Christian's fear of dialogue is not, in fact, evidence that her own Christian faith might be lacking something essential.[10]

Tavard's essay began with a definition of Christendom: "By Christendom I understand the social order in which there takes place a thorough interpenetration and a mutual enrichment of Christian faith and society in their intellectual, social, economic, and political dimensions. In such a society the church becomes identical with the commonwealth". However, Tavard posed a question that echoes in Merton's remark, "The Church is now in a world that is culturally 'post-Christian'".[11] Tavard queried, "In the era in which we live, can we hope only to transmit what the rich past of Christendom legated to us, or can we hope to build a Christian culture for our

culturally pluralistic world?"[12] Here lay an enthusiasm that converges perfectly with Merton's ambitions for inter-religious dialogue.

Reworking journal entries from late August and early September 1963, Merton himself ventures in *Conjectures* a descriptive definition of "post-Christian": a school of thought that rejects Christian conclusions but nonetheless takes as its starting point "presuppositions that are, or sound like, vaguely Christian views."

> *Merton rhetorically questions whether a Christian's fear of dialogue is not, in fact, evidence that her own Christian faith might be lacking something essential*

Merton identifies the post-Christian society as indifferent to traditional questions of good-and-evil—only to accept that dichotomy in an act of self-justification that confuses "good" and "evil" in order to protest that post-Christian conclusions are non-Christian. He characterizes the post-Christian mind as self-conscious about Christianity and still concerned—yet only with its Christian vestiges.[13] Merton's point becomes apparent in an illustration.

> I think that, in our eagerness to go out to modern [post-Christian] man and meet him on his own ground, accepting him as he is, we

must also be truly what *we* are. If we come to him as Christians we can certainly understand and have compassion for his unbelief—his apparent incapacity to believe. But it would seem a bit absurd for us, precisely as Christians, to pat him on the arm and say: 'As a matter of fact, I don't find the Incarnation credible myself. Let's just consider that Christ was a nice man who devoted himself to helping others!'

> What is the use of coming to modern [post-Christian] man with the claim that you have a Christian mission—that you are sent in the name of Christ—if in the same breath you deny Him by whom you claim to be sent?[14]

In a similar way, Merton writes to Bruno

P. Schlesinger the day following his original journal entry about Tavard's essay. He captures the irony of the Catholic person "who is the aggressive specimen of a ghetto Catholic culture, limited, rigid, prejudiced, negative"—"precisely a non-Catholic, at least in the cultural sense." Merton finds "a lot of truth" in this contradiction. He even entertains the notion that such a "Catholic" may be religiously anti-Catholic "without realizing it."[15]

Tavard twice employed the term "post-Christian" in his essay on "The Scope of Christian Culture". He insisted that a new Christian Culture could be "more pluralistic than it has ever been". Then he asked rhetorically, "But who, today, outside of Church circles, can recognize himself in Christian culture?"[16] It was the very quandary of the Christian (as well as Catholic) ghetto that gnawed at Merton's mind and heart.

Christian culture…cannot be simply the culture of Christians next to that of Jews, Moslems, of agnostics and so forth. It cannot consent to be placed on the market of the intellect in competition with other cultures. It is not a product of the mind to be compared with the products of rival minds. The world of thought is not that of business. And in our sort of society, especially in America, we should beware of the temptation to sell faith or culture on their claim to superiority. This would debase them, if it has not already done so.[17]

Part IV of *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, which opens with Merton's attention to Tavard's engaging essay is entitled "The Fork in the Road". It is a fitting signal of the monk's decision to fully engage the world of religious, intellectual, social, economic and political pluralism in order to refashion an authentic Christian culture through dialogue.

Merton's Late Understanding of the "Post-Christian" World: The Influence of Gabriel Vahanian

When *Faith and Violence* appeared in late 1968, Merton already was in the midst of his Asian journey which would end in personal tragedy. Yet he had left behind a set of essays in this volume to probe cogently questions about the post-Christian world in a new context. Theologians were engaged in a well publicized debate called the "God is Dead Theology". Merton alertly distinguishes it from nineteenth century scientific atheism. While he agrees that the God is Dead

Theology marked a real intellectual revival, he judges it as falling short of the prophetic call to which it laid claim. Merton employs United States vernacular to illustrate this contribution: "The Death of God is a necessary iconoclastic protest against every form of popular religion which has blasphemed God by trying to sell him on the same terms as next year's Chevrolet." On the other hand, the monk argues that its failure is to claim God's single epiphany in European-American culture, "the Angel of the [technological] West" as our Power and principality. Merton inquires about the supposed tension between church and state, and church and culture and recounts the rise of a post-Christian world:

But how real was that tension? In actual fact, while "the world" was habitually and consistently denigrated, at least in words, the tension between it and the Church was more and more relaxed. In proportion as the Church became less and less demanding, Christianity issued less and less of a challenge, until finally the Church would allow you practically anything as long as you continued to obey and to conform. A few difficult and symbolic issues like birth control, clerical celibacy, one permanent marriage, remained longer than any other, but are now being corroded away too. More and more the demands of the Church resolved themselves into demands for formal and exterior gestures of pious allegiance to God alone with rather more firm commitments to the claims of Caesar.[18]

Merton chronicles the new situation of the church vis-à-vis the state following the French Revolution. Thereafter, he analyzes, the church elected to put away all scruples about military conscription and the bishops neglected to scrutinize the causes of war, implying that war and everything related to it was "just."[19] Civil religion—perhaps the epitome of a post-Christian ethos—had, in effect, displaced authentic Christianity. Merton describes this crisis of western civilization as a crisis of Christianity and a crisis of Christian faith: "In this crisis, the Christian position has been one of more and more intolerable ambiguity, since in fact the last remaining elements of Christianity in western culture have all been bled away".[20] At both the metaphorical and the literal level his lamentation rings true. No wonder Merton describes the post-Christian "true believers" as figures of pitiful contradiction. They advocate bizarre, fanatical, and aberrant causes in the political and cultural arenas, and resort to racism and a host of other ethical lapses. Merton cites Gabriel Vahanian's indictment of our "Christian" institutions, which he called "only 'the lips with which we praise God while our hearts are far from him'". Vahanian charts the route into this post-Christian cul-de-sac:

The survival of the Christian tradition is handicapped rather than helped by the existence of structures that are Christian in name only. It was doubtless easier to make the conversion from pre-Christian to Christian than it is from post-Christian to Christian… Ultimately, organized re-

ligion, with its variegated paraphernalia by trying to show how pertinent faith is, blunts it and mummifies it, [this leads to] the cultural annexation of God or a deliquescence of faith into religiosity…."[21]

From Vahanian's insights, Merton appropriates the theological conundrum: "The intentness with which official Christianity [i.e., the post-Christian world] seeks to make God relevant to man makes Him so irrelevant that there remains but one alternative: to declare Him dead… For Vahanian, Biblical religion shows us once and for all that man's basic obligation to God is iconoclasm".[22] "The Unbelief of Believers" offers a sequel to Merton's perception that the post-Christian world has reduced God to an "unknown soldier" under the guise of what contemporary theologians have come to call Civil Religion. His lengthy review of Martin Marty's *Varieties of Unbelief* explores the institutionalization of unbelief as a permanent fixture in American religious culture. Merton is prescient in pointing out that technology, nationalism, and security displace the God who speaks and makes demands; God perpetually guarantees that "certain material benefits" are just and perpetual. The monk also proves iconoclastic in Vahanian's style: "Certainly a Christianity that claims to obey God when in fact it is obeying only the imperatives of a marketing and affluent society, must certainly be written off in the end as 'bad faith'".[23] As a result, Christianity is subordinate to nationalism; patriotism insists that the nation state can commit no moral evil; and unquestioning

obedience to the nation state's commands results in a renunciation of authentic Christian faith that is declared Christian heroism. Merton names the irony: "All dissent in the civil sphere thereby automatically becomes a religious betrayal and a spiritual apostasy."[24]

The third in this trio of essays from *Faith and Violence* turns attention to the so-called Unbelievers with whom Merton cultivates a special dialogue. It embraces not only the religious Other (from the world religions) but also those in European-American culture whom Merton alertly suggests are better described as "Non-Believers"—neither rejecting nor accepting Christian religious faith. In a journal entry for March 15 1966, he remarks that, amid "many hesitations," on the previous day he finished writing the first draft of "Apologies to an Unbeliever". Asking himself why he wrote it, he remarks that he did it out of "[c]ompassion for Victor Hammer [an artist friend], who is after all a very believing 'unbeliever' and for so many others who have to be alone and confused, penalized for the sincerity which prohibits facile options!"[25] Once again, the monk disparages the way "authentic religious concern degenerates into salesmanship" and affronts "the honest perplexities of the vast majority of men." He finds "trivial" such "religious vaudeville"—a stinging critique again rendered in vernacular allusions. Instead, Merton turns to the silence of God as an existential and profound religious fact. While hardly reassuring, he finds in God's silence "messages with a definite import of their own."[26]

Instead, Merton recommends the dialogue between Believers and Unbelievers.

His compassion becomes all-inclusive, demonstrating the rebirth of Christian culture through dialogue:

> My own peculiar task in my Church and in my world has been that of the solitary explorer who, instead of jumping on all the latest bandwagons at once, is bound to search the existential depths of faith in its silences, its ambiguities, and in those certainties which lie deeper than the bottom of anxiety. In these depths there are no easy answers, no pat solutions to anything. It is a kind of submarine life in which faith sometimes mysteriously takes on the aspect of doubt, when, in fact, one has to doubt and reject conventional and superstitious surrogates that have taken the place of faith. On this level, the division between Believer and Unbeliever ceases to be so crystal clear. It is not that some are all right and others are all wrong: *all* are bound to seek in honest perplexity. Everybody is an Unbeliever more or less! Only when this fact is fully experienced, accepted and lived with does one become fit to hear the simple message of the Gospel—or of any other religious teaching.[27]

In light of the *Faith and Violence* essays, a number of earlier Merton texts take on a deeper importance. One example is Part I of *Conjectures*. He entitled this initial section "Truth and Violence: An Interesting Era". It opens with a plea for ethics grounded in reasonable principles vis-à-vis a world engulfed in political expedi-

ency, technology, propaganda, and the conformism of "mass man." Merton reads this crisis as a spiritual crisis, a crisis of disordered love. The reader finds in *Conjectures* striking fragments of his more integrated thought on the post-Christian world. Thus, he juxtaposes authentic Christianity with an implicitly post-Christian emptiness. Iconoclasm stands over against mummified faith:

> We too often forget that Christian faith is a principle of questioning and struggle before it becomes a principle of certitude and peace. One has to doubt and reject everything else in order to believe firmly in Christ, and after one has begun to believe, one's faith itself must be tested and purified. Christianity is not merely a set of foregone conclusions. The Christian mind is a mind that risks intolerable purifications, and sometimes, indeed very often, the risk turns out to be too great to be tolerated. Faith tends to be defeated by the burning presence of God in mystery, and seeks refuge from him, flying to comfortable social forms and safe conventions in which purification is no longer an inner battle but a matter of outward gesture.[28]

In a similar manner, Merton singles out the "right-thinking man" as our implicitly post-Christian nemesis. As oracle, prophet, medicine man, and shaman, the right-thinkers are the architects of conformity. "The right-thinking men are managers, leaders, but not eggheads. Hence they can be believed. They can justify any

wrong road, and make it seem the *only* road." Merton concludes by presaging his metaphor of God as Soldier, "They can justify everything, even the destruction of the world".[29] To counter this drift, he proceeds to redefine Christian social action. Merton finds Christian social action to be rooted in the Incarnation, "liberating man from misery, squalor, subhuman living conditions, economic or political slavery, ignorance, alienation—instead of an 'escalator to unworldliness' or appeasement of the gods of war, lust, power, and greed".[30]

> "It is not that some are all right and others are all wrong: all are bound to seek in honest perplexity. Everybody is an Unbeliever more or less!"

He recalls Nikolay Berdyaev's pointing to our desire for utopias; now we have awakened to recognize "the far greater problem: how to prevent utopias from being actualized".[31] In the wake of the "post-Christian world," the alarm is justified. *Conjectures* explores topics such as nonviolence, Catholic identity, Christian society, Totalitarianism (Hannah Arendt), and the "pseudo-Christianity" in which the church mechanically puts "the unquiet conscience at rest...manufactur[ing]...self-complacency and inner peace!"[32] As "Truth and Violence: An Interesting Era" concludes, the emblems of the post-Christian world reappear as the context in

which the paschal mystery's transforming action is wrought.

The Gospel is the news that, if I will, I can respond now in perfect freedom to the love of God for man in Christ, that I can *now* rise above the forces of necessity and evil in order to say "yes" to the mysterious action of Spirit that is transforming the world even in the midst of violence and destruction that seem to proclaim His absence and His "death".[33]

"The Night Spirit and the Dawn Air," Part III of Conjectures, offers Merton's contemplative touching of reality as an antidote to the toxins of the post-Christian world. In Part V, "The Madman Runs to the East," the affinity between the pre-Christian and the Christian stand in stark contrast with the post-Christian ruins and barrenness. Mencius' Ox Mountain parable becomes a metaphor of human nature's renewal. So the dialogue with the religious Other becomes in Merton of Gethsemani's universe the flowering of authentic Christian culture in the fertile matrix of pluralism.

Merton's use of the expression "post-Christian world" (and its correlatives) has long been muted, if not entirely eclipsed, as a hermeneutical key for more intelligent interpretations of his mature writing. In an age when Christian fundamentalists and neo-conservatives seek to stifle the spirit of authentic Christian culture liberated in C.S. Lewis's creative neologism (and Merton's appropriation of it), it proves timely to revisit the monk's writings of the 1960s and drink deeply from his wells of wisdom.

Notes

1. *The Springs of Contemplation: A Retreat at the Abbey of Gethsemani*, ed. Jane Marie Richardson (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1992) pp. 280-83.
2. Ibid. pp. 283-84.
3. Thomas Merton, *The Collected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1977).
4. C.S. Lewis, *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) pp. 4-5.
5. Ibid. p.10.
6. *Letters: C.S. Lewis/Don Giovanni Calabria*. Trans. and ed. by Martin Moynihan. (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1988) pp. 81, 89.
7. *The Road to Joy: [Selected] Letters to New and Old Friends* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989), p. 369.
8. George Tavard, "The Scope of Christian Culture," *The Christian Scholar* 45:2 (Summer 1962) pp. 118-29. Because Merton received a copy of this article in February 1962, I surmise that Professor Bruno P. Schlesinger (St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana) had received a pre-publication copy and forwarded it to Merton. Cf. Thomas Merton, Cold War Letters (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), pp. 73-75 for Merton's letter written on the day following his journal entry and comments. There he includes this observation: "I think Fr. Tavard's analysis is very acute…. [A]nyone with eyes and ears must inevitably agree, that 'Christendom' has ceased to exist and that we are *bel et bien* in the post-Christian era. Unless we realize this fact we cannot possibly make sense out of our situation and its claims on us."
9. *Turning Toward the World* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 202.
10. *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Image Books; New York: Doubleday, 1989), pp. 217-18.
11. Ibid., p. 218.
12. "The Scope of Christian Culture," p. 118.
13. *Conjectures*, pp. 329-30.
14. Ibid., p. 336.
15. *Cold War Letters* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), p. 74.
16. "The Scope of Christian Culture," p. 126.
17. Ibid., pp. 126-27.
18. "Violence and the Death of God: or God as Unknown Soldier," *Faith and Violence* (New York: New Directions, 1968), pp. 193-94.
19. There is little surprise in Merton's choice of the title for his book, *Peace in the Post-Christian Era* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006). In the context of his carefully developed use of the expression, "post-Christian," the meaning of his fundamental *religious* concern looms larger in that volume.
20. Ibid.., p. 195.
21. Ibid., p. 196.
22. Ibid., p. 197. Cf. *At Home in the World: The Letters of Thomas Merton and Rosemary Radford Ruether* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), p. 3, where Ruether mentions sending a copy of her recent article, "Vahanian: The Worldly Church and the Churchly World." Unfortunately, Merton makes no substantive comment about the article itself in this exchange of correspondence. He alludes to (but makes no critical assessment of) the Ruether article in the context of a July 25, 1966 journal entry from *Learning to Love*, p. 101.
23. "The Unbelief of Believers," *Faith and Violence*, p. 201.
24. Ibid., p. 203.
25. *Learning to Love* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), p. 28.
26. Ibid., pp. 208, 211.
27. "Apologies to an Unbeliever," *Faith and Violence*, p. 213.
28. *Conjectures*, p. 70.
29. Ibid., p. 80.
30. Ibid., p. 82.
31. Ibid., p. 86.
32. Ibid., p. 116.
33. Ibid., p. 128.

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