

THOMAS MERTON AND BUDDHISM

Over the several decades of these lectures sponsored by the local chapter of the International Thomas Merton Society, many of the talks have been given by Trappist monks such as James Conner and Maurice Flood who knew Merton as a confrere, or by scholars such as William Shannon and Christine Bochen who have written or edited books about him and have served as officers of the international society. I fit into neither category but was invited to speak today for a rather different reason. The Merton Discussion Group that meets monthly at the abbey recently began reading Merton's *Asian Journal*, and since some of those who attend those meetings know little about Buddhism, a religious tradition that figures so prominently in that journal, it was suggested that since I have long been involved in Buddhist-Christian dialogue, it might be helpful to have me say something first about Buddhism; second, about how Merton came to be interested in it; and third, about some of the ways that tradition influenced him and what he did (or did not) gain from the exposure.

An Overview of Buddhism

I dare not call this first part even Buddhism 101, for it can be only the briefest of summaries of what one might learn in a course lasting for an entire semester, not to mention all that some scholars have learned by devoting their entire life to one or another aspect of Buddhist teaching or practice. Nevertheless, I trust that what I will say will prove to be a useful introduction to this fascinating tradition, after which I will turn to Merton's own encounters with Buddhist texts and Buddhist practitioners.

Just as Christianity takes its name from what was originally the title of a person, "the Christ," signifying that Jesus of Nazareth was "the anointed one," so Buddhism takes its name from the title of a man who can be known as "the enlightened one" or "the awakened one" (either term being an acceptable translation of the word "Buddha") There is no way of knowing the year of his birth or death,

but both very likely occurred sometime in the fifth century before the common era. He was born in what is modern-day Nepal into the warrior-caste Gautama family, his father being a member of the ruling council of the Sakya clan. The earliest texts do not give his personal name, but later ones say it was Siddhartha, meaning "one who has achieved his goal." His early life was one of relative luxury. An early text has him saying: "I was comfortable, extremely comfortable.... Day and night a white canopy was held over me to protect me from the cold, heat, dust, chaff or dew. I had three palaces, one for winter, one for summer, and one for the rainy season."¹ In young adulthood he married a woman named Yasodhara, who bore him a son named Rahula, so it seemed to those around him that Siddhartha had everything that one could reasonably hope for in life. And yet that same early text goes on to say that he was disturbed by certain aspects of the human condition that seemed unavoidable: old age, illness, death. Later texts expand on this by an enchanting story that claims his father tried to keep the very knowledge of such things away from his son but that eventually, on chariot trips outside the palace grounds, Siddhartha one day saw a decrepit old man, on another day someone suffering terribly from a disease, and on a third day a corpse. These were the first three of the so-called Four Passing Sights, the final one being the sight of a monk sitting placidly in the lotus position, unperturbed by all the suffering around him. The texts say that this final sight led him to recall a time in his own life when he had entered a state of calm meditation, giving him an inkling that there might well be a way to cope with all the dissatisfactions we meet on our life's journey.

Convinced that he would never be at peace by remaining with his family, he is said to have taken leave of them under cover of darkness so as to embrace the life of a wandering beggar, seeking the wisdom and truth that would answer his existential angst. For a while he stayed with a spiritual teacher and learned from him a way of deep, absorbed meditation in which all existing things seemed to vanish, but he found that when he returned from this trancelike state the old problems were still with him, so that was not the answer. At another time he joined a group of five ascetics and with them

pursued such severe mortification and fasting that it is said that he could touch his belly and feel his backbone. This, too, was not the answer, for it was only bringing him close to bodily death. Finally, sensing that a breakthrough was near, he decided to sit at the foot of a tree in what is today the northeast Indian state of Bihar, where he was determined to remain until he received the enlightenment he sought. Some of the Buddhist texts go into great detail about the various temptations with which the evil demon Mara confronted him, but Siddhartha bravely resisted them all and attained enlightenment, described in these words in one of the later scriptures:

I truly made effort and endeavor, my thought was firm and undistracted, my body was tranquil and passive.... My mind became concentrated, purified, cleansed.... I then directed my mind to wisdom, raising the recollections of my past lives.... This was the first light of wisdom attained during the early part of the night.... I then directed my mind toward the knowledge of the birth and death of all living beings..... I observed living beings die and be born ... according to the results of their karma.... This was the second light of wisdom attained during the middle of the night.... Then I directed my mind toward the knowledge of the wisdom that eliminates ignorance. At that time, I realized [the truth about] the dissatisfactory condition of life, [the nature of the dissatisfaction, its cause, its cessation, and the path to its cessation]..... When I realized this,... my mind was freed from the defilement of ignorance, and as I became free, I *realized* that I was free.²

At this point, the young man entered a nirvanic state and was no longer properly to be called Siddhartha Gautama but rather "the Enlightened One" (the Buddha) or "the Sage of the Sakya Clan" (Sakyamuni), free from the poisons of hatred, craving, and ignorance even though still liable to physical pain and bodily death. Overcoming a final temptation--that there would be no point in trying

to teach this to others since no one would believe him--he set out on a path that would make him an itinerant preacher and teacher for the remaining four decades of his life, gradually gaining followers. Many of these became celibate monks like himself, living in monasteries especially during the rainy season but for much of the year being entrusted by the Buddha to go about teaching just as he did.

As you might expect, there are many sermons and other teachings of the Buddha that have come down to us in documents called *sutras*, that is, discourses. For our purposes, it will suffice to turn to what is called his First Sermon, preached to that group of five ascetics with whom he had formerly lived and who now became his first disciples. It was held in a deer park near the holy city of Benares and encapsulates the Four Noble Truths, "noble" both because they have been found to be effective and because it takes a noble, determined person to live them honestly and courageously.

The first such truth is that of *dukkha*, a Sanskrit term often translated as "suffering" but, as I will show, much broader in meaning than what we normally understand by "suffering." As the text has come down to us, the Buddha described it thus: "Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of *dukkha*. Birth is *dukkha*, old age is *dukkha*, sickness is *dukkha*, and death is *dukkha*. Sorrow, lamentation, dejection and despair are *dukkha*. Contact with unpleasant things is *dukkha*, and separation from what one wishes is *dukkha*."³ This word *dukkha* can refer literally to an axle that is off-center, leading a vehicle to wobble and bump as it moves along a road, but later texts emphasize that the term does not refer only to things that are more or less obviously unpleasant. The very impermanence of things around us or our own mental states, the whole complex web of what the Buddhists call "dependent arising"--meaning that nothing has its own, independent, substantial reality--is itself a cause of all-pervading suffering. A Buddhist of our own day puts it this way: "Lacking the direct, intuitive insight into the true nature of things, we are caught in a bind: on the one hand, we experience in each moment the effects of previous causes and, on the other, we create each moment the causes for future effects. This very moment of existence is both the effect of past suffering and the cause of suffering in the

future. The fact of being stuck in this cycle [which is called *samsara*], this complex web of problems, is itself all-pervading suffering."⁴

The Second Noble Truth states the cause of all this suffering: "Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the cause of *dukkha*: that craving which leads to rebirth, combined with pleasure and passion, finding pleasure here and there. This is the craving for sensual pleasure, the craving for continued becoming, and the craving for non-becoming." The word here translated as craving is, in the ancient Pali language, *tanha*, which literally means "thirst." This includes not only thirsting or craving for the relatively coarse pleasures of gluttony or lust but also being attached to one's own opinions and thoughts, desiring to advance one's social standing, avoiding people who seem to be or actually are uncongenial, and the like. But even deeper than such craving is our fundamental delusion, our ignorance of universal impermanence and of the truth that ultimately there is no abiding, substantial self to even be the enjoyer of the things craved, despite the fact that there is an enjoyer in a superficial, conventional sense.

After this sobering diagnosis of the problem and its cause, the third truth promises a way out. In his First Sermon, the Buddha phrased it very succinctly: "Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of *dukkha*. It is the complete cessation of that very craving, giving it up, renouncing it, release from it, detachment from it." This is in fact what Buddhists mean by Nirvana, the extinction of all the dissatisfactions of life. Few Buddhist texts ever even attempt to give a positive description of what Nirvana means. Literally it refers to "blowing out" or "extinguishing" a fire, metaphorically therefore the extinction of the fiery craving that leads to *dukkha*. Some later commentators described Nirvana as a supreme or pure state of mind, while others refer to it as the cessation of the Three Root Evils or poisons of hatred, greed, and delusion.

For the Buddha, the only thing that mattered was not to define Nirvana but to describe the path that leads to it, called the Noble Eightfold Path, and this he did in the Fourth Noble Truth: "Now this,

O monks, is the noble truth of the way that leads to the cessation of *dukkha*. This is the Noble Eightfold Path, namely, Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration." There is no time here to discuss each of these in particular. I would only note that they fall into three divisions: the first two steps come under the category of "proper view" or "wisdom" (*prajna* in Sanskrit), the next three under the category of "proper conduct" (*sila*), and the final three under the category of "proper practice" (*samadhi*).

For the next forty-five years, the Buddha went about northern India teaching the monks who were his closest followers, preaching to lay persons, and giving counsel and comfort to those who came to him with their troubles. When about to die at the age of 80, he gathered his monastic community around him and spoke his last words, a summary of the key Buddhist teachings of dependent arising and impermanence, along with encouragement to persevere along the path that leads to enlightenment, freedom, Nirvana. He said: "Now, O monks, I declare that all the conditioned things of the world are passing. Attain your liberation with diligence." (You will have noticed that the Buddha was addressing monks and not nuns as well. The early documents state that he was originally reluctant to accept women into the monastic community--called the *sangha*--but was eventually persuaded to do so on the condition that the nuns accept certain additional rules. Since many hold that the nuns lineage became extinct around the twelfth century, in some Buddhist countries women were subsequently forbidden to be ordained as nuns, but in other countries, such as China, Korea, and Japan, the nuns lineage has continued to be recognized. At a meeting held in Hamburg, Germany in 2007, Buddhist leaders and scholars of all traditions agreed that the lineage should be re-established everywhere, but this is still controversial in countries like Thailand and Myanmar.)

After the Buddha passed away into what is called *parinirvana*, that is, the fullness of Nirvana where not even physical disease could any longer affect him, his followers committed themselves to

preserving his teaching to the very best of their ability. This they did at three important councils, the first of them held within a year of the Buddha's *parinirvana*. It is said that here one of his followers related when and why the Buddha had determined each of the rules of the monastic order, while another disciple spoke about his various discourses and also about certain "higher teachings." All this was passed down in oral tradition before being committed to writing several centuries later in three collections or "baskets" known as the *Tripitaka*. This came to be known as the Pali canon after the language in which it was first written down.

About a hundred years after the First Council a second one was held, mainly to try to resolve various issues that had arisen concerning the monastic rules. There seems to have been lingering disagreement even after this council, leading to a schism in which one party was called Theravada, meaning the way of the elders. A sub-sect of this group, retaining the same name Theravada, eventually became the main form of Buddhism on the island of Sri Lanka, from where it spread to neighboring regions in southeast Asia, specifically the countries known today as Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia. In this form of Buddhism, monks have traditionally been especially prominent. Those who live in city monasteries focus on studying Buddhist doctrine, performing rituals, and serving the laity, who in turn are devoted to supporting the monks by their alms, while those in forest monasteries devote more of their time to the practice of meditation.

Perhaps the best summary of Theravada teaching is found in the work called *The Path of Purification*, composed by the monk Buddhaghosa in the fifth century of our era. Basing his teaching on the afore-mentioned three main divisions of the Noble Eightfold Path, Buddhaghosa first deals with "right conduct" or morality. All Buddhists, whether monastic or lay, are expected to abide by the five basic precepts of not killing, not stealing, refraining from sexual immorality, not lying, and not imbibing intoxicants, while to these five the monks add many others, such as never eating after noon, never attending events where there is dancing and singing, never wearing ornaments or cosmetics, and

never accepting money from donors. Buddhaghosa next treats the category of "right practice" or concentration, which he defines as "a profitable single-pointedness of the mind" realized in various kinds of meditation. The objects of concentration are numerous, such as bodily decay (which can help one develop a detachment to material existence), one's breathing, the arising and subsistence of various sensations in one's body or of thoughts going through one's mind, or what are called the Four Divine Abodes of loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. Third and last, Buddhaghosa discusses "right wisdom" or view, which involves "insight meditation" (*vipassana*) into the nature of such things as the Five Aggregates that constitute ordinary human selfhood, namely, the material body, sensations, perception, the various mental states that form our character, and consciousness itself. Such meditation deepens one's insight into the impermanence, dissatisfactory quality, and nonsubstantiality of all phenomena, but whereas this will at first provoke fear or even terror, perseverance leads to a spirit of detachment and calm and a firm determination to attain Nirvana. Anyone who has completed this entire Path of Purification is called an *arhat*, that is, a "worthy one" who has attained Awakening or Enlightenment and so will, at bodily death, enter *parinirvana*. Attaining the state of an *arhat* is therefore the goal in Theravada Buddhism, where it is traditionally assumed that only those living in monasteries have the time and auspicious circumstances needed to follow the path to its end, whereas lay persons normally hope to acquire enough good *karma* in this lifetime to be reborn as a monk in some future life. It should also be noted that an *arhat*, even though fully enlightened, is not to be called a Buddha, because only the latter attains enlightenment on his own and not by following the path already laid down by another.

Let us now look at another major division within the Buddhist tradition, Mahayana, which means "great vehicle" or "great raft," able to convey many people across to the farther shore of enlightenment. Already in one of the early Pali texts there is an account of a person named Sumedha, who is said to have lived eons ago and who decided not to strive to become an *arhat* by following one

who was already enlightened but instead took the Path of the Bodhisattva, literally "one who is to become awakened." Sumedha resolved to devote all of his many bodhisattva lifetimes to helping others become enlightened and then finally was himself reborn as Siddhartha Gautama and became the one we know as Sakyamuni or "the historical Buddha." About five centuries after his birth, a number of *sutras* came to appear, claiming to be discourses of Sakyamuni and teaching that the Bodhisattva Path is superior to that leading to Arhathood. There are many of these *sutras*, some of the best-known being the *Diamond Sutra*, the *Heart Sutra*, and the *Lotus Sutra*. In the most general terms, they refer to numerous Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, past, present, and future, all of whom may in some way be petitioned in prayer, whereas the tendency in Theravada is to regard Sakyamuni as a great sage who, at his *parinirvana*, so thoroughly passed on as to be no longer available to be personally invoked; rather, he is regarded as an unsurpassable model and teacher. Some scholars have devoted their entire life to studying just one of the various Mahayana lineages, such as *T'ien-t'ai*, *Madhyamika*, *Shingon*, or Pure Land. Since the one that most interested Thomas Merton was that known in China as *Ch'an* and in Japan as *Zen*, I will discuss only it, and even it quite briefly.

Tradition has it that this lineage was brought to China from India by a monk named Bodhidharma around the year 470 of our era. One modern scholar, Donald Mitchell, who himself practiced Zen for about ten years, has written that "Ch'an teaches that to reach [the] sudden turning over of consciousness that reveals [one's] Buddha nature, one must negate all ordinary distinctions and conceptualizations through meditative stillness of mind."⁵ This is in accord with a poetic stanza composed around the eleventh century but attributed to Bodhidharma. It goes like this:

A special tradition outside the scriptures;

With no dependence upon words and letters.

A direct pointing into the mind;

Seeing there one's own nature, and attaining Buddhahood.⁶

It would be wrong to conclude from this stanza that there is no place for the reading of scriptures within Ch'an or Zen Buddhism or that you would not find even vigorous debate among various followers of this tradition about the meaning of this or that point of Buddhist doctrine, but the relationship between a disciple and his master is nevertheless especially prominent here, whereas, for example, in Pure Land Buddhism one can move along the path toward eventual enlightenment mainly by devoutly repeating the name of a celestial being known as Amida Buddha.

Coming from China, *Ch'an* seems to have been present in Japan as early as the seventh century, but the person generally recognized as the founder of Zen Buddhism was a man named Eisai, who died in 1215. Having been criticized for trying to introduce a teaching and practice deemed heterodox by the dominant Tendai School, Eisai wrote a work titled *Propagation of Zen in Defense of the Country*, in which he made the following claim: "By studying it, one discovers the essential key to all forms of Buddhism. By practicing it, one's life is fulfilled in the realization of Awakening. In terms of externals, Zen stresses discipline over doctrine; internally, it brings one the highest inner wisdom. This is what the Zen School is all about."⁷

Not surprisingly, various divisions arose within Zen itself, the two best-known being Rinzai and Soto, the latter emphasizing "just sitting," while the former also places considerable reliance on those rather well-known sayings known as *koans*, intended to promote a practitioner's sudden experience of Awakening known as *satori* or *kensho*, although with the understanding that *satori* is not a once-and-for-all event but rather a step along a path that can lead to more and more profound experiences of this sort. Although Zen is by no means the most popular form of Buddhism in Japan, in the twentieth century it became particularly well-known in the United States and other Western countries, largely due

to the time spent in this country by various Japanese practitioners and promulgators, including in a special way Merton's friend and correspondent D.T. Suzuki.

Finally, to conclude this all-too-rapid survey of Buddhism, I turn to Vajrayana, "the diamond vehicle," found especially in Tibet. Some scholars consider Vajrayana a sub-set of Mahayana, others find it distinctive enough to rank it as a third major form alongside Theravada and Mahayana. That is a minor scholarly disagreement that need not concern us. As you might expect, Buddhism entered Tibet by way of India. At first it was strongly resisted as being totally contrary to the indigenous shamanistic religion of Bön, but under King Songsten Gampo in the early seventh century this changed. Having taken in political marriages two wives who were both Buddhists (one from Nepal, the other from China), he became well disposed toward the religion and sent scholars to India to bring back Buddhist texts and have them translated into Tibetan. At times the religion was driven underground, largely because some of the aristocracy resented the growing power of the monasteries, but it always revived and by the eleventh century there were three major Buddhist lineages that have continued to this day, followed by a fourth dating from the late fourteenth century. There is no need to go into the various differences among them. Suffice it to say that all of them have taken up various elements of Tantra that were created in India. This word "Tantra" comes from a verb meaning "to weave," the implication being that its practice enables one "to weave a spiritually visualized realm of Buddhas and bodhisattvas" and thereby bring "to one's consciousness the essence and qualities of Buddhahood embodied in what one is visualizing."⁸ This practice is assisted by the use of mandalas, circular diagrams that contain "images of a deity in his or her celestial realm, along with symbols and images that depict enlightened virtues associated with the deity and that indicate core Buddhist ideas and ideals."⁹ Also characteristic of Vajrayana is *dzogchen*, a practice that means "Great Perfection" and that goes beyond the visualizations of Tantra to experience the essential nature of mind itself, which is "originally pure and free from all defilements. To discover the essence of consciousness suddenly in a

flash of enlightened insight through *dzogchen* practice enables one to realize this original innate purity and freedom."¹⁰ Those who are recognized spiritual teachers in this lineage are known as lamas, the most important of them being, of course, the Dalai Lama, who regularly refers to himself first of all as a monk and who befriended Merton during the latter's trip to Asia.

Before turning to Merton's own interest in Buddhism, I want to make one more point, perhaps the most important of all. So far I have been focusing more on what distinguishes the Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana teachings and practices from one another. As regards what they have in common, there is, as you would expect, the universal acceptance of the Four Noble Truths as being fundamental, but one could get the impression that at least in some schools or lineages these truths are seen simply as a way to one's own enlightenment. Indeed, textbooks about Buddhism sometimes imply that the Theravada ideal is a rather self-centered quest for Nirvana on the part of an *Arhat* whereas Mahayana is characterized by the *Bodhisattava*'s altruistic desire to bring all beings to enlightenment. The effect of this oversimplification is evident in a story told by Sylvia Boorstein, a teacher at a Theravada meditation center in California. She recounts a meeting at a ski resort with a young man who had been taking a world religions course. She told him that she taught at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, whose program was based on the principal meditation practices described by the Buddha in the Pali Canon. The conversation continued in the following way:

“Oh, I see,” he said, “that’s Theravada Buddhism, isn’t it?”

“Yes it is,” Sylvia replied.

“Is it true,” he asked, “that those were the selfish Buddhists who were only interested in their own enlightenment and not in the liberation of all beings?”

About this exchange, Ms. Boorstein later commented: “I hope I did not wince at what I recognized as a not uncommon survey textbook, shorthand differentiation ... [In fact, the Buddha’s] message of liberation for ‘all beings’ is that craving is the cause of suffering, that the end of suffering is

possible, that peace is possible in this very life, [and] that insight leads to wisdom, *which manifests as compassion on behalf of all beings*. This message that Theravada proclaims has remained central to Buddhism for the 2500 years of its evolution through different cultures and different times.”¹¹

A similar kind of anecdote, this one told by Huston Smith in his best-selling textbook *The World's Religions*, concerns two Germans who, disillusioned by European civilization in the period leading up to World War II, went to Sri Lanka as young men and became Theravada monks. One of them, taking the name Nyanaponika Thera, remained on that path until he died at the age of 93, while his friend, having learned about Tibetan Buddhism on a trip to north India, switched to that tradition and became known in the West as Lama Govinda. When asked about this years later, Ven. Nyanaponika replied, “My friend cited the Bodhisattva Vow as the reason for his switch to Mahayana, but I could not see the force of his argument. For if one were to transcend self-centeredness completely, as the *Arhat* seeks to do, what would be left but compassion?”¹²

How such compassion has been lived out at its best was illustrated by something I once heard at a Buddhist-Christian dialogue held at the Abbey of Gethsemani in 1996. Among those present was the patriarch of the Cambodian Buddhists, a Theravada monk named Maha Ghosananda. He recounted that at a United Nations conference held in 1981 to discuss the future of Cambodia after the genocide practiced by the Khmer Rouge followers of Pol Pot, he had participated in a Buddhist ceremony for peace. Afterwards, a Khmer Rouge leader came up to him very cautiously and asked if he would come build a Buddhist temple at the border between Cambodia and Thailand. Ghosananda said he would, leading some of his own followers to wonder why he would agree to help anyone who had been so fierce an enemy, but Ghosananda reminded them that love embraces all beings, whether noble-minded or low-minded, whether good or evil. Indeed, the latter need loving kindness the most, because in many such persons the seed of goodness may have died because warmth was lacking them. He went on to say, in words that cannot but remind us of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount: "I do not

question that loving one's oppressors ... may be the most difficult attitude to achieve. But it is a law of the universe that retaliation, hatred and revenge only continue the cycle and never stop it.

Reconciliation ... means that we see ourselves in the opponent--for what is the opponent but a being in ignorance, and we ourselves are also ignorant of many things. Therefore, only loving kindness and right mindfulness can free us."¹³

The same emphasis can be found in the Vajrayana Buddhism as practiced especially in Tibet. Just as Maha Ghosananda related to the Khmer Rouge with what he called an attitude of "loving kindness and right mindfulness," the Dalai Lama has maintained a similar attitude toward the Chinese government, which has had effective control of Tibet since the invasion of Mao Tse-tung's army in the mid-twentieth century. More broadly, as the leader of all Tibetan Buddhists, the Dalai Lama has consistently taught that compassion, loving kindness, and wisdom are the only ways to genuine world peace and so ought to be practiced by the leaders of nations as well as by ordinary citizens. In his book *A Human Approach to World Peace*, he phrased it this way:

According to Buddhist psychology, most of our troubles are due to our passionate desire for and attachment to things that we misapprehend as enduring entities.... These mental processes easily translate into actions, breeding belligerence as an obvious effect.... What can we do to control and regulate these "poisons"--delusion, greed, and aggression?... Compassion is what we must strive to cultivate in ourselves, and we must develop it from a limited amount to a limitless [compassion for all sentient beings].... Further, the Tibetan Buddhist tradition teaches us to view all sentient beings as our dear mothers and to show our gratitude by loving them all.... When you train in this sort of outlook, a true sense of compassion--a true sense of love and respect for others--becomes possible.... Thus the practice of compassion and wisdom is

useful to all, especially to those responsible for running national affairs, in whose hands lie the power and opportunity to create the structure of world peace.¹⁴

Finally, even though a superficial acquaintance with Zen could lead one to think that it is mainly a matter of meditative sitting in the lotus position for hours on end, perhaps while grappling with a koan such as "What was the appearance of your face before your parents were born?" in fact this form of Buddhism also emphasizes the practice of loving concern for all sentient beings, including those that are not human. When I attended that Buddhist-Christian dialogue at the Abbey of Gethsemani in 1996, I usually sat next to a Japanese Zen priest named Eshin Nishimura. At one of our sessions, he recounted the following anecdote:

I know a lovely Zen monk who used to live alone in a hermitage at the foot of a mountain near Kobe in Japan. Right after World War II, because of the bombing there were many, many children begging and sleeping homelessly. When this monk went to Kobe, he brought children back whenever he found them. Soon his poor hermitage was full of boys and girls, even babies. Then, after the war, one of my [own] students, who was studying at my university, lived at the hermitage of this monk. One day, this student was picking up frogs in the small pond near the hermitage. At that moment, the monk came back to the hermitage and happened to find the boy putting the frogs into a bucket. The monk asked, "What are you doing?" The student answered, "Well, these frogs are so noisy they disturb my study. So, I am going to put them on the other side of the mountain." The monk said, "Well, be sure not to forget that you are staying here for only four years. The frogs stay here their whole life."¹⁵

In a personal conversation with me, Eshin Nishimura made the same point: the heart of Zen is helping one live in a way that shows compassionate and loving concern for all sentient beings. The hours of meditation, the pondering of a koan, the individual sessions with a *roshi*, the work done in the kitchen or rice paddy are all geared to that end and are otherwise without lasting value. On this crucial point, Zen is at one with Theravada and Vajrayana. Having made it, I look next at how Merton came to be interested in all three of these lineages.

How Merton Came to Be Interested in Buddhism

From his earliest years, Thomas Merton was an inquisitive person, given to a wide range of reading, so even as a young man he would have learned something of Eastern religions as discussed to some extent, for example, in Aldous Huxley's *Ends and Means*, which Merton read during his years at Columbia University. During that same period, he had a brief meeting with a visiting Hindu monk, Brahmachari, who had been invited to New York by the wife of Merton's good friend Sy Freedgood. To his surprise, when Merton asked Brahmachari for advice about what to read in order to gain a better understanding of the spiritual life, the monk recommended not something from his own tradition but rather *The Imitation of Christ* and Augustine's *Confessions*, effectively turning Merton to his own Christian tradition. During his early years at Gethsemani, he immersed himself even further in Christianity, with books on such figures and topics as St. Bernard of Clairvaux (*The Last of the Fathers*, 1954), the Eucharist (*The Living Bread*, 1956), and various forms of Christian monasticism (*The Silent Life*, 1957). By the mid-1950s, however, he had also begun reading works from other traditions, in particular Zen Buddhism as described in the works of D.T. Suzuki.

The direct relationship between these two men, which quickly became a fast friendship, began with a letter Merton wrote to Suzuki on March 12, 1959, which opened with the words: "Perhaps you are accustomed to receiving letters from strangers."¹⁶ He went on to say that he had read many of

Suzuki's books and felt a profound and intimate agreement with the Japanese author. Along with the letter Merton sent a couple pages of translations he had made from some of the early Christian monks of the Egyptian desert, for he found in them a kind of Zen quality that he thought Suzuki would appreciate. He went on to express the hope that Suzuki would agree to receive the entire manuscript of what would become the book titled *The Wisdom of the Desert* and that he would write something by way of introduction. After receiving a positive response, Merton wrote Suzuki an even longer letter a month later, an eventual upshot of their correspondence being a four-part dialogue between the two men that was originally published by New Directions in 1961 and then reprinted as Part Two of Merton's book *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*. Their friendship also led to one of the very few times that Merton's abbot, James Fox, allowed him to travel at any distance from the monastery, for while Suzuki was in New York in the summer of 1964, Merton got permission to fly to that city. Near the Columbia campus he had two long conversations with the Japanese writer, who was then 94 years old and in frail health. Writing later of their encounter, he said that Suzuki "seemed to me to embody all the indefinable qualities of the 'Superior Man' of the ancient Asian, Taoist, Confucian and Buddhist traditions.... A very happy experience, to say the least.... The last words I remember Dr. Suzuki saying (before the usual good-byes) were 'The most important thing is Love.' I must say that as a Christian I was profoundly moved."¹⁷

If we ask why Merton was drawn especially to Zen Buddhism, a large part of the answer was expressed by him in *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, where he gave voice to what he had long considered a major deficiency of Western thought since early-modern times. In his words, "The taste for Zen in the West is in part a healthy reaction of people exasperated with the heritage of four centuries of Cartesianism: the reification of concepts, idolization of the reflexive consciousness, flight from being into verbalism, mathematics, and rationalization. Descartes made a fetish out of the mirror in which the self finds itself. Zen shatters it."¹⁸

It should be noted that some scholars of Buddhism have been quite critical of Merton's reliance on Suzuki. For example, John Keenan, professor emeritus of religion at Middlebury College in Vermont, has written that in recent decades "Buddhist critiques of D.T. Suzuki have left little doubt that the Buddhism he presented in 1960s America was tailor-fitted to that time and place.... His Zen was just too pure and too naïve, too simplistic, for it distorts both the Chan/Zen tradition and the broader Buddhist tradition.... The Zen tradition is no less literate, and no more rarified, than any other religious tradition; it abounds in all manner of Chinese rhetorical moves. It prizes scripture, and it values the study of philosophy, complicated philosophy ..."¹⁹

I myself, however, am not convinced that Keenan was fair in this critique, for his words bring to my mind one of the best-known parables attributed to Sakyamuni Buddha. Suppose, he said, a man were shot with a poisoned arrow. If his friends went to get a surgeon to remove the arrow and heal him, but the man were to say, "No, I will not have this arrow pulled out until I know by what sort of man I was wounded, and of what kind of wood the bow was made, and whether the bow string was of bamboo fiber or hemp, and whether the shaft of the arrow was from a wild or a cultivated plant, and from what kind of bird its feathers were drawn, and whether it was wrapped around with the sinew of an ox or a buffalo or a monkey"--truly, before learning all this the man would die. So, too, the Buddha taught, it is not useful to discuss all sorts of speculative questions such as whether the world is eternal or finite in time or whether the body and soul are distinct or one and the same, for such disputes do not contribute to the cessation of *duhkha*. "So what have I explained?" he asked. "*Duhkha* have I explained, the cause of *duhkha*, the cessation of *duhkha*, and the path that leads to the cessation of *duhkha* have I explained, for this is useful."

It was this practical, non-speculative emphasis of Sakyamuni Buddha that attracted Merton rather than what Keenan called "the complicated philosophy" that can indeed be found in some later

Buddhist authors. In an appreciation of Suzuki that is included in *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*, Merton wrote:

It seemed to me that the great and baffling cultural luxuriance which has clothed the various forms of Buddhism in different parts of Asia is the beautiful garment thrown over something quite simple. The greatest religions are all, in fact, very simple. They all retain very important essential differences, no doubt, but in their inner reality Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Judaism are extremely simple ... and they all end up with the simplest and most baffling thing of all: direct confrontation with Absolute Being, Absolute Love, Absolute Mercy or Absolute Void, by an immediate and fully awakened engagement in the living of everyday life.²⁰

This emphasis on ultimate simplicity, which surely ought not be called "simplistic" in a negative sense, has been emphasized by the Buddhist scholar Ruben Habito, whose doctoral studies in Buddhism at the University of Tokyo give him credentials every bit as impressive as those of Professor Keenan. Writing of what he calls "the embodiment of awakening in one's daily life," Dr. Habito says that this is the most reliable checkpoint as to whether or not an alleged experience of enlightenment was genuine or not. In his words, "The Zen life is after all nothing but one lived in fidelity to each moment, wherein 'just being there is enough.' It is a life lived in each moment, 'just being there,' wherever that may be, or in whatever circumstances one may find oneself, totally open, hearing the cries of the world, and responding to the call that moment brings."²¹ Exactly in accord with this is something that Merton wrote decades earlier in commenting on some of the strange anecdotes one finds in Zen literature:

The apparently mysterious and cryptic sayings of Zen become much simpler when we see them in the whole context of Buddhist "mindfulness" or awareness, which in its most elementary

forms consists in that "bare attention" which simply *sees* what is right there and does not add any comment, any interpretation, any judgment, any conclusion. It just *sees*. Learning to see in this manner is the basic and fundamental exercise of Buddhist meditation.²²

This quotation offers an almost perfect transition to Merton's interest in another of the major Buddhist lineages, Theravada, for in that passage he cites parenthetically the major work by the Theravada monk Nyanaponika Thera, to whom I referred earlier. It is true that Merton wrote much less about Theravada than about Zen or even about Tibetan Buddhism, but he unquestionably valued this tradition very much. He had a copy of Nyanaponika's book *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* with him throughout his Asian journey, the first Buddhist he met on arriving in Asia was the Theravada monk Phra Khantipalo, with whom he had a lengthy conversation about mindfulness, and when he later visited Sri Lanka he made a point of meeting not only Nyanaponika but also Walpola Rahula, the author of the widely read book *What the Buddha Taught*.²³ In addition, it was at the giant stone statues of the Buddhas at Polonnaruwa on Sri Lanka that he had the well-known experience that led him to write a few days later:

I was knocked over with a rush of relief and thankfulness at the *obvious* clarity of the figures, the clarity and fluidity of shape and line, the design of the monumental bodies composed into the rock shape and landscape, figure, rock and tree.... All problems are resolved and everything is clear, simply because what matters is clear.... everything is emptiness and everything is compassion. I don't know when in my life I have ever had such a sense of beauty and spiritual validity running together in one aesthetic illumination.... I don't know what else remains, but I have now seen and have pierced through the surface and have got beyond the shadow and the disguise.²⁴

Whereas Merton had had a quick and lasting attraction to Zen, and whereas he had never questioned the value of mindfulness as emphasized by Nyanaponika and other Theravada writers, his approach to Tibetan Buddhism, "the diamond vehicle," was at first more cautious. As he was preparing for his Asian journey, he reflected in his journal on the Buddhism practiced in Tibet and the threat posed to its very existence by the Chinese occupation of that land. From what he knew of it at the time, he wrote that he was not much interested in it, marked as it was by what he called "ferocity, ritualism, superstition, magic. No doubt many deep and mysterious things, but maybe it *needs* to disappear."²⁵ Similarly, of the possibility of meeting the Dalai Lama, Merton told his friend Harold Talbott that he was totally opposed to meeting with the Tibetan leader, saying: "I'm not going. I've seen enough pontiffs." Talbott, familiar with Merton's difficulties in dealing with authority and obedience at Gethsemani, said that the monk "didn't trust organized religion" and had not come to India "to hang around the power-elite of an exiled central Asian Vatican."²⁶ However, once Merton arrived in Dharamsala, the north Indian town where the Dalai Lama had set up his government in exile and where thousands of exiled Tibetans lived in very primitive conditions, his attitude changed drastically. In his letters and journals both prior to and during his Asian journey, Merton often spoke of his keen desire to *learn by experience* what the Eastern traditions could teach him about the central monastic practices of meditation and contemplation, and once he got to know some of the Tibetan masters, he was very taken by their depth. Shortly after arriving in Dharamsala in early November, he met a man named Sonam Kazi, a lay monk of the Nyingmapa lineage, who told him that he should find a Tibetan guru who could train him in the practice of *dzogchen* so as to be guided into a state of pure awareness that is the very nature of the mind itself. Of this recommendation, Merton wrote:

... he asked me if I were willing to risk it and I said, "Why not?" The question is finding the right man. I am not exactly dizzy with the idea of looking for a magic master, but I would certainly like to learn something by experience and it does seem that the Tibetan Buddhists are the only ones who, at present, have a really large number of people who have attained to extraordinary heights in meditation and contemplation. This does not exclude Zen. But I do feel very much at home with the Tibetans, even though much that appears in books about them seems bizarre if not sinister.²⁷

Just as Merton had quickly come to realize that he had earlier misjudged the Tibetans in general, so too was his opinion of the Dalai Lama totally reversed once the two men met. After meeting the Dalai Lama for the first time on November 4, the first of their three meetings, Merton had only positive things to say about him in his journal, including these words: "The Dalai Lama is most impressive as a person.... A very solid, energetic, generous, and warm person, very capably trying to handle enormous problems--none of which he mentioned directly. There was not a word of politics. The whole conversation was about religion and philosophy and especially ways of meditation."²⁸

Their second meeting, two days later, was even more remarkable, for the Dalai Lama sat down on the floor with Merton and gave him lengthy instruction in meditation in the way any student would be taught, even though in Tibet such an act would have been unthinkable, for Dalai Lamas are always expected to remain physically above others, seated on a throne.²⁹ Knowing of Merton's specific interest in *dzogchen* practice, His Holiness emphasized taking the mind itself as an object of meditation. After a third meeting, on November 8, at which the Dalai Lama asked him to talk about western monasticism, Merton left Dharamsala and a few days later was in the hill station of Darjeeling to make a short retreat. During a day trip near the village of Ghoom he met still another Tibetan master, Chatral Rinpoche, whom Merton called "the greatest *rinpoche* I have met so far and a very impressive

person.... He said he had meditated in solitude for thirty years and had not attained to perfect emptiness, and I said I hadn't either. The unspoken or half-spoken message of the talk was our complete understanding of each other as people who were somehow *on the edge* of great realization and knew it and were trying, somehow or other, to go out and get lost in it--and that it was a grace for us to meet one another."³⁰

About a week later Merton spoke with still another Tibetan lama, Khempo Kalu Rinpoche, at a hermit center at the village of Sonada. This lama told him that there were currently sixteen hermits there (fifteen monks and a nun), each making a rigorous three-year retreat, during which they spent much time in prayer and meditation, doing nothing in common and seeing only their guru, the cook who gave them their food, and a doctor if they were ill. Kalu Rinpoche invited Merton to make such a retreat himself. Reflecting on the invitation, he wrote in his journal: "That was very kind of him. With my reaction to this climate at its best and with the noise of the Indian radio in a cottage across the road from the hermitage, I guess it's still Alaska or California or Kentucky for me."³¹ Later that same day he even wrote in his journal that he had seen enough of this part of Asia, saying: "My mind turns to Ceylon, Thailand, Indonesia. I want to see something else. I have seen the mountains and the *gompas* [Tibetan monasteries]."³² But in sixteen days he was dead, never having gotten to Indonesia or Japan. In that sense, one might say that his words following the experience at Polonnaruwa, written less than a week before his death, were climactic: that his Asian pilgrimage had come clear and purified itself, that he had come to know and see what he had been obscurely looking for, that he had pierced through the surface and had got beyond the shadow and the disguise.³³

What Merton Gained from his Exposure to Buddhism

This leads me to the final, and shortest, part of my talk, some brief reflections on what Merton received in the course of his life from his familiarity with Zen, Theravada, and Vajrayana Buddhism.

In other words, how did they influence his thought and behavior? What did he learn (or not learn) from any of these traditions? I will confine myself to simply one point about each of the three, beginning with Zen.

Even though we think of Merton primarily as a writer--indeed, in his prefatory remarks to *A Thomas Merton Reader*, edited by Thomas O'Donnell, Merton said that while he was not sure he had really become a monk, he had no doubt that he was a writer--his artistic interests and talents were not limited to the written word. His photography was of exceptional quality. From 2005 to 2013 there was even an international traveling exhibition of thirty-five of his photographs called "A Hidden Wholeness: The Zen Photography of Thomas Merton." However, it is perhaps in his calligraphic drawings that a Zen influence may most readily be seen. The art historian and biographer Roger Lipsey has written a perceptive study titled "Merton, Suzuki, Pen, Ink," in which he notes how, beginning in 1960, Merton annually received from Suzuki a twelve-month calendar featuring the pictorial art and calligraphy of the celebrated eighteenth-century Zen priest and artist Sengai. In the late winter of 1965 Merton received not only the calendar for that year but also a precious gift of calligraphy done by Suzuki himself. Merton's letter of thanks spoke of it as "a presence of great beauty and strength which I have given a place of honor in the hermitage. It transforms all around it... It is to me a deep bond with a world and tradition which I greatly love and admire. It is above all a special reminder of you whom I venerate."³⁴ The scroll itself seems to have been destroyed in a fire and only a photograph of it hanging on the hermitage wall remains, but the photograph makes clear that Suzuki had written the Japanese characters for harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility, which form the basis not only of the Tea Ceremony but also of life in a Zen monastery.

Merton himself, the son of artists, had already done drawings for the Columbia University humor publication *The Jester* while he was a student there. During his first fifteen years as a monk at Gethsemani he made hundreds of brush drawings on conventional religious subjects, none of them

especially memorable. But Dr. Lipsey notes that "something quickened late in 1960" when he received from his college friend Ad Reinhardt "a small Black Painting of the sort that would, in time, confirm Reinhardt's reputation as a truly great and fiercely original American painter."³⁵ This seems to have sparked a renewal in Merton's own practice of visual art, just as the calligraphy of the Sengai calendars that he began receiving around this very time prompted him to start using the brush more freely and variously than he had in the past. Lipsey notes that we may want Merton's calligraphic drawings to be interpreted, may want to have answered the question "What is it?" But Merton resisted even giving a title to such works. In a letter to Margaret Randall, the first magazine editor to publish a suite of his calligraphies, he wrote:

Such calligraphies should really have no literary trimmings at all, including titles. There should really be nothing that misleads the spectator by seeming to give him a "clue." That is the curse of the literary incrustations that have still remained on so much abstract art: the mania for satisfying the spectators' foolish question about "what is it?" Until they can be content to accept the fact that the picture is simply itself, there is no point in trying to explain it, especially if the explanation seems to indicate that it is something else.³⁶

Lipsey sensibly and sensitively comments that "Merton's stance 'against interpretation' ... is almost certainly grounded in the notion of *tathata* or suchness that he had encountered in Zen--a notion of the inviolate presence of each thing, best appreciated in silence without the mind running on."³⁷ What Merton himself once wrote about Zen art--that "it is able to suggest what cannot be said and, by using a bare minimum of form, to awaken us to the formless" and so "to alert us to what is *not* and is nevertheless 'right there'"³⁸--all this is certainly applicable to his own calligraphy as well.

As regards Theravada, Merton's indebtedness to that tradition was the topic of a lecture I gave at a conference in Louisville some years ago, a lecture subsequently published in the book *Merton and Buddhism*. Here I will only repeat very briefly that he especially valued the Theravada emphasis on mindfulness, the very topic that he discussed with Phra Khantipalo upon first arriving in Asia. That Buddhist monk subsequently composed a summary of the points he had made in his conversation with Merton, a summary titled "On Mindfulness" and included as an appendix in *The Asian Journal*. Merton also found the topic of mindfulness treated in great detail in Nyanaponika Thera's book *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, which was one of the few books he had brought with him from Kentucky. An especially practical teaching emphasized by that Buddhist monk is to be found in his treatment of what he calls "Bare Attention," that fundamental aspect of mindfulness that can help prevent us from pursuing rash courses of action. In his words, "Very often a single moment of mindfulness or wise reflection would have prevented a far-reaching sequence of misery or guilt. By *pausing* before action, in a habitual attitude of Bare Attention, one will be able to seize that decisive but brief moment when mind has not yet settled upon a definite course or action or a definite attitude, but is still open to receive skilful directions."³⁹ In reading these words, one may well imagine how the practice of such awareness might have spared Merton and the young nurse with whom he fell in love in 1966 a tremendous amount of anguish. Some of you will recall that this was the topic of an earlier lecture of mine in this abbey series; it was later published in volume 12 of *The Merton Annual*.⁴⁰

Finally, we might ask what Merton most valued and learned from his acquaintance with Tibetan Buddhism. Different answers might be given to this question, but certainly near the top of any list would be the effect of his meetings with persons like the Dalai Lama and Chatral Rinpoche. He clearly wanted to learn from persons in other traditions who took the contemplative life as seriously as he did, and in the Tibetans he was not disappointed. A journal entry written just a few weeks before his death beautifully captures the gratitude he felt for having met them. He wrote:

I am still not able fully to appreciate what this exposure to Asia has meant. There has been so much--and yet also so little. I have only been here a month! It seems like a long time since [landing at] Bangkok and even since Delhi and Dharamsala. Meeting the Dalai Lama and the various Tibetans, lamas or "enlightened" laymen, has been the most significant thing of all, especially in the way we were able to communicate with one another and share an essentially spiritual experience of "Buddhism" which is also somehow in harmony with Christianity.⁴¹

Merton was indeed a man open to wisdom wherever he might find it. He was the first to admit that he did not always live in accord with such wisdom, that he was guilty at times of what he called foolish or embarrassing behavior, but there is no doubt that he has helped many others discover what our Church has been teaching since the Second Vatican Council: that there are indeed "rays of truth" in all the great religious traditions and that we are called not merely to recognize or tolerate them but also to promote and learn from them in whatever ways we can responsibly do so. Merton was clearly such a learner, not only from Buddhism but also from Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. In this he has rightly been a model and inspiration for many.

1" Quoted by Donald W. Mitchell, *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12.

2" Quoted *ibid.*, 19.

3" Quoted *ibid.*, 47.

4" Kathleen McDonald, *How to Meditate: A Practical Guide* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1984), 85-86.

5" Mitchell, 201.

6" Quoted *ibid.*

7" Quoted *ibid.*, 263.

8" Mitchell, 160.

9" *Ibid.*, 164-65.

10" *Ibid.*, 168.

11" Sylvia Boorstein, "A Message for Everyone," quoted in Mitchell, 77. My emphasis.

12" Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 127.

13" Maha Ghosananda, "The Human Family," in *The Gethsemani Encounter: A Dialogue on the Spiritual Life by Buddhist and Christian Monastics*, ed. Donald W. Mitchell and James A. Wiseman, O.S.B. (New York: Continuum, 1998), 138.

14" His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, The Fourteenth Dalai Lama, *A Human Approach to World Peace* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1964), 10-12, quoted by Mitchell, 298.

15" Eshin Nishimura, in *The Gethsemani Encounter*, 193.

16" Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love: Letters on Religious Experience and Social Concerns*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 561.

17" Merton, "D.T. Suzuki: The Man and His Work," in *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York: New Directions, 1968), 60-62.

18" Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Doubleday/Image, 1965/68), 285.

19" John P. Keenan, "The Limits of Thomas Merton's Understanding of Buddhism," in *Merton and Buddhism: Wisdom, Emptiness, and Everyday Mind*, ed. Bonnie Bowman Thurston (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2007), 121, 126.

20" Merton, "D.T. Suzuki: The Man and His Work," 61-62.

21" Ruben Habito, "Hearing the Cries of the World," in *Merton and Buddhism*, 115.

22" Merton, "A Christian Looks at Zen," in *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*, 53.

23" Rev. ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1974).

24" Merton, *The Asian Journal*, ed. Naomi Burton, Brother Patrick Hart and James Laughlin (New York: New Directions, 1973/75), 233-36.

25" Merton, *The Other Side of the Mountain: The End of the Journey*, ed. Patrick Hart, O.C.S.O., vol. 7 of *The Journals of Thomas Merton: 1967-1968* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 145 (journal entry for July 23, 1968).

- 26" Helen Tworkov, "The Jesus Lama: Thomas Merton in the Himalayas: An Interview with Harold Talbott," *Tricycle* (Summer, 1992), quoted by Judith Simmer Brown, "The Liberty that Nobody Can Touch," in *Merton and Buddhism*, 66-67.
- 27 Merton, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, 239 (journal entry for Nov. 2, 1968).
- 28" Ibid., 251 (journal entry for Nov. 4, 1968).
- 29" Judith Simmer Brown, "The Liberty that Nobody Can Touch," 71.
- 30" Merton, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, 278 (journal entry for Nov. 16, 1968).
- 31" Ibid., 293 (journal entry for Nov. 24, 1968).
- 32" Ibid., 294.
- 33" Ibid., 323 (journal entry for Dec. 4, 1968).
- 34" Merton to Suzuki, March 4, 1965, quoted by Roger Lipsey, "Merton, Suzuki, Pen, Ink," in *Merton and Buddhism*, 143-45.
- 35" Lipsey, 157.
- 36" Merton to Margaret Randall, Oct. 9, 1963, quoted by Lipsey, 160.
- 37" Lipsey, 162.
- 38" Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*, 6.
- 39" Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation: A Handbook of Mental Training Based on the Buddha's Way of Mindfulness* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1973), 39.
- 40" James A. Wiseman, O.S.B., "Learning to Love and Learning the Price: Thomas Merton and the Challenge of Celibacy," *The Merton Annual* 12 (1999): 85-102.
- 41" Merton, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, 281 (journal entry for Nov. 17, 1968).