

# Wandering the *Mönchsweg*: Personal Reflections on Merton, Mennonites, and the Margins

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The central Illinois church of my childhood was organized in 1889 by my great-grandfather, a bishop in the Amish Mennonite thread of Anabaptism. Though the church no longer bears the Mennonite name, we still hold deep family ties there, and my brother attends. One Sunday morning, a cousin approached him to ask a perplexing question: 'Why does Gordon write books for Catholics?'

I suggested that he tell her, I've tried to write things for everybody, which happen to be about a Catholic monk. Yet her question invites more thought on why a self-identified Mennonite (more or less) has come to write about Merton. Although I'd not examined it closely, I suspect that for me what best holds together these strains—Mennonite origins and Merton's influence—converges around their respective pulls toward social margins. In this paper I explore four facets of the interplay among themes of marginality in these two threads that have helped attract me to Merton. Although each facet has a separate focus, they hopefully resonate well enough to meaningfully harmonize.

## Cistercian Monastic and Mennonite Anabaptist Origins

The first facet entails features of marginality in the origins of the two different traditions that spiritually formed each of us. Merton's Cistercian monasticism began as a twelfth century response to certain practices in Cluny Abbey foundations. In *The Waters of Siloe*,<sup>1</sup> Merton shares his view of those origins. He writes how Cistercians 'stripped the [choir] office of ... many ... ceremonies and returned to the essentials laid down by St. Benedict.'<sup>2</sup> They also rejected 'ornamental' attire and architecture to live in a self-sufficient poverty that spurned the use of serfs for labor and benefices for revenue. They built in remote sites, but not 'for the sake of scenery'<sup>3</sup>; their leader, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, was not, Merton says, 'a twelfth-century Wordsworth.'<sup>4</sup> For Merton, 'The true reason the White



Monks escaped to wild places and built their monasteries in mountains and forests was to get away from the world ... [and the] burdens of worldly business and ambition, for ... union with God by contemplation,<sup>5</sup> because this ascetic poverty reflects a 'most intimate necessity [for the vital development] of the contemplative life.'<sup>6</sup>

But over time, though individual monks did not get rich, their monastic system of innovative agriculture made them 'one of the most powerful economic forces of the Middle ages'.<sup>7</sup> To market goods they ran urban warehouses and brokerages, and travelled to international fairs, and with such 'active and material interests, the contemplative spirit caved' and 'was gone'.<sup>8</sup> To regain their original stance, a movement of seventeenth-century 'Strict Order' reforms coalesced into Merton's Trappist order.

In contrast, my formative Mennonite tradition emerged from the Reformation-era Anabaptist movement — but not without certain parallels. The Anabaptist label was imposed not self-selected and captured an eclectic mix that ranged from peasant revolutionaries to Millennial fanatics to withdrawn sectarians. That label recalled the ancient heresy of 're-baptism' from its rejection of infant baptism and insistence that only confessing adults be baptized.

My particular Anabaptist strain, the Swiss Brethren, performed its first adult baptisms among a circle that broke from reformer Ulrich Zwingli over whether Zurich's city council had authority to decide church matters. But those rebaptizers remained inchoate until a 1527 document, the Schleithem Articles, began to circulate. Significantly for my purpose here, they were drafted by an ex-monk and former Benedictine prior, Michael Sattler.

Some insist this Anabaptism was 'neither Protestant nor Catholic',<sup>9</sup> or perhaps 'both/and'.<sup>10</sup> C. Arnold Snyder, who reconstructed the intellectual origins of Sattler's Schleithem Articles, concludes they reflect his synthesis of Magisterial Protestant, nascent Anabaptist, egalitarian Peasant Revolt, and medieval Catholic elements.<sup>11</sup> During the 1525<sup>+</sup> peasant uprising, for example, Sattler engaged with peasant troops who twice occupied his monastery when opposing the Abbot's collection of oppressive tithes and taxes. Following their second occupation Sattler is believed to have accompanied the peasants when they left the abbey. He returned with them to a heavily Anabaptist region, home to some of those troops, where he began to learn the weaving trade and lived for a year among them before he chose to rebaptize and assume a leadership role.

As for Catholic influence, Snyder asserts that Sattler drew from both a



pervasive late medieval Catholic lay piety and, more crucially, his own Benedictine background as abbey prior during reforms—much like Cistercians—to regain the balance of St. Benedict's rule. Martin Luther and his followers in fact dismissed these Anabaptists as 'nothing else than a new sort of monkery'.<sup>12</sup> Snyder's examples of their 'monastic' traits as reflected through Sattler's articles include:

- The idea of church as a community separated from the world where members live as expressions of Christ.
- Baptism that functions much like monastic vows – a public statement of lifelong voluntary commitment to that separated community; not coincidentally, monastic vows had been referred to as a 'second baptism' already for centuries.
- Constant scriptural immersion to interiorize the 'mind of Christ', which would then express itself in the actions of daily life.

In sum, Snyder sees these traits as adapted Benedictine concepts that replaced Benedict's Rule with a 'Rule of Scripture' to nurture the mind of Christ in members of Christ's body.<sup>13</sup> Their Anabaptist cocktail of rejecting infant baptism, which also established civic membership; of nonviolence; of refusal to serve as magistrates; and especially of refusal to swear civic oaths, a foundation for civic accountability — all combined to elicit widespread imprisonment and often execution as heretics and insurrectionists. They soon gravitated toward isolated places, as Cistercians once had, though now to pursue safety rather than contemplation.

Also like Cistercians, a seventeenth-century Swiss Brethren reform movement seeking more austerity emerged. Having by then adopted the name 'Mennonite', after Menno Simons, a Dutch Anabaptist, these Swiss reforms stiffened group boundaries. Known as *Amish* Mennonites, from reform movement leader Jacob Amman, the church of my forebears emerged. Again echoing Cistercian experience, they prospered through innovative farming techniques such that landowners often sought them as farm tenants and managers.<sup>14</sup> Over time, new confessions replaced Schleithem, its radical dualism softened, and my Amish re-merged with other Mennonites, but traces of Schleithem's imprint lingered for centuries.

These two streams—Cistercian and Amish Anabaptist—tangibly



intersected for me in the eighteenth century. On an isolated mountainside in the German Palatinate, local nobles had leased the ruins of a former Cistercian sheep farm to be rebuilt. In a 1776 census, workers living at this former cloister farm included 'Mennonites' Hans Oyer, Sr. and Hans Oyer, Jr., my forbears. Today a tiny village survives there, as does a nearby hiking trail that traces the same path abbey monks once took to a local castle to remit their tribute. That trail is now named the *Mönchsweg*, or monk's path—the inspiration for this paper's title.

### **Personal Life Circumstances**

The second facet of a resonating marginality entails different personal circumstances that helped orient each of us toward the margins. Merton's personal life seems tailored to cultivate that orientation. His childhood was unrooted. Both parents died before his sixteenth birthday, and by the time he was 13 he had moved from France to New York to Bermuda to New York to France to England. His years in both France and England were dominated by life in boarding schools rather than within a nuclear family. As an adult, although he immigrated to the US in 1934 and gained US citizenship in 1951, he continued to identify as mostly European. As late as 1964 Merton would tell the Black singer Robert Williams that 'as more of a European' he lacked 'deep feeling for the land'.<sup>15</sup> As a poet, Merton felt he stood among those who 'remain innocent and invisible to publicists and bureaucrats' and 'dare to hope in [our] own visions of reality'.<sup>16</sup> Being Catholic in a Protestant-dominated US also fostered marginality, and even within that Church he leaned toward its margins — a convert not raised within the milieu of US Catholic culture, and one interested in pre-Vatican II inter-religious dialogue and study of original sources.

But his monastic vocation instilled his strongest sense of marginal identity. He defined the monk as someone 'who withdraws deliberately to the margins of society with a view to deepening fundamental human experience',<sup>17</sup> to 'stand back from parochial and partisan concerns for a better view of the whole ... mystery of [humanity]'.<sup>18</sup> Some observe in this stance an affinity to the 'borderlands' of more recent post-colonial theory that likewise offers space to recalibrate perspective.<sup>19</sup> For Merton the monk, not only were early Cistercians marginal, he saw the Desert Fathers, the original monks, as those who '[swam] for [their] life' to escape 'letting themselves be passively guided and ruled by a decadent state' and choose a life 'without slavish dependence on accepted, conventional values'.<sup>20</sup> In a 1978 *Christian Century* article on Merton's



'Pursuit of Marginality', Lawrence Cunningham concludes that '[The] notion of marginality was very much a part of Merton's thinking.'<sup>21</sup> It is no accident that I first ran across this article in files of the Mennonite peace theologian John Howard Yoder.<sup>22</sup>

I cannot claim Merton's childhood pulls to the margins, but I do suspect that my childhood on a tenant farm, which straddled the geographic fringes of school and church communities, didn't hurt—I was the only Mennonite in my high school and the only one from my school among church peers. But like Merton's monasticism, being Mennonite instilled *my* primary marginal identity. As a child I sensed my church as marginal to broader Christianity, even as it also embraced many rural American social, political, and religious Fundamentalist/Evangelical norms. As a young adult, I did not attend a church college or volunteer for a Mennonite service assignment, steps that entrenched many peers within Mennonite subculture, and that lack of bonding enhanced my sense of marginalization *within* Mennonite circles. My career choice—an accountant in secular settings—created more a sense of cognitive dissonance than marginalization.

But, beyond the impact of denominational Sunday school literature, my parents' family history research and especially my young adult reading of Mennonite history and theology titles, like *The Upside-Down Kingdom*, added depth, meaning, and a heightened sense of marginality to that Mennonite identity.<sup>23</sup> Later, as an adult, my roles in Mennonite history organizations and church structures further deepened it.

### **Merton's Mennonite Interactions**

The third facet of marginal interplay looks at Merton's resonance with the individual Mennonites with whom he directly engaged. Although publisher Fons Vitae will never release a volume on 'Merton and Anabaptism' he did interact with four Mennonites that I know of. The first, Maynard Shelly, edited *The Mennonite*, a denominational periodical. In August 1961, Shelly wrote for permission to reprint Merton's poem, 'Original Child Bomb', and Merton granted it.<sup>24</sup> Shelly also sent literature on Mennonites, and Merton's response – included as #4 of his Cold War Letters – expressed the 'respect and reverence I have for the Mennonite tradition of peaceful action and non-violence.'<sup>25</sup> He also mentioned that the abbey once sold horses to the Amish and added, 'Our founders were inspired by much the same love of primitive simplicity which I find in your Mennonite tradition.'<sup>26</sup> Shelly and his wife visited Merton in 1962, and he wrote an editorial on Merton for a 1963 issue of *The Mennonite*.<sup>27</sup>



The second Mennonite who Merton interacted with was Paul Peachey, a sociologist and Executive Secretary for an organization called the Church Peace Mission. I addressed their interaction in the book *Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest*, so I'll only summarize here.<sup>28</sup> They corresponded starting mid-1962 about a book on Zen that Peachey was translating from German. Peachey also helped plan the 1964 peace activist retreat at Gethsemani, though he couldn't attend, and in June 1967 he wrote to suggest Merton's involvement in some anti-Vietnam War initiatives, which Merton declined.<sup>29</sup> After two aborted visit attempts, they first met in January 1963. Merton once mentioned Peachey to his novices and then tried to explain Mennonites to them, which makes for amusing listening. It went like this:

I like people like Mennonites, anyway, they are good people. They are very simple people. They cling to — they are sort of, there's kind of a Hussite proposition there too, the Mennonites.<sup>30</sup> It's from a German, a fellow called Menno who was sort of a Hussite, I don't know if he was a Hussite, but that kind of, that same sort of thing. But these are people that have sort of kept apart in their kind of little — the Mennonites have the Amish along with them, too, you know. The Amish are the ones with the big hats, and they won't use machinery — I don't know if that's too wonderful, but — so these are very simple people with rigid principles. And they cling to these rigid principles. Of course this man is a pacifist. Because the Mennonites always have been. The Mennonites have always been extremely — won't have anything to do with anything. And uh, don't smoke, don't drink, don't fight.<sup>31</sup>

So obviously, explaining 'Mennonites' was not any easier for Merton than it is for the rest of us.

The third Mennonite was John Howard Yoder, who'd saved Lawrence Cunningham's article on Merton's marginality. He's also in my book on the 1964 peace activist retreat, where his talk on Christ-based resistance strongly impressed Merton.<sup>32</sup> Though posthumously discredited for his later sexual predations, at the time Yoder was a rising star among Mennonite peace theologians.<sup>33</sup> They later corresponded in 1967 about Yoder's summary of Catholic peace positions.<sup>34</sup>

Last was Vincent Harding, a Black historian and colleague of Martin Luther King, Jr. He affiliated with Mennonites for just a decade or so, which included 1967, when he and Merton met and bonded over Merton's insights on religions of the oppressed. My second book, *Signs of Hope*, covers their interaction in depth.<sup>35</sup>



## Personal Resonance with Merton's Countercultural Themes

The fourth and final facet of shared marginality considers my own personal resonance with three countercultural themes in Merton's writings. First, Merton's nonviolence. He did not reject the possibility of a just war, though felt it unlikely in a nuclear age, and he drew from Gandhi, King, Louis Massignon, and others, as well as Jesus. So his nuanced and qualified 'nonviolent resistance' was more complex than the absolute 'nonresistance' of early Mennonite doctrine. But Mennonite peace teachings have also grown more nuanced and engaged, and I have found much compatibility with Merton's works and helpful observations in them.

Second, Merton's thoughts on individuals and community. On one hand, he was spiritually formed through commitment to a monastic community. On the other, he defended the sanctity of individual conscience, showed fierce independence of mind, and emphasized solitude. It's telling that *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia* entry for 'Community' simply says, 'See Person.'<sup>36</sup> It's also telling that his most sustained reflections on community that I know of consist of lectures to novices on Benedictine community,<sup>37</sup> for one, and then two lectures on community to Alaskan nuns<sup>38</sup> that relied heavily on quotes from Eberhard Arnold, the twentieth-century quasi-Anabaptist founder of the communal Bruderhof movement. Br. Paul Quenon, a former novice of Merton, has commented that: 'I heard Fr. Louis say more than once to the group: "You are better community men than I am." [But] he put a hell of a lot work into serving the community. Those [novice] conference notes prove it best of all, [along with] the hours he put in holding spiritual direction for 25 or 30 Novices.'<sup>39</sup>

As an introvert from a community-focused tradition, I found this paradoxical tension in Merton fascinating.<sup>40</sup> His understanding of a unique True Self that nonetheless remains interconnected with all felt liberating, even as his critique of a False Self imposed by a mass culture of materialistic autonomy rang familiar and true. Although I still wrestle with these tensions among personal freedom, wisdom through community relationships, and conforming pressures of a destructive mass culture, Merton has opened helpful doors for me to explore them.

Finally—Merton's Christ-grounded call to relinquish ego. George Kilcourse's study of Merton's Christology, *The Ace of Freedoms*,<sup>41</sup> sees in Merton 'a radical clarification of Christ's *kenosis*, or emptying himself of divinity, ... to immerse himself in the ambiguity of humanity.' Merton found in that *kenosis*, 'a paradigm for our religious self-understanding', an



'epiphany of God in human 'weakness and defenselessness',<sup>42</sup> rather than in our 'success-and-happiness seeking Western culture'.<sup>43</sup> For Kilcourse, Merton 'discovers [this] epiphany of Christ ... at the margins of Christendom,'<sup>44</sup> where he 'converse[d] with kindred spirits.'<sup>45</sup> He concludes that Merton then 'nudges us toward ... the birth and awakening of the true self, *the very self who imitates Christ*.'<sup>46</sup>

For me, Merton's *kenotic* Christology echoes a Schleithem legacy in a trait seen as central to Anabaptist spirituality: *Gelassenheit*. Often translated as 'yieldedness', it was not unique to Anabaptism—German mystics had invoked it centuries earlier and it permeated the era's Catholic lay spirituality. Anabaptists, however, gained *Gelassenheit* through immersion in scripture to, again quoting historian Arnold Snyder, 'put on the mind of Christ [and] yield one's will to God,' which then guides external behavior.<sup>47</sup> Snyder concludes, 'The disciples of Jesus will live lives that remind the world of Jesus, not because they are superhuman rule-keepers, but because they have yielded to the power of the risen Christ in their lives. It is this spirit of *Gelassenheit*, of "yieldedness", that corresponds to a non-violent life.'<sup>48</sup>

So these two authors suggest that Merton and Anabaptism both emphasize interiorizing the mind of Christ to better imitate Christ in life. But Merton's contemplative imitation of the universal Christ's self-emptying *kenosis* is not quite the same as Anabaptist imitation of the biblical Christ's yielded *Gelassenheit*. The weight of one rests more with contemplative experience, and the other with Christ-like behavior. But their mutual abandoning of individual ego to make room for 'Christ's mind' has deepened my appreciation of both and expanded my imagination for navigating the monk's path of countercultural engagement.

## Conclusion

Hopefully this effort to show threads of marginality that weave among these four facets of my personal 'monk's path wanderings' help illuminate why I as a Mennonite (more or less) have found resonance with Merton. But I must also add a caveat. Voluntary choices to move towards social margins cannot be equated to being involuntarily forced there due to one's innate traits or uncontrollable circumstances. And so, for both Merton and Mennonites, choosing to cultivate a marginal gaze has limits – especially when one's lived reality retains significant privilege. Merton could be overconfident in insights gained through his secure and insulated monasticism. It did not enable him to truly know



how it felt to be marginalized by racism, as he occasionally asserted. For our part, American Mennonites have sometimes too easily appropriated the initial martyrdom and ongoing civic skepticism that Anabaptism elicited. We have sometimes assumed that this past grants us current permission to bracket our own privileged wealth and (usually) whiteness, and claim innocence from American oppressions—which is also obviously false.

Yet I still see leaning toward the margins as an important spiritual focus to channel through Merton. Doing so might help counter our innate tendency toward what behaviorists call ‘habituation’, our tendency to respond less and less to incremental or imperceptible change. This trait permits us to acclimate to continual war, corruption, oppression, as well as economic and political norms that we consider ‘given’. The authors of a recent book on habituation suggest that to counter it we must ‘see our beliefs, norms, and solutions from a distance ... and learn that a change would be valuable.’ They quote Abraham Joshua Heschel that, ‘We must learn to be surprised, not adjust ourselves.’<sup>49</sup> In his pursuit of marginality, Thomas Merton offers such a mindset to help us remain surprised and not adjust.

Daniel Berrigan once mused that while ‘Merton had this image of a monk as being on the margins,’ Berrigan felt their vocations were ultimately ‘creating a new center. We were where the Gospel required us to be.’<sup>50</sup> I like the image of Merton moving toward the margins to engage with kindred spirits and to create a new center, a new focal point that draws us away from our fixated habituation to globally accepted tools and measures of relating – those of power, wealth, extraction, consumption, domination. Elizabeth Johnson, the noted Catholic feminist and ecological theologian, has suggested that in response to our economically-driven climate crisis, we must look beyond only political and technological quick fixes to also embrace a more ‘ascetic’ posture upon our planet.<sup>51</sup> So, perhaps to consider Merton’s marginality as creating a new center might also invite us to revisit both monastic and Anabaptist visions of ascetic simplicity. And, doing so might prompt us to reconsider, as well, what it could mean *now* to self-empty, to yield ego, to open more space for an experience of the mind of Christ. And then live by its influence.

## Notes

This paper was presented by the author at The Thomas Merton Society’s Celebration held at Rydal Hall in Cumbria on April 6, 2024.



1. Thomas Merton, *The Waters of Siloe* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1949).
2. *The Waters of Siloe*, pp. 12-13.
3. *The Waters of Siloe*, p. 267.
4. *The Waters of Siloe*, p. 268.
5. *The Waters of Siloe*, p. 269.
6. *The Waters of Siloe*, p. 18.
7. *The Waters of Siloe*, p. 30.
8. *The Waters of Siloe*, p. 31.
9. See Walter Klaassen, *Anabaptism: Neither Catholic nor Protestant* (Waterloo, ONT: Conrad Press, 1973).
10. Sjouke Voolstra, cited in C. Arnold Snyder, *Following in the Footsteps of Christ: The Anabaptist Tradition. Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), p. 27.
11. C. Arnold Snyder, *The Life and Thought of Michael Snyder. Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, No. 26* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984), p. 27.
12. *Following in the Footsteps of Christ*, p. 27.
13. *Following in the Footsteps of Christ*, pp. 115-16.
14. See for example: Hermann Guth, *Amish Mennonites in Germany; Their Congregations, The Estates Where They Lived, Their Families* (Morgantown, PA: Mastro Press, 1995), pp. 5-9; Claude Jérôme, 'Agriculture and Religion: The Success of Anabaptists in Alsace in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* 28:1 (January 2005), pp. 14-23.
15. Merton to Robert Williams, 23 Apr 1964, quoted in Gordon Oyer, *Signs of Hope: Merton's Letters on Peace, Race and Ecology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2021), p. 160.
16. 'Message to Poets' in Thomas Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable* (New York: New Directions, 1964), pp. 58, 55.
17. 'Marxism and Monastic Perspectives', Appendix VII in Thomas Merton, *The Asian Journal* (New York: New Dimensions, 1975), p. 305.
18. 'Events and Pseudo-Events' in Thomas Merton, *Faith and Violence; Christian Teaching and Christian Practice* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 146.
19. Malgorzata Poks, 'Borderlands of Cultures, Borderlands of Discourse: Cargo Cults and Their Reflection in Thomas Merton's Poetry' in *Representing and (De) Constructing Borderlands*, eds. Grzegorz Moroz and Jacek Partyka (Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K.: Cambridge Scholars Publ, 2016), PP. 167-183; Jung Eun Sophia Park, SNJM, 'Dancing with Thomas Merton in the Borderland', *The Merton Annual* 36 (2023), PP. 87-101.
20. Thomas Merton, *The Wisdom of the Desert* (New York: New Directions, 1960), pp. 3, 5.
21. Lawrence S. Cunningham, 'Thomas Merton: The Pursuit of Marginality', *The Christian Century* (6 Dec 1978), p. 1182.



22. John Howard Yoder Papers, H12, Thomas Merton Center Archives, Bellarmine University, Louisville, Kentucky.
23. Donald B. Kraybill, *The Upside-Down Kingdom* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1978). Written by a Mennonite sociologist and published by a Mennonite denominational press, I first read this book during college as part of a Mennonite congregational discussion group; it proved pivotal in shaping my perspectives on faith-based engagement with political and social concerns.
24. Merton to Shelly, 28 Aug 1961, Correspondence Collection, Thomas Merton Center Archives, Bellarmine University, Louisville, Kentucky.
25. Thomas Merton, *Cold War Letters*, Christine M. Bochen and William H. Shannon, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), p. 14.
26. Merton to Shelly, 27 Nov 1961 (unpublished segment of Cold War Letter #4), Correspondence Collection, Thomas Merton Center Archives, Bellarmine University, Louisville, Kentucky.
27. 'Editorial', *The Mennonite* 78:10 (5 Mar 1963), p. 160.
28. Gordon Oyer, *Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest: Merton Berrigan, Yoder and Muste at the Gethsemani Abbey Peacemaker Retreat* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), pp. 24-52,
29. Merton to Peachey, 30 June 1967, Correspondence Collection, Thomas Merton Center Archives, Bellarmine University, Louisville, Kentucky.
30. Reference to the martyred Czech reformer Jan Hus, who predated Martin Luther by a century.
31. Transcript from recording of Merton's novice lectures, Tape 20, Track 3 (recorded 8/29/1962), Thomas Merton Center Archives, Bellarmine University, Louisville, Kentucky.
32. *Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest*, pp. 146-161.
33. For a thorough treatment of Yoder's actions and discussion of their implications, see the January 2015 issue of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* (LXXXIX:1) devoted to the topic.
34. Merton to Yoder, 29 Jan 1967, Correspondence Collection, Thomas Merton Center Archives, Bellarmine University, Louisville, Kentucky.
35. Gordon Oyer, *Signs of Hope: Thomas Merton's Letters on Peace, Race, and Ecology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2021), pp. 182-201.
36. *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia*, William H. Shannon, Christine M. Bochen, Patrick F. O'Connell, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), p. 73.
37. See Thomas Merton, *The Life of the Vows: Invitation to the Monastic Tradition* 6, ed. Patrick F. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012) and Thomas Merton, *The Rule of Saint Benedict: Invitation to the Monastic Tradition* 4, ed. Patrick F. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012).
38. Thomas Merton, *Thomas Merton in Alaska: Prelude to The Asian Journal. The Alaskan Conferences, Journals, and Letters*, Robert E. Daggy, ed. (New York: New Directions, 1989), pp. 93-114. See also Eberhard Arnold and Thomas Merton, *Why We Live in Community* (Walden, NY: Plough Publishing Co., 1995).



39. Br. Paul Quenon email to Gordon Oyer, 27 Feb 2024.
40. One of Merton's most concise comments regarding the relationship of individuals to 'community' might be found in his 1968 talks to nuns at Our Lady of the Redwoods monastery in California: 'The Spirit is given to each one and to all. It is the community—the loving community called together to seek God's love and will in their common life in Christ. And then the community can also admit that maybe this individual has the Spirit in some form that nobody else understands.' [*Thomas Merton in California: The Redwoods Conferences and Letters*, ed. David M. Odorisio, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2024), p. 39]
41. George Kilcourse, *The Ace of Freedoms: Thomas Merton's Christ* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1993).
42. *The Ace of Freedoms*, p. 5.
43. *The Ace of Freedoms*, p. 225.
44. *The Ace of Freedoms*, p. 225.
45. *The Ace of Freedoms*, p. 7.
46. *The Ace of Freedoms*, p. 225, emphasis added.
47. *Following in the Footsteps of Christ*, p. 45; emphasis added. The phrase 'mind of Christ' alludes to Phil. 2:5-11, sometimes referred to as the 'Christ Song', which reads in part: 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who ... emptied himself ... and being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death.' (NRSV) —a passage foundational to both concepts of *kenosis* and *Gelassenheit* as discussed here.
48. *Following in the Footsteps of Christ*, p. 186.
49. 'Why People Fail to Notice Horrors Around Them', by Tali Sharot and Cass R. Sunstein, *New York Times*, 24 Feb 2024, {<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/25/opinion/brain-habitation-horror.html>}. Their book is *Look Again: The Power of Noticing What Was Always There* (New York: Atria/One Signal Publishers, 2024).
50. Jonathon Montaldo, with Morgan Atkinson ed., *Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), pp. 143-144.
51. From 'John Dear Conversation with Elizabeth Johnson', 10 Feb 2024, recorded Zoom broadcast, The Beatitudes Center for the Nonviolent Jesus, {<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ks6q4RB3wZg>}.

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