

**American Christianity in Public Square  
Through Interfaith Dialogue with Buddhism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century:  
A Case Study on the Life and Work of Thomas Merton (1915-1968)**

By

A. K. Lama

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Seminar on  
**Christianity in the Public Square: 1893-2003**  
(DCH 845)  
*Dr. Fred Beuttler*

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School  
November 17, 2003



## What is Interfaith Dialogue?

Paul Trafford in his article *An Overview of Interfaith* defines, “*Interfaith* is a process of coming together of people committed to their respective religions and spiritual paths for the purpose of mutual understanding, appreciation and enrichment.”<sup>1</sup> It is a process in which the *dialogue* has “a positive and deliberate connotation, a sense of offering space, openness and respect, thereby contrasting with e.g. a dispute or confrontation.”<sup>2</sup> It is organized in an informal or formal, internal to oneself, between neighbors, among community groups, or in front of the large international gatherings. The word *faith* recognizes the fact that the participants are committed to their own faith and the objective is to enlighten each other’s faith.

The history of the interfaith dialogue can be traced back to the two important global events—World Parliament of Religions (WPR) in Chicago in 1893 and the International Missionary Conference (IMC) in Edinburgh in 1910. At the first WPR (1893), the Hindu Monk, Swami Vivekananda startled the Christian audience with Hindu philosophy on religious inclusiveness and universal brotherhood. His opening words “brothers and sisters” received the warmest standing ovation. He challenged his Christian audience to reconsider the richness of Vedantic Hinduism and advised them to reconsider the goal of

---

<sup>1</sup> Paul Trafford, *An Overview of Interfaith*, Feb 2002, n.p. [Cited 20 October, 2003]. Online: <http://www.multifaithnet.org/mfnopenaccess/resource/articles/intftlover.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Christian missions in India.<sup>3</sup> In the final session, he challenged Christians to relate with other religions in order to deepen their faith rather than convert them to Christianity.<sup>4</sup> Although Vivekanand did not use the word “inter-faith dialogue” as such, but in his final speech the idea of interfaith dialogue was explicitly brought to attention for the first time to a international Christian audience. The impact of his challenge was so prevailing that it became a subject of prominence in all the IMCs<sup>5</sup> and in the assemblies of the World Council of Churches (WCC)<sup>6</sup> held thereafter.

---

<sup>3</sup> Vivekanand said, “You erect churches all through India, but the crying evil in the East is not religion - they have religion enough -but it is bread that the suffering millions of burning India cry out for with parched throats. They ask us for bread, but we give them stones. It is an insult to the starving people to offer them religion; it is an insult to the starving man to teach him metaphysics.” See his speech on 20 September 1893: “Religion not the Crying Need of India,” n.p. [Cited 27 October 2003]. Online: <http://www.itihaas.com/modern/vivek-speech4.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Notice what Vivekanand said, “Much has been said of the common ground of religious unity. I am not going just now to venture my own theory. But if anyone here hopes that this unity will come by the triumph of any one of the religions and the destruction of the others, to him I say, "Brother, yours is an impossible hope." Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid.” See his final speech delivered on 27 September 1893. n.p. [Cited 27 October 2003]. Online: <http://www.itihaas.com/modern/vivek-speech4.html>.

<sup>5</sup> The International Missionary Conferences (IMC)—Edinburg (1910), Jerusalem (1928), Tambaram, India, (1938), and Amsterdam (1948)—continued the discussion on the nature of the interfaith dialogue.

<sup>6</sup> The IMC meeting in Amsterdam (1948) gives birth to World Council of Churches (WCC) and it is remarkable to note that the emphasis on the nature of the interfaith dialogue continues in all the following Assemblies of the World Council of Churches: New Delhi (1961), Mexico City (1963), Bangkok (1964), Sri Lanka, in 1967, Uppsala assembly (1968), Ajaltoun, Lebanon, (1970), (Nairobi 1975), Chiang Mai, Thailand, (1977), Vancouver (1983), San Antonio, Texas (1989), Canberra (1991), Bahia, Brazil (1996). Harare (1998).

In 1910, when the IMC met in Edinburgh, the Christian leaders from all over the world was eager to discuss how Christians should relate with other religions and what should be the nature of the interfaith dialogue. S. Wesley Ariarajah's report describes this well.

The question of Christian understanding of and relationship to other religious traditions was a central issue in Edinburgh, and the section that dealt with the missionary message in relation to non-Christian religions was by common consent the finest of all the reports produced at Edinburgh. It spoke of the Christian encounter with the religious traditions of Asia, for example, as being of the same order as the meeting of the New Testament church with Graeco-Roman culture, demanding fundamental shifts in Christian self-understanding and theology.<sup>7</sup>

It was one thing to identify the problem and the pressing need of the time but it was another thing to suggest an appropriate solution. Almost all the international conferences lived with the tension of overcoming the fears that an overemphasis on the interfaith dialogue might lead to syncretism, or it might compromise the uniqueness and finality of the revelation in Jesus Christ. The orthodox and the conservative were afraid that it might threaten the very purpose of Christian missions in the world. Every WCC conference tried to deal with this issue and many proposals were brought forth.

In 1970, when WCC met in Ajaltoun (Lebanon), Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and Christian participants were not only invited for a consultation on inter-religious dialogue,

---

<sup>7</sup> S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Interfaith Dialogue" *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, (edited by Nicholas Lossky, José Míguez Bonino, John Pobee, Tom Stransky, Geoffrey Wainwright and Pauline Webb. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991). [Cited 27 October 2003]. Online: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/diction.html>.

but also they were asked to actually engage in the interfaith dialogue. The establishment of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians and the WCC Sub-unit on Dialogue also

heightened the visibility of interfaith dialogue in the life of the churches. The WCC dialogue sub-unit organized more bilateral dialogue meetings with Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists and sought to clarify the meaning and significance of interfaith dialogue. Then in 1984, Pope John Paul II, in the article “The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission” exhorted Christians to continue dialogue with other faiths. In a recent publication, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (1994), Pope John Paul II writes, “[W]hat unites us is much greater than what separates us . . . It is necessary . . . to rid ourselves of stereotypes, of old habits and above all, it is necessary to recognize the unity that already exists.”<sup>8</sup>

Even after two centuries of sincere international effort, the actual practice of interfaith dialogue in the public square is seen with great hesitation and suspicion by the mainline protestant Churches in America. In a recent editorial of *Christianity Today* (March 11, 2002), the emphasis for Christian’s respectful presence is implored in following words, “Because Christianity's influence on American society is weaker than in the past, we should ensure that our chair is not empty when religion is represented in the public square.”<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Ven. Havanpola Ratanasara, *Interfaith Dialogue a Buddhist Perspective: An Examination of Pope John Paul II's Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, (a talk given at the Intermonastic Dialogue Gethsemani Monastery, Louisville, Kentucky July, 1996), n.p. [Cited 20 October 2003]. Online: <http://bcdialog.urbandharma.org/bcd2/interfaith.html>.

<sup>9</sup> “The Interfaith Public Square: Stand up, Stand Up for Jesus at Civic Events,” *Christianity Today*, Editorial, 46/3 (March 11, 2002): 34. [Cited 20 October 2003] Online: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/003/31.34.html>.

### **Why Interfaith Dialogue with Buddhism?**

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the world has witnessed the chasms of blood flow amid the rivalries that separated orthodox Christians and Muslims in Bosnia, Islam and Judaism in Middle East, Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in India, Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland and so on. Amidst these religious conflicts Buddhism is the only religion that has emerged as a religion of peace free from gory rivalries. In 1989, the Buddhist Tibetan religious and political head, His Holiness Dalai Lama, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. It was not only an honor and recognition awarded for his personal achievements, but also to Buddhism. Jim Eckman wrote, “When the Dalai Lama won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, he became not just world famous, but a symbol of a nonviolent, meditative philosophy of existence. He embodies the transcendence that people are looking for.”<sup>10</sup>

In 1993, when the WPR wanted to celebrate the centennial to commemorate Vivekananda’s stunning challenge for universal brotherhood in 1893, the WPR committee decided to invite Dalai Lama and the prominent Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh to address the august occasion. After Pope John Paul II and Billy Graham, Dalai Lama

<sup>10</sup> Jody Veenker, “Spirituality Without Religion: More Christians attracted to Dalai Lama's teachings,” *Christianity Today*, Nov. 22, 1999, [Cited on 4 October 2003]. Online: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1999/147/21.0.html>.

is the most recognized religious figure in America.<sup>11</sup> He is considered the voice of Buddhism to the nations and is often called the “god-king” of Tibet. His recent books, *Ethics for a New Millennium* and *The Art of Happiness* became best sellers. He is immensely respected by secular media and draws crowds up to 300,000 at his public talks. Orville Schell, the veteran journalist and Asian scholar, in his book *Virtual Tibet* has explored his influence in Hollywood and pop culture.<sup>12</sup> Two large-budget films, Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Seven Years in Tibet* and Martin Scorsese's *Kundun* tell something about his impact on Hollywood. The film producers like Jean-Jacques and Martin Scorsese, actor Richard Gere, actress Sharon Stone, composer Philip Glass, Adam Yauch of the Beastie Boys, martial-arts star Steven Seagal, Tina Turner, and several others who have claimed Dalai Lama’s magical impact on their life.<sup>13</sup>

Today, Americans have become more aware than ever before about the religion called “Buddhism.” And to the American consciousness, Buddhism is not merely an interesting bit of cultural and religious information but rather increasingly a first option among all religions to embrace. Although an accurate statistics are impossible to come by, one can estimate approximately between one to two million Americans who have chosen to become a practicing Buddhist.

---

<sup>11</sup>

James A. Beverley, “Buddhism’s Guru” *Christianity Today*, June 11, 2001 [Cited on 3 October 2003], Online: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/008/15.64.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



American fascination for Buddhism did not begin with Dalai Lama's popularity rather his recognition was only an upsurge of the fascination that was already undercurrent since the first WPR held in Chicago in 1893. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the rise of secularism and anti-fundamentalism sentiment among the elites and the general frustrations caused by the Christianity's failure in the two world wars further attracted the western mind to embrace Buddhism as an alternative. According to Jan Nattier, "Buddhist groups have one striking demographic peculiarity: virtually all of the communities now in existence were formed by people who came of age during the late 1960s and early '70s, and members of succeeding age cohorts have joined in much smaller numbers."<sup>14</sup> Mary Raurke, the Times Staff Reporter in his article on "Zen USA" published in *LA Times*, February 18, 1997, suggests that, "About half of all American-born teachers of Buddhism are women. It's a reflection of American culture; it comes from the feminist movement that started in the '60s and it's radically different from the situation in Asia."<sup>15</sup>

Although the rate of conversion to Buddhism went down after '70s the fascination persists. American born monk Kusala, who was born and baptized a Lutheran in Iowa, became a Buddhist monk in 1981.<sup>16</sup> He is a member of the Buddhist-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Los Angeles, the Wilshire Center Parish Association of Los Angeles, and the

---

<sup>14</sup> Jan Nattier, *Buddhism Comes to Main Street*, [Cited 20 October 2003], Online: <http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma/mainstreet.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Raurke, "Zen USA" *LA Times*, [Cited 20 October 2003], Online: <http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma/zenusa.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Bhikshu Kusala, *How I Became Buddhist?* [Cited 24 October 2003], Online: <http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma6/howbuddh.html>.

Interfaith Council of Garden Grove, Stanton, and Westminster. He is also a Buddhist Chaplain for the University Religious Conference at U.C.L.A and director of the

University Buddhist Association at UCLA. In his narrative “*How I Became Buddhist?*” he explains why one should become Buddhist.

Some of the reasons people become Buddhist's in America: They want a new religion; It's cool to be a Buddhist; They want to understand the meaning of life; They like the Dalai Lama; They want to feel good about themselves. It has been seven years since my Bhikshu ordination, and when I'm asked why I became a Buddhist monk, my answer is: Because life is filled with suffering, and death is sure to come. Being a Buddhist is about living and dying fully in the present moment with compassion and wisdom. It's not about clinging to the past, or being attached to the future. With a focus on the here and now, the ever-changing quality of Samsara, and the unchanging perfection of Nirvana can become a personal truth. With no one to be, there is much to do. The end of suffering is my goal, death is my copilot, and the teachings of the Buddha are my refuge.<sup>17</sup>

Bhiksu (monk) Kusala living through the frustrations 1960s had become agnostics until he turned to Buddhism. From his narrative it is evident that his fundamental religious belief is more anchored in anthropocentric effort (*karma*). In his faith, there is absence of the person of God and the ultimate goal before him is *niravana* (Self-extinction) not eternal life.

Bhiksu Kusala is one among millions who have preferred to convert to Buddhism. During my stay in US (from 1998-2003), I had the opportunity to enter into dialogue with two American intellectuals who was raised in a religiously devout Christian family and yet they wanted to embrace Buddhism. Since my narrative was exactly opposite to

---

<sup>17</sup> Bhikshu Kusala, *How I Became Buddhist?* [Cited 24 October 2003], Online: <http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma6/howbuddh.html>.

theirs, they were curious to know why I had become Christian. In course of my conversation with them I discovered that though they were raised in Christian families, they did not know Christianity well. Their fascination for Buddhism was simply due to their frustrations with mere Christianity.

On one hand, there are those who chose the path of Bhiksu Kusala. On the other hand, there are others who deepened their spirituality within Christianity by entering into interfaith dialogue with other faith. In this paper, I intend to investigate the second category, especially in reference to the Christian inter-faith dialogue with Buddhism in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century with the help of a case study on the life and work of Thomas Merton (1915-1968). Since Merton is one among the most widely known Christian writers and thinkers among American intellectuals and whose initiative for interfaith dialogue in the twentieth century is internationally recognized, it deems appropriate to select him as a case study in this research. I want to examine—What, why, and how he began interfaith dialogue with other faith and Buddhism in particular? How did his interfaith dialogue enabled Christianity to stand in the public square? What can be learned from his method and philosophy on inter-faith dialogue?

### **THOMAS MERTON**

**(1915-1968)**

Merton, a Roman Catholic Trappist monk, was born on January 31, 1915 in Prades in France. His original name was Father M. Louis. At the age of six, he lost his mother. His childhood was often spent in loneliness waiting for his father, who frequently

had to travel to the countryside in search of subjects for pictures that he would paint. In 1928, he moved to England with his father, but only a year later he came to know that his father was suffering from malignant brain tumor. In January 1931, his father died leaving him under the care of his grandfather. In 1933, he graduated from Oakham and continued his education in Clark College, Cambridge. He recalled his time in this college as the time of descending into hell. “The year proved a disaster: too much drinking, too little study, too much “womanizing.””<sup>18</sup>

After a year at the Cambridge, he returned to America and entered Columbia University, New York, where he earned B.A. (1938) and M.A. (1939) degrees. Then he taught English at Columbia (1938–39) and at St. Bonaventure University (1939–41) near Olean, New York. But through out his academic career, he continued to feel the emptiness and longed for something that would satisfy the deep anguish of his spirit. Finally, on December 10, 1941, he entered the Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani near Louisville, Kentucky and was ordained as a priest in 1949. Merton lived a very active religious public life as monk until he died by electrocution during an international monastic convention in Thailand in 1968.

Today he is considered as one of the most prolific authors of America. It is estimated to be around 100 publications that are credited to his name.<sup>19</sup> His first published works were collections of poems—*Thirty Poems* (1944), *A Man in the Divided Sea* (1946),

---

<sup>18</sup> William H. Shannon, Christine M. Bochen, and Patrick F. O’Connell, *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 424.

<sup>19</sup> Shannon, *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia*, xvi.

and *Figures for an Apocalypse* (1948). But the publication of the autobiographical book *Seven Storey Mountain* (1948), gained him an international reputation. His early works are strictly spiritual, but his writings of the early 1960s are toward social criticism, and many of his later works reveal an insight into oriental philosophy and mysticism. His only novel, *My Argument with the Gestapo*, written in 1941, was published posthumously in 1969. His other writings include *The Waters of Siloe* (1949), a history of the Trappists; *Seeds of Contemplation* (1949); *The Living Bread* (1956), a meditation on the Eucharist; and two further posthumous publications, the collection of essays entitled *Contemplation in a World of Action* (1971) and *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* (1973).

Merton, as a writer as well as a person, was very successful in taking Christianity to Public Square in America and Asia. He was respectfully received as Christian ambassador of peace and reconciliation among Buddhist religious leaders. He was a monk who saw the possibility of unity between divided Christendom, between different religions and even between monasticism and Marxism. He was forthright Christian statesman against the violence and war. He took very daring and unpopular stand against his own country during the cold war against Russia and the war against Vietnam. He criticized America for using Nuclear Bomb during Second World War. His writings were censored by the papacy and some even suspect his death as a conspiracy to silence his voice. His story of success in taking the American Christianity to the public square through interfaith dialogue with Buddhism is not something that happened overnight but it entails the long journey of his spiritual quest. His theological framework was not formed in a seminary classroom or in library, but through a real life experiences. In order to understand the process, the following

paragraph will first try to focus on the question—what led him to become a monk in Trappist Abbey?

### **From Protestant Home To Trappist Abbey**

#### ***Frustrations with the Protestantism***

Merton's father, Owen Merton, was an Episcopalian from New Zealand and his mother Ruth Jenkins was a Quaker from America. Although Merton was raised in protestant family, he did not get adequate religious teaching at home.

It seems strange that Father and Mother, who were concerned almost to the point of scrupulosity about keeping the minds of their sons uncontaminated by error and mediocrity and ugliness and sham, had not bothered to give us any formal religious training. The only explanation I have is the guess that Mother must have had strong views on the subject. Possibly she considered any organized religion below standard of intellectual perfection she demanded of any of child of hers. We never went to Church in Flushing.<sup>20</sup>

As he grew up, his experience with the protestant Churches in France, England and American did not improve. He attended a Quakers meeting where his mother used to go for worship and was disappointed to see the noise and out loud preaching.<sup>21</sup> He also described his frustration with Dr. Riley, the pastor of Zion Church, the Episcopalian Church in Douglaston, where he was a member in a time when he was sincerely seeking spiritual direction in his life.

When he did get around to preaching about some truth of the Christian religion, he practically admitted in the pulpit, as he did in private to anyone who cared to talk

---

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948), 9.

<sup>21</sup> Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, 115.

about it, that he did not believe most of these doctrines, even in the extremely diluted form in which they are handed out to Protestants.<sup>22</sup>

### ***The Impact of the Readings***

Beginning in February 1937, Merton read Etienne Gilson's book *Medieval Philosophy*. Initially, when he discovered that it was a Catholic book, he was disgusted and thought of throwing it away.<sup>23</sup> Having lived in Europe he was aware of the horror that Catholic Church was responsible for. But after reading it, he was deeply impressed by the profundity of the catholic philosophy.

I had never had an adequate notion of what Christians meant by God. I had simply taken it for granted the God in Whom religious people believed, and to Whom they attributed the creation and government of all things was a noisy and dramatic and passionate character, a vague jealous, hidden being, the objectification of all their own desires and striving and subjective ideals.<sup>24</sup>

He adds, "The results was that I at once acquired an immense respect for Catholic Philosophy and for the Catholic faith."<sup>25</sup> Then, he read Aldous Huxley's book *Ends and Means* written in defense of mysticism, prayer, and asceticism. Although he did not like Huxley's preference of Buddha over Christ, this book helped him to look at Buddhism more seriously than before. He realized that "a purposeful detachment could be a way of opening one self to a transforming encounter with God."<sup>26</sup> In this book, Huxley strongly agreed with

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 176-77.

<sup>23</sup> Jim Forest, *Living with Wisdom* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1991), 45.

<sup>24</sup> Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, 174.

<sup>25</sup> Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, 175.

<sup>26</sup> Forest, *Living with Wisdom*, 47.

Gandhi, whom Merton's had begun to admire while he was in his fifteen studying in England. As a student he had participated in literary debate and spoke in favor of Gandhi's struggle for India's freedom.<sup>27</sup> Huxley's pacifist philosophy based on Gandhi's principal of non-violence appealed to Merton.<sup>28</sup> At the time Merton was at Columbia and the Spanish Civil War was underway.

Another author, who greatly influenced him, was the eighteenth century mystic poet William Blake. He was deeply impressed by Blake's "unwillingness to adjust himself to an age that was simultaneously pious, grasping, self-satisfied, and indifferent to the poor."<sup>29</sup> He described the impact of this book on his life in following words.

As Blake worked himself into my system, I became more and more conscious of the necessity of a vital faith, and the total unreality and unsubstantiality of the dead, selfish rationalism which had been freezing my mind and will for the last seven years. By the time summer was over, I was to become conscious of the fact that the only way to live was to live in a world that was charged with the presence and reality of God.<sup>30</sup>

### ***The Influence of Bramachari***

In 1938, when he was just twenty-three years old and was seeking to know more about God and religions, he met a Hindu monk "Bramachari," who had arrived late for

---

<sup>27</sup> Forest, *Living with Wisdom*, 19.

<sup>28</sup> "Huxley agreed with Gandhi: people who forget about means become mean, and murderous method create murderous societies; while prayer and asceticism are the foundation of spiritual life, a nonviolent society." See *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>29</sup> Forest, *Living with Wisdom*, 48.

<sup>30</sup> Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, 190-91.



the World Congress of Religion in Chicago and was visiting his friend in New York.<sup>31</sup> He had heard mysterious things about him from his friend and so he was curious and excited to meet him. At the very first meeting he was impressed by everything that he saw in Bramachari. They were together for long time discussing on various subjects related to religions, society and spirituality. And they soon became friends: “I became very fond of Bramachari’s, and he of me. We get along very well together, especially since he sensed that I was feeling my way into settled religious conviction, and into some kind of life that was centered, as his was, on God.”<sup>32</sup> Commenting on Bramachari’s amazing spiritual demeanor, he wrote, “He was never sarcastic, never ironical or unkind in his criticism: in fact he did not make any judgments at all, especially adverse ones.”<sup>33</sup> He learned from him that Hindu’s perspective on spirituality and asceticism was different from that of Christians in west. Because of this differences protestant missionaries had failed to impress the native Indians. He recalled, “But all Christian missionaries, according to him, suffered from this big drawback; they lived too well, too comfortably. They took care of themselves in a way that simply made it impossible for the Hindus to regard them as holy—let alone the fact that they ate meat, which made them repugnant to the natives.”<sup>34</sup> Merton understood the problem of defining the true essence of asceticism and holiness in different culture. Nevertheless, the fact

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>32</sup> Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, 195.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

that the Hindus did not see any saints among Christian missionaries<sup>35</sup> became to him a challenge. As a young Christian, Merton had already experienced the lack of spirituality in the Church of England and other protestant Churches—Bramachari’s negative assessment of protestant missionaries in India further reaffirmed his conviction.

He also learned from Bramachari that Catholics were better in prayer and monasticism—better than the Protestants. In fact, after reading Huxley’s *Ends and Means*, Merton had begun to view Christianity as a religion “immersed in matter.” He was actually more attracted to eastern religions and mysticism. But Bramachari’s appreciation for Catholic monastic spirituality and the personal counsel to read St. Augustine’s *Confession* and *the Imitation of Christ* greatly influenced him. Commenting on this life-transforming encounter with Bramachari, Merton wrote, “Now that I look back on those days, it seems to me very probable that one of the reasons why God had brought him all the way from India, was that he might say just that.”<sup>36</sup> After this experience he had another crucial milestone in his spiritual quest—it was the reading of Jacques Maritain’s *Art and Scholasticism*, which he had to read for his M.A. thesis: “That discovery was one book that united all the knots in the problem which I had myself to solve by my thesis.”<sup>37</sup> These are some of his important life experiences, which prepared him to become a Catholic monk in Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani.

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>36</sup> Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, 198.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 199.

## From Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani to Public Square

### *Violence and Injustice in Christian World*

It is important to note that Merton decided to join the Trappist Abbey of

Gethsemani on December 10, 1941, three days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps, he preferred to chose the extremely rigorous life of Gethsemani rather than be involved in the world of violence. However, this escape did not last longer. The desire for solitude and the monastic life in his heart was replaced with a passion to get involved in the world torn with violence. In 1958, while visiting the Louisville town on an errand he had another life-transforming experience.

In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all these people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers . . . . The whole illusion of a separate holy existence is a dream.<sup>39</sup>

Some of the violent turmoil in 1960s, namely—the bombing of black church in Birmingham in which four children perished, the Vietnam War, and the assassination of J. F. Kennedy in Dallas, greatly impacted Merton.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Thomas P. Rausch, “Thomas Merton: Twenty-five Years After,” *America* v.170/1, 1994: 6-12.

<sup>39</sup> Conjecture of a Guilty Bystander, 1966, 140. See Thomas P. Rausch, “Thomas Merton: Twenty-five Years After,” *America* v.170/1, 1994: 6-12.

<sup>40</sup> Forest, *Living with Wisdom*, 157.

Merton was aware of the evil of racism he had experienced them while working with the poor in Harlem. His vivid portrayal of the injustice that he saw in Harlem reflected his feelings.

Here in this huge, dark, steaming slum, hundreds and thousands of Negroes are herded together like cattle, most of them with nothing to eat and nothing to do. All the senses and imagination and sensibilities and emotions and sorrows and desires and hopes and ideas of a race with vivid feelings and deep emotional reactions are forced upon

in themselves, bound inward by an iron ring of frustration: the prejudice that hems them with its four insurmountable walls.<sup>41</sup>

But this evil was on the rise in south, which challenged Merton's silence.

Forest described, "As the violence increased in 1960s, the burden of a responsibility towards the world, he was living, became unavoidable." In her book *Hope is an Open Door*, Sr. Mary Luke Tobin, a sister of Loretto, wrote, "Faced by the compelling events of the 1960s, he moved in both private and public expressions to a world-embracing attitude."<sup>42</sup>

He was disturbed with the fact that most violence and turmoil in his time was associated with Christians. He felt that Christian theology was understood and practiced contrary to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ.

The disciples of the Prince of Peace have sometimes managed to prove themselves extremely bloodthirsty, particularly among themselves. They have rather consistently held, in practice, that the way to prove the sincerity of faith was not so much non-violence as the generous use of lethal weapons. It is a curious fact that in this present century there have been two world wars of unparalleled savagery in which Christians, on both sides, were exhorted to go out and kill each other if not in the name of Christ and faith, at least in the name of "Christian duty."<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, 345.

<sup>42</sup> Shannon, *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia*, xvi.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Merton, *Faith and Violence: Christian Teaching and Christian Practice* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 10-11.

Merton dedicated himself to read more about Gandhi and understand his principle of nonviolence. In 1965, he published *Gandhi on Nonviolence*. He believed that Gandhi's principle of non-violence was Christian, which Christians had failed to emulate. According to him, Christian nonviolence is not built on the presupposed division, rather on the basis of unity. It is not aimed primarily to convert the wicked to the ideas of good, but for the healing and "reconciliation of man with himself, man the person and man the human family."<sup>44</sup> There is no possession of the fullness of goodness and truth by one party, rather both parties seek mutual transformation and the deepening of the knowledge of truth in mutual respect. The adversary, in his philosophy of nonviolence, is not seen as the opponent but a source of enlightenment and a fellow seeker of truth. Nonviolence is primarily a resistance directed against injustice, untruth and the power of the evil and thus one must be aware of the possibility of such forces existing with or within one's own party. It is a commitment to liberation of the oppressed and the oppressor as well. Merton wrote, "The key to non-violence is the willingness of the non-violent register to suffer a certain amount of accidental evil in order to bring about a change of mind in the oppressor."<sup>45</sup> According to him, the redemptive love of Jesus signifies that nonviolence is not a peripheral aspect of Christian faith but the normative way of sharing in the paschal mystery. He explained, "The Christian is and must be by his very adoption as a son of God, in Christ, a peacemaker (Matt

---

<sup>44</sup> Merton, *Faith and Violence*, 15.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

26:55) who allowed himself to be nailed to the cross and died praying for His executioners.”<sup>46</sup>

He believed that the Christian nonviolence and meekness is rooted in the consciousness that in our meekness, poverty, and powerlessness the invisible strength of

Christ mysteriously displayed.<sup>47</sup> Actually, “Christian nonviolence is nothing if not first of all a formal profession of faith in the gospel message that the Kingdom has been established and that the Lord of truth is indeed risen and reigning over his kingdom.”<sup>48</sup> Therefore, according to Merton, it is better that Christian “should not fight and indeed it is better that he should not fight, for insofar as he imitates his Lord and Master, he proclaims that the Messianic Kingdom has come and bear witness to the presence of the *Kyrios Pantocrator* [Lord of Creation] in mystery, even in the midst of the conflicts and turmoil of the world.”<sup>49</sup>

### ***Christianity and Other Religions***

Merton lived in a time when both WCC and the Vatican were intensively engaged in determining the nature of Christian interfaith dialogue with other religions to promote peace and harmony in the world. His meeting with Bramachari and his reading on

---

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Merton, *Breakthrough to Peace: Twelve Views on the Threat of Thermonuclear Extermination* (New York: New Directions, 1962), 95.

<sup>47</sup> Merton, *Faith and Violence*, 17-18.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Merton, “A Tribute to Gandhi,” *Seeds of Destruction* (New York: Farrar Strauss & Giroux, 1964), 222; *idem*, *The Nonviolent Alternative* (New York: Farrar Strauss & Giroux, 1975), 129.

Gandhi's non-violence had positive impact on his religious thinking. His encounter with other religions neither resulted syncretism nor indifferentism, but rather the deepening of his Christian faith. The interfaith dialogue with Bramachari had re-directed him to seek the truth within Christianity and his knowledge of Hinduism had challenged him to deepen his own spirituality. He also knew how Christianity had deepened Gandhi's spirituality within his own religion.

[T]he spiritual and religious humanism, of the West opened his eyes to forces of wisdom and of love which were closer to his own heart because they were expressed in the symbols and philosophic language of his own people, and they could be used immediately to awaken this sleeping and enslaved people to an awareness of its own identity and of its historic vocation. He neither accepted Christianity nor rejected it; he took all that he found in Christian thought that seemed relevant to him as a Hindu. The rest was, at least for the time being, of merely external interest."<sup>50</sup>

According to Merton, Gandhi's encounter with Christianity made him inclusive. His mind was Indian and yet universal. He described Gandhi in following words.

It was not a mind of hate, of intolerance, of accusation, of rejection, of division. It was a mind of love, of understanding, of infinite capaciousness. Where the extreme nationalisms of Western Fascism and of Japan were symptoms of paranoid fury, exploding into alienation, division, and destruction, the spirit which Gandhi discovered in himself was reaching out to unity, love, and peace.<sup>51</sup>

Merton discovered that "Peace cannot be built on exclusivism, absolutism, and intolerance."<sup>52</sup> He learned how the quest of truth without exclusivism, absolutism and

---

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Merton, *Gandhi on Non-Violence* (New York: A New Directions Paperbook, 1964), 4.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 18.

intolerance could deepen one's faith. His primary concern was true Christian living rather than evangelism. On one occasion when he was questioned why he did not emphasize conversion in his speech, he said, "What we are asked to do at present is not so much to speak of Christ as to let him live in us so that people may find him by feeling him how he lives in us."<sup>53</sup>

### ***Interfaith Dialogue with Zen Buddhism***

Merton was greatly fascinated by the philosophy of Zen Buddhism. Zen has no system, structure, or religions. In fact, in its true sense it points men toward enlightenment, which is beyond system, cultural or social structures, religious rites and beliefs. The practice of Zen carries the true essence of Buddhism.

It is consciousness unstructured by particular form or particular system, a trans-cultural, trans-religious, trans-formed consciousness. It is therefore in a sense "void." But it can shine through this or that system, religious or irreligious, just as light can shine through glass that is blue or green, or red, or yellow. If Zen has any preference it is for the glass that is plain, has no color, and is "just glass."<sup>54</sup>

Merton believed that west did not examine their prejudices against Buddhism, that is Buddhism is "selfish," atheistic or pantheistic, quietistic, and world denying, and so they deprived themselves from its benefit. In fact, Buddhism to him is neither affirming nor denying the existence of God. Its diagnosis of human dilemma is remarkably insightful and

---

<sup>53</sup> Forest, *Living with Wisdom*, 216.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York: A New Directions Book, 1968), 4.



accurate. Buddhist's notion of *anatta*, the denial of selfhood, may well be understood as similar to Christian personalism.<sup>55</sup>

I have no hesitation in saying that the 'Buddhist' view of reality and of life is one which I find extremely practical and acceptable . . . It is by no means foreign or hostile to the spirit of Christianity, provided that the Christian outlook does not become bogged down in a slough of pseudo-objective formalities.<sup>56</sup>

Hence, Zen philosophy should not exclusively be confined to its practitioner in Buddhism. It is beyond Buddhism and likewise "in certain way "beyond" the revealed message of Christianity."<sup>57</sup> Merton explained.

"The 'mind of Christ' as described by St. Paul in Philippians 2 may be theologically worlds apart from 'the mind of Buddha'—this I am not prepared to discuss. But the utter 'self-emptying' of Christ—and the self-emptying which makes the disciple one with Christ in His kenosis—can be understood and has been understood in a very Zen-like sense as far as psychology and experience are concerned."<sup>58</sup>

Therefore, Buddhist concepts should be approached not in abstract metaphysical terms but in the context of concrete spiritual experience. Merton, in his dialogue with Suzuki, pointed out some basic agreement between Buddhism and Christianity. He wrote, "[O]n the point that man, no matter how well balanced, healthy, integrated and sane, is still alienated from his 'true self'."<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Shannon, *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia*, 33.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Merton. *Witness to Freedom: The Letters of Thomas Merton in Times of Crisis* (Edited by William H. Shannon. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994) 167-68.

<sup>57</sup> Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*, 8.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>59</sup> Shannon, *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia*, 5.

In November 1968, Merton visited Dharamsala in India and had three meetings with Dalai Lama on the subject of monasticism. He also met other Buddhist religious leaders in Asia. Merton's intent was to learn about Bodhisattva ideal, Tantrism, and about Buddhist monasticism. In a speech delivered on November 21, 1968, at the Loretto Convent in Darjeeling, India, he said, "We need the religious genius of Asia and Asian culture to inject a fresh dimension of depth into our aimless threshing about. I would almost say an element of heart, of Bhakti, of love."<sup>60</sup> Merton's interfaith dialogue with Buddhism indeed deepened his Bhakti (devotion) and love for Christ.<sup>61</sup>

***Merton: A Christian in the Interfaith Dialogue***

To Dalai Lama, Merton was a unique Christian he had ever met. In his autobiography *Freedom in Exile*, published in 1968, he described Merton, "I could see he was a truly humble and deeply spiritual man. This was the first time I had been struck by such a feeling of spirituality in anyone who professed Christianity."<sup>62</sup> According to him, Merton helped him to see many similarities between Catholicism and Buddhism. Another Buddhist

---

<sup>60</sup> Forest, *Living with Wisdom*, 207.

<sup>61</sup> Shannon, *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia*, 35.

<sup>62</sup> Dalai Lama, *Freedom in Exile* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990), 189.

leader, Chatral Rimpoche, was surprised to find himself so fully at home with a Christian monk and called Merton a “natural Buddha.”

The famous Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh wrote, “Thomas Merton: his life, his feelings, his teachings and his work are enough to prove his courage, his determination, his wisdom. He did more for peace than many who were out in the world.”<sup>63</sup>

According to Amiya Chakravarty, a distinguished scholar, Merton’s strong faith in Christianity enabled him to enter into interfaith dialogue more genuinely. In his letter written on March 29, 1967, he wrote, “The absolute rootedness of your faith makes you free to understand other faiths. . . . Your books have the rock-like inner strength which sustains the Abbey of Gethsemani, [and] which can challenge violence and untruth wherever they may appear.”<sup>64</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Today, the need for the presence of Christianity in American Public Square is felt more than ever before. The growing religious diversities and the tension between them is a phenomenon that evangelicals cannot ignore. Islamic centers, Mosques, Hindu and Buddhist temples, and meditation centers are actively functioning in virtually every major American city. Buddhism is no more a distant Asian religion. Should American evangelicals ignore interfaith dialogue in public squares? Or, Should they leave this business in the hands

---

<sup>63</sup> Shannon, *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia*, xvi.

<sup>64</sup> Shannon, *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia*, xxvi.

of Catholic partner? The negative answer to this question seems to be the only way the evangelicals may find a way to impact our pluralistic society. There are increasing hostility among our neighbors from other faith against the evangelistic crusades and gospel tract distribution. Perhaps the interfaith dialogue in Public Square is the only option to get their receptive attention. We need venues to display our spirituality, or stimulate an appetite among adherents of other faiths for a true experience in God. But the question is how should evangelicals engage in interfaith dialogue in Public Square with people from other faith. What should be our guiding principles? How can we tell the whole truth without any compromise?

From Merton's personal life and practice, following ten essential principles for interfaith dialogue can be extrapolated:

1. One must be first deeply rooted in one's own faith.
2. One must appreciate truth practiced in other faith and spirituality. Our knowledge of the special revelation of God through Jesus Christ does not allow us to entertain a disrespectful, superior, indifferent attitude towards the truth or spirituality practiced in other religions. Unfortunately such attitude prevails even towards other traditions within Christianity. Positive and healthy attitude can richly benefit our practice of faith.
3. One must approach interfaith dialogue without exclusivism, absolutism, and indifference in order to receive a positive attention from the partners we are in dialogue.

4. One must be willing to learn from other faith in order to deepen his own faith in Christ.
5. One should not intend for syncretism.
6. One should first intend to become more like Christ in a context where people of other religions yet to see Christ in Christians.
7. One must participate in raising the common voice against violence, injustice and in seeking peace in the world with people from other faith. The concern for the dignity of human being created in the image of God should have no religious boundary.
8. One should anticipate others to feel the presence of Christ in him.
9. One should allow the Spirit of God to work in the life of Buddhist rather than preach at him.
10. One must engage in prayer more than action.

Practice of these principles may enable Christians to re-build bridges with the religious groups who have shut their ears for Christian gospel either because of their past experiences or present prejudices. Consider the response of a Muslims from Sudan, Bosnia, Iraq, and Iran or a communist from the North Korea being invited to Billy Graham Evangelistic meeting, or given a gospel tract. Perhaps there are greater probabilities through interfaith dialogue than traditional methods of evangelism. In line with what Paul said—"To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." (1 Cor. 9:22) When Paul stood in the meeting of Areopagus, he admired the men of Athens for their religious sincerity and showed his in-depth understanding of their worship of "The Unknown God." Merton's ten-fold principle of

interfaith dialogue does not deviate Christians from their Biblical mandate but it surely demands the transformation of their attitude toward other culture and religions. Christianity with Christ like attitude has better probability to impact the public square.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

## Bibliography

### A. Thomas Merton's Work

Merton, Thomas. *Selected Poems of Thomas Merton*. New York: New Directions, 1944.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Seven Storey Mountain*. New York: Harcourt-Brace Jovanovich, 1948.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Elected Silence: The Autobiography of Thomas Merton*. Dublin: Clonmore and Reynolds, 1949.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Sign of Jonas*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1953.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Elected silence: The Autobiography of Thomas Merton*. Dublin: Clonmore & Reynolds, 1954.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton*. London: Catholic Book Club, 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Selections on Prayer: From the Writings of Saints and Men of Prayer, Fifth to the Twentieth Centuries*. Trappist, KY: Privately Printed, 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Disputed Questions*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1960.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Spiritual Direction & Meditation*. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1960.

\_\_\_\_\_. *An Introduction to Christian Mysticism: From the Apostolic Fathers to the Council of Trent*. Lectures given at the Abbey of Gethsemani. Trappist, Ky.: s.n., 1961.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Breakthrough to Peace: Twelve Views on the Threat of Thermonuclear Extermination*. New York: New Directions, 1962.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Thomas Merton Reader*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Tribute to Gandhi," *Seeds of Destruction*. New York: Farrar Strauss & Giroux, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Gandhi on Non-Violence*. New York: A New Directions Paperbook, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Raids on the Unspeakable*. New York: New Directions Publishing, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Monastery of Christ in the Desert*. N.M.: The Monastery, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*. N.Y: Doubleday, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Mystics and Zen Masters*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *An Interview with Thomas Merton*. McDonnell: Thomas P. Publication, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Faith and Violence: Christian Teaching and Christian Practice*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*. New York: A New Directions Books, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Thoughts on the East*. New York: A New Directions Books, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Thomas Merton on Peace*. New York: McCall Pub. Co., 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*. New York: New Directions Pub. Corp., 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Thomas Merton Reader*. New York: Image Books, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*. New York: New Directions, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Nonviolent Alternative*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*. New York: New Directions, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Hidden Ground of Love: The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Experience and Social Concerns*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Vow of Conversation: Journals, 1964-1965*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Road to Joy: The Letters of Thomas Merton to New and Old Friends*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The School of Charity: The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious*



*Renewal and Spiritual Direction*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Spiritual Master: The Essential Writings*. New York: Cunningham, 1992.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Courage for Truth: The Letters of Thomas Merton to Writers*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1993.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Witness to Freedom: The Letters of Thomas Merton in Times of Crisis*. Edited by William H. Shannon. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Passion for Peace: The Social Essays*. New York: Shannon, William Henry, Publication, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Entering the Silence: Becoming a Monk & Writer*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Run to the Mountain: The Story of a Vocation*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Search for Solitude: Pursuing the Monk's True Life*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Turning Toward the World: Te Pivotal Years*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Striving Towards Being: The Letters of Thomas Merton and Czeslaw Milosz*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Dancing in the Water of Life: Seeking Peace in the Hermitage*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Other Side of the Mountain: The End of the Journey*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Intimate Merton: His Life from his Journals*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999.

## **B. Other Authors**

Abe, Masao. *Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995.

Baker, James Thomas. *Thomas Merton, Social Critic: A Study*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky 1971.

- Carr, Anne E. *A Search for Wisdom and Spirituality: Thomas Merton's Theology of the Self*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988.
- Cunningham, Lawrence. *Thomas Merton and the Monastic Vision*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1999.
- Dell'Isola, Frank. *Thomas Merton: A Bibliography*. Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1975.
- Forest, James. *Living with Wisdom: A Life of Thomas Merton*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991.
- Furlong, Monica. *Merton: A Biography*. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.
- Griffin, John Howard. *A Hidden Wholeness: The Visual World of Thomas Merton*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970.
- Griffin, John Howard. *The hermitage Journals: A Diary Kept While Working on the Biography of Thomas Merton*. Kansas City: Conger Publication, 1920.
- Hanh, Thich Nath. *Going Home: Jesus and Buddha as Brothers*. New York: Penguin Putnam Inc, 1999.
- Hart, Patrick. *Thomas Merton, Monk: A Monastic Tribute*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1974.
- Kelly, Frederic Joseph. *Man before God: Thomas Merton on social responsibility*. New York: Doubleday, 1974.
- Kiely, Robert. Ed. *The Good Heart: A Buddhist Perspective on the Teachings of Jesus. His Holiness the Dalai Lama*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1996.
- Kramer, Victor A. *Thomas Merton*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984.
- Lama, Dalai. *Freedom in Exile*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990.
- Labrie, Ross. *The Art of Thomas Merton*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1979.
- Lentfoehr, Thérèse. *Words and Silence: On the Poetry of Thomas Merton*. New York: New Directions Pub. Corp., 1979.
- Malits, Elena. *The Solitary Explorer: Thomas Merton's Transforming Journey*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980.

- Mott, Michael. *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984.
- Parini, Jay. *The Norton Book of American Autobiography*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.
- Padovano, Anthony. *The Human Journey: Thomas Merton, Symbol of a Century*. New York: Doubleday, 1982.
- Pennington, M. Basil. *Thomas Merton, Brother Monk: The Quest for True Freedom*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.
- Prete, Del. *Thomas Merton and the Education of the Whole Person*. Birmingham: Thomas Publication, 1990.
- Quinn, Edward. *The Sense of the Sixties*. New York: Free Press, 1968.
- Rausch, Thomas P. "Thomas Merton: Twenty-five Years After," *America* v.170/1, 1994: 6-12.
- Rice, Edward. *The Man in the Sycamore Tree: The Good Times and Hard Life of Thomas Merton*. New York: Doubleday, 1970.
- Rousseau, Richard W. *Interreligious Dialogue: Facing the Next Frontier*. Montrose: Ridge Row Press, 1981.
- Sussman, Cornelia. *Thomas Merton: The Daring Young Man on the Flying Belltower*. New York: Macmillan, 1976.
- Shannon, William Henry. *Thomas Merton's Dark Path: The Inner Experience of a Contemplative*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Silent Lamp: The Thomas Merton Story*. New York: Crossroad, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and et al. *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia*. Mary Knoll: Orbis Books, 2002.
- Twomey, Gerald S. *Thomas Merton, Prophet in the Belly of a Paradox*. New York: Paulist Press, 1978.
- Woodcock, George. *Thomas Merton, Monk and Poet: A Critical Study*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1978.
- Wilkes, Paul. *Merton, By Those Who Knew Him Best*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984.

### **C. Online Resources**

Ariarajah, S. Wesley. "Interfaith Dialogue" *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Edited

by Nicholas Lossky, José Míguez Bonino, John Pobee, Tom Stransky, Geoffrey Wainwright and Pauline Webb. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991). Cited 27 October 2003. Online: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/diction.html>.

Beverley, James A. "Buddhism's Guru" *Christianity Today*, June 11, 2001[Cited on 3 October 2003], Source: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/008/15.64.html>.

Bhikshu, Kusala. *How I Became Buddhist?* Cited 24 October 2003. Online: <http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma6/howbuddh.html>.

Editorial "The Interfaith Public Square: Stand up, Stand Up for Jesus at Civic Events," *Christianity Today*, 46/3 (March 11, 2002): 34. Cited 20 October 2003: Online: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/003/31.34.html>.

Ratanasara, Ven. Havanpola. *Interfaith Dialogue a Buddhist Perspective: An Examination of Pope John Paul II's Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, (a talk given at the Intermonastic Dialogue Gethsemani Monastery, Louisville, Kentucky July, 1996), No pages. Cited 20 October 2003. Online: <http://bcdialog.urbandharma.org/bcd2/interfaith.html>.

Nattier, Jan. *Buddhism Comes to Main Street*. Cited 20 October 2003. Online: <http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma/mainstreet.html>.

Raurke, Mary. "Zen USA" *LA Times*. February 18, 1997. Cited 20 October 2003. Online: <http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma/zenusa.html>.

Trafford, Paul. *An Overview of Interfaith*, Feb 2002, No pages. Cited 20 October 2003. Online: <http://www.multifaithnet.org/mfnopenaccess/resource/articles/intfthover.html>.

Veenker, Jody. "Spirituality Without Religion: More Christians attracted to Dalai Lama's teachings," *Christianity Today*. Nov. 22, 1999. Cited on 4 October 2003. Online: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1999/147/21.0.html>.

Vivekanand, Swami. *Religion not the Crying Need of India*. n.p. Cited 27 October 2003. Online: <http://www.itihaas.com/modern/vivek-speech4.html>.