

Sentinels Upon the World's Frontier: Thomas Merton and Celtic Monasticism

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Introduction

Thomas Merton was a man who could be fascinated, deeply fascinated, with an innumerable range of topics. One has only to look at some of his collections of essays, his letters and his journals, or the books on his library shelves to get some inkling of this. Guy Davenport, one of Merton's Kentucky friends, would write of him that he was,

a truly ecumenical spirit. When he wrote about the Shakers, he was a Shaker. He read with perfect empathy: he was Rilke for hours, Camus, Faulkner ... I wonder whether there has ever been as protean an imagination as Thomas Merton's. He could, of an afternoon, dance to Dylan Thomas (sic) on a Louisville jukebox, argue an hour later with James Laughlin

about surrealism in Latin American poetry, say his office in an automobile headed back to Gethsemani, and spend the evening writing to a mullah in Pakistan about techniques of meditation.¹

Extraordinary enthusiasms characterised Thomas Merton. Some of these enthusiasms could be shortlived, others he would return to again and again such as Blake, Hopkins, Gandhi and Joyce, all of whom Merton discovered as a teenager, and who would surface again and again throughout his life, right up to his final years.

At the time Merton was writing the essays that would eventually be published as *Raids on the Unspeakeable* we also see the beginning of one such extraordinary enthusiasm, one that would last from the early 1960s right up until his death in 1968, though one that would bear little fruit in his published work in comparison to the degree of his enthusiasm for it. I'm thinking of his interest in Celtic Christianity, in the lives and writings of the Celtic saints and monks, Celtic art and poetry, and the Celtic literature concerning the hermit life, the themes of pilgrimage and exile, and in particular *The Voyage of St. Brendan*.

Merton and Celtic Christianity

Merton's earliest published references to Celtic Monasticism would appear in *Conjectures of a Guilty*

Bystander and in *Mystics and Zen Masters* though Merton had begun reading extensively about Celtic monasticism well before the appearance of these references.² Some of Merton's handwritten working notebooks have extensive notes on the Celts, one such notebook, number forty-eight, runs to approximately 180 leaves entirely on this subject. In addition he compiled an anthology of Irish Poetry, and ten of Merton's recorded conferences make reference to aspects of Celtic monasticism, life and art, a number of them given over to it in their entirety. References also occur in various collections of correspondence where he writes that he is both preparing notes on Celtic Monasticism to use with his novices and considering the possibilities for a book on the subject. However, unlike other areas of interest that Merton pursued, his published work on Celtic monasticism in no way reflects the extent of his reading and note-taking on the subject, with just one article 'From Pilgrimage to Crusade' appearing in his book *Mystics and Zen Masters*³ and a review of a book on Celtic Christianity by Olivier Loyer that would be published in the French Cistercian journal *Collectanea*.⁴

Much of the material Merton was reading in his study of Celtic Monasticism would come to him on loan from the Irish Studies Collection at Boston College. Over the years he had cultivated a number of friends at Boston College and

would frequently request interlibrary loans from them in return for signed books and other materials that he would send to them for their archives. Among the various volumes he requests from them he even writes, at one point, asking Father Terrence Connolly:

Do you have some kind of manual for learning Gaelic, just in case? I might look it over and see how it shapes up. Since there are lots of texts to be translated, it might be worth getting into. I never thought I would come to this.⁵

Merton gives an overview of this interest in a June 1964 entry in his personal journal where he writes: 'reading about Celtic monasticism, the hermits, lyric poets, travelers, etc', and describing it as 'a new world that has waited until this time to open up.'⁶ At the same time, in his novitiate conferences, he cannot contain his enthusiasm for Celtic Monasticism, and classes on Gregory of Nyssa that he is in the middle of teaching are placed on hold so that Merton can share his latest discoveries with the novices,⁷ telling his students that 'we have launched out into the deep and God alone knows where we are going, but we are going to go with the breath of the Holy Spirit floating in our little boat and our little boat is taking us round and round and round the Emerald Isle.'⁸

In a letter of September 27 1964 to Hans Urs Von Balthasar Merton writes of his absorption in Celtic monasticism and how 'it is becoming a real avocation with me. I can think of nowhere in the West where monastic culture was so drenched in brilliant color and form, with such dazzled love of God's beauty.'⁹ The theologian John Macquarrie had described Celtic Christianity in similar terms when he wrote that:

The Celt was very much a God-intoxicated man whose life was embraced on all sides by the Divine Being. But this presence was always mediated through some finite, this-world reality, so that it would be difficult to imagine a spirituality more down to earth than this one.¹⁰

This is a description that is equally applicable, I would suggest, to Thomas Merton. These quotes point to some of the characteristics of Celtic Christianity, in particular Celtic Monasticism, that attracted Merton and which led to him becoming so quickly and so intensely fascinated with it. I'd like to suggest a number of areas that I think would have attracted Merton.

Firstly, the Celtic attitude to nature, where creation reveals the character of God and its beauty raises the beholder's spirit to God, fitted in with Merton's own experi-

ence of the natural world in the rhythm of his daily life and prayer. As Merton gradually put down his roots at Gethsemani so he began to truly notice the natural world surrounding him. This change is evident in the poetry written during his early years at Gethsemani and its development can be clearly seen in his journals *The Sign of Jonas* and *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*. So for example he can write:

All the hills and woods are red and brown and copper, and the sky is clear, with one or two very small clouds. A buzzard comes by and investigates me, but I am not dead yet. This whole landscape of woods and hills is getting to be saturated with my prayers and with the Psalms and with the books I read out here under the trees, looking over the wall, not at the world but at our forest, our solitude.¹¹

His references to nature—to the Gethsemani woods, to the rain and the wind, to the birds and the other creatures that inhabit the woods, to the Kentucky knobs, the sky and the stars—become more frequent and more developed over the years.¹² We also see it in Merton's interest in the Franciscans, the early Cistercians and other groups and authors he was attracted to over the years, part of his awareness, clearly seen in the Celtic vi-

sion of the world, that all life is spiritual, that all life is sacred. At one point Merton makes the suggestion that the Celtic Christians were 'naturally Franciscan, Franciscan before St. Francis.'¹³ So Merton's poetry and journals, like the writings of the early Celtic hermits, are filled with references to nature and the natural world.

Secondly, Celtic Christianity was not 'enclosed and hostile to the rest of the Christian world,'¹⁴ to other cultures and other faiths. So, for example, Merton points at times to their openness to incorporating pagan or druidic customs and art into their life whilst, elsewhere in Europe, pagan shrines were being despoiled. We see Merton taking a very similar line, discovering in Zen Buddhism many things that he found missing in Catholicism and monasticism in the middle of the twentieth century, but which belonged to the Christian tradition.¹⁵ It is the same attitude that, for example, attracts Merton to the writings of Clement of Alexandria and that he emphasizes in the small collection of Clement's writings he would publish through New Directions in 1962, describing Clement as

... a man of unlimited comprehension and compassion who did not fear to seek elements of truth wherever they could be found.¹⁶

We also see Merton learning this

himself through his own experience, literally turning his back on the world and shaking the dust off of his feet upon his entry to the monastery and then, gradually turning back to the world, a turn made explicit in his experience, his epiphany at Fourth and Walnut in downtown Louisville where he became powerfully aware of his unity with the people he saw around them, seeing the spark of God shining through them all, and then borne witness to in the work of his final years, embracing many of the major issues facing the human family.

Thirdly, the Celtic monks were much closer to the desert fathers, to the Zen masters, and to that primitive monastic ideal that Merton appreciated in the early Cistercians. Monasticism came to Ireland from the East, Syria and Egypt, and had not been filtered through Europe. The early Church in Ireland was completely monastic; its structure was not Episcopal, built around bishops, dioceses and hierarchies, like the rest of Christian Europe, but retained the pre-existing structure of the clan or the tribe. So Celtic Christianity was, in many ways, 'outside' or, in the original meaning of the term, 'beyond the pale.'¹⁷ It was a monastic culture that was very much in touch with nature and the natural world; as a monastic culture it was a liturgical culture, austere and ascetical.

This is the kind of monasticism

that Merton was seeking—a true seeking of the Promised Land, the place of resurrection chosen for the monk by God. It is the picture he gives of Gethsemani in *The Seven Storey Mountain*, the paradise of the cloister and, despite the ups and downs of community life, the mature Merton still writes that way of Gethsemani in the 60s, listen:

Once again I get the strange sense that one has when he comes back to a place that has been chosen for him by Providence. I belong to this parcel of land with rocky rills around it, with pine trees on it. These are the woods and fields that I have worked in, and in which I have encountered the deepest mystery of my own life. And in a sense I never chose this place for myself, it was chosen for me.¹⁸

Celtic Christianity permeated the very marrow of its people, consecrating all times, seasons and every single moment of their day in a way that was distinctly monastic, the society was monastic to its core.¹⁹

Fourthly, within Celtic Christianity a 'rich and sophisticated literary and artistic culture' flourished with the monasteries the local centres of learning and of culture. Having escaped the barbarian invasions Ireland became, for a time, the most civilized culture in Europe and would influence continental medie-

val culture through the work of Irish scholars and artists, such as St Columbanus who would found the Monastery of Bobbio in Italy and whose followers are accredited with founding over 100 other monasteries across Europe. These aspects of Celtic Christianity are clearly attractive to Merton from the very beginning. His earliest conferences about Celtic Monasticism focus immediately on early Irish monastic art explaining aspects of this art in great detail to his novices, in particular lecturing on the monumental crosses and the theological significance of their artwork.²⁰ Over the years Merton's concern with the quality of religious art is evident and can be clearly seen in his unpublished manuscript 'Art and Worship', his commissioning of artwork for the monastery from artists such as Jaime Andrade, Peter Watts and Victor Hammer, and his involvement with the reordering of the Abbey Church in the light of the Second Vatican Council. (It is interesting that Merton's lectures on early Irish monastic art coincide with the time that he is drafting the essay on his own calligraphies which will appear in *Raids on the Unspeakable* as 'Signatures: Notes on the Author's Drawings'.²¹) In his lectures Merton draws particular attention to the desert fathers and hermits who figure prominently in many of the Celtic crosses – most noticeably St Anthony and Paul the Hermit.

Merton is also attracted to the Celtic poetic tradition and in September 1964 compiles an 'Anthology of Irish Poetry' of some twenty-three pages which is mimeographed for circulation.²² Prominent among the poems he selects are pieces concerned with nature and also with the hermit life:

The woodland thicket overtops me,
the blackbird sings me a lay, praise

I will not conceal:
above my lined little booklet
the trilling of birds sings to me.

The clear cuckoo sings to me, lovely
discourse,
in its grey cloak from the crest of
the bushes;
truly – may the Lord protect me! –
well do I write under the forest
wood.²³

Fifthly, Celtic Christianity was marked by its asceticism; the desert traditions of Egypt and Syria were to be mirrored in Ireland and Wales, most noticeably by some of the Celtic hermits. Instead of the physical desert, the Celtic monks sought their own deserted places—forests, remote coastlines and islands, and the sea. Exile became an important concept—monks went on pilgrimage for the love of, or in the name of God, a pilgrimage in search of solitude, and exile from their families and homeland. For the Celtic monks the geographical pilgrimage and inner journey were closely linked. They saw three

forms of pilgrimage. Firstly, a geographical pilgrimage in body only where the spirit remains unchanged. Secondly, an inner pilgrimage, where, though the spirit and soul journey towards God, the body remains physically stable. Thirdly, the perfect pilgrimage where a monk left his country in both body and soul and journeys in search of the absolute, the very source of being. So the ideal for the Celtic monks was both the geographical pilgrimage and the inner journey. Their pilgrimage was not a pilgrimage to a shrine and afterwards to return home, no, their ideal was the man who 'for his soul's welfare abandoned his homeland for good.'²⁴ The Celtic monk who withdrew 'from home and kindred, even from the larger religious community'²⁵ to pass his life, or a period of his life, in solitude became one of the most important aspects of Irish asceticism and one of its chief legacies to later ages.

Merton saw both his own life and monastic life as a journey, a journey into the unknown. By becoming a monk he said 'one becomes a stranger, an exile We go into the midst of the unknown, we live on earth as strangers.'²⁶ The monk is not at home on earth, not even in the monastery, there is a feeling of exile and Merton expressed this well in the following lines of poetry:

We are exiles in the far end of
solitude, living as listeners,
With hearts attending to the skies

we cannot understand:
Waiting upon the first far drums of
Christ the Conqueror,
Planted like sentinels upon the
world's frontier.²⁷

The Celtic monks, Celtic Christians, were very much 'sentinels upon the world's frontier,' watchmen on the edge of the known world—situated at the most westerly point of Christendom at this period of time and, on the very edge of Europe, escaping the barbarian invasions and the fall of the Roman Empire. The liturgical, monastic world in which the Celtic monks were steeped meant that they viewed the world from a different reality, a different realm of continuity. So, Merton tells his novices, for a Celtic monk his 'reality is the prophetic world and for him there is a complete continuity between his inner prophetic world and its outer expression.'²⁸ Merton's own voice could be similarly prophetic and theologians and activists of his time would frequently comment and puzzle over this. So Martin Marty could say in apologizing for his earlier critical review of Merton's book *Seeds of Destruction*²⁹ that

What bothers me now is the degree of accuracy in your predictions and prophecies in general ... it seems to me you were 'telling it as it is' and maybe 'as it will be.'³⁰

Or as Catherine Doherty would

write to him: 'all things reach you, and all news jumps your cloistered walls faster than they enter our open doors.'³¹

Many of the reasons for Merton's attraction to Celtic Monastic seem to resonate deeply with his own personal interests—solitude and the hermit life, nature, art, the role of the monk in society, life as a journey, the importance of place and of finding the right place, the place of our resurrection. Merton also, I would suggest, senses the affinity between his own life as a solitary in the Gethsemani woods and the lives of many of these Celtic monks.

In Merton's essay 'Rain and the Rhinoceros' he wrote of some of the times he had spent in the woods, in solitude, living a life very different from that of an average Cistercian monk in his day and more akin to the stories of some of the Celtic monks. Merton describes very simply an evening spent at the building where he would eventually become a hermit in 1965:

I came up here from the monastery last night ... and put some oatmeal on the Coleman stove for supper. It boiled over while I was listening to the rain The night became very dark. The rain surrounded the whole cabin with its enormous virginal myth, a whole world of meaning, of secrecy, of silence, of rumor. Think of it: all that speech pouring down, selling noth-

ing, judging nobody, drenching the thick mulch of dead leaves, soaking the trees, filling the gullies and crannies of the wood with water, washing out the places where men have stripped the hillside!

In the same manner as some of Merton's descriptions of nature and place in his journals, such as in *The Sign of Jonas* and *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, this passage celebrates a wisdom and a way of life reminiscent of some of the Celtic hermits in solitude on their islands surrounded by the ocean and the elements. For Merton, the wind and the rain and the darkness and the solitude of the night in his cabin had a restoring effect similar to that of 'The Night Spirit and the Dawn Air' in *The Ox Mountain Parable* of Mencius. The rain helped to heal the damage done to the woods by men who had 'stripped the hillside' and it also had a similar effect on Merton:

In this wilderness I have learned how to sleep again. Here I am not alien. The trees I know, the night I know, the rain I know. I close my eyes and instantly sink into the whole rainy world of which I am a part, and the world goes on with me in it, for I am not alien to it.³²

Or a passage such as the following from Merton's personal journal recalling the first evening he was al-

lowed to spend at the hermitage:

Lit candles in the dusk. *Haec requies mea in saeculum saeculi* [This is my resting place forever]—the sense of a journey ended, of wandering at an end. *The first time in my life* I ever really felt I had come home and that my waiting and looking were ended.³³

Words suggesting that Merton had discovered, at least for the moment, what the Celtic monks would describe as their place of resurrection. The monks would set out on pilgrimage looking for the place of their resurrection, the place where they are called by God to settle as a recluse. Sometimes they would be 'walled into a little hut on the side of a church,'³⁴ as if it was their tomb and they were dead. It was the place of their resurrection and there was no need to move any further—'the sense of a journey ended,' as Merton writes, 'of wandering at an end.'

This affinity was also noted by some of his correspondents and Merton takes especial pleasure in a letter he receives from one of the leading Celtic authorities of this period, Nora Chadwick, in which, he notes, she writes that 'she is delighted' that he is 'living the same kind of life as the old guys she writes about: that there actually should be something of the sort in the world today.'³⁵ And, after the visit of his Aunt Kit from New Zealand with whom Merton had dis-

cussed his family history and its Welsh roots, he writes 'It is the Welsh in me that counts: that is what does the strange things, and writes the books, and drives me into the woods. Thank God for the Welsh in me, and for all those Birds, those Celts.'³⁶

In Merton's working notebooks and in other references to Celtic monasticism he singles out *The Voyage of St. Brendan* for special attention. So he can write in his journal on 18 July 1964 that he has begun

studying it as a tract on monastic life. The myth of pilgrimage, the quest for the impossible island, the earthly paradise, the ultimate ideal. As a myth it is, however, filled with a deep truth of its own.³⁷

The Voyage has a 'characteristically monastic orientation towards life, which expresses itself both in the destination of the journey and in the process through which the journey unfolds'³⁸ and it is an 'exploration, not just of lands and places, but of the attempt to live, move and respond to the world out of a transfigured centre.'³⁹ *The Voyage* is monastic to its core: it is a tale about monks, by monks, and at least in its original manuscript context, for monks, and this can be seen in a variety of ways: The chanting of the divine office, prolonged fasts, and obedience to the abbot, are all central to the narrative. The voyage lasts for seven years and each year

begins and ends with the two major celebrations in the church's year, Easter and Christmas. Fasts and feasts alternate and 'correspond to the daily and yearly round of the monastery.'⁴⁰ The length of the fasts, caused by the deprivations of the sea voyages, are of either two, three, fifteen, twenty or forty days and 'the completion of the significant number seems to take precedence, when approaching an island, over the tide or wind,'⁴¹ so that the narrative comes across as stylized, abstract and non-naturalistic.

The monastic cycle of prayer and the liturgical cycle are central to *The Voyage*. St Brendan and his 'crew' are a community, and their relations with both the natural world and the external world they encounter on their journey bear the characteristics that attracted Merton to Celtic Monasticism. The monasticism of *The Voyage* is not an additional extra but its 'central organizational principle both thematically and structurally.' So too, both in Merton's own life at the Abbey of Gethsemani, and in the lives of the early Celtic Christians, the monastic way of life, the monastic vision, the monastic worldview, was central.

The Voyage seems to operate on two dimensions simultaneously. As some scholars have tried to prove the whole voyage is highly plausible. The 'Promised Land of the Saints' is not an allegory for Heaven but a real place and this is supported by the plausibility of the land Brendan and his crew discover. Unlike some

places he visits on his voyage it is to a normal scale, if not modest 'the land is broad and vast, crossed by a wide river, and exceptionally (though hardly supernaturally) bountiful' and they spend their time ashore 'reconnoitring' rather than in 'beatific visions', and there are neither 'celestial choirs' nor 'divine epiphanies.'⁴² So the first dimension is highly plausible.

The second dimension of *The Voyage* though is that 'there is a certain strangeness to the geographical layout which cannot easily be discounted.'⁴³ Barrind and Mernoc, from whom Brendan learns of the 'Promised Land of the Saints,' reach land after only 'about an hour'⁴⁴ of sailing whereas Brendan voyages for seven years 'apparently circling the place all the time, before the proper *kairos* is reached and he is finally permitted a landfall.'⁴⁵ This second dimension is reinforced through a modern textual difficulty as to the direction in which Brendan sails—the manuscripts differ, some suggests 'east' and some 'west'. If it is 'west' then the geographical theories are feasible, but, if it is 'east' then the 'geographical considerations must give way to thematic and typological ones,'⁴⁶ and the impression that Brendan is circling the Promised Land all the time is reinforced and the 'east' becomes a rich symbolic image.

Brendan's voyage to 'The Promised Land of the Saints' holds together these different dimensions—the tension between the temporal

and the eternal along with the tension between the external, geographical pilgrimage and the inner pilgrimage or journey. It is in this overlapping zone between 'the temporal and the eternal, between the times and places of the world and their larger infusing divine reality' that *The Voyage of St. Brendan*, and indeed, all archetypal monastic life unfolds.

In his article 'From Pilgrimage to Crusade' Merton saw in Celtic pilgrimage that 'the external and geographical pilgrimage was ... something more than the acting out of psychic obsessions and instabilities. It was in profound relationship with an inner experience of continuity between the natural and the supernatural, between the sacred and the profane, between this world and the next: a continuity both in time and space.'⁴⁷

Through monastic asceticism Merton had learned to live in that zone where the temporal and the eternal overlap, to live his life out of 'a transfigured centre',⁴⁸ out of 'the great compassion' and to discover in that compassion all of humanity. We see him writing about this most noticeably in those moments in his life that can be seen as epiphanies, 'spots of time'⁴⁹ or experiences of the sublime, as the Romantic Poets would call them. His sense of exploring, wandering, homelessness, questioning, strangeness, his continuing conversion, his sense of journeying kept him moving forward like Brendan, like Abraham in

search of the Promised Land, in search of his hearts' home, and of his place of resurrection.

Conclusion

Merton, in his essay 'From Pilgrimage to Crusade,' writes of that journey and of the search for the place of resurrection, a place of compassion and of unity for all humanity. He writes:

Our task now is to learn that if we can voyage to the ends of the earth and there find ourselves in the aborigine who most differs from ourselves, we will have made a fruitful pilgrimage. That is why pilgrimage is necessary, in some shape or other. Mere sitting at home and meditating on the divine presence is not enough for our time. We have to come to the end of a long journey and see that the stranger we meet there is no other than ourselves - which is the same as saying that we find Christ in him.

For if the Lord is risen as He said, He is actually or potentially alive in every man. Our pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre is our pilgrimage to the stranger who is Christ our fellow-pilgrim and our brother. There is no lost island merely for the individual. We are all pieces of the paradise island, and we can find our Brendan's island

only when we all realize ourselves together as the paradise which is Christ and His bride, God, man and church.⁵⁰

As Thomas Merton overcame the alienation from his self and from the world, and the rootlessness and wandering that so dominated his early years, he came to see the Divine manifesting itself in all peoples, in all times, and in all places. As he found a rootedness based on a vision of a world made whole and a world infused with the Divine, so we can sense how clearly and strongly the worldview of these Celtic saints, monks and hermits must have spoken to him. The continued importance for Merton of his Welsh Celtic heritage can be seen in his epic anti-poem *The Geography of Lograire*, left unfinished at the time of his death, where the 'Prologue' contains numerous references to 'Wales dark Wales,' 'holy green Wales,' 'Two seas in my self Irish and German/Celt blood washes in twin seagreen people,' 'Wales all my Wales.'

In *Lograire* Merton, through the use of the geographical points of the compass, encompasses the whole world – north, south, east and west – and all times and cultures. *Lograire* expresses his continued deep longing for a unified vision of the world like the one he had also discovered in the Celtic vision of the world, a monastic, transfigured vision of the world.

Notes

1. Guy Davenport, 'Tom and Gene' in Ralph Eugene Meatyard, *Father Louie: Photographs of Thomas Merton* (New York: Timken Publishers, Inc., 1991), p.34.

2. References to the Celts in Merton's published work are minor in comparison to the references to be found in his unpublished notebooks. Some of Merton's holographic journals have extensive notes on the Celts, in particular #14, #18, #24 and #48. Volume 2 of his *Collected Essays* contains an anthology of Irish Poetry, pp.231–54 and ten of Merton's recorded conferences are specifically on aspects of Celtic monasticism and life:

41.2 'Monastic spirituality; life as a journey.' 1/16/63.

41.4 'Monastic spirituality; the way.' 1/30/63.

102.3 'Origins of Celtic monasticism.' 5/17/64.

106.2 'Distractions in prayer and the desert fathers' remedy. Irish monasticism.' 6/14/64.

124.2 'Early Celtic art. Machine age and monastic culture.' 9/5/64.

125.1 'Early Irish monastic art.' 9/12/64.

125.4 'Irish art.' 9/19/64.

175.2 'Irish monks. Points on the mystic life in the Far East, Nirvana.' 3/10/68.

175.3 'Irish monks on mystic life.' 3/24/68.

175.4 'Death of Martin Luther King. The mystic life in Cleveland, Ohio. Spiritual points for Easter time.' 4/7/68.

3. Thomas Merton, *Mystics and Zen Masters* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967), pp.91–112.
4. Thomas Merton, review of *Les Chrétientés Celtiques* by Olivier Loyer, *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 29 (1967): article no. 140, pp.78–9. Published the following year in English in: *Cistercian Studies* 3.4 (1968): article no. 189, pp.119–20.
5. Thomas Merton to Brendan Connolly, SJ. 21 October 1965. Archives of the Thomas Merton Center, Belarmine University, Louisville, KY. (Abbreviated to TMC)
6. Thomas Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life: Seeking Peace in the Hermitage*, ed. Robert E. Daggy (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997), p.107.
7. Thomas Merton, # 102.3, recorded 5/17/1964. Unpublished recording of a conference to the novices at the Abbey of Gethsemani. (TMC) 'I wanted to go on with Gregory Nyssa ... but this is too good to miss. This is the latest thing in monastic history of the Celtic Church ... this has to be mentioned now.'
8. Thomas Merton, #124.2, recorded 9/5/64. TMC.
9. *The School of Charity: The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Renewal and Spiritual Direction*, ed. Patrick Hart (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1990), p.241.
10. John Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality* (New York: Morehouse, 1993), p.7.
11. Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1953), p.69.
12. For example *The Sign of Jonas* pp.35, 59, 195, 197, 207 and 256.
13. Thomas Merton, Working Notebook # 48, p.46. (TMC), quoting from Robin Flower's *The Irish Tradition* (Oxford, 1947), p.125.
14. Thomas Merton, review *Les Chrétientés Celtiques* by Olivier Loyer, *Cistercian Studies* 3.4 (1968): article no. 189, p.120.
15. An experiential approach to contemplation and a world-affirming spirituality; a terminology to help describe both his experience of God and of contemplation; writings on enlightenment that also complimented Merton's thinking on the true self.
16. Thomas Merton, *Clement of Alexandria: Selections from the Protreptikos* (New York: New Directions, 1962), p.3.
17. The pale was a stake used to support a fence and the pale came to define that area of Ireland under the authority of English Law
18. Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), p.234.
19. This is very well illustrated by Esther de Waal in her book *A World Made Whole: Rediscovering the Celtic Tradition* (London: Fount, 1991).
20. Merton notes in his journal on 5 September 1964: 'Today—in conference—drawing primitive Celtic crosses on the blackboard. They seemed to enjoy it.' Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life*, p.142.
21. Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable*, pp.179–82.
22. In a 22 July 1964 letter to Dame

Hildelith Cumming of Stanbrook Abbey in England, Merton suggests that some of the 'wonderful old poems by the Irish hermits' would make 'a lovely excuse for some printing.' See Merton, *The School of Charity*, p.223.

23. Thomas Merton, *Anthology of Irish Poetry* (September 1964). Unpublished mimeograph. Merton takes this poem from *Studies in Early Celtic Nature Poetry* by Kenneth Jackson (London, 1955). In a journal entry for 23 June 1964 Merton records: 'Finished Kenneth Jackson's excellent book on *Early Celtic Nature Poetry* before Prime.' Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life*, p.121.

24. James P. Mackey, *An Introduction to Celtic Christianity* (Edinburgh: 1989), p.103.

25. Nora Chadwick, *The Age of the Saints in the Early Celtic Church* (London: 1961), p.82.

26. Thomas Merton, # 41.2, recorded 1/16/63. TMC.

27. *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* (London: 1978), p.201.

28. Thomas Merton, #125.1, recorded 9/12/64. TMC.

29. Martin Marty, review of *Seeds of Destruction* by Thomas Merton, *Book Week (New York Herald Tribune)*, January 17, 1965.

30. Martin Marty, 'To: Thomas Merton. Re: Your Prophecy' *The National Catholic Reporter*, 3.43 (30 August 1967), p.6.

31. *Compassionate Fire: The Letters of Thomas Merton and Catherine de Hueck Doherty*, ed. Robert A. Wild,

(Notre Dame, IN.: Ave Maria Press, 2009), p.77.

32. Thomas Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable*, (London: Burns and Oates, 1977), pp.7-8.

33. Thomas Merton, *Turning Toward the World: The Pivotal Years*, ed. Victor A. Kramer (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996), pp.79-80.

34. Thomas Merton, # 175.2, recorded 3/10/68. TMC.

35. Merton, *Learning to Love*, p.314.

36. Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, p.182.

37. Thomas Merton, *A Vow of Conversation: Journal, 1964-1965*, ed. Naomi Burton Stone (Basingstoke: Lamp Press, 1988), p.64. Similarly in a letter to Dame Hildelith Cumming of Stanbrook Abbey he would call it a: 'symbolic tract on the monastic life.' *The School of Charity*, p.223.

38. Cynthia Bourgeault, 'The Monastic Archetype in the *Navigatio* of St. Brendan', *Monastic Studies* 14 (1983), p.119.

39. *ibid.*, p.120.

40. Dorothy Anne Bray, 'A Note on the Life of St. Brendan', *Cistercian Studies* 20 (1985), p.20.

41. *The Voyage of St. Brendan*, ed. J. J. O'Meara (Portlaoise. 1981), xvii.

42. Bourgeault, *Monastic Archetype*, p.113.

43. *ibid.*

44. *The Voyage of St. Brendan*, p.4.

45. Bourgeault, *Monastic Archetype*, pp.113-14.

46. *ibid.*, p.114.

47. Merton, *Mystics and Zen Masters*, p.97.

48. Bourgeault, Monastic Archetype, p.120.

49. William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams and Stephen Gill (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979): Book 12, lines 208–18.

50. Merton, *Mystics and Zen Masters*, p.112.

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Merton at 100

A Centenary Edition of the Merton Journal

To celebrate the centenary of the birth of Thomas Merton on January 31 2015, the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland will be publishing a special centenary edition of the Merton Journal. Contents are planned to include contributions from France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland, Sweden, as well as Ireland and the UK.

This will be in the form a softback book and will replace the usual issue. It will be posted to TMS members in Advent.