

**MYSTICISM AND SOCIAL ETHICS :
THOMAS MERTON SEEN IN THE LIGHT OF PAUL
TILlich'S THEOLOGY**

Robert E. Giannini

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



1976

Full metadata for this item is available in
St Andrews Research Repository
at:

<http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/>

Please use this identifier to cite or link to this item:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10023/13950>

This item is protected by original copyright

MYSTICISM AND SOCIAL ETHICS

THOMAS MERTON SEEN IN THE LIGHT OF PAUL TILLICH'S THEOLOGY

A Dissertation

Presented to the Senate of
The University of St. Andrews

In partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

1976

by

The Rev. Robert E. Giannini, B.A., S.T.B.



ProQuest Number: 10166722

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10166722

Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

Th 8048

190 11 11

190 11 11

ABSTRACT

MYSTICISM AND SOCIAL ETHICS

THOMAS MERTON SEEN IN THE LIGHT OF PAUL TILLICH'S THEOLOGY

Thomas Merton (1915-1968), the American Cistercian, wrote numerous books and essays on spirituality, including both Christian and Eastern forms of mysticism, and such social concerns as racial injustice, the war in Vietnam, and the depersonalizing tendencies within a technical society. From his position of contemplative withdrawal he spoke a prophetic word to the world in which he lived, recognizing that his monastic, and eventually his eremitic life, was not so much a withdrawal from the world as it was his own place in the world. He provides, therefore, a living example of the close interrelationship between contemplation and action.

Merton understood withdrawal to be a movement away from the superficial and false attitudes one has of the world and of one's own self. Withdrawal is, for him, a movement away from the sharp distinction between subject and object, and a movement toward the understanding that God is the ground of all being and that all contingent beings, rooted in Him, are united. Withdrawal is the necessary prelude to effective social action, since withdrawal opens one to the

truth of man's solidarity in God, who is ultimate Reality, and therefore provides the true basis for moral action. For Merton, moral theology is dependent upon ascetical theology. The closer one is to God, the closer one is to all of God's creation.

Paul Tillich, too, saw the necessity for withdrawal, for an immediate apprehension of God, and for social action. Hence, it is not surprising that Tillich and Merton have numerous points of affinity. In fact, Tillich's theology can be interpreted as a theoretical statement of Merton's experience. Tillich's use of ontological language, especially his distinction between essence and existence, provides a methodical approach to the theology behind Merton's mysticism and social ethic. The purpose for withdrawal is to allow essence to become known under the conditions of existence, and once essence is known - however fragmentarily - it enriches existence for all, not only for the one who has experienced essentialization. Hence, even the mysticism of a hermit has an indirect effect on the entire world, and, in the case of Merton himself, a direct and explicit effect. Tillich, therefore, helps to explain Merton, and Merton's life-long attempt to balance the poles of individuality and participation provides an experiential example of Tillich's system.

Robert E. Giannini

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the following thesis is based on the results of research carried out by myself, that it is my own composition and that it has not previously been presented for a Higher Degree. The research was carried out at the University of St. Andrews under the supervision of The Rev. J.M. Keeling.

.....

CERTIFICATE

I certify that The Rev. Robert E. Giannini has fulfilled the conditions of the resolution of the University Court, 1967, No. 1, and that he is qualified to submit this thesis in application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.).

.....
The Rev. J.M. Keeling
St. Mary's College
University of St. Andrews

PREFACE

I first read Thomas Merton very early in my life when I came across a copy of The Seven Storey Mountain at the home of an uncle. I have been reading him ever since. During the 1950s I purchased (in paperback, which was all I could afford) many of his volumes on spirituality and a number of books of poetry. I regret now that I did not buy more. I did my honours thesis at The University of the South on his poetry chiefly because I liked the way his poems sounded; his imagery appealed to me. Perhaps, though, I liked his poetry because I liked his prose and I liked the person who emerged from behind the printed word. I continued to read Merton throughout the 1960s, both in theological college and when I was in the parish ministry. I was delighted to discover his great empathy with the struggles of black Americans to declare their dignity to their white brothers. I was intrigued with his interest in Zen (although I was not quite sure that I understood what he was talking about) and I envied the straight-forward way in which he spoke to the situation of the war in Vietnam and the possibilities of nuclear holocaust.

In 1962 I had the gratifying and singular honour of being able to meet Thomas Merton and to spend an hour with him, accompanied by five or six other Episcopal theological

students. We had gone to Gethsemani on retreat and hoped (without any real expectation of fulfilment) that we would have a chance to meet Merton. Not only did we meet him, but we were invited to his hermitage, talked with him principally about the Roman Catholic Church's mind on the validity of Anglican orders (it seemed important at the time) and even had him autograph books, which he did graciously but with a kind of embarrassment. I felt at the time (and still do) that Merton was delighted to chat seriously with young theological students but signing books was not his idea of an important task. Rather, this was a part of the superficialities - part of the culture which delights in celebrities - which Merton consistently disavowed. Yet, he did sign my copy of A Thomas Merton Reader. His graciousness was further evidenced when he answered a letter I had written to him asking him to explain the meaning of a poem. I have since learned that it is most indelicate to ask a poet to explain a poem. Nevertheless he answered my letter promptly and specifically. (He said that the poem, "Landscape," was a series of impressions and the meaning was vague and pretty much left up to the reader.) I was delighted to get his reply and thrilled that someone as "famous" as Thomas Merton would take the time to write to me. Years have passed and my understanding of Thomas Merton's thought and his personality has matured. The fact that he wrote to me is perfectly consistent with the kind of person he was. Nevertheless, I am still thrilled.

I have received invaluable help from many sources in preparing this study of the relationship between mysticism and social ethics in Thomas Merton's life and work. Without the encouragement and supervision of Michael Keeling of St. Andrews University, that which is good and worthwhile in this thesis would never have emerged. My thanks also go to the other members of the staff of the Faculty of Divinity at St. Andrews, each of whom, in his or her own way, added to my knowledge and my life. I am grateful, too, to the members of the staff of the Bellarmine College Library in Louisville who gave me access to the Merton archives, and to the Trustees of the Merton Legacy Trust, without whose cooperation no work on Merton could be complete. Brother Patrick Hart of Gethsemani was particularly helpful. A word of thanks, too, to all those who made this research financially possible.

Finally, a word of thanks, appreciation and love to three ladies with whom I have shared this work. JoAnn and Mary Margaret, my wife and eldest daughter, have shared the joys and pains of creativity ever since the beginning of my research. Gillian joined us at about the midpoint of this thesis, and although she was too young to have any idea of what was going on, nevertheless she ranks with her older sister and her "mum" in being one of the three special people to whom this work is dedicated.

All unpublished works by Thomas Merton
are copywrited by the Merton Legacy Trust.
It is with their kind permission that these
works are referred to or quoted in this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
I. THE BIOGRAPHY OF THOMAS MERTON	21
1. The First-half: Pre-monastic	24
2. The Second-half: Monastic	45
II. A HISTORY OF MERTON'S PUBLICATIONS	64
1. Development	64
2. Assessment	162
3. Was Thomas Merton a Mystic?	184
III. MYSTICISM AND SOCIAL ETHICS IN MERTON'S THEOLOGY	195
1. Withdrawal and Return as a Model	195
2. Withdrawal: Merton's Anthropology	201
3. Experience: Merton's Theology	240
4. Return: Merton's Ethics	290
IV. THE MYSTICAL THEOLOGY OF THOMAS MERTON COMPARED WITH THE THEOLOGY OF PAUL TILLICH	322
Introduction: Mysticism and Depth	324
1. God as the Ground of Being	357
2. Essence and Existence	376
3. The Meaning of "Person"	385
4. The Meaning of "the Christ"	422
5. Essentialization and Divinization	465
6. Autonomy-Heteronomy-Theonomy	487
7. The Solidarity of Mankind	526
Conclusion: Mysticism and Social Ethics	549
EPILOGUE	589
Appendix: Some Representative Poems of Thomas Merton	611
Select Bibliography	616
1. Works by Thomas Merton	616
2. Works by Paul Tillich	628
3. Secondary Sources	631
a. Works about Merton	631
b. Works about Tillich	637
4. Miscellaneous Works	641

MYSTICISM AND SOCIAL ETHICS

THOMAS MERTON SEEN IN THE LIGHT OF PAUL TILlich'S THEOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Merton (1915-1968), the American Cistercian, became very well known in the 1950s and 1960s for his writings on both spirituality and social concerns. His earlier works on the spiritual life were explicitly Christian but toward the end of his life he was incorporating a number of insights from Eastern religions into his thought. His social concerns, the seeds of which were present in even his earliest writings, became particularly evident in the 1960s and included racial injustice, the cold war, the war in Vietnam, and the depersonalizing tendencies within a technological society. From his position of contemplative withdrawal he spoke a prophetic word to the world in which he lived, recognizing that his monastic life, and eventually his eremitic life, was not so much a withdrawal from the world as it was his own place in the world. He provides, therefore, a living example of the close interrelationship between contemplation and action, between mysticism and social ethics. It is of considerable importance to those interested in ascetical theology as well as to those interested in the social ramifications of the Christian Gospel, that during the turbulent 1960s in America, one of the most astute and profound voices was that, not of one who had immersed himself in the struggles themselves, but rather of one who was living in quiet seclusion in the hills of Kentucky. Thomas Merton did not march in Selma or in Washington. He did not work hand-in-hand with people in the urban ghettos. He did not even devote much time to a study of the numerous journals and news magazines

that described the American scene. Rather, he meditated and prayed. And from this position of prayer he became increasingly aware of the inner struggles of society and of the individuals who comprised that society. It was his withdrawal from that society, rather than an immersion in it, that provided Merton with insight. Furthermore, his withdrawal was not merely negative; he did not simply withdraw from the world, but he moved into what he considered to be his own personal depths and in those depths, to an immediate apprehension of God. It was this apprehension of God, which for Merton became possible only in the quiet provided by his withdrawal, that led him to his understanding of and concern for social justice. It can be argued then, that in Thomas Merton the social dimension of mysticism is discerned and that in his many writings the theological basis of the relationship between contemplative prayer and ethics can be found.

However, Thomas Merton was not a systematic theologian. His numerous writings do not lend themselves to a direct understanding of his theology, a theology which is implied throughout his work, but is made explicit only occasionally. He was writing for a wider audience than the trained theologian. He wrote for his fellow monks, not all of whom were scholars, he wrote for the American public at large, and he wrote for those who shared his poetic temperament. Therefore, one must discover a means of extricating his theology from these many different types of writings if one hopes to discover precisely how he saw the relationship between mysticism and

social ethics. It is this relationship that I propose to study in this thesis.

In spite of Merton's lack of a systematic approach in his writings, nevertheless, for one to be able to grasp the theological implications of his thought, a methodological approach is necessary. The system that appears throughout this thesis, therefore, is mine and not his.

Since the events of Merton's life had a direct and lasting impact on the development of his thought, it is necessary to include a brief biographical sketch. Merton's life, more so than that of almost any other modern religious thinker, is an almost exact expression or parable of his theology. It would be utterly impossible to understand him apart from a knowledge of at least the basic outline of his biography. The first chapter of this thesis, therefore, is a brief exposition of Merton's life.

In the second chapter there will be an examination of the development of Merton's thought as seen in a chronological study of his writings, with a particular emphasis on his increasing awareness of his own particular responsibility in and to the society which, at one point, he thought he had rejected. In this way the basic substance of his mystical-ethical theology will be disclosed.

In chapters three and four that theological substance will be examined systematically. First of all it will be examined with the help of the model of withdrawal and return

which Toynbee has described in his A Study of History.¹ Inasmuch as this motif can be used to describe Merton's life and inasmuch as Merton's life and his theology were so much of one piece, this model is an appropriate one with which to analyze his theology. I propose to examine Merton's theological anthropology by examining what he meant by his own understanding of withdrawal, to examine his theology by studying what he understood to be the nature of that which occurs to one in the state of withdrawal, and finally, to examine his understanding of the ethical implications of theology by looking at the way in which he understood the importance of a return from that state of withdrawal. It is of importance to note that Merton did not return to American society by giving up his monastic life; he remained a monk until the end of his life. For him, return meant the ability to regard the world - and one's own self - from a totally new perspective, a perspective gained during the period of withdrawal. Therefore, the imposition of the system of withdrawal-experience-return is a suitable, and as will be shown, profitable, means of understanding Merton's theology.

Finally, Merton's theological substance will be examined by juxtaposing it with the systematic theology of Paul Tillich. Mystical elements in Paul Tillich's theology

¹Arnold Toynbee, A Study of History, Vol. III (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 248ff.

have long been noted. Walter Leibrecht described him as "a mystical Christian theologian in the classic sense of the phrase."¹ Others might not agree with such a lofty description, but they would not deny a certain mystical element in his theology,² one which is absent from most

¹"The Life and Mind of Paul Tillich," in Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Paul Tillich, ed. Walter Leibrecht (London: SCM, 1959), p. 19.

²e.g. James Luther Adams, Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science and Religion (New York: Schocken, 1970), pp. 32, 91, 94, 235-240; John P. Dourely, Paul Tillich and Bonaventure (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975); Kenneth Hamilton, The System and the Gospel: A Critique of Paul Tillich (London: SCM, 1963), pp. 183f, 221f; Walter M. Horton, "Tillich's Role in Contemporary Theology" in The Theology of Paul Tillich, eds. Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 39; Rollo May, Paulus: Reminiscences of a Friendship (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 67, 87; N.H.G. Robinson The Groundwork of Christian Ethics (London: Collins, 1971), p. 290; Hans Rollmann, "Mysticism and Social Responsibility" in St. Luke's Journal of Theology 17 (September, 1974), p. 58; P. Schwanz, "Plotin und Tillich" in Kairos 14 (1972), No. 2, pp. 137-141; Roger L. Shinn, "Paul Tillich as a Contemporary Theologian" in The Intellectual Legacy of Paul Tillich, ed. James R. Lyons (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969), pp. 60f; George F. Thomas, Religious Philosophies of the West (New York: Scribners, 1965), pp. 409, 421f; E.J. Tinsley, "Mysticism" in A Dictionary of Christian Theology, ed. Alan Richardson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), p. 225, and "Parable, Allegory and Mysticism" in Vindications, ed. A. Hanson (London: SCM, 1966), pp. 180, 188. Ved Mehta, in The New Theologian (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), quotes from a conversation he had with Reinhold Niebuhr on Tillich's mysticism and Neoplatonism, p. 34. It is noteworthy, too, that David Hopper is able to point to Tillich's early (1912) work (actually his thesis at the University of Halle) Mystik und Schuldbewusstsein in Schellings philosophischer Entwicklung (since published as Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1974), as a key to Tillich's later theological developments. See Hopper's Tillich: A Theological Portrait (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1968), chapters IV and V. It is therefore surprising that Georgia Harkness can refer to Tillich appreciatively

of his Protestant contemporaries.¹ It is this interest in mysticism and the profoundly systematic nature of his theology which makes a comparison of Tillich and Merton possible and fruitful. Tillich constantly tried to interpret the role of mysticism within the total concept of religion without failing to notice, at the same time, the dangers inherent within mysticism itself. Along with Karl Barth he was able to

in her Mysticism: Its Meaning and Message (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), pp. 66, 70, 123, 130, and refer not at all to his mystical elements.

¹It is precisely his interest in and appreciation for mysticism that is one of the chief points of contrast between Tillich and the majority of his contemporary Protestant theologians, most of whom reacted strongly against Schleiermacher's experiential approach to religion, and therefore to anything that came close to resembling mysticism. In this regard Tillich, along with Rudolf Otto (see The Idea of the Holy (ET: London: Oxford University Press, 1932), and Mysticism: East and West (ET: London: Macmillan, 1932)), stands against the neo-Kantian and Ritschlian schools which interpreted religion primarily in moral terms and were hostile to any form of mysticism or theology of religious experience. (For Tillich's appreciation of Otto see Theology of Culture (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 193; Systematic Theology, Vol. I (London: James Nisbit, 1951), pp. 91, 238f; and Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology (London: SCM, 1967), p. 216. See W.R. Inge, Christian Mysticism (London: Methuen, 1899), pp. 334-347 for relevant comments on mysticism by A. Harnack and W. Herrmann, two noteworthy neo-Kantians.) Tillich stands, too, against the modern and vociferous opponents of Schleiermacher's thought, the school of Protestant theology variously known as neo-orthodox, dialectical theology, or theology of crisis. This places Tillich against some of his most distinguished contemporaries, namely, Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, as well as Reinhold Niebuhr who taught with Tillich for many years at Union Theological Seminary in New York. On Protestantism's rejection of mysticism see E.J. Tinsley's The Imitation of God in Christ (London: SCM, 1960), pp. 14-20;

recognize that mysticism can become a matter of self-salvation, an operation of works rather than grace.¹

Yet he was also quick to point out that a mystical element is essential to all religion,² an element without which religion would be severely truncated. Along with Emil Brunner he was able to contrast mysticism, "The feeling of unity with the absolute"³ on the one hand, with the "consciousness of opposition"⁴ between man and God on the other hand. But, unlike Brunner, Tillich insisted that mysticism and the consciousness of separation from God are not irreconcilable opposites but rather constitute two

and Robert Yule, "Article Review: Recent Writings on Christian Spirituality" in The Scottish Journal of Theology 28 (1975), No. 6, pp. 589-591.

¹Barth's statements in opposition to mysticism are many, e.g. Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark), I, 2 (ET: 1956), pp. 318, 319, 323; III, 4 (ET: 1961), p. 563. Cf. Tillich's Systematic Theology, Vol. II (1957), pp. 96f. See below pp. 324ff.

²e.g. Systematic Theology, Vol. III (1963), pp. 257f. See below pp. 324ff.

³Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development, p. 27.

⁴an expression used by both Tillich (Ibid., p. 27), and Brunner (The Mediator, ET: Westminster: Philadelphia, 1937), p. 405. For Brunner's attacks on mysticism see The Mediator as well as his study of Schleiermacher, Die Mystik und das Wort (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1928).

poles of an essential paradox within the Christian faith.¹
 Along with Reinhold Niebuhr, Tillich protested against
 tendencies within the history of mysticism which drove it
 away from concern with concrete, historical reality.²

¹"For although we are in the flesh and under the law and in the cleavage of our existence, we are, at the same time, in the Spirit and in the fulfillment and unity with the ultimate meaning of our life," The Shaking of the Foundations (New York: Scribners, 1948), p. 135. Tillich also refused to divide religion into the contradictory types of 'mysticism' and 'prophetic religion' as Friedrich Heiler has done in his study, Prayer (ET: London: Oxford University Press, 1932). In a study of Buber, Tillich wrote, "It is not true that mysticism and prophetic religion contradict each other." Theology of Culture, p. 196. In Religionsphilosophie (1925) Tillich posited 'sacramental' and 'theocratic' as two opposing religious tendencies and saw mysticism as "the radical, critically conscious form of the sacramental attitude." (ET: "The Philosophy of Religion" in What is Religion? New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 88f, 91. See also The Courage To Be (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1952), pp. 160ff. In Systematic Theology, Vol. I, he saw mysticism and prophetic religion (along with a rational element) as constituting the critical, as opposed to the sacramental side of religion (pp. 155ff). But the critical and the sacramental were not seen to be opposed: "No prophet could speak in the power of a new revelation, no mystic could contemplate the depth of the divine ground, no meaning could be given over to the appearance of the Christ, if there were not this sacramental-priestly substance." (p. 155) Or, in other words, the critical principle of Protestantism needs the substance of Catholicism. See Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 259f. See below p. 585, fn. 1.

²e.g. Niebuhr's The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. II (Nisbet: London, 1943), pp. 12, 94-99. See Tillich: Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 375; The Courage To Be, p. 186; Morality and Beyond (London: Collins Fontana, 1969) p. 10; The Protestant Era (London: Nisbet, 1951), p. 39.

But, unlike Niebuhr who saw mysticism as primarily an attempt at emancipation from the responsibilities inherent within historical existence, Tillich saw that mysticism in its most mature manifestations was directed toward history and not away from it.¹ Carl E. Braten has written:

"For Tillich there is an ineliminable element of mysticism in every religion. A question he often posed to his students was whether 'mysticism can be baptized by Christianity.' His answer was 'yes', provided we distinguish between the abstract type of mysticism of Hinduism and the concrete mysticism of Christianity."²

Therefore, in his desire to find a central place for mysticism within Christian theology, Tillich stands, if not in total opposition to his distinguished contemporaries, at least on a different plane.³ From as early as the writing

¹ see below pp. 554-566.

² "Paul Tillich and the Classical Christian Tradition" in Tillich's Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology, pp. xxivf.

³ Although an opponent of mysticism, Barth can speak about it with respect (especially in his later writings) and see that it cannot be dismissed lightly. See Church Dogmatics IV, 1, p. 104, IV, 2, pp. 10ff, IV 3 (2nd half) p. 540, and in a passage which speaks of the Kant-Ritschl repudiation of mysticism, pietism and anything akin to sentimentality, Barth cautions against erring by going too far in this direction to the neglect of the Spirit, IV, 2, pp. 795f. Brunner, too, can appreciate certain forms of mystik: "Meditation is the spiritual act through which the Word which is preached, prayer, and our experience of life are united, in order that they may thus mutually penetrate the soul as a whole. Were 'Christian mysticism' nothing more than an emphasis upon the necessity for such meditation there would be nothing against it." The Divine

of his thesis on Schelling in 1912, to the final volume of the Systematic Theology published in 1963, less than two years before his death, Tillich was concerned with the questions mysticism posed for the theological task. Unlike Barth, Brunner and Niebuhr, he was more interested in defending mysticism than attacking it, more interested in seeing it in correlation with prophetic religion than opposed to it. It is because of this interest in mysticism that it is possible to look at Merton's theology in light of the theology of Paul Tillich. Furthermore, since

Imperative, (ET: London: Lutterworth, 1937), p. 314.

No mention has been made of other contemporaries of Tillich, principally Rudolf Bultmann and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Like Barth and Brunner they stood against mysticism generally. Bultmann called mysticism "man's belief in himself...the opposite of belief in God", Essays: Philosophical and Theological (ET: London: SCM, 1955), p. 19. See also pp. 9, 106 in which he criticizes mysticism for being a-historical. However, see Faith and Understanding - I (ET: London: SCM, 1969), p. 203 in which he says, regarding St. Paul "...for Paul, 'in the Spirit' does not mean an ecstatic or mystic state but describes the Christian's new mode of being, the manner of his historical existence as an existence in the New Age." This passage has certain marks of affinity with the thought of Tillich, especially Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 118ff. Bonhoeffer criticized mystical silence as "the soul secretly chattering away to itself." Christology (ET: London: Collins Fontana, 1971), p. 27. It is Bonhoeffer who, it may be recalled, has had considerable influence in the so-called "radical" theologians and their decidedly anti-mystical stance.

Merton was not a systematic writer¹ and Tillich was profoundly systematic, such a juxtaposition of theologies will prove to be fruitful as well as merely possible.

Over the years Paul Tillich's theology has received considerable attention and criticism;² Merton, however, in spite of a number of detailed and scholarly expositions of his thought, has not received the same thorough theological critiques.³ I do not propose to provide such a critique in this thesis. That work is left to the systematic theologian. Rather, it is my hope that this comparison of Merton and Tillich will not only point the

¹This point is noted as well by James Thomas Baker in Thomas Merton Social Critic (Lexington, Ky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1971) p. 34, and Jean LeClercq, OSB, who wrote: "He was not concerned with a 'definitive work,' a scholarly tome, needing no further commentary, but with a number of 'essays,' trials, thrusts, breakthroughs moving beyond the fragile present, which others are now trying to consolidate in order to preserve the message and increase its life." From the "Introduction" to Merton's Contemplation in a World of Action (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971) p. xiv.

²Throughout this thesis reference will be made to a number of these studies as it appears appropriate. The major studies, and especially those that have been of particular importance to this thesis will be found on pages 637ff of this thesis.

³The major studies of Merton to date are listed on pages 631ff. A number of doctoral dissertations also provide valuable insights into Merton's thought and these will be acknowledged within the scope of this work. Of all the critical works on Merton, I have found that only Higgins, Kelly and Bailey provide detailed theological expositions of Merton's theology, but none of these works are of a critical nature; they are all expository. See below pp. 576ff on the nature of the critiques of Merton to date.

way to a modern understanding of the relationship between mysticism and social ethics, but will also provide one avenue of approach to a detailed theological critique of Thomas Merton, with the implication that the criticisms leveled against Tillich can be, with only minor alterations, applied to Merton as well.¹

The similarities between these two men have been noted in various places, but no detailed comparison of their respective theologies has yet been made. The American

¹It is certainly not to be implied that this is the only way in which Merton could be criticized, nor is Paul Tillich the only Protestant theologian with whom Merton could be compared. Merton himself mentions his own appreciation for Barth, Bultmann and Bonhoeffer (see Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968); Faith and Violence (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), and Opening the Bible (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972). Merton's references to Tillich are to be found chiefly in Faith and Violence, with extended treatment in two articles, "The Catholic and Creativity: Theology of Creativity" in The American Benedictine Review 11 (1960) pp. 197-213, and "Symbolism - Communication or Communion?" in The Mountain Path (India) 3 (October, 1966), pp. 339-348. All these theologians are mentioned by Merton in other places as well. In the Merton Archives at Bellarmine College, Louisville, Kentucky, there is one extant letter from Merton to Tillich, see below, p. 569. Merton could be compared with Barth on the subject of God as pure subjectivity; with Bonhoeffer on their common concern for direct political action; with Bultmann on their various approaches to Biblical exegesis and their interest in existentialism; and with Brunner (a theologian Merton is not that familiar with) on the contention that when man is in revolt against God he is in revolt against himself as well.

sociologist of religion, Robert Bellah, mentioned their common interest in Eastern religions and in this context drew a comparison.¹ Raymond Bailey, in his book Thomas Merton on Mysticism, specifically mentioned that he saw "clear affinities" in the thought of the two men.² It is also to be noted that in New Harmony, Indiana, on the site of Robert Owen's nineteenth century utopian community, there is a park named in honour of Paul Tillich and in which Tillich is buried. On the same grounds there is a garden in honour of Thomas Merton.³ These are the only two persons so honoured in New Harmony. Therefore, this is not the first time that the names of these two men have been linked.⁴ It is, however, the first time in which their thought has been systematically compared.

¹Bellah wrote: "Post critical western religion was therefore ready for a positive response to Asian religions in a way different from any earlier period. Paul Tillich's response to Zen Buddhism late in his life is an example of this. Thomas Merton's final immersion in Buddhism is an even better one." "The New Religious Consciousness" in The New Republic 171, No. 21 (November 23, 1974), p. 40.

²Raymond Baily, Thomas Merton on Mysticism (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), p. 220. cf pp. 69, 72, 180.

³see R.H. King, "Tillich at New Harmony" in The Christian Century 89 (March 1, 1972), pp. 252f.

⁴In his biography of Tillich, Rollo May mentions Merton: "He (Tillich) is aware of his vocation of watching the waves of the ocean and of the human scene, and knows that it requires standing aside from the cares and pressures of life. Hence the Roman Catholic Church, with a wisdom not often appreciated in these days of group-mindedness and other means of huddling together in our anxiety, has required celibacy for those of its clergy, who, like Thomas Merton, need it." Paulus, p. 59.

For the purposes of this comparison, two definitions need to be discussed, namely, "mysticism" and "social ethics." Throughout his writings Thomas Merton used the words "mysticism," "contemplation," "contemplative prayer" or such similar phrases, in an unsystematic, interchangeable way. This, according to Dom Cuthbert Butler, has been common practise throughout the history of Christian mysticism.¹ Merton was never happy with the word "mysticism" or the word "contemplation." He found them misleading and the cause of much consternation;² but he found it impossible not to use them. Evelyn Underhill knew from her many years of research into mysticism, the word itself is "one of the most abused words in the English language."³ Dean Inge felt that it was employed even more loosely than the word "socialism!"⁴

¹ Dom Cuthbert Butler, Western Mysticism (London: Constable, 1922), pp. 2f. On Merton's usage of these terms see John J. Higgins, Thomas Merton on Prayer (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975), p. 73, fn. e. See also R. Bailey, op.cit., p. 209. Merton tended to favour "mysticism" in his earliest works (e.g. The Ascent to Truth, 1951), but often uses "contemplation" to describe the same experience (e.g. Seeds of Contemplation, 1949, and "What is Contemplation?", 1948). "Contemplation" tends to be favoured in his later works, but this does not mean that he ceases to use the word "mysticism". It does appear frequently in The New Man (1961).

² e.g. Merton's Preface to New Seeds of Contemplation (New York: New Directions, 1962), pp. ix-xi; The Wisdom of the Desert (London: Sheldon Press, 1961), p. 20; and "The Life that Unifies" in Sisters Today 42 (October, 1970), p. 65.

³ Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism (12th edition), (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1961), p. xiv.

⁴ W.R. Inge, op. cit., p. 1.

William James, in his analysis of mystical experience, refused to give a precise definition of such a complex phenomenon, but discussed instead various marks of the experience itself.¹ Merton is in good company, then, in his own unsystematic approach to discussions of this elusive experience. Like James, he most often describes mysticism in terms of its concrete manifestations rather than in precise definitions. Nevertheless, he does attempt various definitions, both simple and elaborate. In Merton's most concise definition, contemplation is described as "simple openness to God at every moment."² A more complex definition - one which expresses Merton's explicit Christocentric emphasis - is given elaborate formulation in the first chapter of New Seeds of Contemplation. A brief summary of this chapter is made in the following definition:

"Contemplation is the awareness and realization, even in some sense experience, of what each Christian obscurely believes: 'It is now no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.'"³

¹William James, The Varieties of Religious Experiences (The Gifford Lectures, 1901-1902), (London: Collins Fontana, 1960), pp. 366-413.

²"The Life that Unifies," p. 65.

³New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 5. (Here, and throughout this thesis underscoring represents italics in the original text. Only where it is specifically noted is underscoring supplied for reasons of emphasis.)

Mysticism, then, for Merton, is openness to God, awareness, realization and experience of the indwelling of Christ in the human person. It is never atheistic, and always Christocentric, and although in his discussions of Eastern forms of mysticism the Christocentric nature of mysticism is often unstated, it will be shown in the following study that even in Merton's understanding of Eastern mysticism a Christocentric basis is implied. A more detailed examination of the meaning of mysticism in the thought of both Merton and Tillich will constitute the greater part of this thesis; what has been given here simply serves to point in the direction that this study will follow, and eliminates from consideration all forms of mystik, theistic or otherwise, or mystizismus - psychic, parapsychological, occult or magical - that do not coincide with Merton's basic understanding of mysticism.

The term "social ethics," like "mysticism," can yield a great variety of meanings. Merton's social ethic can be described as his concern for social reform, or what Gibson Winter has called "the continuing and daily business of man in his social existence,"¹ specifically, the organizing of human communities and the shaping of social policies within them.

¹Social Ethics: Issues in Ethics and Society, ed. Gibson Winter, (London: SCM, 1968), p. 8.

Thus, social ethics incorporates both individual acts of charity as well as the drive to alter structures in order that conditions which made those charitable acts necessary can be alleviated. Merton did not concern himself with the broader issue of the ways in which societies interact, but was concerned with the ways in which individuals act within societies and for the sake of societies.¹ He could agree, therefore, with the observation, articulated by John Macquarrie, that, in a sense, "all ethics are social ethics." No ethic is "purely self-regarding."² The word "social" therefore could be eliminated from any consideration of Merton's moral theology. It is maintained, however, in order to differentiate between ethics within the

¹Paul Tillich, however, has attempted to speak to the problem of how societies interact, although such a definition of social ethics does not constitute a central place in his theology. He does, however, differentiate between the moral principle applied to the individual, whom he sees as having a centred-self, and the community, which lacks a centred-self. Hence he makes a distinction between an individual and a social ethic, the individual ethic dealing with the way in which individuals interact, and social ethics dealing with the way in which societies act and interact. Such a distinction shall not be followed in this thesis. See, Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 43f, 82-89; Morality and Beyond, pp. 40f; and Love, Power, and Justice (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 91-105.

²"Social Ethics" in A Dictionary of Christian Ethics, ed. John Macquarrie (London: SCM, 1967), p. 324.

context of community on the one hand, and on the other hand, the type of individual ethic condemned by Emil Brunner as being "wholly unscriptural," namely, an ethic which is solely concerned with the individual's duties towards God and duties toward himself.¹

Since the main interest of this thesis is theological and not political or sociological, it will be of secondary interest only to dwell upon the exact content of Merton's political and social writings. Our primary concern lies in the very fact that a cloistered, contemplative monk would make social reform such a central focus of his writings. Ernst Troeltsch had argued that in the history of Christianity, mysticism and mystical movements did not lead to social transformation.² But in Merton, mysticism did, in fact, lead to an ethic of social transformation. The specifics of Merton's pronouncements are relatively unimportant compared to the fact that these pronouncements came from one who espoused the contemplative, rather than the active life. His interests show that the relationship between

¹ Emil Brunner, The Divine Imperative, pp. 308f.

²e.g. Troeltsch, The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches, Vol. II (ET: London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931), pp. 743, 1,011. However Troeltsch does see a social ethic inherent in asceticism, see Vol. I, p. 245.

mysticism and social ethics is a more far-reaching concern than the ancient debate about the relationship between contemplation and action. As the study that Merton himself made of contemplation and action in St. Bernard clearly shows, such a study can often limit itself to either an analysis of the differences between contemplative and active monastic orders, or it can narrow the meaning of "action" to include only those actions within the contemplative community necessary for maintaining the material structures of the community.¹ In spite of his early studies that tended to be of this nature, this was never Merton's primary understanding of how the relationship between contemplation and action was to be defined. His concern was with the individual contemplative's relationship with a greater community than that of his own immediate environment. Merton's own interest in monastic life, and of monastic

¹"Action and Contemplation in St. Bernard" in Collectanea Ordinis Cisterciensium Reformatorium 15 (January and July, 1953), pp. 26-31, 203-216, and 16 (April, 1954), pp. 105-121. These articles were later published in French as Marthe, Marie, et Lazare (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1956). See below pp. For a summary of the relationship between action and contemplation see the appendices by Jordan Aumann, OP, to Aquinas' Summa Theologiae, Vol. 46 (ET: London: Eyre and Spottiswoods, 1966), pp. 85-123.

reform, should be of great importance to modern monasticism. For those in the secular world, however, such interests remain subservient to a more all-encompassing interest: the relationship between contemplation and such issues as racial justice, war and peace in a nuclear age, and an increasingly dehumanizing technology. Merton's life, and the theology found implicitly and explicitly in his many writings,¹ serves as guide to the possibility of a moral theology that is grounded in a modern interpretation of prayer. He points to the essential role that mysticism can play in the attempt to keep the world from submitting to that which is less than human. To study Merton's theology of mysticism is to be confronted with a summons to action as well as a summons to a life of prayer. For him, the two could not be separated. Prayer without action was not communion with the God who is love, and action without a deep apprehension of the ground and source of love was inevitably futile and frustrating. He pointed to what he considered to be man's only hope in a terrifying age, namely, existential communion with God, and in Him, loving union with all of His creation.

¹Unpublished Merton material will be used sparingly and, when used, confined to footnotes. References made to articles which were subsequently published in books will be made, initially to the article, and thereafter, only the reference to the book will be made.

I. THE BIOGRAPHY OF THOMAS MERTON.

The Merton Legacy Trust¹ has commissioned John Howard Griffin² to write the official and definitive biography of Thomas Merton. In accordance with the stipulations of the Trust, Griffin alone has access to a great number of unpublished works by Merton, including personal journals, letters, notebooks, lectures, and other material. Many of these items will never be published and the public's knowledge of their contents will depend on Griffin. Until his work is finished any biography of Merton's is incomplete. A number of studies of Merton have been published, including some works that could be called "biographies," many of

¹The Merton Legacy Trust was created by Merton himself in 1967 to act as his literary executor and to assure that all copyrights would be in the name of the Abbey of Gethsemani. The three trustees are Naomi Burton Stone, who, over the years, had been editor of a number of Merton's works; Mrs. Frank E. O'Callaghan, III, of Louisville; and James Laughlin of New Directions Books, New York.

²John Howard Griffin, born in 1920, was a personal friend of Merton and collaborated with him on A Hidden Wholeness: The Visual World of Thomas Merton (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), and is most well-known for Black Like Me (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961). For a brief biographical sketch see The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton (New York: New Directions, 1973), pp. 180f.

which were written by those who knew Merton personally.¹ Their value is limited and varied. Personal reminiscences of Merton are of considerable worth in our coming to understand the man as he was seen by his friends. However, the cloistered nature of Merton's life imposed great restrictions on the extent that any one person could become acquainted with him. Such personal remembrances, other than those of his fellow monks, were usually achieved through letters or occasional visits. They are limited by

¹ See especially the essays in Thomas Merton, Monk: A Monastic Tribute, ed. Patrick Hart (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1974), all of which were written by monks or nuns who had known Merton personally. See also The Man in the Sycamore Tree: The Good Times and Hard Life of Thomas Merton by Edward Rice (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Image, 1970), written by a friend of Merton from his university days. Articles of a biographical nature include A.M. Allchin, "A Liberator, A Reconciler," Continuum 7 (Summer, 1969), pp. 363-365; Daniel Berrigan, "Daniel Berrigan on Thomas Merton," The Thomas Merton Life Center News-Letter, April, 1973; Naomi Burton (Stone), "I Shall Miss Thomas Merton," Cistercian Studies 4 (1969), No. 3, pp. 218-225; Ernesto Cardenal, "Coplas on the Death of Thomas Merton," in New Directions in Prose and Poetry 25 (New York: New Directions, 1972); Dorothy Day, "Thomas Merton, Trappist: 1915-1968," Catholic Worker 34 (December, 1968); Basil DePinto, "In Memoriam: Thomas Merton, 1915-1968," in The Cistercian Spirit: A Symposium in Memory of Thomas Merton (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications, 1969), pp. vii-x; James H. Forest, "The Gift of Merton," Commonweal 89 (10 January, 1969), pp. 463-465; Andrews Mann, "Thomas Merton: Man, Mystic, Enigma," Newsletter-Review of the R.M. Bucke Society for the Study of Religious Experience, Vol. VI, Nos. 1 and 2, (Spring, 1973), pp. 6-22; John Moffitt, "Thomas Merton: The Last Three Days." The Catholic World 209 (July, 1969), pp. 160-163; also in New Theology, No. 7, eds. Marty and Peerman (New York: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 125-134.

their lack of an extended view. The accumulation of many such accounts, however, can be one source for an understanding of the man. There are also the numerous scholarly studies of the life and work of Merton, studies which attempt to systematize and evaluate his thought, analyze in detail particular aspects of his life and work, or assess his contribution to religious thought.¹ Many of these works are biographical in their approach, and within the limitations that are necessarily imposed by the Merton Legacy Trust, they are of great value in so far as they collate and present in a condensed form, all of the material currently available with which to construct a "life."

The primary sources for a biography of Thomas Merton are his own published autobiographical writings. The most important of these are The Seven Storey Mountain (1948),²

¹See below, p. 631ff.

²Merton's autobiography was published in Great Britain with the title of Elected Silence (London: Hollis and Carter, 1949). As a rule, this thesis will use the American title and make references to that book. Evelyn Waugh edited Merton's work for the British reader, and Elected Silence ended up being a severely truncated version of the original. The Seven Storey Mountain (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948 - all quotations are from the Signet 1952 paperback edition), was finally published in Great Britain in 1975 by the Sheldon Press, London. See Robert Murray Davis, "How Waugh Cut Merton," Month, April, 1973, pp. 150-153.

his autobiography which gives details of the early years of his life up until his entrance into the monastery; The Sign of Jonas (1953), a journal that covers the years 1946 to 1952; The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton (1959), extracts from a journal he kept between October, 1939 and November, 1941; Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander (1966), which contains excerpts from the journals written between 1956 and the mid-1960s; and the post-humously published The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton (1973) which contains Merton's reflections on the last months of his life. In addition to these books there are autobiographical references and allusions in numerous other books and articles.¹ These give us ample information with which to construct an accurate and detailed picture of his life. A more accurate picture, of course, awaits the work of Mr. Griffin, but until then the material at our disposal is considerable.

1. The First-half: Pre-monastic

Thomas Merton was born on January 31, 1915, in Prades, France. His father, Owen Merton, was a New Zealand artist, who had gone to the Pyrenees to paint. His mother, Ruth

¹These will be noted as they are used.

Jenkins, was an American Quaker. When Thomas was only a year old the family moved to America to live at the home of his maternal grandparents. The next five years of his life was spent in Flushing, Long Island, New York.

Owen Merton was an Anglican and had Thomas baptized while still in France. However, there was no religious instruction given to the young boy. Merton's guess is this was primarily due to his mother, who, although occasionally attending a Friends' Meetinghouse, had no desire to give her children a formal religious education. Merton suggests that his mother's intellectual standards were such that she found typical religious education to be inferior to the kind of perfection she wished for her children. Merton never attended church while living in Flushing.¹

His father's Anglican faith, which he was to get to know rather superficially later in his childhood, made only a negative impression. In fact, the first recorded social criticism of Merton's has to do with the Church of England. He saw it as an institution whose cohesive power was neither doctrinal unity nor a mystical bond between people, but a "stubborn tenacity" to cling to the values of a certain social class. In The Seven Storey Mountain he is unable to say anything positive about his father's religious heritage.²

¹ The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 19.

² Ibid., pp. 84, 213.

Merton's mother died in 1921. She had cancer, and rather than have her children (a brother, John Paul, had been born in 1918) witness her in her pain, she refused to allow them to visit her in her hospital bed. Once his mother entered the hospital, Merton never saw her again. He was six years old.

After his mother's death, Thomas travelled to Bermuda with his father. A successful exhibition of paintings gave Owen Merton some financial success and he decided to go to France to continue painting. Thomas went back to New York to live with his grandparents and his younger brother. In August of 1925 Thomas joined his father in France, without his brother, and was enrolled in school. He spent two years in France before moving to England in the summer of 1928. He was sent to Oakham, an English public school, where he concentrated in French and Latin and developed a dislike for Plato, whom he had to read in Greek. Here he received an intellectual idea of religion, one based on Descartes' Cogito ergo sum, phrases such as "the Good, the True, and the Beautiful," and a detailed reading of the Book of Kings. He was not very impressed.¹

¹The Seven Storey Mountain, pp. 94ff.

Owen Merton died of a brain tumor in the fall of 1930. The fifteen-year-old Thomas was alone in England. His godfather lived in London, and Merton had a high regard for him, but his family was in America. For the past ten years of his life Merton had been centred around his father, even though there were long stretches of time when he was separated from him. Other than a few years, he rarely lived with his brother. Now, with a small but sufficient legacy, he was on his own. During the next few years he was able to use his summer holidays to travel back to America to visit his brother and grandparents, striking up a shipboard romance along the way, and to travel extensively on the European continent. In Rome, in the summer of 1933, he had his first encounter with religion in other than an intellectual context. He was intrigued with byzantine mosaics in various churches. An aesthetic sense, probably a gift from his father, (a gift which later was to become more explicit in Merton himself),¹ opened up a new way of coming to understand that which bored him when presented in the form of propositions.

¹He was art director of a campus publication at Columbia University, to which he contributed numerous sketches, some of which are printed in Rice's, The Man in the Sycamore Tree, but the mature artistic talents of Thomas Merton are seen in Griffin's, A Hidden Wholeness which demonstrates his ability with photography and calligraphic abstract art.

"And now for the first time in my life I began to find out something of Who this Person was that men called Christ. It was obscure, but it was a true knowledge of Him, in some sense, truer than I knew and truer than I would admit. It was in Rome that my conception of Christ was formed."¹

In the mosaics Merton learned of God, and it was at this time that Merton first began to pray:

"And now I think for the first time in my whole life I really began to pray - praying not with my lips and with my intellect and my imagination, but praying out of the very roots of my life and of my being, and praying to the God I had never known, to reach down towards me out of His darkness and to help me to get free of the thousand terrible things that held my will in their slavery."²

His interest in art took him into numerous churches and monasteries throughout the continent, and he even discovered that he was beginning to go into these places not simply to look at works of art, but also to pray.

In 1933 Merton matriculated at Clare College, Cambridge, and remained in its "dark, sinister atmosphere" for a year doing modern languages. It was not a very good year, and

¹The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 135.

²Ibid., p. 138.

the only positive thing that Merton felt occurred to him at Cambridge was his introduction to Dante's "poetic synthesis of scholastic philosophy and theology."¹ Everything else was negative.¹

Merton remained at Cambridge for one academic year. His godfather suggested rather strongly that he return to America and forget about Cambridge, a suggestion that Merton readily accepted. He had been chastized by his godfather for the kind of life he had been living. Precisely what this implied is not at all made clear, but the confrontation between Merton and his godfather was unpleasant and the advice given to the younger man was direct and not contradicted.² He left England for good in November of 1934.

He spent the next years at Columbia University in New York. His life there focused around three centres, all of which help to explain some of the later developments

¹The Seven Storey Mountain, pp. 146, 152.

²Ibid., pp. 154f. Edward Rice suggests (but does not try to document or substantiate) that Merton's romantic life had brought certain problems along with it. Op. cit., pp. 22f. If this had been the case, and had Merton included details in his autobiography, they may very well have been removed by the censors who edited his works before they were presented to the publishers. The existence of the censors¹ and Merton's own discretion explain why, in The Seven Storey Mountain, he seems to be "agonizing tediously" over sins which are not at all unusual. (Monica Furlong is perplexed by this in Travelling In (London: Hodder and Staughton, 1971), p. 95. On the censors see below pp. 92, 105.

in his thought. The first of these was his interest in his academic work: his studies, his extra-curricular work within the University, and the friends he made at this time. Secondly, it was at this time that he developed an explicit social consciousness and became interested in Marxism and the Communist party. The third focal point was his interest in, and conversion to, the Roman Catholic Church.

The first of Merton's focal points was the University. Among the several people he met at Columbia University who profoundly impressed the young Merton was the poet Mark van Doren, who was later to write a preface to Selected Poems of Thomas Merton (1967) and would remain a friend for the rest of his life. "As far as I can see," wrote Merton, "Mark's sober and sincere intellect, and his manner of dealing with his subject with perfect honesty and objectivity and without evasions, was remotely preparing my mind to receive the good seed of scholastic philosophy."¹ Merton studied literature with van Doren and it was in this field that Merton would concentrate his efforts while at Columbia. Other than a short attempt at running cross-country for the Columbia track team, Merton's interests

¹ The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 172.

were literary. Most of his free time was spent on the fourth floor of John Jay Hall where various campus literary publications had their office. Merton did sketches for these magazines, became art editor of one of them and, in his senior year, was editor of the university yearbook. His contributions to the various student publications were numerous.¹

Merton's literary interests centred around William Blake and the thesis for his Master's degree was "Nature and Art in William Blake." He had become interested in and excited by scholastic philosophy, chiefly through a study of Gilson's The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, and the friendship of a lecturer in philosophy, Daniel Walsh, who was later to become a priest. It was this philosophical interest that led him to Maritain's Art and Scholasticism, which was the book that "untied all the knots" in the thesis.²

¹They are listed in Dell Isola Thomas Merton: A Bibliography (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956), pp. 88-93. Others who worked with Merton on these efforts include Robert Lax and Edward Rice, both of whom have made contributions to an understanding of Merton. On Lax, see "A Catch of Anti-Letters," Correspondence between Thomas Merton and Robert Lax, Voyages 11 (Winter-Spring, 1968), Nos. 1 and 2, pp. 44-56. In Merton, Seeds of Destruction, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), p. 264. (Robert Giroux of the mentioned publishing firm was also a Columbia friend.) On Rice, see The Man in The Sycamore Tree.

²The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 240.

Later he became interested in the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins and had planned to write his doctoral dissertation on him. Merton was more and more involved in mystical and Catholic poetry and in the precise and rational philosophy of the scholastics of the Middle Ages.

In addition to the works that he submitted to the various student publications at Columbia, Merton wrote a number of novels during this period. Only one of them is still extant, Journal of My Escape from the Nazis,¹ a quasi-autobiographical account of a young man in England and Europe in the years immediately preceding the Second World War. Three finished novels and one half-finished novel were thrown away when Merton decided to enter the monastery in 1941. The rest of his writings, including his poetry, were sent to Mark van Doren for safekeeping.²

The second focus was Communism. Merton flirted with Communism while at Columbia. In the early 1930s he had first read the Communist Manifesto and some books about

¹Published post-humously as My Argument with the Gestapo (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969).

²The Seven Storey Mountain, pp. 403, 441. Merton had tried to get two of these novels published. They were called The Labyrinth and Man in the Sycamore Tree. "So many bad books get printed," he wrote in his journal in 1941, "why can't my bad books get printed?" The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959); quoted from the Dell paperback edition, 1960, p. 136.

life in the Soviet Union and had come to believe that Soviet Russia was a friend of the arts. Furthermore, he saw himself as a part of a crassly materialistic and manipulative society:

"I considered the person that I now was, the person that I had been at Cambridge, and that I had made of myself, and I saw clearly enough that I was the product of my times, my society and my class. I was something that had been spawned by the selfishness and irresponsibility of the materialistic century in which I lived."¹

Capitalism was to blame for everything unpleasant. The Western world was the epitome of this worldliness. The idea of a "classless society" intrigued him. "... there would be no more poverty, no more wars, no more misery, no more starvation, no more violence. Everybody would be happy. Nobody would be overworked."² Furthermore, Merton was very much impressed by passivism and had a profound dislike for the idea of war. He thought that the Communists shared this belief, and so, in the ironic setting of a Park Avenue apartment, Thomas Merton joined the Young Communist League, and took the party name of Frank Swift. This flirtation with Communism lasted for a very brief time.

¹The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 163.

²Ibid., p. 165.

Already he had noticed the Communists becoming increasingly militant concerning the Spanish Civil War. At the meeting when Merton joined the Communists, one middle-class adolescent was talking about machine gun positions along Park Avenue. Merton left the party quickly:

"I only went to one meeting of the Young Communist League, in the apartment of one of the students. It was a long discussion as to why Comrade So-and-so did not come to any of the meetings. The answer was that his father was too bourgeois to allow it. So after that, I walked out into the empty street, and let the meeting end however it would."¹

Merton's concerns for the social, political and economic problems of the world were not to find their fulfilment within the Communist Party. Nor would they find fulfilment anywhere until Merton was able to overcome certain tendencies within himself. He could not hope to solve, even partially, the selfishness of the world if he was not able to overcome the selfishness of Thomas Merton.

"The truth is that my inspiration to do something for the good of mankind had been pretty feeble and abstract from the start. I was still interested in doing good for only one person in the world - myself."²

¹The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 181.

²Ibid., p. 182.

It was his desire to overcome destructive tendencies within himself that led him to seek truth within the Catholic Church.

The Church became the third focal point for Merton at this time. His interest in the Catholic Church had begun on his trip to Rome in 1933.¹ It was in the Byzantine Churches of Rome that he first had begun to pray and to come to an understanding of God. The next recorded instance of any desire to pray came in 1936 when his grandfather died. Without any real sense of the existence of the soul, and without any systematic thought, Merton was drawn to pray.² These were the inchoate beginnings of his religious quest. Nevertheless it was with a feeling of "disgust and deception" that Merton discovered, in February, 1937, that a book he was reading had received the "Nihil Obstat" and "Imprimatur" of the Catholic Church. The book was Etienne Gilson's The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy and he was tempted to throw it away. Catholic culture may have been of interest to him, but he was afraid of the Catholic Church. He kept the book, however, read it, and found that it was to revolutionize his entire life. He had discovered an entirely new concept of God. Heretofore he had assumed that

¹ See above, p. 27.

² The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 195.

the Catholic idea of God was a "vague and rather superstitious hangover from an unscientific age." Faced now with the idea of the aseity of God, Merton came to have an intellectual understanding of God that he felt was "deep, precise, simple and accurate, and what is more, charged with implications which (he) could not even begin to appreciate."¹ For the first time, Merton understood God in terms of being; he understood, for the first time, that God can be defined as "Being itself." The result of reading Gilson was that now Merton had a profound respect for Catholic philosophy and for the Catholic faith. God was now becoming an intellectual possibility for him, and faith was no longer something he considered to be only for the uneducated; he could appreciate it as having "a very definite meaning and a most cogent necessity."² This was the beginning of Merton's conversion.³

¹The Seven Storey Mountain, pp. 207ff

²Ibid., p. 212.

³"It had taken little more than a year and a half, counting from the time I read Gilson's The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy to bring me up from an 'atheist' - as I considered myself - to one who accepted all the full range and possibilities of religious experience right up to the highest degree of glory." The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 247.

At the same time Merton was reading Gilson, he was also reading Aldous Huxley's Ends and Means, a book which, although it had nothing to do with Catholicism, did excite Merton's interest in prayer, mysticism and asceticism. In the same way that Gilson showed him the intellectual acceptability of a certain concept of God, Huxley showed Merton the intellectual credibility of these particular practices. This made Merton turn to the various schools of Oriental Mysticism, and it was through a Hindu monk that he became familiar with the classics of the mystical tradition within the Christian tradition. Expecting that he would receive some direction for reading within the Eastern scriptures, Merton turned to a man called Bramachari, a Hindu who was at Columbia University. Instead, Bramachari urged Merton to look into the writings of the West. Merton recalls:

"He did not generally put his words in the form of advice: but the one counsel he did give me is something I will not easily forget: 'There are many beautiful mystical books written by the Christians. You should read St. Augustine's Confessions, and The Imitation of Christ.'

"Of course I had heard of both of them: but he was speaking as if he took it for granted that most people in America had no idea that such books ever existed. He seemed to feel as if he were in possession of a truth that would come to most Americans as news - as if there was something in their own cultural heritage that

they had long since forgotten; and he could remind them of it. He repeated what he had said, not without a certain earnestness:

"Yes, you must read those books."¹

Gilson, Huxley, the Christian classics, and his own desire to pray were part of the ingredients of a religious conversion. Added to these were his work on the mystical poems of William Blake and his increasing interest in Gerard Manley Hopkins. All of this was leading Merton closer to the Catholic Church. In September, 1938, he made the decision to become a Catholic and began taking formal instructions at a parish church near the University campus. At the same time, in a less precise yet not inarticulate way, he was entertaining the thought of becoming a priest. Dan Walsh, his friend in the Department of Philosophy, encouraged him and helped him to face this desire with honesty; it was Walsh, a layman, to whom Merton turned to talk of the priesthood. But these thoughts were put aside temporarily.

Merton was baptized as a Roman Catholic in November, 1938. Edward Rice, who was later to write a book about Merton, was his godfather; most of his other friends were Jewish.² He had submitted his thesis for the Masters Degree

¹The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 239.

²Ibid., 268.

and now was beginning to prepare for his doctoral dissertation on Hopkins. The desire to become a priest, however, was becoming increasingly stronger. The more he became involved in the liturgical life of the church, and in the scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages, the closer he came to seek a vocation in the priesthood. He was attracted, at first, to the Franciscans, and this attraction was enhanced by the summers he spent with his friends in Olean, New York, not far from the campus of St. Bonaventure University, a Franciscans institution.

"Yes, I liked the Franciscans. Their life was very simple and informal and the atmosphere of St. Bonaventure's was pleasant and happy and peaceful. One thing that attracted me to them was a sort of freedom from spiritual restraint, from systems and routine."

He was familiar with the Order of Cistercians at this time but had no desire to join them. "The very title made me shiver," he wrote, "and so did their commoner name: The Trappists." Dan Walsh described the Trappist life to him: the silence, the farm labour, the fasting and meager diet, the rising in the very early hours of the morning long before dawn, the long hours of prayer in the chapel.

"Dan said: 'Do you think you would like that kind of life?'"

" 'Oh, no,' I said, 'not a chance! That's not for me! I'd never be able to stand it. It would kill me in a week. Besides, I

have to have meat. I can't get along without meat, I need it for my health.'

"Well,' said Dan, 'it's a good thing you know yourself so well.'"¹

So, Merton decided to join the Franciscans and to forget the Cistercians. He conferred with the Order and they suggested that he wait for a year. During that year Merton taught English composition in the extension division of Columbia University and wrote book reviews for a number of New York publications, including The New York Times. He practised his new faith with utter seriousness, attending Mass daily and spending an hour each day performing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. During the Easter holidays of 1940 he went to Cuba, tried to read the Autobiography of St. Theresa in Spanish, and had what he considered to be a mystical experience during Mass in a Cuban church.²

Merton was eventually turned down by the Franciscans. He shared with them his doubts about his vocation, doubts that were occasioned by a sense of guilt about his past life. They saw him as "only a recent convert, not yet two years in the Church." He was unsettled, not sure of

¹The Seven Storey Mountain, pp. 313, 315, 318.

²The nature of this, and other mystical experiences that Merton records will be discussed later in this paper. See pp. 184-194.

his vocation, and upset by doubts and uncertainties. At the suggestion of a friar, he withdrew his application. Merton was terribly upset by this rejection; nevertheless, he was determined to live the life of a monk in the world. He bought breviaries and determined to try to live as close as he could to the monastic ideal.

"There could be no more question of living just like everybody else in the world. There could be no more compromises with the life that tried, at every turn, to feed me poison. I had to turn my back on these things."¹

His stated needs ("to get a job teaching in some Catholic College where I could live under the same roof as the Blessed Sacrament")² were met in large part when he was offered a job teaching English at St. Bonaventure's University near where he and his friends had been spending their summer holidays.

Thomas Merton's teaching career at St. Bonaventure's lasted less than two years. During that time he was almost inducted into the American armed forces, he almost moved to Harlem in New York City to work among the poor,

¹ The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 360.

² Loc. cit.

and he was reintroduced to the Trappists. The draft board had rejected¹ him because of poor teeth and he had taken the suggestion of Dan Walsh to make a retreat at the Cistercian Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani in Kentucky.² Evidence in the journal he was keeping at this time shows an increasing interest in the Trappists, in spite of his summary rejection of them earlier.³ Returning from Gethsemani after the Easter holidays of 1941, Merton was convinced that he needed to pay more attention to the attraction that he had felt for the Trappist way of life. His trip to Gethsemani had been nothing but encouraging and positive, and he filled pages of The Seven Storey Mountain with his initial impressions and subsequent nostalgia for the monastery in the hills of Kentucky.⁴ Nevertheless, back at St. Bonaventures's,

¹ Had he been accepted for the draft, Merton would have served in the medical corps. He had registered as a non-combatant objector. See The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 375.

² In this thesis, as in popular usage, the terms "Trappist" and "Cistercian" are interchangeable. The Trappists were a reform movement within the Cistercian order that began in the abbey at La Trappe, France, in 1662 and later (1892) came to be known as the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance. On the history of the Cistercian order and the Trappist reform see: New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), Vol. 3, pp. 885-889 and Vol. 14, pp. 261-264, (including detailed bibliographies). On the history of the Trappists in America see Thomas Merton, The Waters of Siloe (New York, Harcourt Brace, 1949).

³ The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton, p. 137.

⁴ The Seven Storey Mountain, pp. 382ff.

he had to face one more doubt: his desire to play some part in the reforming of the social conditions in America. At the University he met, and was very impressed by, Baroness Catherine de Hueck, a Russian who had started and was maintaining a centre in Harlem called "Friendship House." Merton decided to work there during the summer.

Friendship House was made up of a number of renovated shops, and maintained a library, recreation rooms and other services for the people of Harlem. It was explicitly Catholic. His experience there posed a problem: that of a possible alternative to the Trappist monastery. Merton approached Harlem with a profound sensitivity and had a genuine compassion for the people he met there.¹ The idea of working in a place such as Harlem had a definite appeal. Yet, it was not primary. "If I stayed in the world," he thought, "my vocation would be first of all to write, second to teach. Work like that at Friendship House would only come after the other two."² He returned to St. Bonaventure's

¹ Eldridge Cleaver was very impressed with Merton's description of Harlem in The Seven Storey Mountain (pp. 413f). He wrote, "I liked it so much I copied out the heart of it in longhand. Later, after getting out of solitary, I used to keep this passage in mind when delivering Black Muslim lectures to other prisoners...For a while, whenever I felt my self softening, relaxing, I had only to read that passage to become once more a rigid flame of indignation." Soul on Ice (New York: Dell Ramparts, 1968), pp. 44f. See below p. 599.

² The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 422.

in the autumn with the hope of being able to get things into perspective. At one point he made up his mind to go to Harlem and to forget the idea of the cloistered life. He planned to quit his job at the end of the academic term and move to the city.¹ As it turned out, he did quit his job at the University, but not to go to Harlem. In his journal entry for November 27, 1941, he wrote:

"Today I think: should I be going to Harlem, or to the Trappists? Why doesn't this idea of the Trappists leave me?...Would I not be obliged to admit, now, that if there is a choice for me between Harlem and the Trappists, I would not hesitate to take the Trappists?... I would have to renounce more in entering the Trappists. That would be the one place where I would have to give up everything. Also anyone who believes in the Mystical Body of Christ realizes I could do more for the Church and for my brothers in the world, if I were a Trappist at Gethsemani than if I were a staff worker at Friendship House."²

He wrote to the Abbot of Gethsemani asking permission to visit the Abbey over Christmas time, implying that he wanted to test his vocation. Soon after a positive reply was received, Merton also received a summons from his Draft Board to be re-examined for military service. The

¹The Seven Storey Mountain, pp. 430f.

²The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton, p. 222.

draft board, however, was willing to put off his examination for a month, which would give Merton time to be accepted as a postulant for the monastery and thereby, according to United States law, be exempt from a military obligation. On December 10, 1941, Thomas Merton entered the monastery of Our Lady of Gethsemani in Kentucky. The United States, three days before, had entered the Second World War.

2. The Second-half: Monastic

Merton's entrance into the Abbey of Gethsemani marked the half-way point in his life. He was one month short of his 27th birthday when he entered the monastery; he died one month short of his fifty-fourth. Almost exactly half of his life was spent within the cloister. It was during this half of his life that Merton wrote the numerous books and journals that were to have a profound effect upon the religious and social situation of the 1950s and 1960s. Yet, ironically, these last twenty-seven years contain considerably less biographical material than the first twenty-seven. The first half of his life is described in detail in The Seven Storey Mountain. Although many of the books he wrote after his autobiography were of a personal nature,

most especially his published diaries, their tone was different. There were fewer "events" to report. His autobiographical writings became notes on meditations, which although personal, were "in no way intended as an account of spiritual adventures...there was no adventure to write about, and if there had been, it would not have been confined to paper in any case."¹ The monastic life is not a life marked by "events." As one apologist for Merton says, "A man becomes a monk not to do things but to become someone, and becoming someone is not announced by superficial eventfulness."² On one level, therefore, there is not too much to write about concerning the second half of Merton's life.³ Nevertheless, things did occur, new experiences took place, and new people crossed his path. Merton wrote about these events, and a summary on what he wrote and on what his friends and fellow monks have written about him.

¹From the Preface to Thoughts in Solitude (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1958). (All quotations are from the Dell edition, 1961), p. 11.

²Dennis Q. McInerney: Thomas Merton: The Man and His Work, p. 6.

³For example, in American Mysticism From William James to Zen (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 65-69, Hal Bridges devotes four pages to the account of the first half of Merton's life and only one paragraph to the twenty-seven years of Merton's life in the monastery.

Thomas Merton was given the name of Frater Louis, and was to continue to be known by that name within the monastic community.¹ His new life pleased him and he recognized immediately that he was at home in Gethsemani. Nevertheless, he also discovered that simply the act of joining a monastic community does not immediately grant spiritual wisdom. He took into the monastery the same problems he had outside the monastery, problems he describes as "spiritual gluttony, spiritual sensuality, spiritual pride."² As an example he relates that, soon after arriving at Gethsemani he had spent some time in the infirmary and had looked forward to the solitude it was to afford him:

"I jumped into bed and opened the Bible at the Canticle of Canticles and devoured three chapters, closing my eyes from time-to-time and waiting, with raffish expectation, for lights, voices, harmonies, savors, unctions, and music of angelic choirs.

"I did not get much of what I was looking for, and was left with the vague disillusionment of the old days when I had paid down half a dollar for a bad movie."³

¹The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 461. Some journals, for example Cistercian Studies and Monastic Studies, published Merton's articles under the name of Louis Merton or M. Louis Merton (Mary being the formal but rarely used first name of all Trappist monks). Brother Patrick Hart, Merton's secretary the last years of his life, says that the monks good-naturedly referred to Merton as "Uncle Louie." (Thomas Merton: Monk, p. 15.) However, the world continued to know him by the name of Thomas, and in this thesis that name will be used.

²The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 464f.

³Loc. cit.

The spiritual quest was to be more difficult than he had expected.

In terms of emotional content, one of the most important "events" in these early days of Merton's monastic life was the death of his brother in April, 1943. Merton wrote of his last meeting with his brother, and the latter's baptism, reception of Holy Communion and departure for the war. Not long afterwards Merton received news that his brother was missing in action; a few weeks later it was confirmed that John Paul Merton was dead. The obvious passion of this account,¹ and the subsequent poem,² indicate how grieved Merton was at the death of his brother.

He had now outlived his entire family, seeing his mother and father die when he was a child, his grandparents die when he was in University, and his brother die when he was still a young man. Merton's accounts show he was saddened, but not despairing. And, his faith in the resurrection of Christ gave him hope. Yet, in the poetic account of his grief there is a certain sensitivity to the futility of war, a theme which will become fully articulated

¹The Seven Storey Mountain, pp. 472ff.

²Ibid., p. 484. Also in Selected Poems of Thomas Merton (New York: New Directions, 1967), pp. 12f.

in many of Merton's later writings.¹

Daily life in a Trappist monastery is simple, but certainly not easy. Merton spent the next years working on the monastery farm, studying for ordination, and writing. It was not until August of 1947, that Merton made his first trip back into the "world," the world which, in The Seven Storey Mountain, he wanted to reject.² Now, almost six years later, his attitude had changed:

"We drove into town with Senator Dawson, a neighbor of the monastery, and all the while I wondered how I would react at meeting once again, face to face, the wicked world. I met the world and I found it no longer so wicked after all. Perhaps the things I had resented about the world when I left it were defects of my own that I had projected upon it. Now, on the contrary, I found that everything stirred me with a deep and mute sense of compassion. Perhaps some of the people we saw going about the streets were hard and tough - with the naive, animalistic toughness of the Middle West - but I did not stop to observe it because I seemed to have lost an eye for merely exterior detail and to have discovered,

¹See a sampling of his poetry in the Appendix. See below pp. 611-615.

²See, for instance, Merton's comment on passing through Cincinnati on his trip to Gethsemani: "...I was passing through all this, and did not desire it, and wanted no part in it, and did not seek to grasp or hold any of it." The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 383.

instead, a deep sense of respect and love and pity for the souls that such details never fully reveal. I went through the city, realizing for the first time in my life how good are all the people in the world and how much value they have in the sight of God."¹

Whereas at one time Merton saw the world as something to be avoided, he was now beginning to see it as worthy of his love. The fantastic, mystical experience that should transport one out of the world into a Neo-Platonic heaven had not occurred. He was able to take his life, and his spiritual quest, with a greater sense of humour and with less self-conscious seriousness. In his journal entry for December 13, 1948, he wrote:

"What do you think, you dope, after having been a Trappist for seven years? I think, where did the time go? I caught myself wondering, Have I changed? Not that it matters. I have and I haven't. I'm balder. Somehow I have more of an interior life but I'd have a hard time trying to say how."²

¹ The Sign of Jonas (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1953). All quotations are from the Doubleday Image edition of 1956, pp. 97f.

² Ibid., p. 143.

Other than some amusing accounts of daily life at Gethsemani, there are no special events mentioned in Merton's journal until May 26, 1949, the date of his ordination to the priesthood. Many pages of the journal were dedicated to the importance of his ordination and his own existential understanding of the meaning of the priesthood, but the actual account of the ordination itself is muted and understated. Perhaps, not unlike his experience reading the Canticle of Canticles in the infirmary, the expected euphoria simply did not occur. Or, perhaps, he was unable to relate his feelings on paper. Subsequent journal entries speak of his inner awareness of the meaning of his priesthood, but the one event, the ordination itself, is scarcely mentioned.¹

¹The Sign of Jonas, pp. 167-191. On Merton's reluctance to write about the meaning of the priesthood for the community see F.J. Kelly, Man Before God: Thomas Merton on Social Responsibility (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 44-48. Kelly has examined the contents of all Merton's taped conferences and concludes that not one of the 605 conferences has an explicit treatment of the priesthood. Rice in The Man in the Sycamore Tree, pp. 91-97 has a number of photographs of Merton's ordination service.

Merton described the year and a half after his ordination as a time of ill-health and nervous exhaustion:

"When the summer of my ordination ended, I found myself face to face with a mystery that was beginning to manifest itself in the depths of my soul and to move me with terror. Do not ask me what it was. I might apologize for it and call it 'suffering.' The word is not adequate because it suggests physical pain. That is not at all what I mean. It is true that something had begun to affect my health; but whatever happened to my health was only, it seems to me, an effect of this unthinkable thing that had developed in the depths of my being."¹

This time of "abysmal testing and disintegration" ended in December, 1950 and Merton was able, subsequently, to describe this time as a kind of dark night of the soul, a period of growth, however painful. "I discovered," he wrote, "that the essence of a solitary vocation is that it is a vocation to fear, to helplessness, to isolation in the invisible God."²

His outward life was changing, too. He was beginning to teach classes on Patristic theology to the scholastics - young monks studying for ordination - and on May 21, 1951

¹Ibid., p. 226. cf. "First and Last Thoughts: An Author's Preface" in A Thomas Merton Reader, Thomas P. McDonnell, ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962), p. ix.

²Ibid., p. 227.

he was named Master of Scholastics.¹ More and more his life was being directed in areas that were contradictory - if not at times alien - to the life of monastic solitude. On one level his teaching involved him with increasing intensity in the corporate life of the community, and on another level, his writings kept his name before the public. However, on a still deeper level, he was more clearly coming to recognize the emptiness of an attitude of total rejection of the world. Merton had come instead to reject any idea of contemptus mundi that implied a rigid dualism between spirit and flesh, sacred and secular, and the monastery and the world. Such a dualism, he believed, had dominated The Seven Storey Mountain:

"When I wrote it I thought I had a very supernatural solution. After nine years in a monastery I see that it was no solution at all. The false solution went like this: the whole world, of which the war is a characteristic expression, is evil. It had therefore to be first ridiculed, then spat upon, and at last formally rejected with a curse."²

¹ The Sign of Jonas, p. 295. See also Therese Lentfoehr "The Spiritual Writer" in Thomas Merton, Monk, p. 211. Being named "Master of Scholastics" is another "event" in his monastic career which Merton understates. He makes only brief references to it in The Sign of Jonas and in the preface to A Thomas Merton Reader. The date is supplied by Lentfoehr, loc. cit.

² Ibid., p. 312.

Now, in 1951, Thomas Merton saw the monastery no longer as a place of escape from the world but rather as his place in the world. "Coming to the monastery has been for me exactly the right kind of withdrawal. It has given me perspective. It has taught me how to live."

"..I can do nothing whatever for my own salvation or for the glory of God if I merely withdraw from the mess people are in and make an exhibition of myself and write a big book saying, 'Look! I am different!' To do this is to die."¹

In June of that year, as if to symbolize his newly articulated dedication and involvement in the world, Merton became a citizen of the United States.

Yet, the call to a life of increasing silence, solitude and prayer caused Merton to be travelling toward his future "in the belly of a paradox."² In 1955, he had hoped to be appointed as keeper of a newly constructed fire-tower in a remote forest on the monastic property. This would have afforded him the solitude he was seeking; he would, in fact become a hermit. At the time, however, the position of Novice Master became open and Merton eventually took this office. He would remain as Novice Master until 1965.³

¹ Loc. cit.

² Prologue to The Sign of Jonas, p. 21.

³ A detailed account of this episode is given in James Fox, "The Spiritual Son," in Thomas Merton, Monk, pp. 149-151.

These ten years would accentuate and develop Merton's paradox. On the one hand, it would be during these years that Merton would publish the majority of his most explicit writings on political, social and economic issues. He would find himself deeply impressed and delighted with the reforms set in motion by Pope John XXIII, increasingly moved by the non-violent approach to political revolution advocated by Mahatma Gandhi, and in dialogue with important members of the movements for peace and racial justice in the United States. On the other hand these would be the years in which the eremitical life, with its silence and solitude, would become more and more attractive to him, culminating in his decision to become a hermit. He would discover the existential importance that the desert fathers of the ancient church had for him and he would find that Oriental religion, philosophy and meditative techniques, especially Zen, would become of great interest to him.

During this period Merton's chief activities were teaching and writing and giving lectures on Sunday afternoons to whichever monks chose to attend.¹ He made three extended trips outside the monastery. These included a

¹Many of the Sunday afternoon talks have been recorded and are on file in the Thomas Merton Room of the library at Bellarmine College, Louisville, Kentucky. Some have been published by Electronic Paperbacks, Chappaqua, New York.

trip to Columbus, Ohio, to aid in the search for a location for a new Trappist community; a trip to St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota, to attend a psychological conference in 1956; and, in 1964, a visit to New York City to meet Dr. Daisetz Suzuki, the Zen scholar.¹ There were few trips other than these; usually to the doctor or the hospital in Louisville. These were not numerous, and, except for such exceptions, Merton was cloistered. However, these occasional visits to "the world" had more than a utilitarian purpose. They provided Merton with opportunities to renew his love for the world and the people in it. This had been his experience on his first trip back to the world, and the experience was to be repeated. One such incident was recorded by Merton:

"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 those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness. The whole illusion of a separate holy existence is a dream. Not that I question the reality of my vocation, or of my monastic life; but the conception of 'separation from the world' that we have in the monastery too easily presents itself

¹Thomas Merton, Monk, ed. Patrick Hart, p. 126, footnote.

as a complete illusion: the illusion that by making vows we become a different species of being, pseudoangels, 'spiritual men,' men of interior life, what have you.... This sense of liberation from an illusory difference was such a relief and such a joy that I almost laughed out loud."¹

This is one explicit occurrence in Merton's life which shows his continuing conversion to the world. But, in addition to taking an occasional trip out into the world, the world often came to Gethsemani to visit him. In the early sixties a small cottage was built about a mile away from the Abbey and Merton would use it for his work, and for holding conferences with various groups of people, or on rarer occasions, with individuals.² These were usually informal and unstructured meetings that would last for about one hour. In November of 1964, however, Merton arranged a

¹Conjectures of a Guilty By-Stander (New York: Doubleday Image, 1968), pp. 156f. Unfortunately the journal entries in this volume are not dated and are not printed in strict chronological order. The similarities to the experience Merton records in The Sign of Jonas, p. 97 (see above pp. 49f) have been noted by Aldhelm Cameron-Brown, "Zen Master" in Thomas Merton, Monk, pp. 164f. Mark Gibbard thinks that this particular incident marked the moment of Merton's re-conversion to the world. "Thomas Merton-Contemplative" in Twentieth Century Men of Prayer (London: SCM, 1974), pp. 69-79. It is one intention of this thesis to show that this is not the case. Gibbard is trying too hard to find precise moments of conversion. Merton's interest in and love for the world is evidenced in numerous instances prior to this event, the most obvious of which has been mentioned above (pp. 49f).

²Daniel Berrigan, the American priest who became very well known for his part in the Peace Movement in the 1960s, recalled that he was moved by various articles that Merton had written about nuclear stockpiling and international

retreat which was titled "Spiritual Roots of Protest."¹ Among those present were Daniel and Philip Berrigan and James Forest, well known figures in the American anti-war movement. They found that the cloistered Merton could help them to define some of their aims and objectives, and help them see the theological basis of their work. Daniel Berrigan commented later: "While ninety percent of our people were tearing themselves apart in the frenzies of the sixties, he was telling us what it was all about. In a very nice, indirect, non-exhorting way, he was showing us a way. We are just beginning to see it."²

violence. "I wrote him that I found it impossible to live alone with what he was saying. And in a week there was a letter back: 'Come on down and we'll talk about it.'" This was in 1960. "Daniel Berrigan on Thomas Merton", a talk given on January 28, 1973, and quoted in The Thomas Merton Life Center News-Letter, April, 1973, p. 7.

¹Some notes from this retreat are published in Thomas Merton on Peace, edited by Gordon Zahn (New York: McCall, 1971), pp. 259f. Another retreat for the staff of The Catholic Worker was held in 1962. See F.J. Kelly, Op. cit., p. 43.

²"The Eucharist and Survival - Discussion with Dan Berrigan", in Seeds of Liberation, edited by Alistair Kee (London: SCM, 1973), p. 89.

However, the paradox was not to be denied. Merton continued to live with the tension of desiring to be involved with the world, on the one hand, and to be in seclusion and silence, on the other. The paradox would never be resolved. Merton would remain involved with the world, but simultaneously would enter further into a life of solitude. In August, 1965, Merton was granted permission to move permanently into the remote cottage, the "hermitage." He would continue to give the weekly conference every Sunday afternoon, but this would be his only formal contact with the community. The last three years of his life were spent as a hermit.

Merton's desire for solitude was now being fulfilled, and he was delighted with it,¹ but it would not detract from his concern for the world. The visitors to the hermitage were numerous and included a great variety of people. Among many others² were theologians such as Jean LeClerq,³ and Jacques Maritain⁴ who visited during these last

¹He writes often about the idyllic nature of life in the hermitage. See, for example, "Rain and the Rhinoceros" Raids on the Unspeakable (New York: New Directions, 1966), pp. 9-23, and "Day of a Stranger" Hudson Review 20 (Summer, 1967), pp. 211-218. See also Therese Lentfoehr, "The Solitary" in Thomas Merton, Monk, pp. 59-77.

²Martin Luther King had an appointment to visit Merton but was killed before he could do so.

³The Man in the Sycamore Tree by Rice, p. 165 (with a photograph of Merton and LeClerq on p. 169).

⁴Griffin, A Hidden Wholeness, pp. 101-110 (including numerous photographs).

three years of Merton's life, as did Joan Baez,¹ the folk singer and war protester, and Thich Nhat Hanh,² the Vietnamese Buddhist monk and poet.

Three years after moving into the hermitage Merton made his final trip away from Gethsemani.³ Jean LeClerq had suggested that Merton be invited to a conference on monastic renewal to be held in Bangkok in December, 1968. The Abbot had approved and Merton was able also to accept numerous invitations to speak at various Cistercian communities in the East. In September, Merton left Gethsemani.⁴ He visited in California and other places in the western United States and, on October 15th, left the United States for the Orient. He was to spend time in Calcutta, New

¹ Rice, op. cit., p. 122.

² See "Nhat Hanh is My Brother" published in Faith and Violence (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. 106-108. Also in Thomas Merton on Peace. See also, "Life and Contemplation: Reflections on a Buddhist Monk" a tape recording of one of Merton's conferences with his fellow monks, published by Electronic Paperbacks, Chappaqua, New York, 1972.

³ An earlier trip had been made to Cistercian foundations in the western United States in the Spring of 1968.

⁴ For information on this trip see The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton, New York, New Directions, 1973.

Delhi, the Himalayas, Madras and Ceylon before arriving in Bangkok. He met with the Dalai Lama and Chogyam Trungpa Rimpoche, a Tibetan monk who founded monastic communities in the United States and in Scotland. From Bangkok he planned to go on to Indonesia, Hong Kong and Japan. On December 10, at the Bangkok conference, he delivered a lecture entitled "Marxism and Monastic Perspectives."¹ The lecture ended with these words:

"I will conclude on that note. I believe the plan is to have all the questions for this morning's lectures this evening at the panel. So I will disappear."²

Thomas Merton was found dead in his room later that afternoon, electrocuted by a faulty electrical appliance.

The accounts of his death are almost identical in outline but confusing in so far as the details of his death are not clear.³ The following quotation is Patrick

¹This lecture is published in The Asian Journal, pp. 326-343, and also was filmed by both an Italian and a Netherland film company.

²The Asian Journal, p. 343. The Netherland film, however, records these words: "So I will disappear from view, and you can all have a Coke or whatever..." (An apt conclusion for the life of a man with tendencies toward Zen! It is as if Merton's last words were a koan.)

³The principle accounts are "Letter to Abbot Flavian Burns" signed by six Trappist delegates to the Bangkok conference, December 11, 1968, in The Asian Journal, pp. 344-347, and "Thomas Merton: The Last Three Days" by John Moffitt, who was a participant at the conference.

Hart's attempt to reconstruct the circumstances of Merton's death based on eyewitness accounts and the police and medical reports.¹

"Thomas Merton returned to his cottage about 1:30 and proceeded to take a shower before retiring for a rest. While bare-foot on the terrazzo floor, he apparently had reached for the large standing fan (either to turn it on or pull it closer to the bed) when he received the full 220 volts of direct current. (This is normal voltage for Bangkok.) He collapsed, and the large fan tumbled over on top of him. When he was discovered about an hour later by two of the monks who shared his cabin, the fan, still running, lay across his body. They could not get into the room at first because the door was bolted from the inside. One of them ran for help, and two of the abbots came immediately. They broke through the upper panel of the door, opened it, and entered. One of the abbots tried to remove the fan at once from the body, but though he wore shoes, he also received a severe electrical shock. Fortunately, someone rushed over to the outlet and pulled the cord from the socket. Later examination revealed defective wiring in the fan."

Catholic World 209, July, 1969, pp. 160-163, and reprinted in New Theology, No. 7, eds. Martin Marty and Dean Peerman (New York: MacMillan, 1970), pp. 125-134. A summary of these events has been written by Patrick Hart and included as a "Postscript" to The Asian Journal, pp. 257-259.

¹Hart, "Postscript" The Asian Journal, pp. 258f.

In 1948, in the final pages of The Seven Storey Mountain, Thomas Merton had written that he had heard a word of God addressed to him, saying:

"Everything that touches you shall burn you, and you will draw your hand away in pain, until you have withdrawn yourself from all things. Then you will be all alone.... That you may become the brother of God and learn to know the Christ of the burnt men."¹

The body of Thomas Merton, a man who had written against war, especially the war in Southeast Asia, was flown back to the United States from Thailand on an American military aircraft. He had died on the anniversary of his entrance into the monastery, twenty-seven years before. He had spent the last half of his life within the walls of that monastery, yet he died on the other side of the world. The paradoxes that had been so evident in his life never ceased. In his life he sought to speak to the modern, technological world; he was killed by a machine of that world. What touched him had burnt him. In his life he sought solitude; when he died he was alone. His life was spent seeking to make real his brotherhood with God; and if he came to know the Christ of burnt men, it was because he was one of them.

¹The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 505f.

II. A HISTORY OF MERTON'S PUBLICATIONS

1. Development

Patrick Hart has included a chronological bibliography of Merton's major publications in Thomas Merton, Monk.¹ The intention of this historical survey is neither to duplicate nor simply to expand Hart's outline, but rather to look at the history of Merton's writings from the point of view of his social concern as it is articulated within the milieu of his monastic spirituality.²

Merton gained fame with The Seven Storey Mountain. It was this work that brought Merton's name permanently before the reading public. However, the writing career of Thomas Merton, the monk, had begun four years earlier with the publication of a small book of poetry. Before The Seven Storey Mountain was published, Merton published two more collections of poems in addition to articles and pamphlets

¹Thomas Merton, Monk, pp. 225-228.

²For a survey of Merton's social concern, see James Thomas Baker, Thomas Merton Social Critic and F.J. Kelly, Man Before God.

written principally for the Cistercian Order.¹ During this period Merton also wrote two biographies of saints from the Trappistine Order, one of which was published shortly before The Seven Storey Mountain, and the other a little over a year later.² Within very narrow limits, therefore, Merton was known before his autobiography saw print. The pamphlets and biographies were soon to be forgotten,³ but not the poetry. Many of these poems were to

¹Before entering the monastery, Merton had published a number of book reviews in The New York Herald Tribune, The New York Times and elsewhere. A complete list of all of Merton's published work of this period will be found in the Dell 'Isola bibliography, p. 31. This book also lists the published articles of Merton's youth, items, for the most part, from his University days. (See pp. 91-93. The articles and pamphlets of this period often were first published anonymously and include "Guide to Cistercian Life" (1948), "Cistercian Contemplatives" (1948), and "Poetry and the Contemplative Life" in Commonweal XLVI, July 4, 1947.) Dell 'Isola has the complete corpus listed in the bibliography. The poetical works are: Thirty Poems (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1944); A Man in the Divided Sea (New York: New Directions, 1946). This volume also contains all the poems published in Thirty Poems; Figures for an Apocalypse (New York: New Directions, 1948).

²Exile Ends in Glory: The Life of a Trappistine, Mother M. Berchmans (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1948); What Are These Wounds? The Life of a Cistercian Mystic, Saint Lutgard of Aywieres (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1950).

³The biographies were little more than hagiographies in the worst pietistic tradition, and Merton was embarrassed by them. See below, pp 178f.

be published in Selected Poems and in A Thomas Merton Reader and were to gain for Merton a reputation for being a poet of some competence.¹ All of these poems were written after Merton's conversion to Roman Catholicism, and most of them were written at Gethsemani. Therefore, their explicit religious content is not surprising. The poems often are definitely Catholic and Trappist: "After the Night Office - Gethsemani Abbey," "The Trappist Cemetery - Gethsemani," "Three Postcards from the Monastery," and others with similar titles. Yet in the midst of this religious poetry, one also discovers not only the young Merton's dislike for the modern, industrialized world, but also his intense religious concern for that world. The poems of this period are a much better indicator of his concern for the world than are the pamphlets he was writing at this time. Whereas the pamphlets are concerned with a world-denying sort of asceticism, the poems contain statements of Merton's personal involvement with the problems of the world which, on one level, he had rejected. He concerns

¹ See Robert Lowell, "The Verses of Thomas Merton," Commonweal XLII, June 22, 1945, and the Introduction to Selected Poems, written by Mark van Doren. Dennis Q. McInerney, Professor of English at Bradley University in Indiana, says that Merton "reached a plane of competence from which he produced works whose value ranks him among the best minor American poets of this century." Thomas Merton: The Man and His Work (Spencer, Mass: Cistercian Publications, 1974), p. 44.

himself with the racial injustice that he encountered in
Harlem:

Daylight has driven iron spikes,
Into the flesh of Jesus' hands and feet:
Four flowers of blood have nailed Him to
the walls of Harlem.

.....

Across the cages of the keyless aviaries,
The lines and wires, the gallows of the
broken kites,
Crucify, against the fearful light,
The ragged dresses of the little children.¹

He concerns himself with war and nationalism:

When all the men of war are shot
And flags have fallen into dust,
Your cross and mine shall tell men still
Christ died on each, for both of us.²

He concerns himself with the possibility of a cataclysmic
apocalypse brought about by nuclear war:

Yonder, by the eastward sea
Where smoke melts in a saucer of extinguished
cities,
The last men stand, in delegations,
Waiting to see the seven-headed business
Promised us, from those unpublished deeps;
Waiting to see those horns and diadems
And hear the seven voices of the final blasphemy.³

¹"Aubade-Harlem" from A Man in the Divided Sea.

²"For My Brother" from Thirty Poems. See Appendix p.

³"Landscape: Beast" from Figures for an Apocalypse.
The existential concerns of the poems of this book are indicated
in the title. Merton's suggestion about how to face the
apocalypse is indicated in the subtitle to the first poem in the
book, "Advice to my Friends Robert Lax and Edward Rice, to get
away while they still can."

The pamphlets of this period are not about such issues. If one knew only the Merton of these early pamphlets, one would be surprised by the Merton of the 1960s.¹ The poetry of the 1940s, however, helps us to see that the social and political concerns of the last decade of his life were always present, not only in the mind of Merton, but in his published works as well.

The seeds of his social concern are clearly evident in the story of his early life as it appeared in The Seven Storey Mountain, although they were over-shadowed by the radical nature of his withdrawal from the world. Those who read this best-selling book² saw it as the tale of a modern young man, totally disillusioned with the world around

¹ In his pamphlets Merton was writing such things as "It (Contemplation) teaches one to think about God instead of about the world," and "Let those that are great actives and think to girdle the world with their outward works take note that they would bring far more profit to the Church and be far more pleasing to God if they spent even half this time in abiding with God in prayer..." from "What is Contemplation?" (London: Burns and Oates, 1950), pp. 12, 26f, originally published in Notre Dame, Indiana, a few months after the publication of Merton's autobiography (1948).

²"The first printing ran only 8,000 copies; it was picked up by some small book clubs, and began to sell. It received no unusual reviews, no advertising to speak of, and no heavy promotion. Nevertheless, sales continued. By the time of Merton's ordination, the year following publication, roughly 400,000 copies of the book had been sold, and it still did not appear on the best-seller lists until the publisher complained ceaselessly over the omission. It finally ran third behind The White Collar Zoo and a book on canasta." Rice, The Man in the Sycamore Tree, p. 87. See also Naomi Burton, More Than Sentinels (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), p. 245. Within two years it would be translated into Danish, Dutch, German, Italian and Spanish, and subsequently into French, Czechoslovakian, Portuguese, and Japanese.

him, discovering an alternative to the way of life most took for granted. His alternative was one of total renunciation: the problems of the world were to be solved by leaving the world. Other possible alternatives were rejected: a teaching career, social work in Harlem, or even membership in the Franciscans, an "active" order. Nevertheless, numerous social concerns are evident in his story, as are the inchoate beginnings of a contemplative answer to the problems of the world.

Excerpts from a diary kept during the years of The Seven Storey Mountain were published in 1959¹ and these passages accentuate the social awareness of the autobiography. In this diary we are able to discover the "primary sources" behind The Seven Storey Mountain. Merton in his twenties sounded strikingly similar to the Merton who wrote in the midst of the troubled America of the 1960s. Space permits

¹The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959).

only a few examples.

In September 1941, a few months before America entered the war and a few months before Merton entered Gethsemani, he wrote (somewhat prophetically):

"The present capitalist system has got certain terrific weaknesses which, if it survives the war at all, which it may, will make inevitable a series of revolutions that will be almost as bad as a German victory and that is clearly not something to die for! Especially since one of the results of these revolutions may be an 'order' something like Nazism or Fascism or the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, but most probably Fascism, in this country.¹

He felt that people were opposed to the atrocities of Hitler not so much on humanitarian or moral grounds, but on grounds that were, in themselves, lacking in morality.

"And if we go into the war, it will be first of all to defend our investments, our business, our money. In certain terms it may be useful to defend all these things, and expedient to protect our business so that everybody may have jobs, but if anybody holds up American business as a shining example of justice, or American politics as a shining example of honesty and purity, that is really quite a joke!

"And if this is a joke, it is also a bit blasphemous to get up and say that just because Germany started the actual fighting, ultimately Germany is to blame for everything, and God is on the side of England and the

¹The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton, p. 209.

democracies and all enemies of Germany.

"To try to make God the defender of any one side in this war is simply to reduce Him to the level of a Nazi, and no greater blasphemy is possible."¹

The kind of hypocrisy that is seen in simplistic justifications for war can also be seen in a lack of social involvement within the Church. Even before his monastic years, Merton was a critic of popular religion:

"But there is one thing certain: those who pretend they love God, and pray to Him, and even receive His Body and Blood sacrificed entirely for them in the Eucharist, and still hate laws which are meant to help feed the poor and clothe the needy and care for the sick, had better look to their consciences, and see whether the reason they hate the law isn't that they themselves fear to lose some of their profits if such laws go through!"²

It would be in the monastery that Merton would search for a religious tradition that would have a greater depth than the popular piety he saw in the world. As long as religion was to be a servant of the success orientation of American business, it was inauthentic. The Trappist Order was to be the place in which to discover real religion; and to be really religious meant to become poor, radically poor.

¹Ibid, p. 91.

²Ibid., p. 202.

Half-way measures would not suffice; abstract poverty only separates one from true self-giving.¹ He was beginning to discover, in the monastic tradition, a kind of poverty that would be redeeming, a poverty based on detached love. This tradition, as exemplified by St. Bernard and St. John of the Cross, recognized that self-oriented love drove men from God and from each other:

"Both saints agree that the love of creatures for the sake of the pleasure they give to ourselves covers the soul with a form or rather a deformity, an unlikeness to God."²

To manifest the imago Dei, one must become detached from one's own desires; "In other words, pure love, disinterested love is part of our very nature itself in its integrity."³ The imago Dei is caritas. In these early writings Merton's idea of poverty of spirit and disinterested love is still rather abstract. He speaks of love, but not often of any

¹ see The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 406.

² "The Transforming Union in St. Bernard and St. John of the Cross" Collectanea Ordinis Cisterciensium Reformatorium 10, No. 3, July, 1948, p. 215.

³ Ibid. 10, No. 1, January, 1948, p. 111.

particular, concrete object of that love. He discusses the three vocations: the active, the contemplative, and a mixture of the two; and agrees with St. Thomas¹ and St. Bernard² that the last is superior to the other two if it is based on contemplation, but his analysis is still abstract. He insists that his discussion of these distinctions is to be set not within the context of the world, much less that of the Church, but strictly within the context of the contemplative order itself. He is seeking to justify the necessity for certain members of the Trappist order having to do such mundane things as are necessary for the maintenance of the structure.² It would only be later that Merton would expand this thinking to the context of the political, economic and social struggles of the world, seeing the ground of political action in contemplative prayer. In the 1940s and the early 1950s he was learning in theory and in a limited context what would, in time, become the spiritual basis for his social ethics. At this point in his religious development, contemplation of God

¹In a somewhat later essay, "Action and Contemplation in St. Bernard" Collectanea 16, No. 2, April, 1954, p. 121, Merton writes: "If Martha has the highest calling, it is only by reason of her contact with Mary and for the sake of Mary. St. Bernard's teaching fully vindicates the primacy of contemplation."

²Ibid., 15, No. 1, June, 1953, pp. 27ff.

in solitude was the reason for and end of all action. Action served contemplation. He had not yet developed the idea that contemplation also serves action. But the idea was present. In 1949, Merton published Seeds of Contemplation, and although he was to revise it the same year and then revise it again much more considerably in 1961 to make it more concrete, the beginnings of his understanding of contemplation's service of love were already present.¹ It is to be noted that he revised this book; he did not rewrite it.

"We do not go into the desert to escape people but to learn how to find them: we do not leave them in order to have nothing more to do with them, but to find out the way to do them the most good."²

"If we experience God in contemplation, we experience Him not for ourselves alone but also for others."³

¹For an analysis of the differences in the various revisions see Donald Grayston, "The Making of a Spiritual Classic: Thomas Merton's Seeds of Contemplation and New Seeds of Contemplation" in Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses 3, No. 4 (1973-1974), pp. 339-356, and "Nova in Novibus: the New Material in Thomas Merton's New Seeds of Contemplation" Cistercian Studies 10 (1975), Nos. 3, 4, pp. 190-206. In these articles Grayston gives a detailed analysis of the differences between Seeds of Contemplation, the revised edition which appeared in December, 1949, and New Seeds of Contemplation (1961).

²Seeds of Contemplation (London: Hollis and Carter, 1949), p. 58.

³Ibid., p. 183.

"The biggest paradox about the Church is that she is at the same time essentially traditional and essentially revolutionary. But that is not as much of a paradox as it seems, because Christian tradition, unlike all others, is a living and perpetual revolution."¹

Merton is ready to recognize the finitude of human traditions and to recognize that the Church is called to speak prophetically when these traditions become absolutized. If he is not yet speaking with that kind of a prophetic and critical voice, and not yet addressing concrete situations in which human creations have become idols, he is preparing himself to do precisely that.

"To those who love money and pleasure and reputation and power this tradition says 'Be poor, go down into the far end of society, take the last place among men, live with those who are despised, love other men and serve them instead of making them serve you.'"²

Statements that criticize Merton for lacking a particular social ethic in this period fail to take such passages as these into account. The criticisms are valid in so far as they criticize the lack of a particularly social emphasis; but they are not valid in so far as they fail to discern

¹ Ibid., p. 83.

² Ibid., p. 84.

the ethical ramifications of Merton's thought.¹ Even in The Waters of Siloe, a popular history of the Trappist order in America, there are indications of Merton's social concern, both in a theoretical sense and in a practical sense:

"Contemplation and action necessarily have their part in every religious Rule. The two must always go together, because Christian perfection is nothing else but the perfection of charity, and that means perfect love of God and of men. This is only one love, specifically the same. It cannot be divided into two."

"One of the strongest criticisms leveled by Citeaux against the Cluniac regime was that it was rooted in social injustice. The Cistercians could not accept the notion of a life of contemplation in which the interior peace and leisure of the contemplative were luxuries purchased by the exploitation of serfs and the taxation of the poor."²

A small book of verse published in 1949, although specifically religious, has hints of Merton's concern with what was

¹ Among the critics of Thomas Merton at this stage of his writing was Dom Aelred Graham. See "Thomas Merton, a Modern Man in Reverse," Atlantic Monthly 191, (January, 1953), pp. 70-74. See also Y.H. Kirkorian, "The Fruits of Mysticism," The New Republic 121 (September, 1949), pp. 17-18.

² The Waters of Siloe (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Books, 1949), pp. xxxiii, 17.

happening in the world, but little expression of his personal involvement in that world. His message was more critical than redemptive. He was offering no advice or encouragement to the world, but rather was stating that the world needed to be awakened by criticism. His existential and personal involvement with the struggles of the world are hardly evident in these poems:

"Two cities sailed together
 For many thousand years
 And now they drift asunder.
 The tides of new wars
 Sweep the sad heavens,
 Divide the massed stars,
 The black and white universe
 The blooming spheres."¹

- 0 -

"We who are still alive will wring a
 few green blades
 From the floor of this valley
 Though ploughs abhor your metal and your clay.
 Rather than starve with you in rocks
 without oasis,
 We will get up and work your loam
 Until some prayer or some lean sentence
 Bleeds like the quickest root they ever cut."²

¹"A Responsory, 1948" from The Tears of the Blind Lions (New York: New Directions, 1949), reprinted in Selected Poems, pp. 83f. At this time in his life Merton was impressed by St. Augustine's division between the City of God and the City of Man. Merton used the two-cities analogy in many of his writings and wrote an Introduction to a popular edition of The City of God (New York: Modern Library, 1950).

²"Dry Places" from The Tears of the Blind Lions, reprinted in Selected Poems, pp. 81f.

Neither is there a specific theology of involvement evident in The Ascent to Truth (1951), a theological treatise on the mystical theology of St. John of the Cross. The city is not the place to know God; those who live in the world often lose all hope for an "interior life" and thereby risk being cut off from God himself.¹ Even the political activities of Catherine of Siena are seen simply as relating to the City of God rather than the City of Men:

"Her mysticism was her experience of union with God, in Christ, whose Kingdom is 'not of this world.' Her politics were simply the working out of God's will, in the temporal affairs of men and above all the Church, in such a way that the greatest possible number of souls should enter the City of God, which is irrevocably opposed to the city of this world because it belongs to an entirely different order."²

This dualism between the realm of God's activity and that of man's is reflected in his chapter on love. His discussion of love is restricted to man's love for God. This is obviously within the self-imposed limitations of the book itself: it is about union with God. Furthermore, Merton is writing within the tradition of apophatic mysticism - the via negativa or the way of unknowing - and he is stressing

¹The Ascent to Truth (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951). (All references are from a paperback edition: New York: The Viking Press, 1959), p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 63

a central point within that tradition, namely, that since the intellect is incapable of a full comprehension of God, only love can be the adequate approach to Him. Nevertheless, even within these limitations, Merton's treatment of love remains abstract and lacks an exposition of concrete expressions of that love.¹ The value of The Ascent to Truth as a presentation of the mystical theology of the apophatic school can be debated; its value as an indication of that tradition's impact on the existential needs of man in society is minimal.²

Thomas Merton defined The Ascent to Truth as a work concerned with "the dogmatic essentials of mystical theology..." It was to be "objective" in its approach.³ Yet the work of a systematic theologian was not the work Merton enjoyed most. The Prologue to The Sign of Jonas (1953) showed his misgivings about approaching spirituality from this direction: he was publishing his journals in order to describe spirituality in more personal and less objective terms.

¹Ibid., pp. 274ff.

²Merton's struggles in writing this book are found within the pages of The Sign of Jonas (pp. 129f, 158, 162, 163). See also Therese Lentfoehr, "The Spiritual Writer" in Thomas Merton, Monk, pp. 108f.

³The Sign of Jonas, p. 162. From the journal entry dated February 20, 1949.

"I have attempted to convey something of a monk's spiritual life and of his thoughts, not in the language of speculation, but in terms of personal experience. This is always a little hazardous, because it means leaving the sure, plain path of an accepted terminology and traveling in byways of poetry and intuition. I found in writing The Ascent to Truth that technical language, though it is universal and certain and accepted by theologians, does not reach the average man and does not convey what is most personal and most vital in religious experience."¹

The Sign of Jonas is about Merton's own interior life, and in this sense is not abstract. Although it is not overtly concerned with the problems of the world it does reflect a new understanding of contemptus mundi² and indicates a methodological approach to truth. Merton is becoming increasingly existential and experiential. His analysis of the spiritual life will begin with experience rather than with dogma. This new approach will not be evident in the two books that were published immediately after this journal: Bread in the Wilderness (1953), about the psalms, as aids to contemplation, and The Last of the Fathers (1954) on St. Bernard of Clairvaux. However, with the publication in 1955 of No Man is An Island Merton's

¹The Sign of Jonas, p. 18. Cf, p. 129.

²See below pp. 201-240.

shift in emphasis becomes obvious. In The Ascent to Truth he concludes with his thoughts about love; in No Man is An Island his first chapter is about love. In the former book the object of love is God, in the latter the object of love is God and man. In the Preface Merton writes:

"Whatever may be said in the following pages rests upon this foundation. Man is divided against God by his own selfishness, which divides him against his brother. This division cannot be healed by a love that places itself only on one side of the rift. Love must reach over to both sides and draw them together."¹

The vast gulf that had existed in his mind between the City of God and the City of Man had been bridged. No longer was he criticizing Cluny alone for a lack of social consciousness; he was criticizing the modern monasteries of his own order. Even they, he wrote, "are not free from the smell and clatter of the world."² The monastery is no longer seen as the manifestation of the City of God on earth. It, too, is a human institution and has within it the same possibilities for distraction and debasement. The world is in the monastery and the monastery is in the world. The love that is engendered within the monastic life is a love that is to be shared with the world; and if the monk is not aware of this, then the monastery is no better than the world which stands in the

¹No Man is An Island (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955), quoted from paperback edition (New York: Dell, 1957), p. 18.

²Ibid., p. 118.

way of love. Merton is now saying that the problem is not the "world," some enigmatic entity outside of the self, but that the problem is the self.¹ Here we can see Merton's newly expressed existentialism, in so far as he is beginning to write about man and his need for God, rather than about God's Being as it is in Itself. This is not new in Merton: The Seven Storey Mountain and The Sign of Jonas are about man's quest for God. The difference is this: now Merton is writing not only autobiographical works, but also books of meditations, from this experiential perspective. Furthermore, when he discusses the relationship between contemplation and action, he moves out of the limited context of the contemplative cloister and expands that context to include the world.² St. Francis becomes his example of the life in which the fruits of contemplation are most perfectly shared with others. In his life Merton sees the concrete expression of the contemplative ideal: to be "another Christ" in the wholeness of "existential simplicity."³

¹ See especially Ibid., pp. 214ff. See below pp. 201-240.

² e.g., see below p. 308, fn. 4 and p. 309, fn. 2.

³ Ibid., p. 161. Franciscan poverty intrigued Merton at this point, and he was beginning to see it in terms that would eventually become articulated in his explicit social criticisms. For instance, "Take the antithesis between love of self and love of others. As long as there is a question of material things, the two loves are opposed. The more goods I keep for my own enjoyment, the less there are for others. My pleasures and comforts are inordinate, they are not only

Thomas Merton published four books in the next two years, one of which was a small monograph for the use of the Trappist Order.¹ Those that were written for the general public were The Living Bread (1956), a series of meditations on the Eucharist; The Silent Life (1957), an apologetic for the monastic life; and The Strange Islands (1957), a collection of poems that were written mainly in 1955 and 1956. None of these books is more explicit in its social consciousness than was No Man Is An Island, but neither are they less so. What is important as far as Merton's understanding of prayer and action is concerned is that he is now introducing existential language to discussions of the sacraments and the monastic life. In the context of a treatise on the Holy Eucharist, Merton writes about alienation, about the dangers of totalitarianism to the spirit of man, and about the world as the place of God's activity. Alienation, as a word to describe man's condition, is becoming increasingly central in Merton's thought. Man is estranged from his true self, from his brother and from God. Alienation cannot be overcome in one area without it also having been overcome in the others. Man cannot become one with himself or with God by fleeing from his brother.

taken from another, but they are stolen." pp. 16f.

¹Basic Principles of Monastic Spirituality (Trappist, Kentucky, Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani, 1957).

He writes, "It is by well-ordered contact, by relatedness with others, that we ourselves become mature and responsible persons."¹ The relationship must be "well-ordered."

Totalitarianism in Merton's view, was an example of a disordered relationship between men that was readily available for his use; America in the 1950s saw itself as being involved in an ideological struggle with totalitarian communism as represented by Soviet Russia. Servile conformity to a mass-culture according to Merton denies mankind the opportunity for true relationships, especially so when that society sees materialistic ends as absolute. However, when Merton warns against totalitarian notions of society, he is not simply condemning Soviet communism; his criticisms are also about the totalitarian pressures within the American culture. Love can be destroyed in a totalitarian state, but not only under that particular form of government.

"What is true of totalitarian states is true to a lesser degree, but true, nevertheless, of the great capitalistic democracies in which the same processes take place, more slowly, less systematically, but none the less surely, under the

¹The Living Bread (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956), p. xiii. See also pp. 33f.

pressure of an ever growing materialistic technocracy."¹

Neither of the two super-powers of the 1950s, which Merton later was to call Gog and Magog, were immune from a potential that could destroy community. The monastic life could provide the world with a model of what community could actually be. Merton saw that one role of the monk in the modern world was to point out that "There is all the difference in the world between a community and a crowd." The Silent Life was written to show those who were living in the midst of the "ever growing materialistic technocracy" that there was a living alternative.² But those who choose this alternative were not thereby turning their backs on the world. The world is still the milieu in which the Word of God has become

¹The Living Bread, p. 129. (It is to be remembered that this statement was made in America in the 1950s and within a volume of meditations on the Holy Communion! Later such statements were to be commonplace. Within its own context, however, this statement was a new and daring stance.)

²The Silent Life (New York: Farrar, Straus and Gudahy), 1957 - all quotations are from the paperback edition - (New York: Dell, 1959), pp. 47f. Merton was saying the same thing to his fellow monks in Basic Principles of Monastic Spirituality: "In the night of our technological barbarism, monks must be as trees which exist silently in the dark and by their vital presence purify the air." p. 35.

flesh, and therefore it is to be accepted:

"...we must begin by learning how to see and respect the visible creation which mirrors the glory and perfections of the invisible God...We must, first of all, see all material things in the light of the mystery of the Incarnation. We must reverence all creation because the Word was made flesh."¹

Furthermore, the world is the arena in which man and his brother find each other. The knowledge and love of God, which is intimately related to the knowledge and love of man and all of God's creation, will be truncated if the world is totally rejected. To reject the world, in the monastic sense, is not to reject the needs of one's brother, neither his spiritual nor his physical needs. If the monk (or anyone) does so his "spiritual life will remain stunted and incomplete."²

"But the meaning of the monk's flight from the world is precisely to be sought in the fact that the 'world' (in the sense in which it is condemned by Christ) is the society of those who live exclusively for themselves. To leave the 'world' then, is to leave oneself first of all and begin to live for others."³

¹Basic Principles, pp. 10, 12.

²The Living Bread, p. 139.

³The Silent Life, p. 22

The existential - or experiential - approach that began to characterize Merton's style in The Sign of Jonas and in No Man Is An Island is carried through in these books.

Paradoxically however, whereas there is more social concern in Merton's prose than there was earlier in his writings, there is no noticeable corresponding increase of concern in the poems of The Strange Islands.¹ These poems are primarily of a religious nature, and the principle attitude toward the world is one of condemnation.

Thoughts in Solitude (1958)² is written in the same style as earlier books of meditations such as Seeds of Contemplation, No Man Is An Island and The Living Bread. It is a book of loosely connected meditations concerning the spiritual life, but not without an implicit social concern. Once again this concern is suggested by Merton's criticism of totalitarianism and technological materialism, but the criticisms themselves remain vague and secondary. This is not an analysis of particular social or political problems from a religious perspective. It is rather an attempt to define what for Merton is a necessary step in

¹The Strange Islands (New York: New Directions, 1957).

²Thoughts in Solitude (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1958) - all quotations will be from the paperback edition - (New York: Dell, 1961).

the overcoming of any problem, social or personal, namely, the withdrawal into solitude.

In an article published in 1959, Merton defined the polarity between prayer and social action as he saw it:

"There has always been a tendency for Christian society to pass from an almost exclusive emphasis on the spiritual character of the Christian vocation, to an equally exclusive emphasis on the social and humanistic aspects of that vocation. The fact remains that both points of view are obligatory."¹

It has been shown that in his earlier writings Merton's emphasis has been on the spiritual character of Christian life, but certainly not exclusively so. His social concern and awareness is evident throughout his writings. In 1960, however, that which was muted and implicit in his first books became articulate and explicit. In Disputed Questions, and to a lesser degree in The Wisdom of the Desert and Spiritual Direction and Meditation, all published in 1960, Merton's social criticism becomes explicit. At the same time, he begins to write more poignantly and precisely about solitude.

¹"Christianity and Mass Movements," Cross Currents 9, (Summer, 1959), p. 201.

Disputed Questions is a book in which Merton deals with one basic theme: "the relation of the person to the social organization."¹ He begins the book with an analysis of this relationship in the life of a particular person, Boris Pasternak. He sees this novelist, who had considerable troubles with the Russian hierarchy, as a living symbol of the struggle a man of integrity necessarily has with an impersonal social organization. In this, Pasternak is not unique. He can be compared to Gandhi, in that his protest was "the protest of life itself, of humanity itself, of love, speaking not with theories and programs but simply affirming itself and asking to be judged on its own merits."² Here for the first time, at least in a widely disseminated work,

¹Disputed Questions (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1960), paperback edition (Toronto: Mentor), p. viii. Certain essays in this book have been published in Great Britain as The Power and Meaning of Love (London: Sheldon Press, 1976).

²Ibid., p. 21. Dennis Q. McInerny suggests that Merton saw in Pasternak a model of Merton's own struggles: "The more Merton talks about the difficulties to which Pasternak was subjected as a direct result of the society in which he lived, and the way he bravely held to his beliefs and preserved his integrity despite those difficulties, the more it becomes apparent that Merton felt a deep affinity for Pasternak precisely for these reasons. I think that his meditations on the plight of Pasternak...awoke in Merton a certain feeling of guilt at the fact that the society in which he was living might in many respects be as evil as (Pasternak's society), and yet, unlike (him) he was not protesting against the evil." Op. cit., p. 63. It is to noted that this chapter was originally published in essay form the previous year.

Merton was speaking about specific situations within the world. Here, too, in a chapter on Christianity and Totalitarianism, Merton spoke of the social imperatives of the Christian Gospel as they relate to a restructuring of society:

"Christians are not the only ones in the world who are faced with this need to build a new and better society. Indeed, it must be said to our confusion that we have not even been the first to undertake this most pressing task of our century."¹

A social dimension is as important as a spiritual one in the Christian faith. Merton is highly critical of those who stress only a superficial "spiritual" aspect:

"If we are content with merely exterior practise of our religion we will tend to make Christianity another of the mass-movements that cover the face of the earth. Then the Christian, rather than a free man, humbled by the consciousness of his responsibility, tends to become another fanatic who allows himself the worst excesses and excuses them easily on the ground that he is 'defending the faith' or 'fighting for the Church.' A timely example: the readiness some Christians might have today to accept the idea of an all-out atomic surprise attack on Russia, and their approval of the most drastic and cruel methods in order to 'stamp out communism.'...To be a Christian one must

¹Disputed Questions, p. 103.

love all men, including not only one's own enemies but even those who claim to be the 'enemies of God.'¹

This is not abstract or imprecise. At the time this was published there were numerous members of the churches in America who would have been very much in favor of the actions Merton denounces. The horrors of the American involvement in Vietnam for instance, occurred with the explicit approval of many, if not even a majority, of Christians.² In this chapter of Disputed Questions, Merton is beginning to develop a precise application of the Christian ethic of love to a particular social situation, that of war and peace.

Disputed Questions also contains essays that emphasize the spiritual aspect of Christianity: essays on the monks of Mount Athos, a renaissance hermit called Paul Guistiniani, and John of the Cross among others. Most notable, perhaps,

¹Ibid., pp. 109f.

²See R.E. Chanteloup in "Hawks and Doves: An Analysis of a Catholic Attitude Toward Nuclear War," in Sociological Analysis 31 (1970), pp. 23-35; C.E. Tygart, "Religiosity and University Student Anti-Vietnam War Attitudes," Sociological Analysis 32 (1971), pp. 120-129.

is an essay called "Notes for a Philosophy of Solitude." Although Merton had written on the theme of solitude already, this particular essay was one that he had trouble getting pass the Trappist censors. A similar essay had been published in French and Italian in 1955,¹ but the American censors were hesitant to allow such an explicit essay on solitude to be published. The Cistercian life is cenobitic, that is, the monks live together in community. The idea of an eremetical life within the Cistercian Order was an idea that was received only gradually and reluctantly.²

Solitude, however, was to become a dominant theme in Merton's subsequent writings, and the publications of 1960 contain Merton's underlying theological understanding of the relationship between solitude and action. The two were not seen as exclusive ideals; rather, for Merton, constructive action without solitude is an impossibility. Solitude is necessary for one to become fully himself; and in the midst of a world he felt was becoming increasingly impersonal, Merton called for a society made up of mature and responsible

¹ See Merton's reference to this in Therese Lentfoehr, in "The Solitary," Thomas Merton, Monk, pp. 71f.

² Loc. cit. Also see below p. 105, fn. 2.

persons:

"To build the Kingdom of God is to build a society that is based entirely on freedom and love. It is to build a society which is founded on respect for the individual person, since only persons are capable of love."¹

The same emphasis can be found in Spiritual Direction and Meditation, although with less explicitness. He calls for the Christian's meditations to become grounded in the concrete reality of the world around him.

"I would be inclined to say that a nun who has meditated on the Passion of Christ but has not meditated on the extermination camps of Dachau and Auschwitz has not yet fully entered into the experience of Christianity in our time. For Dachau and Auschwitz are two terrible, indeed apocalyptic, presentations of the reality of the Passion renewed in our time."

This sort of concrete meditation, rather than what Merton called the "comic book school of spirituality" in which one chats amiably with Jesus, is what he saw as the way for a modern Christian to pray.² Love can never become abstract if it is to remain Christian. In an article

¹Disputed Questions, p. 112.

²Spiritual Direction and Meditation (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1960), pp. 88, 82f.

published at this time Merton emphasizes that the Christian needs to distinguish between real love and a romantic distortion of love:

"It is always a romantic evasion to turn from love of people to the love of love itself: to love mankind more than individual men, to love 'brotherhood' and 'unity' more than one's brothers, neighbours, and associates."¹

But before one can love, one needs to enter into solitude. According to Merton, solitude aids love rather than distorts and corrupts it, for although love requires a concrete expression in order to avoid becoming an evasion, love also requires a person who is fully developed in order to love. Only persons can love, and solitude forms the person. This idea of solitude is something Merton borrowed from the ancient desert fathers of Egypt and Syria. The Wisdom of the Desert is a translation of a number of the sayings of these desert fathers, and in his introduction, Merton explains the importance of the way of life that they exemplified. Theirs was a paradoxical message:

"The simple men who lived their lives out to a good old age among the rocks and sands only did so because they had come into the desert to be themselves, their ordinary selves, and to forget a world that divided

¹ "Love and Maturity," Sponsa Regis 32, No. 2, October, 1960, p. 46.

them from themselves. There can be no other valid reason for seeking solitude or for leaving the world. And thus to leave the world, is, in fact, to help save it in saving oneself....They knew that they were helpless to do any good for others as long as they floundered about in the wreckage. But once they got a foothold on solid ground, things were different. Then they had not only the power but even the obligation to pull the whole world to safety after them."¹

The year 1960, therefore, was a year in which Merton was stating the paradox with clarity: on the one hand, the Christian Gospel demands love in the concrete situation, and this requires intimate involvement with the world; on the other hand, the Gospel's demand for love requires a person capable of loving, and that capability is impossible if one is consistently exposed, without relief, to a world which tries its best to alienate one from one's true self. Solitude is necessary if one is not to be floundering in the wreckage of the world and thereby to participate in its rescue, that is, the building of the Kingdom of God.

¹The Wisdom of the Desert (London: Sheldon Press, 1974), p. 22f.

Thomas Merton published three books of importance in 1961; The New Man, The Behavior of Titans, and New Seeds of Contemplation (a revision of an earlier work). In the first two of these books Merton looks at what he calls "Promethean Theology,"¹ a theology in which man sees himself as forcing grace from God:

"Theology becomes Promethean whenever it assumes that man's supreme perfection is something God wants to prevent him from attaining. But this assumption is invariably accompanied by the secret conviction that this spiritual perfection is of and for ourselves. In other words, wherever we find a theology that is Promethean in character, that is to say that conceives salvation as a stealing fire from heaven, we also find an implicit naturalism that sees our salvation and perfection in something other than God himself."²

Merton finds a Promethean theology in such divergent forms as the quest for "spiritual perfection" rather than for God, or the idea that salvation depends on one's feelings

¹This interest in Prometheus as a model for a sub-Christian theological system was first seen in a small pamphlet with a limited printing in 1958: Prometheus: A Meditation (Lexington, Ky.: Margaret I. King Library Press, University of Kentucky). This essay was later published in The Behavior of Titans (New York: New Directions, 1961), and has since been printed in Raids on the Unspeakable (New York: New Directions, 1966), and A Thomas Merton Reader (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1962).

²The New Man (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1961), quotation from the paperback edition (New York: Mentor-Omega, 1963), pp. 26f.

of being saved. Although he is critical of an idea of salvation that centres on man and not on God, Merton wrote The New Man from an existential perspective. It is an analysis of man's spiritual self and his quest for reality. He defines contemplation in existential terms: "Contemplation is at once the existential appreciation of our own 'nothingness' and of the divine reality, perceived by ineffable spiritual contact within the depths of our own being."² However, when contemplation becomes Promethean instead of properly existential, it becomes selfish and without concern for the other person. There is no possibility of a social ethic in a Promethean mysticism. "Such a mysticism is simply an escape from reality: it barricades itself from the real and feeds upon itself."³ On the other hand, existential communion with God in contemplation produces a new creation in which a social ethic is basic. The new man, he who has been made new by the salvific action of Christ in the depths of his being, sees no opposition between contemplation and action. His action flows from

¹Merton had originally called this book Existential Communion but the publisher preferred the other title. (From a conversation with Merton's former secretary, Brother Patrick Hart, O.C.S.O., June, 1973).

²The New Man, p. 15.

³Ibid., p. 27.

contemplation, the appreciation of the divine reality in the depths of the soul. This is so because the divine reality that is encountered is the reality of agapaic love, and an encounter with love begets a social ethic. The New Man is not a book about particular social problems. Rather, it is the formulation, in terminology which is expressly existential and theological, of an underlying basis for an ethical approach to such problems.

In addition to two essays on Prometheus, The Behavior of Titans contains an essay on Herakleitos, the ancient Greek philosopher whom Merton sees as one who protests for love and against power, and an essay called, "A Signed Confession of Crimes Against the State." This is a satirical 'confession' about the 'crime' of doing nothing but enjoying nature. In a world that pushed one to think in terms of efficiency and productivity, Merton reserves the right to enjoy the world rather than utilize it. He has begun at this point to use a gift of satire for expressing his social criticism, and will continue to use satire as one form of his criticism for the rest of his life.¹

¹On Merton's satire see James York Glimm, "Exile Ends in Satire" Cithara 11 (November, 1971), pp. 31-40. This title itself is a satirical play on the title of one of Merton's earliest works. On the theme of doing nothing see Raids on the Unspeakable, pp. 9-23, and Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pp. 56, 98.

New Seeds of Contemplation is a revision of the work that was published in 1949. The revision was chiefly by way of expanding what had been written in the earlier book. According to Merton, this made it "in many ways a completely new book."¹ The original Seeds of Contemplation was not without social concern,² but the new book was much more explicit. The revisions can be seen throughout the book: he added two totally new chapters at the beginning and one at the end, as well as making a number of additions to almost every chapter. For instance, his remarks on poverty are less abstract. In Seeds of Contemplation he writes of the importance of poverty in the contemplative life. In New Seeds of Contemplation he makes this addition:

"Misery as such, destitution as such, is not the way to contemplative union. I certainly don't mean that in order to be a saint one has to live in a slum, or that a contemplative monastery has to aim at reproducing the kind of life that is lived in tenements. It is not filth and hunger that make saints, nor even poverty itself, but love of poverty and love of the poor."

Utter destitution is not what he means by "poverty." In no way is he trying to romanticize the poor. In fact,

¹New Seeds of Contemplation (New York: New Directions, 1961), p. ix.

²See above, pp. 74-76.

he continues, "A certain degree of economic security is morally necessary to provide a minimum of stability without which a life of prayer can hardly be learned."¹ In order for one to pray, one needs a stable environment, and it is almost completely useless to preach about a spiritual life to a society whose atmosphere militates against such a life. This theme is most clearly stated in the revisions Merton makes to the chapter, "The Root of War is Fear."² In New Seeds of Contemplation, Merton is quite specific about some ambiguities in the world's approach to peace; the original version lacked these remarks:

"What is the use of postmarking our mail with exhortations to 'pray for peace' and then spending billions of dollars on atomic submarines, thermonuclear weapons, and ballistic missiles? This, I would think, would certainly be what the New Testament calls 'mocking God' - and mocking Him far more effectively than the atheists do."

"The 'cold war' is simply the normal consequence of our corrupt idea of a peace based on a policy of 'every man for himself' in ethics, economics and political life. It is absurd to hope

¹Seeds of Contemplation, p. 167, of New Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 250f.

²Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 70-73; New Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 112-122.

for a solid peace based on fictions
and illusions!"¹

Merton's analysis of the spiritual sickness which lay at the root of war has been amplified with such concrete and timely additions. The contemplative cannot allow himself to look at the world in terms of a strict Manichaean dualism. To do so is actually to give tacit support to the prevailing attitudes of the day, attitudes which Merton feels are antithetical to true contemplation. For the contemplative to avoid social concern means that he is turning his back on his brother and, in addition, he is implicitly supporting a structure which will eventually destroy the possibility of contemplation itself. To acquiesce in the status quo would reduce contemplation to a "spiritual anaesthesia" making it nothing more than an opiate.² Therefore, the contemplative has to live with the paradox of being at once within the world and not of the world:

"Insensitivity must not be confused with detachment. The contemplative must certainly be detached, but he can never allow himself to become insensible to

¹New Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 119, 122. See also Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander (New York: Doubleday, 1971), pp. 41, 200.

²Ibid., pp. 12f.

human values, whether in society, in other men or in himself. If he does so, then his contemplation stands condemned as vitiated in its very root."¹

A further example of his increasing concreteness occurs in an article Thomas Merton wrote for The Catholic Worker that appeared just prior to the publication of New Seeds of Contemplation. In it one sees the contemplative trying to be sensible to human values in a particular situation. The early 1960s in America witnessed the building of individual backyard fallout shelters, designed to protect life in the event of nuclear war. One moral issue that was raised by the advent of these shelters was the question of the right to protect one's shelter from invasion by desperate neighbours. Merton addressed this issue by questioning some basic assumptions about the fallout shelter mentality. The whole idea that a "hole in the backyard" can save one from nuclear holocaust, and the kind of mentality that reduces mankind to "neighbor pitted against neighbor with revolvers and shotguns" is rejected. Furthermore, he uses this debate to introduce

¹New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 20.

the idea of "nonviolent resistance." This idea is one which Merton will elaborate in later writings. Its first explicit mention is in the early sixties.¹

It should be noted that Merton's interest in Eastern religions, especially Zen Buddhism, became explicit in 1961. The closing chapter of New Seeds of Contemplation was seen by one critic as verification that Merton is now very much under the influence of Zen² and two articles published in that year substantiate this judgement. "Wisdom in Emptiness"³ is a dialogue between Merton and the Zen scholar, D.T. Suzuki, and "Classical Chinese Thought"⁴ is a studious introduction to the thought of Confucius. At the same time, therefore, that Merton was writing quite specifically about the problems of society,

¹"The Shelter Ethic", The Catholic Worker 28, November, 1961. of "The Machine Gun in the Fallout Shelter," in Thomas Merton on Peace, and Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pp. 191f, 194, 258.

²Aldhelm Cameron-Brown, "Zen Master" in Thomas Merton, Monk, p. 166.

³"Wisdom in Emptiness" by Thomas Merton and Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki in New Directions in Prose and Poetry 17, ed. James Laughlin (New York: New Directions, 1961), pp. 65-101. Also published in Zen and the Birds of Appetite (New York: New Directions, 1968).

⁴In Jubilee 8 (January, 1961), pp. 26-32. Also published in Mystics and Zen Masters (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967).

he was also turning to the East with increased interest. This must be understood if one is to keep a balanced picture of Thomas Merton. Throughout his life the paradox is maintained: as he becomes increasingly contemplative, he becomes increasingly sensitive to the problems of society.

The next two years, 1962 and 1963, were years in which Merton continued to write about war and in which he began to write also about racial matters. A number of articles were published in these areas in addition to two important books.¹ Breakthrough to Peace (1962) was edited by Thomas Merton and also contained an introductory essay by him.

Emblems of a Season of Fury (1963) is principally a book of poetry, but also contains a significant essay on the cold

¹Among the important articles on war are "Nuclear War and Christian Responsibility," Commonweal 75 (February 9, 1962), pp. 509-513, and a response to criticisms of that article, April 20, 1962; "We Have to Make Ourselves Heard," Catholic Worker 28 (May, 1962), pp. 4-6, (June, 1962), pp. 4-5; "Spirituality for an Age of Overkill," Continuum 1 (Spring, 1963), pp. 9-12; "Christian Morality and Nuclear War," The Way 19 (June, 1963), pp. 12-22; and an essay in War Within Man, edited by Erich Fromm (Philadelphia: Peace Literature Service of American Friends Service Committee, 1963), pp. 44-50. His articles on the racial issue include "Neither Caliban nor Uncle Tom," Liberation 8 (June, 1963), pp. 20-22; "The Negro Revolt," Jubilee 11 (September, 1963), pp. 39-43, and "Letters to a White Liberal," also called "Black Revolution," Blackfriars 44 (November, 1963), pp. 464-477 and Blackfriars (December, 1963), pp. 503-516, later published in other places including Seeds of Destruction, Thomas Merton, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1964).

war and its importance to the Third World.

Breakthrough to Peace contained articles by Herbert Butterfield, Norman Cousins, Erich Fromm, Lewis Mumford, among others. The Trappist censors were hesitant about allowing Merton's name to appear as editor, although it eventually did, but did not block the publication of his introductory essay. It was one of his most impassioned statements yet. No one wanted war, Merton wrote, "But they wanted a political and economic situation that make war inevitable." Members of the Truman administration had hoped that the bombing of Japan would bring peace¹ but "Instead of producing peace, the atom bomb started the most fantastic arms race in history," an arms race based on "nuclear deterrence" which "has proved to be an illusion, for the bomb deters no one. It did not prevent war in Korea, Indochina, Laos, the Congo. It did not prevent the Russian suppression of the Hungarian revolt."²

¹cf Original Child Bomb (New York: New Directions, 1962), a satirical poem on the American decision to bomb Japan. (also in Thomas Merton on Peace, pp. 3-11.) See also "Conference on Prayer" in Sisters Today 41 (April, 1970), p. 455.

²Breakthrough to Peace, ed. Thomas Merton (New York: New Directions, 1962), pp. 8f. For Merton's problems with the Trappist censors on this book and on other writings on war see Gordon Zahn, "Original Child Monk: An Appreciation" in Thomas Merton on Peace (New York: McCall, 1971), pp. ix-xli.

Fanatics, however, with a perverted idea of patriotism, perpetuate the illusion. Merton issued an open call to all men to return to sanity:

"We are responsible for the present and for those present actions and attitudes of ours from which future events will develop. It is therefore supremely important that we get a grip on ourselves and determine that we will not relinquish either our reason or our humanity; that we will not despair of ourselves, or of man, or of our capacity to solve our problems; that we will make use of the faculties and resources we still have in abundance, and use them for positive and constructive action in so far as we can. We will resist the fatal inclination to passivity and despair, as well as the fatuous temptation to false optimism and insouciance which condition us equally well to accept disaster. In a word we will behave as men, and, if Christian, then as members of Christ."¹

Religious people have no recourse to "the ivory tower of private spirituality...such a decision would be immoral."² It would, in effect, be supporting the status quo, which itself was a horrid illusion. All men, especially those in the Church, have a duty to make definite changes in the

¹Breakthrough to Peace, p. 10. In the Introduction to New Seeds of Contemplation, p. xi, Merton wrote that his message was "not addressed primarily to Catholics." Now, his message is not even primarily to Christians or even to those of any religious persuasion, but to all who will listen.

²Ibid., p. 11.

prevalent socio-political structure and attitude.

"It is therefore vitally important to create a general climate of rationality, and to preserve a broad, tolerant, watchful and humanist outlook on the whole of life, precisely in order that rash and absurd assumptions may not have too free a circulation in our society."¹

Emblems of a Season of Fury contains an essay called "A Letter to Pablo Antonis Quadra Concerning Giants."² In this essay, Merton weaves two major social concerns: on the one hand, his horror of the absurd cold war between the United States and Russia (which he refers to in the biblical language of Magog and Gog), and on the other hand, the arrogant stance that the Western white man has taken toward the stranger whom he encounters, in this case particularly, in Central and South American natives:

"Let me be quite succinct: the greatest sin of the European-Russian-American complex which we call 'the West' (and this sin has spread its own way to China), is not only greed and cruelty,

¹Ibid., p. 13.

²Emblems of a Season of Fury, (New York: New Directions, 1963), pp. 70-89. Quadra, a poet and intellectual, was editor of La Prensa of Managua, Nicaragua.

not only moral dishonesty and infidelity to truth, but above all its unmitigated arrogance toward the rest of the human race."¹

The heart of the problem is the idolization of one's own self and of one's own group. The Westerner believes that he, and he alone, is of importance. The Christian has come to believe that he, and he alone, can speak the voice of Christ. It is this arrogance that Merton believes is destroying the world. The great lesson of the Apostolic Age was that God is in all men, not just in the Jew. But later ages of Christians forgot that lesson. They ardently spoke of Christ and for Christ,

"But they had omitted to listen to the voice of Christ in the unfamiliar accents of the Indian, as Clement had listened for it in the Pre-Socratics. And now, today, we have a Christianity of Magog."

"God speaks," Merton continues, "and God is to be heard, not only on Sinai, not only in my own heart, but in the voice of the stranger....if we cannot see him unexpectedly in the stranger and the alien, we will not understand him even in the Church."²

¹Ibid., p. 78.

²Ibid., pp. 80, 82.

Merton seems to be addressing criticisms to the Church and to the Western world rather than addressing Gaudra and his Latin American brothers. However, the criticisms of the West contain within them a message for others. His primary word to the people of the Third World is a hope that they will profit from the mistakes of "Gog and Magog."

"To the whole third world I would say that there is one lesson to be learned from the present situation, one lesson of the greatest urgency: be unlike the giants, Gog and Magog. Mark what they do and act differently."¹

In the midst of these writings on war and race Thomas Merton was not neglecting to write in his usual "religious" genre. For those who felt that Merton was becoming somewhat too radical,² there were a number of articles on religious themes,³ and one major book, Life and Holiness.

¹Emblems of a Season of Fury, p. 86.

²See, for example, the letter in reaction to "Nuclear War and Christian Responsibility," entitled "Nuclear War and Christian Responsibility: An Exchange of Views," Commonweal 76 (April 20, 1962), pp. 84-85.

³For instance, "Christ, the Way," Sponsa Regis 33 (January, 1962), pp. 144-153; "Christian Freedom and Monastic Formation," American Benedictine Review 13 (September, 1962), pp. 289-313, and "Examination of Conscience and 'Conversatio Morum'" Collectanea Ordinis Cisterciensium Reformatorum 25 (1963), pp. 355-369.

Although it does not have the passion of the essays just quoted, it is not lacking in a very definite call to Christian action.¹ To reject the world is not to reject other people or the creative achievements of man, but rather it is "to reject the perverted standards which make men misuse and spoil a good creation."² The life of faith cannot be separated from the needs of the world. The Christian's spiritual life "will inevitably be affected by his attitude toward such problems as nuclear war, the race question, the growth of new nations, and the whole crucial struggle between the communist and noncommunist worlds." Furthermore, "It is a duty of charity and of justice for every Christian to take an active concern in trying to improve man's condition in the world." The problems that man faces in the world, that is poverty, social upheaval, and the threat of nuclear war" are not just political or economic problems: they are symptoms of a spiritual sickness so universal and so deep-rooted that it threatens the very existence of the

¹In the Introduction Merton calls the book "a meditation on some fundamental themes appropriate to the active life." Life and Holiness (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), quoted from the paperback edition (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1963), p. vii.

²Life and Holiness, p. 100.

human race."¹ Even in his specifically religious books one encounters Merton's plea that a false dualism between the sacred and the secular be overcome. The "nice defenders of the faith"² no longer could possibly look to Thomas Merton as the champion of a life that was purely spiritual to the neglect of radical social involvement. In actuality, Merton never could have been their champion. From his earliest writings there is evidence of his strong social concern. Disputed Questions made it quite clear that social concerns and spiritual ones were aspects of the same reality. If any reader missed the point, Life and Holiness would make it again, with equal clarity and force. One could ignore Merton's articles and one could ignore Breakthrough to Peace and read only Merton's "spiritual" works, but the message would be inescapable: Thomas Merton was calling men and women to be willing to risk all for the sake of their brothers.³

¹Ibid., pp. 122, 117, 138f.

²A phrase Merton used in a letter to Dom Jean LeClerq quoted by the latter in his Introduction to Contemplation in a World of Action (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. xii.

³The impact of the encyclicals of John XXIII, especially Mater et magistra, are evident in Life and Holiness. See pp. 121ff.

Seeds of Destruction was the only book that Merton published in 1964. It is a collection of essays and excerpts from letters, most of which had appeared earlier in various journals. Included here were the "Letters to a White Liberal" published the year before, and now exposed to a wider readership. There is also a section on "The Christian in the Diaspora," a commentary on Karl Rahner that provides a new approach to Merton's understanding of the form that Christian apologetics needs to take in the latter-half of the twentieth century. A tribute is paid to Gandhi as both a prophet of non-violence and an example of a life based on the law of Christ. The "Letters in a Time of Crisis" deal with a multitude of subjects ranging from the explicitly religious (on Julian of Norwich) to the explicitly secular (a letter to the Negro novelist, James Baldwin.)¹

Seeds of Destruction was a succinct demonstration of the complexity of Merton's interests. The reader was confronted by his interest in racial injustice, in non-violence and the issues of war and peace, in the spiritual importance of the East, and in the means of Christian

¹Whereas today "Black" is a term that is preferred to "Negro," Merton used the latter term, and in this thesis his usage is followed.

witness. It was, however, the essays on racial matters that received the most attention, for Merton's approach to these problems was displeasing to the liberal as well as to the conservative.¹ It is an indictment of impure motivations on the part of the white American liberal who wishes to give aid to the Negro. Merton felt that the white man, liberal or not, was unable to recognize the actual roots of the racial problem. Negro non-violence is seen as a means of opening the eyes of the white man to the gravity of his own sin:

"The purpose of non-violent protest, in its deepest and most spiritual dimensions is then to awaken the conscience of the white man to the awful reality of his injustice and of his sin, so that he will be able to see that the Negro problem is really a White problem: that the cancer

¹Conservative here does not mean conservative in a classical sense, but in the sense in which that word has taken on a particularly American connotation which is described by Paul Tillich. Conservatism in America, he says, "has to do with the individualism of the capitalistic society...Thus it can happen that the term 'conservative' can be used for simple fascist movements, like the John Birch Society...These movements have nothing to do with conservatism. They are based on the mass culture of the present and wish to exclude all liberal elements...for the sake of maintaining the rule of the upper classes in a capitalistic society." Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology (London: SCM, 1967), p. 85.

of injustice and hate which is eating white society and is only partly manifested in racial segregation, is rooted in the heart of the white man himself."¹

The non-violent protest of Martin Luther King, which Merton identifies closely with the approach of Gandhi, is seen as a particular occurrence in history in which both the Negro and the white man can find salvation. It is a new kairos, a moment in which white America could hear and receive a "message of salvation." However, the moment might pass: if white society does not heed the message of non-violent protest, the result could be catastrophic.

"The conspicuous failure of the law to provide adequate protection or redress for Negroes subject to violent attack by Whites is having one very serious effect: it is causing Negroes to lose confidence in the efficacy of non-violence as a political tactic.... Unfortunately, not all Negroes can appreciate the Christian foundation of non-violent action as it is practised by the followers of Dr. King."²

If the just demands of the Negro are not met "The merciful kairos of truth will turn into the dark hour

¹Seeds of Destruction (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1964), pp. 45f. See also Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pp. 31f.

²Ibid., pp. 64, 52f.

of destruction and hate." The Negro would become a black Samson who "pulls the pillars of white society crashing down upon himself and his oppressor."¹ The white liberal, cautions Merton, is terribly naive. He fails to take seriously the Negro's message that white society is sick, and is content with incorporating the Negro into a society which he refuses to examine. The Negro is calling the white man to recognize his own malaise, and the white liberal has very little to offer.

Thomas Merton also touched on the issue of war in Seeds of Destruction, most especially in the long essay, "The Christian in World Crisis: Reflections on the Moral Climate of the 1960s."² Increasingly his comments include references to non-violent action and resistance, pacifism, and theories of "just war," themes which will continue to be developed throughout the remainder of Merton's life. The cessation of war

¹Ibid., pp. 69f.

²Ibid., pp. 93-183. In this essay Merton comments at some length on another of John XXIII's encyclicals, Pacem in Terris: "Pope John's optimism was really something new in Christian thought because he expressed the unequivocal hope that a world of ordinary men, a world in which many men were not Christians or even believers in God, might still be a world of peace if men would deal with one another on the basis of their God-given reason and with respect for their inalienable human rights. Note that Pacem in terris is the first encyclical in which the language of human rights has been so clearly espoused." pp. 120f.

is not a sufficient goal for a nation's defensive strategy. The means used for defending one's nation are signs which point to the quality of the way of life being defended. Merton was trying to call America to an examination of its corporate spiritual life. The American insistence on seeing foreign policy in cold war terms of black and white, good and evil, democracy and totalitarianism blinded the nation to the necessity of improving the quality of its institutions and its public morality. "If our affluent society ever breaks down and the facade is taken away," he wrote to the wife of a statesman, "what are we going to have left?"¹ As long as the American public were uncritically determined to defend the American way of life, and determined to use any possible means to do so,² then there is the danger that we either blow the world up, or "that we may someday float without realizing it into a nice tight fascist society."³ The attitude of America's cold war mentality would, in

¹ Seeds of Destruction, p. 251.

² In 1964, when this book was published, Barry Goldwater made the statement that extremism in the defense of liberty is a virtue. Goldwater was the Republican candidate for President.

³ Ibid., p. 251.

Merton's view, lead inevitably to a disastrous conclusion. The Christian has a particular vocation in this situation, a vocation that is not at all easy:

"No one is encouraged to be clear-sighted, because conscience can make cowards, by diluting the strong conviction that our side is fully right and the other side is fully wrong. Yet the Christian responsibility is not to one side or to the other in the power struggle: it is to God and truth, and to the whole of mankind."¹

Therefore the Christian is going to have to take a lonely stance. He will be considered as dangerous and subversive by all who see reality in terms of a rigid dualism of good and evil. But such a stance, for Merton, is necessary for two reasons: it is necessary first of all if we are to be true to God, and secondly, if we are to be true to man.²

Thomas Merton continued to write about the issues of war and race during 1965,³ but only one book of his touched directly on these subjects. That was Gandhi

¹ Ibid., p. 98.

² It is to be recalled that it was in 1964 that Merton conducted the retreat on "The Spiritual Roots of Protest" with the Berrigans and others. See above,

³ For instance: "Religion and Race in the United States," New Blackfriars 46 (January, 1965), pp. 218-225, reprinted in Faith and Violence (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968); "A Enemy of the State" in Pax Bulletin (London: May, 1965), pp. 3-5, also reprinted in Faith and Violence and in Thomas

on Non-Violence, a collection of sayings from the writings of the Hindu leader with an introduction by Merton. Another book was also a collection of aphorisms from an Eastern giant, Chuang Tzu, who wrote in China in the fourth and third centuries B.C.¹ The only other book published that year was a collection of essays chiefly on liturgical matters: Seasons of Celebration.²

Merton on Peace. He also contributed an introduction to Philip Berrigan's No More Strangers (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

¹The Way of Chuang Tzu (New York: New Directions, 1965), a book of which Merton wrote, "I have enjoyed writing this book more than any other I can remember." British paperback edition, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970), pp. 9f. Another work on Eastern religion published at this time is the essay, "Mysticism and Zen Masters," Chinese Culture 6 (March, 1965), pp. 1-18. (Later published in Mystics and Zen Masters (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967).

²Seasons of Celebration (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965). Merton published numerous articles in 1965 that were strictly of a religious nature including "Reflections on Some Recent Studies of St. Anselm," Monastic Studies 3, (1965), pp. 221-234; "Contemplation and Ecumenism," Season 3 (Fall, 1965), pp. 133-142, and "Contemplative Life in the Modern World," The Mountain Path (India), (October, 1965), pp. 223-227, and reprinted in Faith and Violence.

In addition to these publications, certain earlier works of Merton's were being translated into Japanese and Korean, and Merton was writing special prefaces to these new editions.¹ In these prefaces Merton had an opportunity to summarize the development of his thought for a new audience. Here one can find some of the most precise and succinct statements of Merton's paradox: silence and solitude living in creative tension with outspoken social criticism. For instance, in the Preface to the Japanese edition of The Seven Storey Mountain, he wrote:

"I make monastic silence a protest against the lies of politicians, propagandists and agitators, and when I speak it is to deny that my faith and my Church can ever seriously be aligned with these forces of injustice and destruction."²

Merton obviously wanted the Japanese to hear this message, not only as an apologetic for Christianity, but also for the inherent value of that message for

¹Preface to the Japanese edition of Seeds of Contemplation (Kanso no tane), (Kyoto: Veritas, 1965); Preface to the Japanese edition of Seven Storey Mountain, (Nanae no yama), (Tokyo: Toyo Publishing, 1965); Preface to the Korean edition of Life and Holiness (Hyeondaeineui sinang saenghwal), (Seoul: Kaetoric Chulpansa, 1965).

²From the manuscript in the Bellarmine College Collection.

Japanese society. Merton was developing a considerable love for the East; Zen Buddhism, especially, was having a continuing attraction for him. On the one hand he was beginning to try to discover points of affinity between Zen and the apophatic tradition of Christian mysticism.¹ On the other hand his own life was becoming more and more Zen-like in attitude. He felt a close bond of unity with those who lived a Zen existence.

The insights that he had received from Zen, plus his long-standing attraction to the solitary life, reached a culmination in 1965 when Merton retired to the hermitage. Many of his writings take on a Zen-like quality: personal, poetic meditations of present reality, celebrating meaninglessness and a total absence of utilitarianism. For instance, "Rain and the Rhinoceros" published first in 1965 and later in 1966 in Raids on the Unspeakable, is a personal meditation which, on the one hand, celebrates the "Gratuity" and the

¹ See "Mystics and Zen Masters," in Mystics and Zen Masters, especially pp. 40-42, in which Merton describes a "Trinitarian structure" in the thought of an early Zen master, Hui Neng (Seventh Century, A.D.), a structure Merton feels is akin to "all that is most characteristic of the highest forms of Christian contemplation."

"meaninglessness" of nature, and on the other hand, recognizes the rumblings of the Rhinoceros in the distance. (The imagery is Ionesco's.)

"The rain has stopped. The afternoon sun slants through the pine trees: and how those useless needles smell in the clean air! A dandelion, long out of season, has pushed itself into bloom between the smashed leaves of last summer's day lilies. The valley resounds with the totally uninformative talk of creeks and wild water. The quails begin their sweet whistling in the wet bushes, and so is the delight I take in it. There is nothing I would rather hear, not because it is a better noise than other noises, but because it is the voice of the present moment, the present festival. Yet even here the earth shakes. Over at Fort Knox the Rhinoceros is having fun."¹

Merton's solitude was increasing his appreciation for Zen, and at the same time was enforcing his new understanding of the Augustinian split between the City of God and the City of Man. If such symbols were to be used they were no longer to be interpreted in the strict dualistic sense of Merton's earliest writings. Solitude taught Merton that evil is to be finally located not in an abstract "city" but in the heart of the individual man. To leave the city and go out into

¹"Rain and the Rhinoceros," in Raids on the Unspeakable (New York: New Directions, 1966), p. 23. Originally published in Holiday 37, May, 1965.

desert is the means to confront evil rather than to escape it. Then the power of evil is seen "not in the city, but in ourselves."¹

Raids on the Unspeakable was one of two books of collected essays published by Merton in 1966.² It contains literary criticism, prose poems, paraphrases of a medieval Moslem Sufi mystic, and advice to modern poets and artists on the relationship of art and politics. Here can be seen Merton's wide range of interests in a single volume. And here, too, can be seen a continuing affirmation of Merton's understanding of the intimate relationship between contemplation and poetic, artistic endeavors, on the one hand, and social action and politics, on the other. Understanding himself as a poet and artist as well as a contemplative,³ Merton addresses the artistic

¹Ibid., p. 19.

²The other was Redeeming the Times (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), most of which was published in America in Seeds of Destruction or subsequently in Faith and Violence.

³In 1947 Merton published an article called "Poetry and the Contemplative Life," Commonweal XLVI, (July 4, 1947), which was also published in Figures for an Apocalypse. This was revised in 1958 with the title, "Poetry and Contemplation: A Reappraisal," Commonweal 69, (October 24, 1958), and also published in Selected Poems and A Thomas Merton Reader.

community as well as the religious community. In the same way that the contemplative cannot separate himself from the concerns of the world, neither can the artist. The artist is not a preacher. He should preach nothing: "His art should speak its own truth." Yet, at the same time, the artist "does live in a world where politics are decisive" and he is thereby "indirectly committed to seek some political solution to problems that endanger the freedom of man." The temptation is to seek to join a particular movement, but there is a danger in this. Merton is very skeptical about political or social programmes. They all, he says, "seek to manipulate or coerce the artist in one way or another." Therefore, the artist, like the monk, must stand apart, and be willing to criticize all forms of government or social systems, and to stand "in complete solidarity with those who are fighting for rights and freedom against inertia, hypocrisy and coercion: e.g. the Negroes in the United States."¹

¹"Answers on Art and Freedom," in Raids on the Unspeakable, p. 171, originally published in The Lugano Review 1 (1965). This essay consists of replies to questions asked by readers of Eco Contemporaneo, a Buenos Aires magazine.

Also included in this volume was "A Devout Meditation in Memory of Adolf Eichmann" in which Merton wonders about that sanity of a world which judges Eichmann to be perfectly sane, and considers pacifists to be a little crazy:

"I am beginning to realize that 'sanity' is no longer a value or an end in itself. The 'sanity' of modern man is about as useful to him as the huge bulk and muscles of the dinosaur. If he were a little less sane, a little more aware of his absurdities and contradictions, perhaps there might be a possibility of his survival. But if he is sane, too sane...perhaps we must say that in a society like ours the worst insanity is to be totally without anxiety, totally 'sane.'"

This was to become one of Merton's most often quoted pieces of social criticism.¹

¹"A Devout Meditation in Memory of Adolf Eichmann," in Raids on the Unspeakable, p. 49. This essay was first published in New Directions 18, and subsequently saw print in magazines as diverse as The Catholic Digest 31 (November, 1966), Ramparts 5 (October, 1966), and Peace News (London: May 19, 1967). Edward Rice reports that Lenny Bruce, the late nightclub comedian often ended his act by reading this piece in a German accent. See Rice, The Man in the Sycamore Tree: The Good Time and Hard Life of Thomas Merton, p. 122. See also Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pp. 285ff.

The only other book to appear in 1966 was Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander,¹ a collection of notes from private journals Merton kept between 1956 and 1965. This was not to be a sequel to The Sign of Jonas, his earlier monastic journal, which gave the reader an intimate picture of the monastic milieu in which Merton was living and thinking. Rather, Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander is "a personal version of the world in the 1960s." Merton described his book this way:

"Maybe the best way to characterize this book is to say that it consists of a series of sketches and meditations, some poetic, and literary, others historical and even theological, fitted together in a spontaneous, informal philosophical scheme in such a way that they react upon each other. The total result is a personal and monastic meditation, a testimony of Christian reflection in the mid-twentieth century, a confrontation of twentieth century questions in the light of a monastic commitment, which inevitably makes one something of a 'bystander.'"²

¹Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1966). Parts of this journal first appeared in other places: "Barth's Dream," in Motive 25 (March, 1965), and Sewanee Review 73 (Winter, 1965), and "The Night Spirit and the Dawn Air," in New Blackfriars 46 (September, 1965).

²Ibid., pp. 5f.

In these musings and notes one is able to see how Merton responds to the world from which he has separated himself. The themes that have been in the forefront of almost all of his writings since Disputed Questions are seen here in preliminary, inchoate and unsystematic meditations. Here is, so to speak, the "raw material" of Merton's major writings of the sixties. Yet, quite often, the raw material has a vibrancy and poignancy that far surpasses the finished product, and the unhesitatingly personal quality of these writings gives the reader a deeper insight into the processes of Merton's mind than one is able to discern in more systematic writings. (For example, Merton compares the monastery with the General Electric plant in Louisville. Which, he asks, is the most serious, the most "religious" institution? His conclusion is that the religious seriousness of the monastery cannot compare to that of General Electric: "It may in fact occur to many, including the monks, to doubt the monastery and what it represents. Who doubts G.E.?"¹)

In the aftermath of Vatican II, Roman Catholicism in America demonstrated these two extremes: at the one pole there were the advocates for total reform within

¹Ibid., p. 232.

the Church and the world, and at the other pole, there were those who wished the Church to maintain its uninterrupted continuity with its past allowing for no appreciable changes in that tradition.

Merton's continuing paradox, that is the tension between the traditions of monastic spirituality and social involvement, is seen in how he tried to balance these conservative and progressive elements within himself. He wanted to side with neither extreme. Progressives often seem "hasty, irresponsible, in many ways quite frivolous" and conservatives often betray a "chilling malice and meanness." Merton looked to Pope John XXIII as a model of "a progressive with a deep respect and love for tradition." Merton wanted to follow him in maintaining "a very clear and marked continuity with the past" and yet be "completely open" to the needs of the modern world.¹ He looked upon the "new radicalism" of the sixties with a mixture of hope and fear:

"There is a new generation and a new spirit here, and perhaps it will turn out to have been much more serious and much more effective than anything I can remember from my own youth. I think this new radicalism may be the decisive force and hope of the sixties - or it may simply be the catalyst that will bring

¹Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pp. 312f.

on our transformation into something
very disagreeable and stupid..."¹

This new wave could become a liberating manifestation of the Spirit of God or it could become demonized - a political circus. Contemplation and solitude are what Merton saw as necessary to keep political dissent honest. Political action requires a free and open response on the part of individuals. Cheap words and "programs that grow on every tree" will change little. Merton had an innate distrust of mass-movements:

"...the more massive a movement is, the more it is doctored and manipulated. The more it tends to be a mass lie, a front." What is called for is simpler, more individual, less self-conscious, and less publicized acts and gestures. "Genuine dissent," he wrote, "must always keep a human measure. It must be free and spontaneous."² Contemplation is the means of achieving this necessary freedom and spontaneity.

¹Ibid., p. 172.

²Ibid., pp. 162f. Compare this to an article published that same year in which Merton questions protests against the war in Vietnam: "Is the current protest making any real headway in re-educating us, in giving us a new attitude towards war? Or is it simply an outlet for the indignation, the frustration and the anxiety of those who see that the war is irrational, but fear they can do nothing to stop it?" "Peace and Protest," Continuum 3 (Winter, 1966), later published in Faith and Violence, p. 43.

It is in contemplation that one can come to an encounter with the roots of one's being and the source of one's own freedom. Here one can encounter the Christ in himself and in others. Without such an encounter, political action becomes a counter-productive frenzy, which destroys one's own inner capacity for peace. Without the contemplative experience, the reformer tries to reform the world without first having experienced his own metanoia. In short, nothing will really be changed.¹ Contemplation and solitude were, for Merton, not individualistic or selfish pursuits; they were seen as essential to a viable social reformation.

In addition to the three books published in 1966, Merton also published numerous articles on specifically religious concerns, both Christian and Eastern, as well as articles on the problems of life in the modern world. Many of these writings were to appear in book form in the next two years, the last years of Merton's life, and would become known to the wider circle of readers at that time.² His writings on Eastern religions

¹Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 86.

²Articles which have not yet been published in book form include "A Buyer's Market for Love," Ave Maria 104 (December 24, 1966), pp. 7-10, 27; "Love and Solitude," (the Preface to the Japanese edition of Thoughts in Solitude), The Critic 25 (October-November, 1966), pp. 30-37; "Monastic Vocation and Modern Thought," Monastic Studies 4 (1966), pp. 17-54; "Symbolism: Communication or Communion?" The Mountain Path 3 (India), (October, 1966), pp. 339-348; "Saint Anselm and His Argument,"

appeared in Mystics and Zen Masters (1967) and Zen and the Birds of Appetite (1968), and his writings on explicitly social issues were published in Faith and Violence (1968).¹

An interview with Thomas Merton that was conducted and published in 1967 supplements the understanding of his social concern that can be discovered in his essays. Merton talked about the ideas of Marshall McLuhan and Harvey Cox, ("I haven't read The Secular City, and may conceivably not do so until ten years from now, when no one else is reading it. In a word, I don't get too excited about climbing on every bandwagon...")² and a number of other topics of interest in that year. He also addressed himself to the problems of war and nationalism:

"We are living in a world that is radically different from that of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. But if we fail to see the fact we will, in

American Benedictine Review 17 (June, 1966), pp. 238-262; "Symbolism: Communication or Communion?", The Mountain Path 3 (India) (October, 1966), pp. 339-348.

¹Some of these essays appeared post-humously in Thomas Merton on Peace. This book and another book of collected essays which appeared after Merton's death (Contemplation in a World of Action), will be treated later in this chapter.

²"An Interview with Thomas Merton," Thomas P. McDonnell, Motive 28 (October, 1976), p. 34.

all good faith, continue to believe that we have imperative reasons for killing each other off and escalating wars until we obtain complete surrender of every enemy on our own unconditional terms. We will do this just so long as we continue to believe that the nation-state is the center of everything and can take its own interests as absolute..."¹

When asked about Vietnam, Merton replied:

"It seems to me that the most tragic thing about it is the escalating moral insensibility: the incapacity of so many people to understand that the useless killing of Vietnamese non-combatants, women and children, is not only real but even criminal."²

Merton did not claim to be a political or sociological expert. His interest in the racial struggles and the political problems of America were those of a "bystander," one whose detached vantage point offered him a perspective that was lost to those involved in the midst of the struggles themselves. His own vocation as a monk was to gain a holistic perspective. By a withdrawal from

¹ Ibid., p. 38.

² Loc cit. For Merton's views on Vietnam see also "The Church in World Crisis," Katallagete (Summer, 1967), pp. 30-36, Faith and Violence, pp. 46, 91ff, 109, 121f, 166, and Thomas Merton on Peace, pp. 65, 252, 264ff.

concentration on any one particular problem, the monk could be in a unique position to "give more thought to the interests of all...to stand back from parochial and partisan concerns,...to get a better view of the whole problem and mystery of man."¹ His statements in the 1967 interview reflect this broad understanding of his own role as a prophet. He attempted to speak to the underlying moral questions involved in the concrete events of his day. The particular facts about military, economic and political realities were secondary to him, if even that. He was unable, in the monastery, to have the wealth of information that others had. To him, however, this was an advantage.² He had a profound distrust for mass communications and the information that was shared by the media. The events reported were often "pseudo-events" and the facts reported tended to obscure issues rather than clarify them. Merton hoped that contemplation would be able to help free one from the cacaphony of confusing and contradictory "facts" so that a picture of the whole would

¹"Events and Pseudo Events," in Faith and Violence, p. 146. Originally in Katallagete (Summer, 1966).

²Others saw this as a disadvantage. See below

emerge. Zen, he discovered, was helpful in this pursuit. In the interview he said that he didn't think that Zen and Christianity were antithetical, but that Zen "is already radically present in Christianity itself."

"Zen Masters are pointing where you need to look. They are pointing not at some secret answer: they are pointing at you. And you realize that the you they are pointing at is not there as a visible object to yourself. That's the beginning. A curious dialogue is then possible, but not a dialogue about ideas. I have no Zen ideas. There are none to be had."¹

Mystics and Zen Masters contained numerous articles and essays on the relationship between Zen, Christianity, and the needs of man in the modern world. The book is a collection of various essays, and therefore does not present a systematic approach to this interrelationship. Neither does a second book of articles on Zen, Zen and the Birds of Appetite, which was published in 1968.² However, a careful reading of the essays in both books will reveal some basic tenets of Merton's thought. Merton was trying to defend a mystical religious viewpoint in a world that was, at that time, highly critical of and skeptical of anything mystical. This was a

¹"An Interview with Thomas Merton," pp. 38f.

²Various essays from both of these books have been published in Great Britain as Thomas Merton on Zen (London: Sheldon Press, 1976).

modern battle in a very old war. The Ritschlian spirit had dominated much of Western Christian thought, Catholic as well as Protestant. The tradition of Christian mysticism was seen as a deviation rather than an integral and essential part of Christian experience. Such anti-mystical feelings were principally to be blamed, thought Merton, on Descartes.¹ The radical split between subject and object in the Cartesian understanding of reality was the beginning of the modern world view, a view that saw reality in its parts rather than as a whole. This view point drove man to think of the other as "object" and eventually the person is seen as "object" and finally God is seen as "object" as well. Zen, according to Merton, could help to free man from this Cartesian consciousness, a consciousness that led to alienation. Zen could help call Christianity back to an awareness of that which it already possessed in its rich mystical and theological tradition: a metaphysical or ontological intuition of Being. Zen was particularly well-suited for this task, for it was not alien to the West or to Christianity, and furthermore, it "does not preach sermons."²

¹See below pp. 270f.

²"An Interview with Thomas Merton," p. 39.

"It is nondoctrinal, concrete, direct, existential, and seeks above all to come to grips with life itself, not with ideas about life, still less with party platforms in politics, religion, science or anything else."¹

Merton did not hesitate to include Christian and Eastern interests in a single volume. As far as he was concerned, they were all part of a greater whole, one complementing and aiding the other. Therefore, in Mystics and Zen Masters, there are articles on a wide variety of related topics: the English mystics of the fourteenth century, the mystical tradition of Russian Orthodoxy, the Jesuits in China, Protestant Monasticism, the Shaker movement in America, and a number of articles on Zen, Chinese thought, and Buddhist monasticism. There is also an essay called "The Other Side of Despair: Notes on Christian Existentialism," in which Merton wrote of the points of affinity between existentialism, Zen, and apophatic Christian mysticism.² The Cartesian cleavage between subject and

¹"The New Consciousness," Zen and the Birds of Appetite, (New York: New Directions, 1968), p. 32. This essay was originally entitled, "The Self of Modern Man and the New Christian Consciousness," and appeared in R.M. Bucke Memorial Society's Newsletter-Review 2 (Montreal: April, 1967).

²"The Other Side of Despair: Notes on Christian Existentialism," in Mystics and Zen Masters (New York: Dell, 1967), pp. 258, 301. Originally published in The Critic 24 (October-November, 1965). For a further understanding of Merton's existentialism see his Albert Camus' 'The Plague': Introduction and Commentary, Religious Dimensions in Literature Series (New York: Seabury, 1968).

object could be overcome, thought Merton, by a theology that was, at once, existential and incarnational, and also enhanced by Zen. Such a theology would lead to a "definite social concern" and "authentic respect and love for the human person,"¹ thus providing an alternative to the chaotic world of the technological society, "a nihilist city of pandemonium, built on hybris and destined for cataclysm."² Merton was not against technology as such, but against the mental attitude that sacrifices ends to means and sees efficiency as more important than morality.

"We must first of all distinguish between the true scientific humanism of science itself and the anti-humanism of science in the service of totalitarianism, plutocracy and realpolitik....The Church therefore must not only enter into conversation with modern science, and learn to cooperate with the scientist and technician in building a better world, but she must also enable the scientist and technician to retain a certain spiritual freedom and independence from the power structures which offer them such tempting rewards."³

¹Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 273.

²"Can We Survive Nihilism?" Saturday Review 50 (April 15, 1967), p. 19.

³"The Church in World Crisis," Katallagete (Summer, 1967), p. 36.

Contemplation, either as found within the Christian tradition or as learned from the Zen Masters, was, for Merton, the means to achieve the new consciousness required to move from a limited understanding of the modern situation to a deeper and more profound realization of the spiritual malaise that contributed to the many problems of the 1960s. Man could not begin to search for, and accept, grace, until he recognized the need for it. Merton's social criticism was his attempt to awaken his fellow man to his own disease and alienation. The racial situation, the threat of nuclear war, and the perils of directionless technological advances provided him with the occasions for his message. Merton, by this time, was no longer calling all men to a life of contemplation, but was asking men to hear what the contemplative had to say from his own peculiar and unique point. The contemplative could point to the roots of the malaise, and the Christian contemplative could point as well to the solution:

"No humanism has retained the respect for man in his personal and existential actuality to the same extent as Christian humanism. The center of Christian humanism is the idea that God is love, not infinite power. Being love, God has given himself without reservation to man so that he has become man. Henceforth by reason of the incarnation, the love which is also the infinite creative secret of God in his hidden mystery becomes manifest and active through man, in man's world....It is man, in

Christ, who has the mission of not only making himself human but of becoming divine by the gift of the Spirit of love. This is not an abstract or contemplative operation only. Love is measured by its activity and its transforming power."¹

Therefore, Merton's interest in Zen and other aspects of Eastern thought and practise, his interest and commitment to the Christian heritage, and his social criticism were all part of the same reality. They were not separate interests in a complex mind, but were different aspects of one central concern: love as a concrete and existential reality.

Faith and Violence is a collection of essays on race, war, non-violence, and the "Death of God" theology. Rather than echo what a number of religious leaders were saying about the Vietnamese war, either for or against, Merton hoped to challenge the idea that "might makes right," or "the myth that all biological species in their struggle for survival must follow a law of aggression..."² Taking this stance allied Merton with those who were against the war, such as the Berrigan

¹"Christian Humanism," Spiritual Life 13 (Winter, 1967), pp. 229f.

²"Vietnam - an Overwhelming Atrocity," in Faith and Violence, p. 93. Originally published in The Catholic Worker 34 (March, 1968). On the nature of aggression see also, "Is Man a Gorilla with a Gun?", Faith and Violence, pp. 96-105.

brothers, and separated him from Christians who saw the war as "a sad and heavy obligation imposed by the mandate of love" (a Catholic Bishop) or a "spiritual war between good and evil" (Billy Graham), or "my country right or wrong!" (Cardinal Spellman).¹ Nevertheless, in so far as he did not advocate the burning of draft cards and the use of violent methods by war protesters, he separated himself from the left as well as the right. Philosophically he was one with the protesters, but he feared that the means that they were using were still a part of that kind of mentality that led to violence and war. If he was at odds with the radicals, it was because he did not see them as being radical enough.² The essays in this book, most of which were written during the years Merton was living in total solitude in the hermitage, are an excellent indication that his increased solitude was in no way an escape from involvement with the world. Furthermore, they indicate the far-reaching breadth of his criticism;

¹Quoted by Merton, Ibid., p. 91, and in "Peace and Protest," Faith and Violence, p. 40.

²See, for instance "Peace and Protest," Faith and Violence, pp. 40-46. "Peace and Protest: A Statement," in Thomas Merton on Peace, pp. 67-69, and "Note for Ave Maria," in Thomas Merton on Peace, pp. 231-233.

no human institution, not even the peace movement to which Merton contributed much, could stand beyond the possibility of the criticism developed from the contemplative stance.¹

The year of 1967 saw a reissue of Merton's Selected Poems, and in 1968 Merton published the first book of new poetry since Emblems of a Season of Fury. This was Cables to the Ace, subtitled "Familiar Liturgies of Misunderstanding." Although the value of this book as poetry is debatable,² it has numerous references, often subtle and disguised, to social and political issues. However, unlike his earlier poetry, in which the social ramifications were pronounced and often more clearly articulated than in his prose, Cables to the Ace has a message that is difficult to hear. Its prophetic impact on America of the late sixties would not equal

¹Many of the essays in Faith and Violence have already been mentioned in this survey of Merton's thought. (see above pp. 117, 128, 131, 132). Although this book is one of the best collections of Merton's thought, it would be superfluous to give it an extended treatment at this point.

²See, for instance, James York Glimm, "Exile Ends in Satire: Thomas Merton's Cables to the Ace," Cithara 11 (November, 1971), pp. 31-40, and Dennis Q. McInerney, Thomas Merton: The Man and His Work (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications, 1974).

the impact of his numerous essays. Although there are references to an impersonal technical society, and often surprising and subtle mention of particular manifestations of that society,¹ the message would be clear only to those whose ears were tuned to this unconventional style of poetry. The same is true for The Geography of Lograire, a long poem published the year after Merton's death. This poem suffers in that it has been published without benefit of the author's final revisions and editing. What changes, if any, Merton would have made is a useless matter of conjecture. Its principle contribution to an understanding of his social concern is his mention of the problems of the American Indian and references to his fascination with the "Cargo cults" of Melanesia.² As it stands, however, whatever social

¹For example, Merton mimics a popular American tobacco advertisement of the day: (Cables to the Ace, New York: New Directions, 1968), p. 40.

"I will get up and go to Marble country
Where deadly smokes grow out of moderate
heat
And all the cowboys look for fortunate
slogans
Among horses' asses."

²The Geography of Lograire (New York: New Directions, 1969), pp. 131ff, 91ff. On the Indian situation see also "Ishi: A Meditation," Catholic Worker 33 (March, 1967), pp. 5-6, republished in Thomas Merton on Peace, pp. 248-253; and "The Shoshoneans," Catholic Worker 33 (June, 1967), pp. 5-6. Moreover, see "The Sacred City," Catholic Worker 34 (January, 1968), pp. 4-6. Merton has a yet unpublished

value the poem may have is difficult to grasp at first reading. The chaotic style of the poem obscures rather than communicates, and therefore, for the purpose of analysis of the relationship between mystical prayer and social ethics in the over-all thought of Thomas Merton, The Geography of Lograire, along with Cables to the Ace, will have a minimal importance.¹

essay on "Cargo Theology," see Rice The Man in the Sycamore Tree, pp. 148-150, and the notes of Therese Lentfoehr in The Geography of Lograire, pp. 147-149.

¹This thesis does not pretend to be a study of poetic technique or poetic merit, and therefore there may be some poetic value in these books which will neither be discussed or debated in these pages. Nevertheless, this writer is in agreement with McInerny who wrote that, if Merton's intention was to "pass judgment upon the fragmented and disjointed nature of our age" (as held by Thomas Landes in "Monastic Life and the Secular City" in the Sewanee Review 77, Summer, 1969), p. 534) by reflecting this condition in a deliberate fragmentation of language, the decision was a poor one. McInerny continues, "One does not intimidate or dispel linguistic chaos by yet more linguistic chaos...To write about confusion confusedly only compounds the confusion, and that was what Merton was doing by his anti-poetry." (McInerny, Op.Cit. pp. 43f. One example of the minimal impact of these two books of poetry is that neither of them are quoted in a revised edition of A Thomas Merton Reader (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Image, 1974). For an appreciation of these books see George Kilcourse: Incarnation as the Integrating Principle in Thomas Merton's Poetry and Spirituality (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1974), pp. 366ff.

A number of Thomas Merton's writings have been published since his death in December, 1968. Some of these appeared immediately after his death and had probably already been submitted for publication by Merton himself.¹ Others, however, cannot be accurately dated. They were published by the authority of the Merton Legacy Trust from the vast collection of Merton's unpublished collected essays, and some of them are difficult, if not impossible, to date. This does not limit their worth, except in so far as they are used to try to indicate development in Merton's thought. The general trend of Merton's development in this chronological picture of his concern for the relationship of contemplation and action would not be complete however without some reference to those posthumously published works.

Readers in 1969 were able to discover in the works of Merton published that year further articulation of his understanding of the role of the contemplative in the modern world. In a note published in the magazine of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions,

¹ These include "As Man to Man," Cistercian Studies 4, No. 1 (1969), pp. 90-94. "Creative Silence," The Baptist Student 48 (February, 1969), pp. 18-22; "Terror and the Absurd: Violence and Non-Violence in Albert Camus," Motive 29 (February, 1969), pp. 5-15.

he reiterated the nature of this role:

"The task of the solitary and hermit is to realize in himself in a very special way a universal conscience, and to inject it, insofar as he can, into the communal consciousness."¹

The contemplative, especially the kind of contemplative that Merton himself tried to be, had the role of using his solitude to think holistically. This same theme was repeated in Contemplative Prayer, also published in 1969. This book was originally intended for a monastic audience, whereas the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions is certainly secular. Nevertheless, Merton is consistent. What he said to the monk was the same thing he said to the intellectual community:

"This is an age that, by its very nature as a time of crisis, of revolution, of struggle, calls for the special searching and questioning which are the work of the monk in his meditation and prayer. For the monk searches not only his own heart: he plunges deep into the heart of that world of which he remains a part although he seems to have 'left' it. In reality the monk abandons the world only in order

¹"The Monk as Marginal Man," The Center Magazine 2 (January, 1969), p. 33.

to listen more intently to the deepest and most neglected voices that proceed from its inner depth."¹

This book, since it is written for the monastic community, contains a more historical and theological description of the relationship between contemplation and action than is found in the works that Merton published primarily for the non-monastic reader. He gives an account of the history of this tension within the Christian tradition, especially concentrating on the Benedictine heritage, an account that is similar to the kind of thing he was doing in the earlier part of his career as a monastic writer.² Now, however, he is more straight-forwardly stating that there is no cleavage between the two. Recognizing the communal nature of the Church as a body made up of members whose vocations, talents and skills differ widely but all contribute to the whole, Merton is able to say that "there is no contradiction between action and contemplation when Christian apostolic activity is raised to the level of pure charity."³ In other words, Merton

¹Contemplative Prayer (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973), p. 25. Originally published as The Climate of Monastic Prayer (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications, 1969).

²Ibid., pp. 58-81. See above pp. 73f.

³Ibid., p. 143.

assures his monastic brothers and sisters that not everyone in the Church has to be a contemplative nor does everyone have to take part in the apostolic activities of the Church, as long as both the activist and the contemplative recognize each other as a part of the same body, sharing and giving life to each other. When this occurs, and the Church can live as an organic unity, then contemplation and action are resolved. "On that level," Merton continued, "action and contemplation are fused into one entity by the love of God and of our brother in Christ." Still, however, Merton emphasizes the primacy of contemplation. Without the spirit of contemplation in the Church, he warns, "Christian action can never really reach this high level."¹ But in no way can the monk ignore the world, and the actions of the Church in the world, while living his contemplative vocation. "Prayer does not blind us to the world," he wrote, "but it transforms our vision of the world, and makes us see it, all men, and all the history of mankind, in the light of God."²

Contemplative Prayer, although it is the last of Merton's works on prayer that has been published to date, is not necessarily the last word Merton had to

¹Loc. Cit.

²Ibid., p. 139.

say on the subject. There is still unpublished material, some of which is of considerable length,¹ which would help us to get a more complete picture of Merton's more mature understandings. It would be an error to try to fit this book into a developmental survey of his writings. Nevertheless, it is a valuable work, and although we cannot give it its precise chronological position in the history of Merton's thought, it cannot be ignored.

The year 1969 saw the publication of The Geography of Lograire and also My Argument With the Gestapo, a novel. This was one of the novels Merton had written before entering Gethsemani. It had originally been

¹In the files of the Merton Collection at Bellarmine College is a typescript of over 150 pages entitled The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation. In a conversation with this writer, Brother Patrick Hart said that this was very possibly to have been Merton's magnum opus. Merton left for the Orient without having written more than the first draft, however, and specified in his will that the book was definitely not to be published under any circumstances. Merton's wishes, unfortunately, must be honoured. However, scholars are allowed access to this book and, with certain stipulations made by the Merton Legacy Trust, may quote from it in part. Wherever quotations appear from The Inner Experience in this thesis, they appear with the kind permission of the Merton Legacy Trust. The date of this book is a matter of debate. Patrick Hart thinks that Merton began it in the early sixties. (Raymond Bailey relies very heavily on The Inner Experience in his book Thomas Merton on Mysticism.)

entitled Journal of My Escape From the Nazis. The publication of this novel, which contains autobiographical material from Merton's years in England and on the continent, showed not only a glimpse of the early literary talents of Merton, but also some early manifestations of some themes which would dominate his later thought. The following passage indicates, among other things, the kind of thinking which would later attract him to Zen:

"But when you ask me to tell my real name by means of passports, and live my life in terms of total allegiance to human systems, I can only answer you in a set of equivocal jokes, by which I am all but helpless to tell you that I don't understand what you are talking about."¹

¹My Argument with the Gestapo (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), p. 157. Compare this passage with the following quotation from "Day of a Stranger," Hudson Review 20 (Summer, 1967), p. 213 (later included in the revised edition of A Thomas Merton Reader, 1974).

- "- Why live in the woods?
- Well, you have to live somewhere.
- Do you get lonely?
- Yes, sometimes.
- Are you mad at people?
- No.
- Are you mad at the monastery?
- No.
- What do you think about the future of monasticism?
- Nothing. I don't think about it.
- Is it true that your bad back is due to Yoga?
- No.
- Is it true that you are practising Zen in secret?
- Pardon me, I don't speak English."

"You think you can identify a man by giving his date of birth and his address, his height, his eyes' colour, even his fingerprints. Such information will help you put the right tag on his body if you should run across his body somewhere full of bullets, but it doesn't say anything about the man himself. Men become objects and not persons. Now you complain because there is a war, but war is the proper state for a world in which men are a series of numbered bodies. War is the state that now perfectly fits your philosophy of life: you deserve the war for believing the things you believe. In so far as I tend to believe those same things and act according to such lies, I am a part of the complex of responsibilities for the war too. But if you want to identify me, ask me not where I live, or what I like to eat, or how I comb my hair, but ask me what I think I am living for, in detail, and ask me what I think is keeping me from living fully for the things I want to live for. Between these two answers you can determine the identity of any person. The better answer he has, the more of a person he is."¹

The cynicism of Merton in 1941 subsided in time, but some basic understandings would remain and become clarified and refined as Merton matured. In this passage one can discover statements of Merton's understanding of the nature of personhood and the nature of the world. Here one can see the early articulation of that which becomes more and more pronounced in Merton's writings: the spiritual vacuum

¹My Argument with the Gestapo, pp. 160f.

in the understanding the world has of itself, and the responsibility for the evil in the world that belongs to all those who espouse that philosophy, either explicitly in their overt actions, or implicitly by acquiescence to the world's demands.

One book and numerous articles appeared in 1970. The book was called Opening the Bible, a long essay that was originally to be published as a bridge between the Old and the New Testament in an edition of the Bible being published by Time-Life.¹ It is an excellent example of Merton's existentialism. In his earlier writings he spoke highly of the allegorical and typological approach to Scripture.² Moreover, this particular exegetical method, so popular in the early Church, is not evident in Opening the Bible. Merton has progressed from Origen and Augustine to Barth, Bultmann and Bonhoeffer, all of whom he quotes extensively. And, in addition to the Protestant theologians, Merton refers to various non-Christian traditions to help him explain the meaning of the Bible. He compares the Judeo-Christian

¹The Time-Life Bible never materialized. See the explanation given in The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 189.

²See, for instance, Bread in the Wilderness, pp. 27-38.

Scriptures to the Upanishads, to the writings of the Taoists and Confucians in China, and to the Zen tradition.¹ Furthermore, he brings in such secular works as the films of Pasolini, the psychology of Erich Fromm, and novels of William Faulkner.² In the opening pages of this book he immediately warns his reader against dualism. The Bible, he says, is not to be seen in terms of a separation between the sacred and the secular, rather "the message of the Bible is precisely a message of unity and reconciliation, an all-embracing and positive revelation from which nothing real is excluded and in which all receives its full due and its ultimate meaning."³ All of man's experience, and all articulations of those experiences, can be instruments of God's revelation. The aim of Opening the Bible is to speak of the unique word that is spoken to man in the experiences recorded in the Bible. The Bible raises "the fundamental question of identity." It asks us to examine who we are and what we are to do:

¹ See especially Opening the Bible (London: Unwin, 1972), pp. 50-53.

² On Pasolini see Ibid., pp. 29-33; on Fromm, pp. 35-37, on Faulkner, pp. 42-49.

³ Ibid., p. 4.

"When you ask: 'What is this book?' you find that you are also implicitly being asked: 'Who is this that reads it?'.....If we ask for information about the meaning of life, it answers by asking us when we intend to start living."¹

These questions of man's identity are answered by the Bible in an existential manner. Rather than pointing to abstract and theoretical answers, the Bible points to events. The central message is the unique claim that in the kairotic event of Jesus Christ, the inner truth of humanity is revealed and a new relationship of man with man is established in which men no longer live for themselves but for others.² Central to the Bible, in Merton's understanding, is the relationship between the experience of God and social responsibility. The meaning of "person" is revealed not in a theory but in a person. And because the central event of the Bible is the coming of a person, the meaning of the Bible is to be found "not in the message about Christ but in an encounter with Christ," a surrendering to the Christ so that we live no longer according to an "ego-fantasy

¹Opening the Bible, pp. 17, 20.

²Ibid., pp. 73f. See below pp. 439f.

but by the Spirit of Christ speaking out of the inmost ground of our being in our encounter with our brother."¹

One finds in Opening the Bible a picture of Merton that is consistent with the writings of his later life. The ecumenical dimension of his thought is evident in the way he accepts secular and non-Christian traditions and the social dimension is seen in his insistence on the moral imperatives of the encounter with the person of Christ.

Beginning in 1970 there began to appear a number of articles that were edited versions of tape-recorded talks that had been given by Merton during his life time. A series of such articles appeared in a journal called Sisters Today.² These had been talks given by

¹Ibid., p. 70.

²These particular articles, which form a unity and are therefore mentioned together, are called: "This is God's Work," "The Life that Unifies," "Prayer, Personalism, and the Spirit," "Building Community on God's Love," "Community, Politics, and Contemplation," "Prayer, Tradition and Experience," "Contemplation in a World of Action," and "Prayer and Conscience." They appeared in Sisters Today 42, between August, 1970 and April, 1971, and were edited by Naomi Burton Stone, one of the trustees of Merton's estate. Since that time a number of other articles have been published based on tape-recorded conferences and lectures. These include "A Life Free from Care," Cistercian Studies 5 (1970), No. 3, pp. 217-226; "The Face: Tertullian and St. Cyprian on Virgins," Cistercian Studies 6 (1971), No. 4, pp. 334-342; "Guerric of Igny's Easter Sermons," Cistercian Studies 7 (1972), No. 1, pp. 85-95; and "The Ascetic Life, Experience of God and Freedom,"

Thomas Merton in September, 1968 to sisters at a house in Alaska. Their primary concern is monastic prayer, but interwoven with the discussion on prayer are various references to social ethics. Here, as in Contemplative Prayer, Merton is addressing his message to a specifically contemplative and cloistered audience, introducing that audience to the more anthropological aspects of prayer. Merton's starting point was not so much God, but rather, he began with the person who prays:

"Prayer and identity go together. Who is it that prays? What is our concept of ourselves or our non-concept of ourselves praying? Who do we feel ourselves to be when we pray?"¹

This existential approach to prayer was evident in Merton's early writings, beginning with The Sign of Jonas and reaching its most concise expression in The New Man. It characterizes the talks Merton gave to the sisters in 1968, and is also characteristic of most of the talks that have been published since his death. In brief, it is an acknowledgement of the via negativa,

Cistercian Studies 9 (1974), No. 1, pp. 55-65. More such essays can be expected in the future. In addition, twelve hours of conference have been published on cassette tapes by Electronic Paperbacks of Chappaqua, New York.

¹"Prayer and Conscience," Sisters Today 42 (April, 1971), p. 409.

the belief that man has no direct knowledge of God as He exists in Himself, that he can only know God indirectly and that therefore, the way to God is not through speculation or abstraction, but through a recognition of Him as the ground of one's being. For Merton, prayer is the means for the person to discover not only God but also the true self. "It is in prayer," he told the sisters, "that we are truly and fully ourselves"¹ and in being fully ourselves we are free to know and love our brother and to know and love God. Without knowing our true selves, it is impossible either to love our brothers or to know God. Contemplation serves these ends.

This existential approach to the monastic vocation is reiterated in the collection of essays on monastic life which were published in Contemplation in a World of Action in 1971. On the one hand, the Christian is not to be concerned with abstractions but with the concrete situations:

"The great problem of our time is not to formulate clear answers to neat theoretical questions but to tackle the self-destructive alienation of man in a society dedicated in theory

¹"Community, Politics, and Contemplation," Sisters Today 42 (January, 1971), p. 245.

to human values and in practice to the pursuit of power for its own sake."¹

On the other hand, Merton said in a taped conference, the religious and theological dimension cannot be overlooked. "We are learning more and more that the denial of God is really the denial of man. Yet, on the other hand, the affirmation of God is the true affirmation of man." Nevertheless, the concrete situation always predominates. Merton continued, "Monks ought to be able to reassure the modern world that in the struggle between thought and existence we are on the side of existence, not on the side of abstraction."² Toward the end of his life, therefore, Merton was teaching that the Transcendent was to be discovered as the Imminent, and the discovery of the transcendent God incarnated in the world led to a particular ethical stance. The way in which one acts, depends on how one apprehends the ground of all reality,

¹"Is the World a Problem?" in Contemplation in a World of Action (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 153. Originally this essay was in Commonweal 84 (June 3, 1966).

²"Is the Contemplative Life Finished?" in Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 331f, originally a taped conference published in Monastic Studies 7 (1969).

and that the primary purpose for the contemplative life is to discover the Absolute and the Eternal at the ground of one's being. Again, without knowing our true selves, love is truncated:

"He who attempts to act and do things for others or for the world without deepening his own self-understanding, freedom, integrity and capacity to love, will not have anything to give others. He will communicate to them nothing but the contagion of his own obsessions, his aggressiveness, his ego-centered ambitions, his delusions about ends and means, his doctrinaire prejudices and ideas."¹

There are only a few references to specific social, economic, or political situations in Contemplation in a World of Action, yet the book contains the core of Merton's most mature understanding of the relationship between contemplative prayer and social action. Never does he seek a pragmatic excuse for the practise of contemplation. It is never to be seen as a utilitarian measure, it should not be defended "in terms of action and efficacy."² Nevertheless, without the discovery

¹"Contemplation in a World of Action," in Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 164.

²Ibid., p. 158.

of the true reality of the ground of our being, all action becomes activism, a shallow, and ultimately ineffective, exercise. Without the contemplative element, all attempts at love eventually fail because the eternal ground and source of love has not been allowed to become known.

Another collection of essays published in 1971 was Thomas Merton on Peace. Many of these essays had already been included in Faith and Violence and other earlier books by Merton, and some have already been quoted in this chapter.¹ There are, however, numerous essays that appear here for the first time, having hitherto been unpublished or privately circulated among friends. Here one can find further verification of Merton's contribution to the discussions on war and peace that took place in American society in the 1960s. Such previously unpublished works included "Target Equals City," in which Merton argues against the applicability of traditional just war theories in an age in which nuclear weapons will inevitably destroy non-combatants; "Danish Non-violent Resistance to Hitler," in which he shows a concrete example of non-violent resistance to evil, (Non-violence, for Merton,

¹See above pp. 58, 60, 117, 130, 131, 139, 141.

could never be a passive acquiescence to existing evil); and various incidental writings: his statement upon being awarded the Pax Medal in 1963, notes from the Retreat on "The Spiritual Roots of Violence," and his Prayer for Peace which was delivered to the United States Congress in 1962.¹

The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton is the last of Merton's books to be published to date. Others, either previously unpublished material or collections of writings that have appeared in scattered places, will be published in the future.² The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton required considerable editing. The journal notations were taken from three different handwritten notebooks (a photograph of a representative page demonstrates both Merton's handwriting and the difficult job the editors had in deciphering it!): a public notebook, a private journal (which is not to be published but was used for points of clarification),

¹Thomas Merton on Peace is valuable as well for the long and detailed introduction by Gordon C. Zahn; "Original Child Monk: An Appreciation," pp. ix-xli.

²These forthcoming publications include Merton's Collected Poems, which has been accepted for publication by New Direction; Collected Essays on the American Indian and A Vow of Conversation, his monastic journal from 1964 to 1966, both of which have not yet been sent to a publisher. The official biography of Merton, by John Howard Griffen (to be published by Houghton-Mifflin) is expected shortly; see above pp. 21, 24. Certain reissues of early works have,

and a small spiral notebook that Merton obviously kept in his coat pocket and used for quick notations. In addition to these journal entries, this volume also contains various letters, transcriptions of lectures and conferences, including his final lecture, "Marxism and Monastic Perspectives," and other incidental writings. The editors' supplementary material is also of great value. There are copious notes, a glossary of Eastern words and concepts, and various writings about Merton, particularly about the circumstances of his death, and numerous photographs. The journal material itself, although not directly related to Merton's understanding of prayer and ethics, is quite helpful in explaining his personal involvement with the religious traditions of the East, his quest for solitude, and his understanding of the role of Christian monasticism in the modern world. Here one is able to see Thomas Merton in the last months of his life; his hopes, concerns and interests. It is a very personal journal, and therefore, very helpful in so far as it provides a portrait of this complex man. Merton, in the months before his death, continued to show his great

however, been published, especially in Great Britain, since The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton.

openness to the world in the midst of his liberation from it. On the day of his death he lectured his fellow monks on the social consequences of the monastic life:

"The monk belongs to the world, but the world belongs to him insofar as he has dedicated himself totally to liberation from it in order to liberate it. You can't just immerse yourself in the world and get carried away with it. That is no salvation. If you want to pull a drowning man out of the water, you have to have some support yourself. Supposing somebody is drowning and you are standing on a rock, you can do it; or supposing you can support yourself by swimming, you can do it. There is nothing gained by simply jumping in the water and drowning with him."¹

The support Merton sought was solitude and silence. The monastic life provided him with this support. In solitude and silence he found himself open to God in the depths of his being, and open as well to God in the depths of all beings. In November, 1968, high above Darjeeling, Merton wrote:

"The sun is high at the zenith. Clear soft sound of a temple bell far down in the valley. Voices of children near

¹"Marxism and Monastic Perspectives," in The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 341. cf The Wisdom of the Desert, pp. 23f, and see above pp. 94f.

the cottages above me on the mountainside. The sun is warm. Everything falls into place. Nothing is to be decided...There is nothing to be judged."¹

"The monk," he said on the day of his death, "knows the score...he has come to experience the ground of his own being in such a way that he knows the secret of liberation and can somehow or other communicate this to others."² Merton communicated this liberation in numerous ways, not least important of which was his social criticism, and certainly not least of all was his vision that, at the deepest level of existence, "everything falls into place."

2. Assessment

Various stresses and emphasis in Thomas Merton's approach to the contemplative vocation can be discerned in a survey of the history of his publications. Shifts can be seen in numerous areas, among which are the manner in which he addresses the question of the relationship

¹The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton, p. 151.

²"Marxism and Monastic Perspectives," in The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton, p. 333.

between contemplation and action; his quest for certitude; his approach to other religions; his concern for the inner workings of spirituality and his subsequent concern for social ramifications of spirituality; and his theological method. The changes in Merton's approach to these and other areas of concern raise certain questions about his life, and these questions can be reduced to one: was there one Merton or many Mertons?

A brief examination of certain shifts in his thought indicate the enormity of the question. For, as many have noted, there is a remarkable difference between the kind of things Merton was writing in the 1940s and the things he was writing in the decade before his death.

The first important difference is in the way in which Merton changed in his approach to the relationship between contemplation and action. As has been mentioned, to be concerned about this relationship is not necessarily to be concerned about the relationship between contemplative prayer and social ethics. The word "action" can be used to denote something that falls far short of involvement with the struggles of society. As has been shown, in his earlier writings, Thomas Merton often writes of contemplation and action in a limited sense. Action is seen as related to contemplation in a negative way.

It is the necessary concomitant to contemplation. The contemplative monk needs to have an environment in which he can practice contemplation, and such an environment requires a certain activity in order to produce and maintain it. Action is secondary to contemplation; it serves contemplation. This emphasis can be found in some, although not all, of Merton's earlier discussions of contemplation and action.¹ At the same time, even inchoately in some of his earliest writings on monastic spirituality, Merton demonstrated a more far-reaching understanding of contemplation and action. Action is seen as the result of contemplation. It is the end result of the contemplative experience.² In his later writings this is Merton's exclusive emphasis. He does continue to write about the needs of the monastic community, but he no longer limits any discussion of contemplation and action to life as it is lived simply within that community.

Another shift in Merton's thinking can be seen in his quest for certitude. For instance, in the 1940s Merton was quite sure of the efficacy of his newly chosen

¹See in particular, The Ascent to Truth, and the series of articles called "Action and Contemplation in St. Bernard." See above pp. 73f.

²See above pp. 74f; cf for some examples of this understanding in Seeds of Contemplation (1949).

way of life. The monastery was the true centre of the world, and the monk had a true understanding of life:

"If you receive a letter or see a document signed by someone who puts the letters O.C.R. or O.C.S.R. after his name, you can tell yourself that he is someone who has found the meaning of life."¹

In his later writings Merton had developed in such a way as to be less sure of himself. In 1967 he wrote:

"I do not know if I have found answers. When I first became a monk, yes, I was more sure of 'answers.' But as I grow older in the monastic life and advance further into solitude, I become aware that I have only begun to seek the questions. And what are the questions? Can man make sense out of his existence? Can man honestly give his life meaning merely by adopting a certain set of explanations which pretend to tell him why the world began and where it will end, why there is evil and what is necessary for a good life?...I have been summoned to explore a desert area of man's heart in which explanations no longer suffice, and in which one learns that only experience counts."²

¹The Waters of Siloe (1949), (New York: Doubleday Image), 1963 edition, p. 21. Elena Malits sees this as an example of Merton's early arrogance. See Journey into the Unknown: Thomas Merton's Continuing Conversion (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1974), pp. 281, 283.

²"As Man to Man," Cistercian Studies 4 (1969), p. 92.

In his later life, Merton was able to entertain doubt. In order to overcome "conventional and superstitious surrogates that have taken the place of faith" he found it necessary to see that "faith sometimes mysteriously takes on the aspect of doubt."¹ The certainty of Merton's earliest writings was replaced by a faith that was less sure of itself, one in which certainty was no longer seen as a positive indication of knowledge of God, but as a delusion: "If in resisting doubt," he wrote in his journal, "we convince ourselves that we truly 'know God' we have lost touch with reality."² For the solitary, the only certitude was one which was found in darkness and unknowing: "the presence of God in the midst of uncertainty and nothingness, as the only reality but as a reality which cannot be 'placed' or identified."³ Only by accepting doubt and the way of unknowing can one "know the score."

¹"Apologies to an Unbeliever," in Faith and Violence, p. 213. Originally in Harpers Magazine, November, 1966.

²Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 293.

³Disputed Questions, p. 202. On Doubt, see also Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 45, Contemplative Prayer, p. 96, and New Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 105, 134.

Thomas Merton's approach to other religions changed in his twenty-seven years as a monk. Monica Furlong felt that in his early days as a monk, Merton "wore an aggressive Catholicism like a glaring birthmark." For the early Merton, she wrote, "All that is Catholic is good. All else is evil..."¹ In later life, however, Merton changed. His vision expanded to one which included not only the rest of Christianity, but the non-Christian religions and even secular humanism as well. This shift can be seen in the ways in which Merton introduced Seeds of Contemplation in 1949 and New Seeds of Contemplation twelve years later. In the first book Merton wrote:

"Many of the things said in this book could be said much better by somebody else, and have been said better already by the saints. The author has tried to say them in the language of the men of our time and he insists that it is his most earnest wish to be understood in all his statements, in the light of Catholic doctrine. If there is anything in these pages that cannot be reconciled with the teaching of the Church, it is to be considered as automatically deleted."²

A considerable shift is evident in the Preface to New Seeds of Contemplation. He does not deny his Catholicism, but tempers his adherence to the teachings of the Church

¹ Travelling In (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), pp. 94f.

² Seeds of Contemplation (revised edition), pp. 7f.

and expands the intended audience for the book:

"It is not addressed primarily to Catholics, though it should be clear that the author has tried, in every case, to explain difficult matters in language that accords with Catholic theology."¹

A certain doctrinaire rigidity is lacking in the latter statement. In 1961, Merton continued to use Catholic theological language, but inasmuch as he was open to new positions and a new audience, he did not feel that he had to adhere to any strict Catholic dogmatic position. He continued:

"There are very many religious people who have no need for a book like this, because theirs is a different kind of spirituality. If to them this book is without meaning, they should not feel concerned. On the other hand, there are perhaps people without formal religious affiliations who will find in these pages something that appeals to them."²

The strict Catholicism was abated. This ecumenical openness characterized much of the work of Thomas Merton

¹New Seeds of Contemplation, p. xi.

²Loc. Cit. It should be noted that Merton was sharing in the same spirit that motivated Pope John XXIII and Vatican II but that the seeds of Merton's openness preceded both Pope John's elevation and the advent of the Vatican Council.

in the 1960s and reached its epitome in his trip to the East in 1968. His ecumenicity and openness can be found on every page of The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton. The Thomas Merton who wrote so openly about Tibetan Buddhism wrote with considerably different style than the Merton who wrote The Seven Storey Mountain.

Henri Nouwen calls attention to the difference between the tone of two of Merton's published journals. According to Nouwen,¹ The Sign of Jonas is an introspective monologue, whereas Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander is concerned instead with what is in the world. The chapter titles of The Sign of Jonas are personal: "Solemn Profession," "Death of an Abbot," "To the Altar of God." Those of Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander are, among others: "Barth's Dream," and "Truth and Violence: An Interesting Era." Both books are journals; both are autobiographical. But even within the context of autobiographical writings, Merton has moved from a concern with himself to a concern for the world in which he lives.

¹ Pray to Live: Thomas Merton: A Contemplative Critic (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides, 1972), translated from the Dutch by David Schlauer. See page 40.

Finally, a comparison of Merton's theological style is indicative of changes in his approach to religion. Merton did not write very much explicit theology, as such, and most of his theological writings are essays hidden in various journals of greater or lesser obscurity. Nevertheless, he did publish two books that were particularly theological as opposed to being more meditative or prophetic. These two books show an enormous difference in approach. In The Ascent to Truth (1951), Merton is a scholastic. He assumes a "certain pattern of development" which is imposed upon mankind by nature. This a priori pattern has the following essential elements:

"First, and most important of all: I must adapt myself to objective reality. Second, this adaptation is achieved by work of my highest spiritual faculties - intelligence and will. Third, it demands expression when my whole being, commanded by my will, produces actions which, by their moral vitality and fruitfulness, show that I am living in harmony with the true order of things."¹

In The New Man (1961) Merton shifts from a concern with understanding objective reality to an existential stance. He moves from "the pure objective concept of "being" to an exposition of contemplation which

¹The Ascent to Truth, p. 9.

"comprehends God not as a separate object but as the Reality within our own reality, the Being within our own being."¹ Merton transcends the subject-object dichotomy in his theological method. God is not to be discovered in objective truth but in subjective and existential encounter.

In the writings of Thomas Merton, the concern for the place of action within a contemplative community was replaced by a concern for prophetic action in the world. The religious certainty that Merton expressed in his early writings was replaced by a faith that includes doubt. The rigid Catholicism of the 1940s is replaced by the broad ecumenism of the 1960s. The introspection of The Sign of Jonas is superseded by an openness to the problems of the world. Scholasticism is replaced by existentialism. It is no wonder that Monica Furlong asked the question, "What happened to Thomas Merton?"² Are there two Mertons, an early Merton and a late one? Or was there one Merton, a thinker who grew and matured? In other words, does an examination of his writings

¹The New Man, pp. 16, 18.

²Travelling In, p. 94. Furlong's dilemma is echoed in an article by A.M. Allchin: "Solitude and Communion in the Life of Thomas Merton," Christian 2 (Whitsun, 1974), No. 1, pp. 81-90.

show that Merton made some radical and thorough changes in his thought, or did he develop certain ideas and allow them to mature? Or is there a third position, one which allows for both change and development?

Cases have been presented for both extremes. James Thomas Baker saw a radical change in Merton's thought. He wrote that Merton had changed "dramatically," and although he refuses to give a precise point that marked the change, he can still speak of an "early Merton" and a "late Merton." Merton's emphasis, he wrote, "had shifted decidedly from the other-worldly to the this-worldly."¹ Daniel Berrigan, too, was struck by the decided change in Merton's writings. He wrote that, although he had lost interest in Thomas Merton in the late 1940s, he resumed a correspondence with him in the early 1960s because of the kind of things Merton was writing for The Catholic Worker.²

A number of Merton's readers have tried to pinpoint a moment, or at least a period, that marked the dividing line between the early Merton and the late Merton.

¹ James Thomas Baker, Thomas Merton Social Critic (Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1971), pp. 27f.

² Daniel Berrigan: "Daniel Berrigan on Thomas Merton," The Thomas Merton Life Center Newsletter, April, 1973. See above p. 57, fn. 2.

Mark Gibbard sees it as the Louisville shopping-centre experience that is told in Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander.¹ James Glimm sees the Introduction to Thoughts in Solitude as the beginning of Merton's social criticism.² Dennis Q. McInerny sees its beginning in No Man is an Island.³ Merton's friend, Daniel Walsh, sees The New Man as the turning point.⁴ Elena Malits sees Disputed Questions as pivotal,⁵ and Donald Grayston, in a careful analysis of two editions of Seeds of Contemplation and the subsequent New Seeds of Contemplation, concludes that the new material in the latter is definitely new, and not simply a shift in tone "which could be explained by the gradual increase in knowledge and insight which could reasonably be expected to take place in a 'spiritual' writer over a dozen years in the

¹See above, pp. 56f.

²James York Glimm, "Exile Ends in Satire: Thomas Merton's Cables to the Ace," page 32.

³D.Q. McInerny, Thomas Merton the Man and His Work, p. 26.

⁴As reported in F.J. Kelly's Man Before God, p. 18.

⁵Elena Malits' Journey into the Unknown: Thomas Merton's Continuing Conversion, p. 22.

fifties and sixties."¹ Perhaps the most extreme of all positions is taken by Robert J. Voight, who claims that there is a marked difference between Merton the poet and Merton the priest, one stressing individuality, the other stressing collectivity. Voight sees Merton struggling continuously to reconcile these two selves, succeeding only in his "mature years" to achieve a sort of harmony, with the poet in Merton predominating.²

Not all critics of Merton are willing to make any strict division between Merton as poet and priest, or early Merton and late Merton. Even those who do attempt

¹Donald Grayston: "The Making of a Spiritual Classic: Thomas Merton's Seeds of Contemplation and New Seeds of Contemplation," p. 351.

²Robert J. Voight: Thomas Merton: A Different Drummer (Liguori, Mo.: Liguori Publications, 1972), p. 94. This writer agrees with George Kilcourse who criticized Voight for being extremely simplistic, "Voight's conclusion that the poet took precedence at the expense of Merton's priesthood is preposterous Certainly Voight's work lacks maturity and any sensitivity to Merton's continuous effort to live the two vocations." See Kilcourse: Incarnation as the Integrating Principle in Thomas Merton's Poetry and Spirituality (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1974), p. 30. Another critic who sees a definite "early" and "late" Merton is Tolbert McCarroll, in "A Quiet Life: The Contemporary Spiritual Significance of Fr. Louis Merton," Cistercian Studies 8 (1973), pp. 108-209.

to discover a turning point in his writings, are often those who also stress that Merton developed rather than changed. The simple fact that so many "turning points" can be discerned is fair warning against any attempt to make Merton's writings fall into a pattern of rigid consistency. McInerny, for the sake of analysis, divides Merton's attitudes into two, a "this-worldly" and an "other-worldly" attitude, but insists that it would be wrong to think of this division "as something rigid and uncompromising."¹ Elena Malits' entire thesis is that Merton's life was a continuing conversion and that turning points are only indicative of a continuing process, a process that included religious, moral, and intellectual conversions. Jean Leclercq sees not "two men - for few personalities have been as well integrated as his - but two spheres of activity."²

Other critics stand at the other extreme and stress the continuity of Merton's thought rather than changes. John J. Higgins, for instance, writes:

"After an extensive reading of Merton's works as well as several conversations with some of the monks who lived with

¹McInerny, p. 59.

²"The Evolving Monk," Thomas Merton: Monk, p. 95; and also in his Introduction to Contemplation in a World of Action, p. xi.

Merton at the Abbey of Gethsemani, the present writer feels that there is really no noticeable tension, no contradiction, no radical change in Merton's thinking or writing."¹

Higgins sees that in Merton there is, instead of change, "a gradual unfolding."² Gordon Zahn in his lengthy Introduction to Thomas Merton on Peace, agrees with Higgins, when he writes of the unity of Merton's work:

"The consistency of his concerns outweighs the slight differences in emphasis or attitude one might uncover over the course of time. ...All of Merton's writings, whether specifically focused on spirituality and mysticism, on liturgy and the monastic life, or on pressing social issues and problems, are of a piece."³

Other critics have pointed to the early instances of some of Merton's later concerns. John-Eudes Bamberger, for instance, sees Merton's first explicit

¹ John J. Higgins, Merton's Theology of Prayer (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications, 1971), p. xvii. (Also published by Doubleday as Thomas Merton on Prayer.)

² Ibid., . . . p. xix. Higgins reviewed Baker's Thomas Merton Social Critic and criticized it for its tendency to divide Merton into an early and late period. See The American Ecclesiastical Review 166, (April, 1972), pp. 282f.

³ "Original Child Monk: An Appreciation," in Thomas Merton on Peace, p. xi.

social criticisms in The Seven Storey Mountain,¹ while both Chalmers MacCormick and Edward Rice trace Merton's interest in Zen to the 1930s when he read Huxley's Ends and Means.² It has been one of the primary concerns of this paper's section on the development of Merton's thought to indicate precisely this continuity between the mature thought of Thomas Merton and the seeds of that thought in his early life. Edward Rice agrees when he writes, "...what was to come in the 1960s was not an aberration but the entire point of his life as a layman and especially as a Trappist."³ This "evolving development" of Merton's thought and writings is the thesis of Frederic Joseph Kelly's book Man Before God, in which he argues that "Thomas Merton, the social commentator, was the externalization

¹"The Monk," in Thomas Merton: Monk, p. 44.

²Chalmers MacCormick, "The Zen Catholicism of Thomas Merton," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 9 (Fall, 1972), p. 805; and Rice, The Man in the Sycamore Tree: The Good Time and Hard Life of Thomas Merton, p. 13. MacCormick dates Merton's reading of Huxley as 1937, Rice as 1935. In The Seven Storey Mountain, Merton himself gives the date as 1937 (p. 223). This is an indication of the hurriedness and lack of precision in Rice's otherwise fascinating and delightful biography. As "an entertainment" (Rice's description), his book has merit, as aid to scholars, it is not very dependable.

³Rice, Op. Cit., p. 108.

of Father Louis, a man of deep religious experience." Kelly summarizes the focus of those who prefer to understand Merton as a man of continuity rather than one of contrasts:

"It is true to say that there was no 'earlier Merton' or 'later Merton.' The circumstances and contexts of his life changed: his writings on some topics took on a new emphasis and urgency, but in his mature years he never repudiated the fundamental ideas of the past."¹

Nevertheless, it is necessary to notice that Merton did, in fact, repudiate certain elements of his past. Whether or not he repudiated anything 'fundamental' is a matter of conjecture,² but in his later life he made numerous references to various aspects of his earlier life that he no longer saw as salutary. For instance, he repudiated the early biographies of

¹Kelly, Man Before God, pp. 259, 262.

²Daniel Berrigan felt that Merton might possibly have been repudiating his decision to become a monk when he quotes Merton as saying, in a private conversation, "If I had to do it over again I would never become a monk, but now that I'm here they'll never get me out." See Berrigan, "Daniel Berrigan on Thomas Merton," p. 6.

saints that were written and published in his early career.¹ More importantly, he repudiated an image that he inadvertently created for himself with the publication of The Seven Storey Mountain, and in so far as he repudiated the image, he came close to repudiating the book itself. In the essay called, "Is the World a Problem?" he defended a monk's role as one concerned for the world, but to do this he first had to explain himself:

"Due to a book I wrote thirty years ago, I have myself become a sort of stereotype of the world-denying contemplative - the man who spurned New York, spat on Chicago, and tropped on Louisville, heading for the woods with Thoreau in one pocket,

¹See Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 150 in which Merton refers to some "absurd" biographies which "thank God" never got published: see also A Thomas Merton Reader, in which he says of his life that "At first the writing...was very bad.", p. ix. An apology for Merton is found in Lentfoehr, "The Spiritual Writer," in Thomas Merton Monk, in which she explains how Merton wrote these books under the vow of obedience and that they were published without his having the opportunity to make corrections. In an unpublished manuscript which has often been quoted Thomas Merton made an evaluation of his books up to and including Mystics and Zen Masters. Only two books rated his most deprecatory remarks. Exile Ends in Glory was the only book he rated "bad," and What Are These Wounds ranked "awful." See "Father Louis' own Evaluation of His Books," Collected Essays Vol. 1, p. 15. This is an unpublished collection, one copy of which exists at Bellarmine College Library, the other at the Abbey of Gethsemani.

John of the Cross in another, and holding the Bible open at the Apocalypse. This personal stereotype is probably my own fault, and it is something I have tried to demolish on occasion."¹

There are references, even in The Seven Storey Mountain itself, to an identity crisis within Merton.² He knew that he was moving from one understanding of his life to another. "I have become very different from what I used to be," he wrote in his journal in 1951, "The man who began this journal is dead, just as the man who finished The Seven Storey Mountain...was dead." The writing of his autobiography, he wrote, was necessary for him to get certain things off his mind "for good," so he could forget them and move on.³ In 1967, in an interview, Merton was asked about his early and most famous work. He responded in a way that is consistent with what he had written in his journal sixteen years earlier:

"Yes, I'll accept The Seven Storey Mountain as a point of departure, and I'll be glad if we can depart

¹"Is the World a Problem?" in Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 143f. Originally in Commonweal 84 (June 3, 1966).

²See The Seven Storey Mountain, pp. 490ff.

³The Sign of Jonas, p. 317.

from it and keep moving. I left the book behind many years ago. Certainly, it was a book I had to write, and it says a great deal of what I have to say; but if I had to write it over again, it would be handled in a very different idiom...I was still dealing in a crude theology that I had learned as a novice: a clean-cut division between the natural and the supernatural, God and the world, sacred and secular, with boundary lines that were supposed to be quite evident...life is not as simple as it once looked in The Seven Storey Mountain. Unfortunately, the book was a best-seller, and has become a kind of edifying legend or something. That is a dreadful fate. I am doing my best to live it down."¹

When The Seven Storey Mountain was translated into Japanese in 1966, Merton provided a Preface in which he wrote about changes in his understanding of his own life:

"Certainly I have never for a moment thought of changing the definitive decisions taken in the course of my life...if anything the decision to renounce and depart from modern secular society, a decision repeated and reaffirmed many times, has finally become irrevocable. Yet the

¹"An Interview with Thomas Merton," Thomas P. McDonnell, pp. 32f.

attitude and the assumptions behind this decision have perhaps changed in many ways."¹

This is not an out-right repudiation at all.

Nevertheless, in so far as Merton was concerned, the attitudes and assumptions of his earliest writings were his no longer, and could only be understood as parts of an on-going process of growth and development. Perhaps it is not wise to divide Merton into an "early Merton" and a "later Merton," but Merton himself seems to do just that. Yet he makes no rigid lines of demarcation. He does not attempt to classify his works into periods,² except for his introductory remarks in A Thomas Merton Reader, but the division is only in order to show the congruity between what he was writing and the various stages of his monastic career. He is considerably less

¹Preface to the Japanese edition of The Seven Storey Mountain, in the Bellarmine College Library collection. Some of these changes, Merton continues, are his having learned "to look back into that world with a greater compassion, seeing those in it not as alien to myself, not as peculiar and deluded strangers, but as identified with myself. In breaking from 'their world' I have strangely not broken from them."

²Although, as has been mentioned (p. 179) he did evaluate his works. The Seven Storey Mountain received his highest ranking, "Better," along with such works as The Sign of Jonas, New Seeds of Contemplation, Seeds of Destruction, The Way of Chuang Tzu, Raids on the Unspeakable, and Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander. (His highest accolade 'best' he gave to no book.) The two biographies of saints ranked lowest. Also ranked low, though not as low as the biographies, were The Living

concerned with these issues than are his critics. He simply recognizes that all throughout his life he had matured, changed, and developed, but such recognition does not include a sense of depreciation of his earlier values. The many years of monastic life, his solitude and his "contact with other solitudes,"¹ and his contacts necessitated by his careers as writer and teacher, provided new perspectives, raised new questions and brought new understandings. There were changes; comparisons of his earlier and later works make the changes obvious. But the seeds of those changes were present in the early Merton. The mature Merton of the 1960s can be found hidden and implied in the youthful Merton of the 1930s and 1940s. In some cases it might be of value to divide Merton into many parts,² but this can be done with safety only if one is ready to recognize an over-all consistency in the man and his thought. The changes that did occur were indications, not so much of a change in who Thomas Merton really was,

Bread and Seasons of Celebration. The Ascent to Truth and Life and Holiness were "fair."

¹New Seeds of Contemplation, p. x.

²For example, see the work of Donald Grayston, quoted above, p. 74, fn. E. Glenn Hinson, "Merton's Many Faces," Religion in Life 42 (Summer, 1973), pp. 153-167; Alice Mayhew, "Merton Against Himself," Commonweal 91 (October 17, 1969), pp. 70-74.

but changes in his own ability to recognize and express his inner self and his understanding of that self and its Ground.

3. Was Thomas Merton a Mystic?

Merton wrote very little about his own spiritual or mystical experiences. There are some who conclude that Merton himself was not a mystic. Linda Parsons, for instance, writes, "In my opinion Merton was not a mystic, but a man of genius who was a profound, contemplative philosopher and Christian humanist." She feels that there is too little evidence about any of Merton's personal experiences to warrant calling him a mystic rather than a "contemporary philosopher and Civil Rights leader."¹

Merton does, however, describe certain experiences which could be considered as mystical. Two of these occur before he had entered Gethsemani. The first occurred shortly after the death of his father. He

¹Linda Parsons, "Comments on Mann's Article about Merton," Newsletter-Review 6, The R.M. Bucke Memorial Society (Spring, 1973), p. 23.

described it in the following manner:

"I was in my room. It was night. The light was on. Suddenly it seemed to me that Father, who had now been dead more than a year, was there with me. The sense of his presence was as vivid and as real and as startling as if he had touched my arm or spoken to me. The whole thing passed in a flash, but in that flash, instantly, I was overwhelmed with a sudden and profound insight into the misery and corruption of my own soul, and I was pierced deeply with a light that made me realize something of the condition I was in, and I was filled with horror at what I saw, and my whole being rose up in revolt against what was within me, and my soul desired escape and liberation and freedom from all this with an intensity and an urgency unlike anything I had ever known before. And now I think for the first time in my whole life I really began to pray..."¹

¹ The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 138. Raymond Prince, M.D., the editor of the R.M. Bucke Memorial Society Newsletter-Review, does not accept this as a mystical experience "in the strict sense." He explains, "It lacks the sense of oneness and timelessness that we usually require of an experience to designate it as mystical." "Editorial," Newsletter-Review 6 (Spring, 1973), p. 2. Nevertheless, this experience, like all "mystical" experiences, is open to different interpretations. It does, in fact, satisfy the criteria set forth by William James in his Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 367f, i.e. it is ineffable (Merton says that he cannot explain it), noetic, or in James' words a "state of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect," transient, and there is a state of passivity "as if his own will were in abeyance." It can be argued, therefore, against Prince, that this is a record of a genuine "mystical" experience.

The second of Merton's pre-monastic mystical experiences occurred in Cuba. He was attending Mass in a Havana church, and a new awareness of "what had just taken place at the altar" came upon him:

"But what a thing it was, this awareness: it was so intangible, and yet it struck me like a thunder-clap. It was a light that was so bright that it had no relation to any visible light and so profound and so intimate that it seemed like a neutralization of every lesser experience.

"And yet the thing that struck me most of all was that this light was in a certain sense "ordinary" - it was a light (and this most of all was what took my breath away) that was offered to all, to everybody, and there was nothing fancy or strange about it. It was the light of faith deepened and reduced to an extreme and sudden obviousness.

"It was as if I had been suddenly illuminated by being blinded by the manifestation of God's presence...

"It lasted only a moment: but it left a breathless joy and a clean peace and happiness that stayed for hours and it, was something I have never forgotten."¹

Merton's third major recorded "mystical" experience was that which occurred at a street corner in Louisville, Kentucky, an experience which liberated Merton

¹The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 34lf. This experience is also recorded in The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton, pp. 7lf. It, like his first experience, satisfies James' criteria, especially in so far as James wrote that although mystical states are transient "some memory of

from a false duality and provided him with "such a relief and such a joy that (he) almost laughed out loud."¹

Finally, Merton records an experience during his Asian journey, when he was before some statues of the Buddha in Ceylon. He writes that:

"Looking at these figures I was suddenly, almost forcibly, jerked clean out of the habitual, half-tied vision of things, and an inner clearness, clarity, as if exploding from the rocks themselves, became evident and obvious...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."²

their content always remains, and a profound sense of their importance." (Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 368.) Such is the case with this experience.

¹Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pp. 156f. See above, pp. 56f. The description of this experience is brief and therefore makes it difficult to classify as "mystical" according to the criteria of James or that of any other. The fact that it did have a profound effect on Merton is not enough to characterize it as any kind of special occurrence. Nevertheless, it is included here because of its profound and lasting effect on Merton, and additionally, to show the singular absence of detailed accounts of personal experiences in Merton's spiritual writings.

²The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton, pp. 233, 234, 235.

These, then, are Merton's recorded "mystical" experiences. It is of interest to note that none of them occurred within the cloister of the Abbey of Gethsemani. Two occurred prior to Merton's admission to the monastery, one occurred in the heart of a large city, and one in Ceylon. Furthermore, except for the two youthful experiences, Merton rarely writes in any detail about his inner spiritual experiences. One could very well question whether or not the Louisville or Ceylon experience was "mystical." Linda Parsons has some justification for her claim.¹ However, two observations militate against Parsons. First of all, as we shall see Merton consistently wrote about the ineffableness of mystical experience and cautioned against taking the psychological effects of the experience as ends in themselves; and secondly, seen in the light of his monastic milieu (which for some reason Ms. Parsons does not wish to do)² Merton

¹ But only in so far as she regards the lack of evidence for categorizing Merton as a mystic. Her own categorization as "philosopher" is quite debatable in itself. Her own standards of evidence can be used against her. Furthermore, she does not define "mystic," or "mysticism."

² She writes approvingly, "Yale University has a course on Merton: A Contemporary Philosopher. They hardly mention that he was a Catholic priest and monk." Op. Cit., p. 23.

certainly does have an existential rather than a purely intellectual and abstract involvement with mysticism and the mystical experience.

The consistency in the way in which Merton discussed the nature of the mystical experience itself is evident when one makes a comparison of one of his earliest and one of his latest works. Throughout his life he remained highly skeptical of any experience which could possibly be explained psychologically. Furthermore, he recognized that the purpose of the experience itself was to point to a reality beyond the experience, and that a great danger in the mystical life occurs when one becomes so involved in delightful experiences that one fails to recognize the reality to which the experience leads. In The Ascent to Truth he wrote that "it is false to make mysticism consist essentially in visions." False mysticism, he continued, "turns us away from our true end and seeks the enjoyment of flattering and glorious experiences rather than the perfect gift of our whole being to God alone."¹ Twenty years later he was writing essentially the same thing:

"It becomes overwhelmingly important for us to become detached from our everyday conception of ourselves as potential

¹The Ascent to Truth, p. 72.

subjects for special and unique experiences, or as candidates for realization, attainment and fulfillment. In other words, this means that a spiritual guide worth his salt will conduct a ruthless campaign against all forms of delusion arising out of spiritual ambition and self-complacency which aim to establish the ego in spiritual glory. That is why St. John of the Cross is so hostile to visions, ecstasies and all forms of 'special experience.' That is why the Zen Masters say: 'If you meet the Buddha, kill him.'¹

Therefore, it is not at all surprising that Merton would write very little about his own mystical experiences. They were, to him, not important in themselves, and dangerous if taken to be important. We have already noticed how Merton spoke hardly at all about his own priesthood; in the same way he rarely spoke about his own spiritual experiences. Furthermore, both in his early and his later life, Merton wrote about the basic "incommunicability of the highest form of religious experience."² "The personal experience of the mystic," he wrote toward the end of his life, "remains inaccessible to us and can only be evaluated indirectly through

¹ "Transcendent Experience," originally in the Newsletter-Review of the R.M. Bucke Memorial Society 1 (September, 1966), and quoted in Zen and the Birds of Appetite, pp. 76f.

² The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton, p. 120, entry dated November 29, 1940.

texts and other testimonials."¹ Merton, accordingly, wrote little about such experiences.²

Merton did write about contemplation and about his own life as a monk. If there could be a case made for a lack of evidence about actual mystical experiences in his life, an even stronger case can be made for his

¹"A Christian Looks at Zen," in Zen and the Birds of Appetite, pp. 43f. This was first published as the Preface to John C.H. Wu's The Golden Age of Zen (Committee on the Compilation of the Chinese Library, 1967).

²F.J. Kelly notes this when he writes, "Merton wrote much about contemplation, he wrote practically nothing about his own contemplation," and again, after discussing Merton's very rare mention of his own experiences, "After these early attempts at description of religious experiences, Merton rarely talked about his own experiences. His own religious experiences would have to be inferred from his many writings on prayer and canonical religious life." Op. Cit., pp. 62, 114. (See also J.H. Griffin, A Hidden Wholeness, pp. 2, 10.) In his silence Merton is in good company according to one student of Cistercian history. In an article which touches on the accounts of religious experience in two prominent Cistercian Fathers (Bernard of Clairvaux and Aelred of Rievaulx), Charles Dumont, himself a Cistercian, writes, "In comparison with other spiritual authors the Cistercians are reserved.", "Experience in the Cistercian Discipline," Cistercian Studies 10 (1975), p. 134. Certainly not all mystics within the Christian tradition are as explicit as are St. Theresa, Julian of Norwich and Henry Suso in describing their personal mystical experiences. E. Allison Peers observed that one of Merton's mentors, St. John of the Cross, rarely wrote about his own experiences (in Spirit of Flame: A Study of St. John of the Cross (London: SCM, 1943), pp. 100-102). Merton, therefore, can be said to be one with his Cistercian brothers and other contemplatives in maintaining a discreet silence.

concern for, and involvement in, the contemplative way of life. There is an abundance of evidence in his writings to show that he was passionately interested in all forms of man's spiritual life. His was never an abstract interest. He joined a contemplative order precisely in order to be able to contemplate. He became a hermit precisely in order to have more and deeper solitude in which to contemplate. He studied the mystical traditions of both the East and the West in order to have an intellectual as well as an experiential grasp of this kind of life.

Because Merton kept his inner life private, it is impossible to make a final statement about whether or not he could be called a mystic. What we know of his own spiritual experiences must be inferred. However, as great an authority on mystical experiences as Dr. D.T. Suzuki, the Zen scholar, believed that Merton did, in fact, know what he was talking about and was one of the few Westerners who had truly understood the Zen experience. Considering the experiential nature of Zen, Suzuki could only have meant that Merton had an experiential and not simply an intellectual understanding of Zen. In other words, although Merton did not write specifically about having experiences similar to those described by Zen Masters, one can infer that he did, in fact have such experiences in

some degree or another.¹

Therefore, the assumption of this thesis is that Merton was a mystic, and not simply one who wrote abstract, mystical theology. His mystical theology,

¹See Suzuki's statement quoted by Christmas Humphreys in his Introduction to Merton's "The Zen Revival," and quoted in full below, p. 600. Others who have inferred that Merton was a mystic are Edward Rice, Dennis Q. McInerny and Andrew Mann. Rice wrote, "In the light of what happened to Merton in his meeting with the Tibetan monks in India, and their reception of him, it is obvious - to me (and I cannot document it, of course) - that they accepted him as one who had passed beyond ordinary experience, that is, Merton apparently had already had, at least once and if not frequently, 'direct and pure experience on a metaphysical level, liberated from verbal formulas and linguistic conceptions.' The interior evidence, 'The 'feel' of his later writings on Zen indicate this, without its being said in so many words." The Man in the Sycamore Tree: The Good Times and Hard Life of Thomas Merton, pp. 131f.

McInerny in the thesis which was to form the basis for his book on Merton came to the conclusion that Merton was, in fact, one who had had mystical experiences. See Thomas Merton and Society: A Study of the Man and His Thought Against the Background of Contemporary American Culture (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1969), pp. 229ff.

Andrew Mann, who was a monk at Gethsemani, writes: "Yes, Merton was a mystic in the traditional Roman Catholic sense of one receiving special gifts. For although we never saw him levitated, or bleeding from hands or feet - except when he cut himself at work - his confessor maintains that he experienced what are commonly defined as mystical phenomena." "Thomas Merton: Man, Mystic, Enigma," in Newsletter-Review 6 of the R.M. Bucke Memorial Society (Spring, 1973), p. 21. Unfortunately, Mann does not document his source, a point which Parsons (Op. Cit.) correctly criticizes. See also R.C. Zaehner's comment that Thomas Merton "seems to me to be the most remarkable mystic of our times.", in The Catholic Church and World Religions (London: Burns and Oates, 1964), p. 18.

which will be expounded in the following chapter, is not simply a speculative theology; Merton's theology was the product of the entirety of his life, his solitude as well as his functions in the community and in the world, his prayer as well as his thought, his contemplation as well as his action. Intellectual speculation - either philosophical or historical - did not overwhelm the experiential nature of his theology, nor did his experience suffer the loss of clear and disciplined reflection and thought. In Merton one discovers both a modern mystic, and a modern mystical theologian.

III. MYSTICISM AND SOCIAL ETHICS IN THOMAS MERTON'S THEOLOGY

1. Withdrawal and Return as a Model

In A Study of History, Arnold Toynbee devised a model which is capable of providing a precise and accurate means of structuring an analysis of both the life and thought of Thomas Merton. Toynbee holds that social change is brought about by creative personalities or by creative minority groups and, in trying to show how these can be vehicles for social change, he analyzes the movement of withdrawal and return evidenced in these persons or groups. This model is particularly appropriate for a study of the interrelationship between mysticism and social ethics in Thomas Merton. Not only has Merton's life clearly evidenced this pattern but, furthermore, he was aware of what he was doing and was able to provide a rationale for that movement in his own life. Therefore, Toynbee's model is an excellent one for an understanding of Merton, and, conversely, Merton is an excellent exemplar of Toynbee's model: both because his life so visibly demonstrated the withdrawal-return motif, and because he was aware of that movement in himself and was able to articulate his understanding of it.

Toynbee first describes this movement in terms of its manifestation within man's psyche or spirit; later it is described in so far as it relates to the interactions between individuals. It is a movement which involves, in Toynbee's words,

"...a disengagement and temporary withdrawal of the creative personality from his social milieu, and his subsequent return to the same milieu transfigured: in a new capacity and with new powers. The disengagement and withdrawal make it possible for the personality to realize individual potentialities which might have remained in abeyance if the individual in whom they were immanent had not been released for a moment from his social toils and trammels."

Toynbee sees this movement as a part of all social change, and not simply as a movement that occurs for the sake of the individual and his self-actualization. He continues:

"The withdrawal is an opportunity, and perhaps a necessary condition, for the anchorites transfiguration; but, by the same token, this transfiguration can have no purpose, and perhaps even no meaning, except as a prelude to the return of the transfigured personality into the social milieu out of which he has originally come...The return is the essence of the whole movement, as well as its final cause."¹

¹Arnold J. Toynbee, A Study of History, Vol. III (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 248. Toynbee indicates that he is dependent on H. Bergson's Les Deux

This model can be described as having three phases: first, the act of disengagement; second, the period of withdrawal; and third, the act of return. Its adequacy for the analyses of Thomas Merton's understanding of mysticism and social ethics is based on the following four points.

First, Toynbee's model is an accurate description of Thomas Merton. It has already been demonstrated how Merton disengaged himself from his social milieu and how he subsequently returned to the same milieu "transfigured: in a new capacity and with new powers." Merton returned to the milieu of American society, but in the capacity of the monastic and contemplative observer. His return did not mean repudiation of his Catholicism or his monastic life. It did mean that he addressed the same situations with which he was concerned before his act of disengagement, but he addressed them now from a new position and with new powers, the powers gained from years of his monastic

Sources de la Morale et de la Religion (Paris: Alcan, 1932), and J.C. Smut's Holism and Evolution (London: MacMillan, 1927) for these ideas. John MacMurray used a similar model to examine the meaning of the personal in Persons in Relation (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), ch. 4. See also Sr. Benedicta Ward's Introduction to The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp.51-56 in which she analyzes a similar pattern in St. Anselm.

experiences. The contents of Merton's writings makes it possible to examine all three phases of the movement: how he understood the act of disengagement, what he saw as the essence of the period of withdrawal, and the way in which he understood the necessity for the subsequent return.

Second, Toynbee uses his own model to describe the forces of change within civilizations. Whether or not Thomas Merton was the kind of creative personality Toynbee describes is a question that will not be possible to answer except by the test of history. Nevertheless, in so far as he was associated with the Peace Movement and the Civil Rights Movement in America in the 1960s, Merton was a member of a minority that sought social change as its primary goal. He was a mystic in the midst of this particular minority group. Since Toynbee's model is used to describe such forces of social change, it is not misusing his model to apply it to Merton.

Third, the model is adequate for a study of Merton because Toynbee uses his own model to describe and account for various religious figures. He sees the motif of withdrawal-and-return as a reoccurring one in the life of Jesus: the flight into Egypt, the withdrawal into the wilderness, the Transfiguration, the descent into the tomb, and finally, the Ascension, with the expectation of a final return. Toynbee

continues with an examination of the motif as it appears in such religious personalities as St. Paul, St. Benedict, Saint Gregory the Great, Saint Ignatius Loyola, The Buddha, David, Muhammad, and others. It is not out of place, therefore, to examine this same motif as it appears in a modern religious figure, using it as a model for the analyses of the relationship between the mystical experience and social action.

Fourth, and finally, the model is adequate in that Thomas Merton himself used a similar model to describe monastic life.¹ The model Merton uses is that of "Disintegration, existential moratorium, and reintegration on a higher, universal level,"² which is derived from the Iranian psychiatrist, A. Reza Arasteh.³ The similarity between Arasteh's model and that of Toynbee can be seen in the following statement of Arasteh:

"Experientially, those who seek rebirth in the trans-cultural state adopt an existential mechanism which begins with

¹See "Final Integration: Toward a 'Monastic Therapy,'" Monastic Studies 6 (1968), and reprinted in Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 205-217.

²Ibid., p. 214.

³A. Reza Arasteh, Final Integration in the Adult Personality (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965).

detachment from their previous state, followed by a quest, anxiety, a vague awareness of the new state, and increase of anxiety and love for that state, effort, devotion, trust, and hope in identifying with it. There then occurs rebirth in a universal state, directly and indirectly, leading to insight into an inner evolution of life and finally union with this inner process."¹

Merton sees this as an adequate description of the monastic life, and hence, as an implicit description of his own life. Therefore, the use of Toynbee's model, which is a less psychological and less technically worded version of the process described by Arasteh, is an adequate one for the study of Thomas Merton.

The following pages will examine the theological basis for the relationship between mysticism and social ethics in the life and thought of Thomas Merton. This analysis will be structured on Toynbee's model of withdrawal-and-return, and will thereby consist of three sections. First of all, there will be an examination of the process of withdrawal, an analysis primarily of Merton's understanding of personhood, and therefore a study of his anthropology. Secondly, there will be an examination of the period of experience, an analysis of his understanding of that which happens in the state

¹Ibid., p. 153.

of withdrawal, which therefore is a study of Merton's theology. Finally, there will be an examination of the process of return, an analysis of the social implications of the entire movement, and therefore a study of ethics.

The division into three sections is for the purpose of analysis only. The spiritual life of man, if understood as transcending and incorporating all the dimensions of human activity, cannot be compartmentalized. The three stages of this study are to be understood as parts of a continuing, dynamic process, and are not to be understood as descriptions of static phenomena with clear and rigid points of demarcation. For Merton personally, the mode of withdrawal was solitude and silence, the mode of the experiential stage was prayer and liturgy, and the mode of return was his writing, especially his writings that were concerned with explicit ethical problems. Obviously, in his life, each one of these modes intertwined with the others, each being parts of a greater whole: life itself. This must be remembered at all steps in the following analysis.

2. Withdrawal: Merton's Anthropology

For Thomas Merton withdrawal meant withdrawal from the world. This is clearly seen not only in his writings, but in his life itself. By entering the Abbey

of Gethsemani, he explicitly and purposefully made an act of withdrawal from the world. What constituted an act of withdrawal in Merton's thought can be examined first from a rejection point of view. Merton is specific about what withdrawal is not. In spite of some of his early attitudes, and in spite of some language with a Manichean flavour, Merton was not calling for a withdrawal from the needs of other men. Some of the passages in The Seven Storey Mountain, as well as in other early works, tended to see withdrawal as such a flight. But these passages are not many,¹ and Merton spent most of his twenty-seven years of withdrawal from the world assuring that world that he was neither turning his back on it nor denying its validity and its needs. He made numerous explicit criticisms of the language he used in his earlier writings and the type of withdrawal that they seemed to advocate.² Withdrawal is not, and can never be, a withdrawal from the dictates of love. It can never be a cover for escapism or irresponsibility and insensitivities. It can never cloak laziness. In the

¹ See, for instance, The Seven Storey Mountain, pp. 313, 396ff, 382f; "What is Contemplation?" p. 12; The "Introduction" to The City of God; The Waters of Siloe, p. 332; Thoughts in Solitude, p. 18.

² See above, pp. 53f.

situation in which the world was to find itself in the middle of the twentieth century, wrote Merton, certain kinds of withdrawal were not possible options for the Christian:

"In such a situation it is no longer permissible for Christians seriously and honestly to devote themselves to a spirituality of evasion, a cult of other worldliness that refuses to take account of the inescapable implication of all men in the problems and responsibilities of the nuclear age. No matter what may be the alleged motive for this abdication, it cannot be acceptable to God, and it cannot therefore contribute to Christian holiness. Indifference and callousness can no longer mask as 'recollection,' and cowardly withdrawal may not allege the excuse that it is a sacrifice and an act of worship. Passivity is no longer to be counted as 'faith' or 'abandonment.' Lack of interest in the desperate fate of man is a sign of culpable insensitivity, a deplorable incapacity to love! It cannot in any sense claim to be Christian. It is not even genuinely human."¹

Withdrawal into solitude is positive; it has its own special work: a "deepening of awareness" for the world.² The monk does not withdraw into solitude simply for his own benefit, but for the benefit of others. His solitude is never to be an escape, but on the contrary

¹Life and Holiness, p. 136.

²Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 19.

the monastery or the hermitage should become the monk's place in the world. Merton refused to "reproach" those who remain in the world, nor did he "repudiate the world in a purely negative fashion."¹ Rather, the perspective he was to gain from his solitude was to be his response to the world and his gift to the world. The only justification for a life of deliberate solitude is the conviction that it will help the individual not only to love God but also to love other persons. To go into solitude merely to get away from others will lead neither to peace nor to truth. Whenever Merton saw expressions of religion, either corporate or private, become escapist, he was critical, calling such escapism "immoral," "apostacy," and "blasphemy." To ignore the great issues upon which the very survival of humanity depends and to concentrate "on the relatively minor problems of the religious-minded minority"² was not only apostacy but suicide.

¹"As Man to Man," p. 92.

²Faith and Violence, p. 56. One such "relatively minor" concern, according to Merton, was glossolalia. In his journal he wrote, "Curious that in the United States, particularly the South, at the height of the struggle for Civil Rights, the (Protestant) churches were swept with a wave of glossolalia...a convenient resort to immediate inspiration rather than the difficult and humiliating business of hearing and obeying the Word of God in the need of one's fellow man." Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 125. cf "War and the Crisis of Language," in Thomas Merton on Peace, pp. 234-247.

It was not an option for serious and dedicated Christians.

Withdrawal from the world, in Merton's thought, avoided being escapism because he saw it not as a withdrawal from the real needs of the world but rather as a withdrawal from a particular understanding of the world, an understanding based on superficial and false attitudes. The world from which he withdrew was not the world of men, but the world as understood by certain "myths" that men had created. Therefore, it can be said that Merton differentiated between a true world and a false world and that his idea of withdrawal was a withdrawal only from the false world. At the same time, however, Merton repudiated any dualistic or Manichean interpretation of the world, any clear distinction between the sacred and the secular. In his earlier writings he was more comfortable with the "two cities" language of St. Augustine but as he matured he relied on this language less and less. The Church and the world interpenetrated, and although Augustinian dualism could be used for the sake of clarification, it was not to be used if it might lead to an understanding that two distinct worlds were ontological realities.¹

¹See "The Church in World Crisis," Katallagete, Summer, 1967, p. 30; "The Death of God and the End of History," in Faith and Violence, pp. 244f; Life and Holiness, p. 61 and Opening the Bible, p. 3f. Merton does, indeed, use the analogy of the two cities in the

Yet he insists that the world can be known in a true sense and in a false sense.

A great deal depends on what one means by "the world," and how one understands it. For instance, Merton was quick to criticize leaders of the church who spoke of "the world" while failing to clearly define what they meant by "the world." All too often, Merton felt, clergymen denounce the world only in the sense of the world that has not paid attention to them or to their message,¹ and accept the world when the world accepts them. It is a temptation to accept the world, whatever its distortions may be, if it "offers us a prestige which we believe to be essential for the dissemination of the Gospel."² This type of world-acceptance, although not unique to the American church, is an acute problem in that Church. In America, Merton wrote somewhat facetiously, "The message of the priest who drives an Oldsmobile is surely more credible than that of one who rides the bus!"³ Such a priest,

unpublished The Inner Experience, especially pp. 49f, however, Merton did not want this book published until he had opportunities to work on it at more length. Whether or not he would have modified the use of this analogy would have to be conjecture.

¹Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 348.

²Loc. Cit.

³Loc. Cit.

Merton feared, would make customary tirades against the "flesh" but seldom attack the world which makes his affluence possible. If the world quit paying attention to him, and he lost his expensive car, then he might renounce the world. To Merton, this is not at all what is meant by the New Testament understanding of rejection of the world. "The world, in the triad world-flesh-devil," he wrote, "represents greed for wealth and prestige"¹ among other things. The priest who attacks the world because his own wealth and prestige have been denied is a man who does not truly understand that he is a slave of the world he condemns. He does not understand the New Testament idea of contemptus mundi. A clear definition of that which one is denouncing is necessary. Merton insisted that it has never been Christian to reject the world in the sense of the cosmos created by God or as the locus for the Incarnation, or as that which is sanctified by the "presence and action of the Mystical Christ."²

The world from which Merton withdrew, and to which he speaks critically, is the superficial, empirical world which sees itself as an autonomous, closed system.

¹Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 348.

²Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 114.

It is the world that rests upon appearances, upon (in the commercial world in which Merton lived) advertising and public relations. It is the world which had constructed its own myths: the myth of unlimited progress, the myth of the omnipotence of science, the myth of naturalism and materialism, the myth and culture of quantification. It is this world that Merton rejects. He does not call for a withdrawal from the needs of others or from union with other persons, but he calls for withdrawal from a world which says that the appearance of union is, in fact, union, and that the propaganda issuing from the advertising industry and from the news media is, in fact, truth. His is a call to withdraw from a world of irrational compulsions and a world which makes irrational compulsions the basis for its economy. His is a call for withdrawal from a world "constituted by the illusions, the myths, the prejudices, and all the mental fictions with which man torments himself and from which Christ came to deliver him."¹ The "worldliness" he decries is that of the mythology of a technological culture with its "ever-changing, complex, and fictitious orthodoxy in taste, in politics, in cult, in belief, in theology and what-not, cultivation of the ability to redefine one's identity day-by-day in

¹Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 324.

concert with the self-definition of society."¹

It is the world of self-concern and greed:

"The world is the unquiet city of those who live for themselves and are therefore divided against one another in a struggle that cannot end, for it will go on eternally in hell. It is the city of those who are fighting for possession of limited things and for the monopoly of goods and pleasures that cannot be shared with all."²

It is this understanding of the world that Merton rejects, because it is this understanding of the world that is driving men mad. The world he rejects is the world that refuses to know the "Living God; the God whose one commandment is to love. The "world" is the body of those who hate - - hatred which stems from attachment to "narrow illusions and petty desires."³

This world is inauthentic and ultimately unreal. It is "a complete and systematic sham" and those who base their lives upon it are only pretending to be alive.⁴ To withdraw from it is to call it a sham.

¹Ibid., p. 284.

²Seeds of Contemplation, p. 57.

³The New Man, pp. 108f; cf. Seasons of Celebration, p. 125.

⁴Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 339.

To withdraw is to make "the decision to disagree completely with those who imagine that the call to diversion and self-deception is the voice of truth and who can summon the full authority of their own prejudice to prove it."¹

However, to withdraw from the world in this sense is not simply a matter of joining a monastery or becoming a hermit. This kind of a world, which is not so much a place as it is an attitude, can be found everywhere. It is not the world that is evil, but certain processes that are within it, processes which tend "to stamp out" the light of God in the world.² There is no place in the world which is immune to such processes, not even the monastery itself.³ The monastery can be ruled by the same kind of greed, competition, self-interest, triumphalism and commercialism that is found outside the monastery.⁴ Only by withdrawing from

¹Disputed Questions, p. 183.

²"This is God's Work," Sisters Today (August-September, 1970), Vol. 42, No. 1, p. 5.

³No Man is an Island, p. 118.

⁴Edward Rice mentions Merton's humorous but nonetheless real criticisms of his own monastery's cheese production. See Man in the Sycamore Tree, p. 157. There is also a subtle reference to the Gethsemani pre-occupation with cheese in "Conscience of a Christian Monk" in the tape recorded conference Life and Contemplation (Electronic Paperbacks: Chappaqua, New York).

the "world" in this sense, wherever it may be found, can one begin to know the world in another sense, the sense in which we can and should be reconciled to the world, the sense in which the world is the locus of God's creation and redemptive activity. Merton, however, usually reserves the term "the world" for the dehumanized surface. When Merton speaks of the world he makes clear that he "focuses on the sham, the unreality, the alienation, the forced systematization of life, and not on the human reality that is alienated and suppressed."¹ What one discovers when he successfully withdraws from this superficial world is something that is more than the world: "it is the spirit and likeness of God in men."² As he is critical of inadequate ideas of withdrawal, he is critical also of theologians who call the Church to turn to the world without first making clear what it is that they mean

¹Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 257.

²Loc. Cit.; cf. Zen and the Birds of Appetite, in which Merton argues that Nirvana does not entail flight from the world but a real understanding of the value that is in the world, pp. 87f.

when they use the term "world."¹ We are not to be reconciled to the world in its unredeemed and sinful state. We are not to adjust ourselves to its shams and illusions. However, those theologians who talk about reconciliation with the world, often do not make this clear. For Merton, the world is the locus of God's activity but not in its sinful and superficial aspect. God is present in the world, but He is hidden as well. We are called, therefore, to reject reconciliation to the superficial world, for to be reconciled to an illusion can in no way lead to an awareness of God. The illusion must be rejected:

"Where 'the world' means in fact 'military power,' 'wealth,' 'greed,' then the Christian remains against it. When the world means those who are concretely victims of the demonic abstractions (and even the rich and mighty are their victims too) then the Christian must be for it and with it."²

Only by withdrawing from the world in the first sense and accepting the world in the second, can one hope

¹See in particular, "Orthodoxy and the World," Monastic Studies 4 (Advent, 1966); pp. 105-115, a review article of two books of Alexander Schmemmann; and, "A Life Free From Care," Cistercian Studies 5 (1970), No. 2, pp. 217-226. Merton does not make clear which theologians he means.

²Faith and Violence, p. 256.

to penetrate behind the surface distortions of the world and discover it as it really is, the sacrament of God's presence.

Merton's suggestion that one withdraw from the world without withdrawing from the needs of others and from the companionship of others raises the simple question of how this can be possible. Merton's own answer to this question begins with the recognition that one discovers the world by first looking to himself. The world is a "problem," he wrote, in so far as the person is a problem to himself.

"As long as I imagine that the world is something to be 'escaped' in a monastery - that wearing a special costume and following a quaint observance takes me 'out of this world,' I am dedicating my life to an illusion."¹

The world is not some entity "out there" that one must renounce. The way to renounce the false world and to discover and accept the true world for oneself is to recognize that one discovers the world and contends with the world within himself. Merton's most precise statement of this discovery of the world within the self is contained in his journal:

¹Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 145.

"As usual, one comes back to the old question: what do you mean by 'the world' anyway? In this, I don't think an abstract answer makes too much sense. My concrete answer is: what did I leave when I entered the monastery? As far as I can see, what I abandoned when I 'left the world' and came to the monastery was the understanding of myself that I had developed in the context of civil society - my identification with what appeared to me to be its aims. Certainly, in the concrete, 'the world' did not mean for me either riches (I was poor) or a life of luxury, certainly not the ambition to get somewhere in business or in anything else except writing. But it did mean a certain set of servitudes that I could no longer accept - servitudes to certain standards of value which to me were idiotic and repugnant and still are."¹

Therefore, for Merton to give up the world meant the giving up of a particular understanding of himself, his identification with the aims of the world, and the servitude which was a direct result of that identification. No one can escape the world merely by fleeing the city and entering into solitude. If one tries to renounce the world in this way he will only find that he has taken the world with him into his solitude. Nothing positive will have been accomplished. To be able to renounce what is false, superficial and distorted in the world, one must first renounce what is

¹Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 47.

false, superficial and distorted in the self. Having done this, one is free to turn withdrawal into love, for the contemptus mundi will be a deep appreciation for the world as it really is, that is as the locus of the Incarnation.

In the same way that he sets up a distinction between the world in a false sense and the world in a true sense, Merton differentiates between a false self, often called the "individual," and the true self, often called the "person."¹ In order to withdraw from the false world one must withdraw from the

¹It is to be noted that Merton is not unique in using the terms "individual" and "person" to describe aspects of the self. These terms are used by numerous writers in the development of the Christian doctrine of man. In a subsequent chapter it will be shown how Merton's use of the terms is related to Tillich's usage. Furthermore, in the same way that Merton spoke of the difference between a false world and a true world, he did not wish to speak of the false self and the true self in any dualistic or Manichean way. In commenting on St. Augustine's distinction between the superior and inferior soul in Book XII of De Trinitate, Merton understands St. Augustine to mean that there is one soul which acts in two ways (No Man Is An Island, pp. 214f.) His own understanding of the true and false self is similar. Cf. "Poetry and the Contemplative Life," in Figures for an Apocalypse, p. 103, and A Thomas Merton Reader, p. 444. Merton will also refer to the false self as "ego" or as "flesh" but explains that ego is not meant in its psychological sense (Zen and the Birds of Appetite, pp. 77f) and "flesh" is not to be equated with the body nor is "soul" to be equated with the "whole self." (New Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 26f), e.g. "The whole man is 'flesh' if his body and his selfish passions dominate the soul. The whole man is spirit if his soul is subject to the Spirit of Christ and his body is subject to his soul." Basic Principles of Monastic Spirituality, p. 18.

false self, and conversely, in order for one to recognize and accept the world in its true sense, one must allow the true self to emerge from behind the facade of the false self. The true self will not emerge, however, as long as one mistakes a part of the self for the whole, that is as long as one thinks of the entirety of the self as coextensive with that part of the self which is known or which is theoretically knowable. The self is more than the ego, super-ego and id, it is more than simply the sum of the conscious and the subconscious mind, it is more than the unity of body and mind and spirit. The self is more than that which can be analyzed.

Implicit in Merton's thought is a two-stage process for the emergence of the true self. In order for the true self to emerge one must first of all recognize the existence of the false self, and secondly, renounce the false self. This process amounts to an uncovering - a stripping away - so that the true self, which is a hidden reality, can be seen. In the first stage, a process involving three phases is implied. First of

Cf. "The flesh includes not only sensuality and licentiousness, but even worldly conformism, and actions based on human respect or social preoccupation." Life and Holiness, p. 85.

all one must recognize that there is a true and a false self, or in other words, one must recognize that the self can be described according to its true or false aspects. Secondly, having recognized that there is a false way and a true way of being a self, one must be able to describe the characteristics of the false self, and subsequently, to recognize characteristics of the true self. Thirdly, one must acknowledge that living according to the false self stands in the way of the emergence of the true self.

The first phase of this process is the acknowledgement that what we normally think of as the "self" is not the true self, the person in his deepest dimension. Such an acknowledgement is necessary, Merton thought, since "before we can realize who we really are, we must become conscious of the fact that the person we think we are, here and now, is at best an imposter and stranger."¹ As long as we assume that our conscious minds are the highest indication of our humanity, as long as we assume that our own estimates of our worth and our own estimates of the validity of what we do are paramount, or as long as we assume that our own admiration for what we think are our primary abilities and values is indicative of our essential self, we will

¹The New Man, p. 73.

live a superficial and ultimately false existence. Such an understanding of our "self" will get in the way of real personal growth. Any growth that occurs will be simply an expansion of that which does not need expansion. Merton was writing at a time when the words, "be yourself" had become a cliché on the lips of a great number of people, especially the young, who felt (often correctly) that society had helped alienate them from themselves. Merton was in deep sympathy with these people, but warned them that all too often "being yourself" ended up being the impersonation of a shadow.¹ To be oneself was futile if all one actually did was to reinforce the false self and never to awaken the true self.

Next, one must recognize the characteristics of the false self. The basic characteristic is a strict subjectivity that makes a rigid distinction between that which is "I" and that which is "not-I." Merton believed that "True quietude and purity of heart are impossible where this division of the "I" (considered as right and good) and the "not-I" (considered as threatening) governs our conduct and our decisions."²

¹"Day of a Stranger," p. 211.

²Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 281.

This split between subject and object is attacked by Merton throughout his many and varied writings. It destroys the possibility of personhood. To live in such a division is to be an individual, not a person. It is an alienated existence, one in which separation and division reign over unity and fellowship.

"I have what you have not. I am what you are not. I have taken what you have failed to take and I have seized what you could never get. Therefore you suffer and I am happy, you are despised and I am praised, you die and I live; you are nothing and I am something, and I am all the more something because you are nothing. And thus I spend my life admiring the distance between you and me; at times this even helps me to forget the other men who have what I have not and who have taken what I have not and who have taken what I was too slow to take and who have seized what was beyond my reach, who are praised as I cannot be praised and who live on my death..."¹

This is Merton's description of the alienated individual, or the false self. The true self is not like this. In other words, Merton believed that although man might live according to a strict division between "I" and "not-I" this was not authentic life. The individual

¹Seeds of Contemplation, p. 39. On the subject-object split and Cartesian philosophy see below pp. 270f.

is man as a self-concerned being, the man who, like Adam Smith, thinks that harmony can be achieved through "enlightened self-interest." But to live according to enlightened self-interest is to live inauthentically. "We are not individuals," he told a meeting of nuns, "we are persons, and a person is defined by a relationship with others."¹ In another context he wrote:

"Personalism and individualism must not be confused. Personalism gives priority to the person and not the individual self. To give priority to the person means respecting the unique and inalienable value of the other person, as well as one's own, for a respect that is centered only on one's own individual self to the exclusion of others proves itself to be fraudulent."²

Individual subjectivity leads to selfishness, and selfishness is the inevitable result of the subject-object split and is the characteristic quality of the false self. All other descriptions of the false self

¹"Prayer and Conscience," Sisters Today 42 (April, 1971), pp. 411f.

²The Way of Chuang Tzu, p. 17. Cf. "Contemplation and Ecumanism," Seasons 3 (Fall, 1965), p. 142, and "Prayer, Personalism and the Spirit," Sisters Today 42 (November, 1970), p. 133. Merton finds support for this emphasis in the thought of such different philosophers as the Japanese, Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945) and Gabriel Marcel; see Zen and the Birds of Appetite, pp. 69, 82. In some places in his earlier writings Merton writes as if the true self can be found by separating oneself from others, but these scattered quotations are not

can be included in the idea of selfishness. Secondary characteristics of the false self stem from this one basic characteristic. Accordingly, the cult of "success" in American society is "pure illusion,"¹ as is the concern for "adjusting" to the norms and pressures of society.² All such activities are based on selfishness, and selfishness is pride, and pride is sin, and sin is separation from the really real.

"Pride and selfishness then react upon one another in a vicious circle, each one greatly enlarging the other's capacity to destroy our life. In a sense, pride is simply a form of supreme and absolute subjectivity. It sees all things from the viewpoint of a limited, individual self that is constituted as the center of the universe. Now everybody knows that subjectively we see and feel as if we were at the center of things...Pride however comes and elevates this subjective feeling into metaphysical absolute."³

indicative of the main thrust of his thought. See for instance, No Man Is An Island, p. 12; and The Sign of Jonas, p. 246. On the other hand, see The Living Bread, pp. xiii, 149, for explicit statements of the necessity for the discovery of reality through interrelatedness with others.

¹New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 281.

²Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pp. 264f.

³The New Man, p. 64.

What "the world" saw as strength and rugged individualism, Merton saw as illusion and weakness. He understood that the greatest problem facing the Church in the modern world was not "scientific atheism" but "the despair and languor of a depersonalized man incapable of authenticity." He called upon Marx, Freud, Kierkegaard and T.S. Eliot, among others, for support of this understanding.¹ In a society that stresses individuality rather than personality, or enlightened self-interest rather than a selfless concern for others, the true selfhood of man will manifest itself only with the greatest difficulty. A spirit of servile conformity and acquiescence to the demands of a society based on such principles will prevent man from finding and actualizing his true and deepest self, because the true and deepest self of man is actualized through concern for others rather than through self-concern. The person, rather than the individual, fulfills himself, "not by closing himself within the narrow confines of his own individual interests and those of his family, but by his openness to other men."² The false self, therefore, is characterized by selfishness, pride, and a guarded and closed relation-

¹Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 33ff.

²Seeds of Destruction, p. 163.

ship with others. The true self is characterized by concern for others, humility, and an openness and freedom in relationship with others. The false self sees itself as separate from others, the true self sees itself as united with others.

The third and final phase of the process of the recognition of the difference between the true self and the false self is the acknowledgement that the false self inhibits the emergence of the true self. For Merton it is a matter of either-or. If the false self is dominant, then the true self cannot emerge. "The person must be rescued from the individual."¹ Accordingly, Merton writes of the emergence of the true self in language which is explicitly religious - language which indicates the either-or nature of the relationship between the false self and the true self. Hell is the perpetual alienation from the true self.² One must be saved from such a hell. The discovery of the true self is "salvation."³ It is "rebirth."⁴ One is called to

¹New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 38.

²Ibid., fn. p. 7; cf Seeds of Destruction, p. 25.

³No Man Is An Island, p. 14.

⁴"Rebirth and the New Man in Christianity" (unpublished), p. 5.

decision; to decide for or against the true self. Our first task is to be truly human, he said in an interview, "When one comes into existence as a human being, then prior to every other obligation is the obligation to be what one is: a human being."¹ We cannot cheat ourselves of our humanity. Anything that inhibits us from our primary vocation to be persons must be avoided. In order for us to be true, we cannot be false.

The first stage of self-realization, that is, the emergence of the true self, has required three phases: recognizing the existence of the false self, describing its characteristics, and acknowledging its destructive power. The second stage of self-realization is a purgative stage: the abandoning of the false self. Having recognized the false self and its destructiveness, one must renounce it, or deny it, or withdraw from it. For the true self to live, the false self must die. We must not simply recognize that the false self stands in the way of the true self; if we wish to be truly human we must sacrifice the false self so that the true self is not to atrophy. Recognition of the negativities of the false self is not enough, more is needed: an existential act, or series of actions, of turning away

¹"An Interview with Thomas Merton," Thomas P. Mc Donnell, p. 35. Cf. Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 81.

from the false self. Having been awakened to the difference between the true self and the false self, man is capable of choosing between the two and is thereby capable of the necessary act or acts of negation of the false self. The only way for man to separate the false and the true self is to abandon the false.

This act of abandonment is predicated on the Gospel injunction that in order to save one's life one must be willing to lose it.¹ Merton writes that "this discovery of ourselves is always a losing of ourselves - a death and resurrection."² What is lost, of course, is the false self. When one makes an act of self-emptying "the self that vanishes from this emptiness is the superficial, false, social self, the image made up of the prejudices, the whimsey, the posturing, the pharisaic self-concern and the pseudo-dedication."³ In order for man to be truly himself, he must discover some way to overcome the false self. For Merton, the monastery, and the solitude that it was able to provide him, was the way toward such self-abandonment. The dissolution of the false self is no easy procedure,

¹For example, No Man Is An Island, p. 79; Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 340.

²No Man Is An Island, p. 15.

³Disputed Questions, p. 206.

and Merton describes no simple "method" that can be followed. His method was the monastic life, with all its asceticism, discipline and obedience.

"Cistercian asceticism, and indeed all the asceticism of the monastic Fathers, is simply the recovery of our true self ...effected by stripping away all that is alien and foreign to our true selves - shedding the 'double garment' of hypocrisy and illusion by which we try to conceal the truth of our misery from ourselves, our brethren and from God."¹

Although he did not recommend the monastic life to all, he emphatically stated that all men are in need of such personal stripping away of the false self. For alienated man it is the only way to the recovery of his true identity. In response to an essay by Eric Fromm on the psychological causes of war, Merton wrote:

"It would seem that we ought to pay a great deal more attention than we do to the traditional spiritual and contemplative wisdoms which prescribe

¹The Silent Life, p. 32. Cf. The Inner Experience, p. 2: "One of the strange laws of the contemplative life is that in it you do not sit down and solve problems: you bear with them until they somehow solve themselves. Or until life itself solves them for you. Usually the solution consists in a discovery that they only existed in so far as they were inseparably connected with your own illusory exterior self. The solution of most such problems comes with the dissolution of this false self."

disciplines (in the deepest sense of 'disciplineships') to help man transcend his empirical self and find his "true self" in an emptiness that is completely 'awake' because completely free of useless reflection."¹

Hence, all persons ought to recognize and overcome the false self, and find the appropriate discipline that will help them do so.² For Thomas Merton himself, the appropriate discipline was the monastic life, and eventually the eremitical life. He discovered that the monastery and the hermitage did not, in fact, foster a life of self-centredness but rather, provided one with the opportunity to enter into the desert, the place of purgation. "The desert strips our hearts bare," he wrote in concert with two other monks, "It strips us of our pretensions and alibis..."³ In such an environment

¹ War Within Man, ed. Erich Fromm (Philadelphia: Peace Literature Service of American Friends Service Committee, 1963), p. 46. Also in Faith and Violence, pp. 113f. Fromm agreed with Merton. He wrote, "I want to stress briefly how much I agree with Thomas Merton's emphasis on 'the overwhelming and almost totally neglected importance of exploring this spiritual unconscious of man.' I believe that any real change in man depends on this discovery of one's self and of exploring the depths of what he calls one's 'spiritual unconscious.'" War Within Man, p. 55.

² Merton did not believe that the use of drugs is an appropriate means of self-discovery. See below

³ "Contemplatives and the Crisis of Faith," by J.B. Porion, André Louf and Louis Merton, Cistercian Studies 2 (1967), No. 4, p. 271.

it is possible to be provided with the necessary discipline and simplicity of life in order to make this possible. For Merton, the act of self-purgation is both active and passive. One makes a decisive and responsible act by entering into a particular discipline. He, for instance, chose the Cistercian life in 1941, and chose the eremetical life in 1965. However, his language indicates that he believed that the stripping away of illusions is something that happens to someone, not simply something that someone effects by his own efforts. Such a mixture of active and passive approaches to self-abandonment can be seen in this passage:

"The monk does not come into the desert to reinforce his own ego-image, but to be delivered from it. After all, this worship of the self is the last and most difficult of idolatries to detect and get rid of. The monk knows this, and therefore he determines to take the proper means to destroy instead of reinforcing the image. For this purpose he renounces his own will in order to be taught and guided by another, even though he may live alone."¹

Self-renunciation, then, is something that happens to the monk (he is "delivered from" the ego-image, and is taught and guided by others) and something that the

¹Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 285.

monk himself effects (he takes "the proper means to destroy" the ego-image.)¹ "Renunciation" is a word that contains within it both the active and the passive elements. To renounce is to make a conscious and responsible decision, but it is a decision to forgo certain areas of experience. For Thomas Merton, the act of renunciation is always for the purpose of allowing something to happen, that is, renunciation of the false self (effected by the renunciation of the will in the passage just quoted) is for the purpose of the emergence of the true self. It is not simply a negative movement. Detachment is from ourselves, not from other persons or from material things.² Furthermore detachment from ourselves is for the purpose of discovery of ourselves. In order to save one's life one must lose one's life.

The positive element of renunciation or detachment is stressed in Merton's discussions of the process of self-abandonment. The process does not lead to self-hate, but rather to the ability to love ourselves in a totally new way.³ It is self-realization, not

¹Cf. John H. Griffin, A Hidden Wholeness: "In the 'tremendous action' of contemplation, Merton held that it was not so much what you did that counted, but what you allowed to be done to yourself." p. 4.

²e.g. New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 21.

³e.g. Thoughts in Solitude, p. 52.

self-alienation.¹ It is for the sake of "fullness,"² "perfection,"³ "spiritual freedom,"⁴ and "true creativity."⁵ Self-renunciation is, therefore, never a matter of the destruction of the person, the true self. Rather it is the necessary means for the discovery of the true self. The self-annihilation of the ego is so that the New Man can be raised from the dead;⁶ so that a new self-discovery can be made "on an entirely different plane from a mere psychological discovery, a paradoxical new identity that is found only in a loss of self."⁷

For Merton, therefore, the process of withdrawal that is effected through a stripping away of the empirical ego, is not a purely negative phenomenon.

¹e.g. Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 53.

²Disputed Questions, p. 192.

³Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 273.

⁴The New Man, p. 107, Cf. No Man Is An Island, p. 136.

⁵"The Catholic and Creativity: Theology of Creativity," The American Benedictine Review 9 (September-December, 1960), Nos. 3-4, p. 211. Cf. A Thomas Merton Reader, p. 530.

⁶e.g. Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 179.

⁷Ibid., p. 340.

It is radically positive. It may be painful; in most cases it certainly is. Hence, there is a negative element. However, if this negative element dominates an act of self-abandonment, that abandonment in itself is false and futile. Merton discussed such inadequate ideas of renunciation in one of his journals:

"False humility and the illusory ideal of self-annihilation. I distinguish this quite clearly from the real annihilation of the mystics, which is another matter. But a contrived 'annihilation' simply sets up one figment against another and has them cancel each other out. The 'self' sits by, smugly watching the operation and indeed directing it, and is not annihilated at all. On the contrary, this is a sure way of avoiding annihilation. Such 'humility' becomes a last refuge in which the self remains impregnable."¹

Pious, self-centred acts of self-depreciation certainly have found expression in the history of Christian monasticism. Merton knew this from his own experience.² The monk, he discovered, had to go beyond superficialities in his discipline in order to get beyond the superficial self. "Spiritual egotism" never can give birth to the New Man. The process of withdrawal was, for him, "not

¹Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 281.

²See above, p. 47.

the destruction of personality but the dissipation of an illusion." And, "the discovery of the New Man," was for him, "the realization of what was there all along, at least as a radical possibility, by reason of the fact that man is the image of God."¹

Having examined Merton's understanding and description of the false self, it is now necessary to examine his understanding of the true self that is hidden under the superficialities of the empirical ego. The Christian doctrine of the image of God in man was his fundamental vehicle for the description of the true self. This doctrine is based on certain biblical passages, especially Genesis 1: 26-27; 5: 1-3; and 9: 5-6,² and Merton's understanding of it follows the classical Catholic interpretation of these texts, an interpretation that can be traced to Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Augustine and that is found explicitly in the teachings of those Cistercian Fathers who formed the basis of the theological tradition that he inherited.³ In its

¹ Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 118.

² See also, in the Apocrypha, Wisdom 2:23 and Ecclesiasticus 17:3; and in the New Testament, I Corinthians 9:7 and James 3:9.

³ See Etienne Gilson, The Mystical Theology of St. Bernard (London: Sheed and Ward, 1940), and Amedee Hallier, The Monastic Theology of Aelred of Rievaulx (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), esp. pp. 3-24. On Image and Likeness in the Eastern Orthodox

most simple form this interpretation states that man was created in the image of God and still retains that image although it is weakened, hidden, and man does not live according to it. Following Ireneaus, this is explained by making a distinction between the "image" and the "likeness" of God. Both words

tradition see Vladimir Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church (London: James Clark, 1957), pp. 114-134 and In the Image and Likeness of God (London: Mowbrays, 1975), esp. pp. 125-139. The relationship between Eastern theology and early Cistercian thought can be seen in two articles published in Cistercian Studies 9 (1974), No. 4, pp. 389-398. These are Patrick Ryan's "Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise On the Making of Man," and Anne Saward's "Note on William of St. Thierry's Use of Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise On the Making of Man," in which she shows William's extensive use, sometimes almost verbatim, of Gregory. For a history of the Christian understanding of this doctrine see David Cairns, The Image of God in Man (revised edition), (London: Collins Fontana, 1973), and Emil Brunner, Man in Revolt (ET: London: Lutterworth, 1939), esp. pp. 82-113 and 499-515. Both of these works favour Reformation interpretations. A more Roman Catholic emphasis can be found in Jean Kirchmeyer, "Grecque Eglise: L'Image et la Ressemblance," in Dictionnaire de Spiritualite, Vol. 6, eds., M. Viller et al (Paris: Beauchesne, 1967), pp. 814-822, and Paul Lamarche et al, "Image et Ressemblance," in Dictionnaire de Spiritualite, Vol. 7 (1970), pp. 1401-1472. On the Image of God in Merton see Higgins, Thomas Merton on Prayer, pp. 31ff, 138-140.

are accorded separate definitions and functions.¹

The fall, or original sin, did not obliterate the image of God in man, although it did weaken it.

Rather, man who is created in the image of God, has fallen from the likeness of God. He is still in the image of God, but that image has been distorted by "unlikeness."²

The image of God in man is described by Merton as man's freedom and capacity to aspire to God. The image is not a static representation of something in the divine essence, but is a "dynamic tendency" toward God, who is love.³ Following St. Bernard,

¹This is based on an interpretation of Genesis 1:26, an interpretation which was rejected by the Reformers. See Cairns, Op. Cit., p. 28: "We must reject the view of Irenaeus who, in his exegesis of Genesis 1:26 made a distinction between tzelem and demuth, image and likeness...What we have here is a Hebrew parallelism, or as Eichrodt thinks, the second term defines more closely than the first what is meant. 'In God's image, that is to say, in his likeness.'" See W. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, Vol. II (ET: London: SCM, 1967), pp. 122-131.

²The Silent Life, pp. 25f, 29, and The New Man, pp. 41f, 69.

³The New Man, p. 74. Merton quotes Aquinas: "The image of God is seen in the soul in so far as the soul is carried, or is able to be carried, towards God." (Summa Theologica, I, Q. 93, a. 8). Cf. Disputed Questions, p. xi.

Merton held that even fallen man retains his "innate capacity and 'need' for divine union."

"The human soul is still the image of God, and no matter how far it travels away from Him into the regions of unreality, it never becomes so completely unreal that its original destiny can cease to torment it with a need to return to itself in God, and become, once again, real."¹

Since God is love, this capacity for union with Him is, a capacity for love. "To say that I am made in the image of God," he wrote early in his life as a monk, "is to say that love is the reason for my existence...Love is my true identity."² However, to define man's true identity, his true self, as love, is not to make a static equation. Love, by definition, is dynamic. It is a response to a value that encounters the person. It is not a substance but is movement and freedom. "It is the lucid and ardent response of the whole man to a value that is revealed to him as perfect, appropriate and urgent in the providential prospect of

¹Ibid., p. 69. See St. Bernard: Sermons on The Song of Songs, Sermon 82.

²Seeds of Contemplation, p. 46.

his own life."¹ The image of God in man, therefore, is the capacity to actualize love. The likeness of God in man is the actualization itself. Man has in his basic structure "an openness, a capacity, a possibility, a freedom" for love, and this is the image of God "because God himself is pure freedom and pure love."²

All men share in this image,³ and the image can be known by rational conjecture. But such an intellectual understanding of the imago Dei is not sufficient for man to have a "real experience of (his) own identity,"⁴ for the imago is never simply a matter of the intellect but is primarily a matter of will. Therefore, even though all men share in the image of God, not all share in the "likeness." All men have the capacity for love and the yearning for divine union, however

¹Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 22.

²"Introduction" to The Monastic Theology of Aelred of Rievaulx, p. ix.

³The New Man, pp. 74, 80. Merton quotes Gregory of Nyssa as his patristic support: "The whole of human nature, from the first man to the last, is but one image of Him Who is."

⁴Ibid., p. 74.

implicitly it may be understood and articulated. But the "likeness" is seen only where there is a complete and faithful correspondence between the image and its actualization in existence.¹ Merton wrote,

"The image of God in man - the openness to love, the capacity for total consent to God himself and in others - remains indestructible. But it can be buried in and imprisoned under selfishness. The image of God in man is not destroyed by sin but utterly disfigured by it. To be exact, the image of God in man becomes self-contradictory when its openness closes in upon itself, when it ceases to be a capacity for love and becomes simply an appetite for domination or possession: when it ceases to give and seeks only to get. In such a case, man becomes his own god and instead of loving others he uses them for his own purposes - to gratify his own narcissism as we would say today."²

The image needs to be freed from its imprisonment to selfish tendencies, to the false self. The "image" is not the true self. The true self is man as he exists as both the image and likeness of God; it is real only when it is actualized in existence.³

¹Ibid., p. 42.

²"Introduction" to The Monastic Theology of Aelred of Rievaulx, p. x.

³Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 128. Cf. "The Transforming Union in St. Bernard and St. John of the Cross," p. 211.

Therefore, there is an element of mystery associated with the true self. The "image" of God exists in man as a potentiality and as a capacity and can be described as such, but unless and until the true self is actualized and "image" and "likeness" are made one, its reality remains a mystery that is impossible to define or describe.¹

"The 'true man' has no title. He is in the body and yet you don't see him and he almost never speaks. In fact he has to be beaten into speaking, because if he simply goes along on the habitual level of life he is never awake, he might as well not be there at all."²

The true self is the self that can be described as "no-self" or as the transcendent Self,³ but best remains undescribed. Merton can say that when one

¹The Christological implications of this understanding of the true person will follow. See below pp. 276-287, 437-458.

²"Lactantius," Cistercian Studies 7 (1972), No. 4 p. 252. This is said as well in Merton's unpublished The Inner Experience: "The inner self is not a part of our being...it is our entire substantial reality itself, on its highest and most personal and most existential level...The inner self is as secret as God and, like Him, it evades every concept that tries to hold of it with full possession...It is not a 'thing.'" p. 6.

³Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 71.

lives according to this true self he is in "direct contact with the ground of reality"¹ but this is not to describe the "true self" as much as it is a description of what life can be like when lived at this level. Merton prefers to follow the example of the Zen Masters and maintain silence in the face of the mystery.² We cannot recognize this inner reality, it is that which we can only be.³

The entire process of withdrawal is to be able to allow for the emergence of the true self, for the "likeness" of God to be restored. Merton does speak of the "annihilation" of the self, following not only the Buddhists but John of the Cross, Meister Eckart,^h and the Desert Fathers as well; but the self that is annihilated is never the deep, inner "true" self, but rather is the superficial, empirical self which inhibits the emergence of the true self.⁴

¹Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 283.

²See, for example, Mystics and Zen Masters, pp. 22-30, 17; A Thomas Merton Reader, p. 510, and "An Interview with Thomas Merton" (McDonnell), p. 38.

³Raids on the Unspeakable, p. 15.

⁴"And this return to God as the Ground of all existence is only possible by detachment and 'death' in the exterior self, so that the inner self, purified and renewed, can fulfil its function as image of the Divine Trinity." The Inner Experience, p. 35. "He is not really a man, then, ... (As St. John of the Cross

For Merton himself, Cistercian austerity and asceticism was a necessary, although not sufficient, means to this end, a "means of putting off the 'old man' corrupted by sin, and renewing the image of God... by perfect likeness to Christ in Charity."¹

3. Experience: Merton's Theology

"The human person," wrote Merton, "is a free being created with capacities that can only be fulfilled by the vision of an unknown God."² The person will remain at the level of the superficial self if the movement into the depths of the self fails to take this teleological aspect into account. Without a theistic dimension, the stripping away of the false self is never complete. Merton considers man in

would say) until his humanity has been annihilated.", "The Transforming Union in St. Bernard and St. John of the Cross," p. 211. See also, on Eckart, Zen and the Birds of Appetite, pp. 9f, and on the Desert Fathers, Wisdom of the Desert, p. 8. On "annihilation" in the Russian mystics see "Prayer, Personalism, and the Spirit," in Sisters Today, and Mystics and Zen Masters, pp. 178-187.

¹The Silent Life, p. 88. Cf. Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 128. See above, p. 226.

²Seasons of Celebration, p. 213.

light of this supernatural vocation and not simply as he exists in his natural state.¹ The vocation to the vision of God is a part of man's essence. Therefore, as man discovers God he discovers himself as well, and conversely, self-knowledge is the beginning of the ascent (or descent) to God.² There is more than the awareness that one is created in the image of God; it is the apprehension of God Himself. God is discovered within "in much the same way as we discover the unsuspected depths of our own deep self."³ Self-discovery, if it is authentic, is also a discovery of God; and the discovery of God opens up to the person the depths

¹The New Man, p. 70. Merton, at this point, is thoroughly Augustinian. See Frederick Copleston, S.J., A History of Philosophy, Vol. II (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1950), p. 49; "(The Augustinian attitude) contemplates always man as he is, man in the concrete, for de facto man has only one final end, a supernatural end, and, as far as actual existence is concerned, there is but man fallen and redeemed: there never has been, is not, and never will be a purely 'natural man' without a super-natural vocation and end." Cf., Ibid. p. 243. Cf. Confessions, I, l. i.

²The Waters of Silence, p. 19.

³The Living Bread, p. 91. Cf. The Inner Experience, p. 11: "In Christianity the inner self is simply a stepping stone to an awareness of God."

of his own reality. If we oppose God we oppose our own deepest selves, if we have a true awareness of him, we have a true awareness of ourselves.¹ In order to find God, therefore, we must also find ourselves, for "if I penetrate to the depths of my own existence and my own present reality, the indefinable 'am' that is myself in its deepest roots, then through this deep center I pass into the infinite 'I am' which is the very Name of the Almighty."² Therefore, the entire process of withdrawal has a deeper goal than the discovery of the true self; its goal is the discovery of God, the source of truth.

¹Cf. Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 160f, and The New Man, p. 42. Although Merton was Thomistic in the sense that he saw the possibility of discovering God through reflection on data available to the senses, at this point he is in the Augustinian tradition, the tradition which looks for God in the depths of the soul. Cf. Confessions, VII, 10; X, 20., Copleston, Op. Cit., p. 69: Merton is fond of stating the Augustinian maxim that God is nearer to us than we are to ourselves. See below, p. 363.

²Thoughts in Solitude, p. 86. Cf. The Inner Experience, p. 11. "...our being somehow communicates directly with the being of God...If we enter into ourselves, find our true self, and then pass 'beyond' the inner 'I,' we sail forth into the immense darkness in which we confront the 'I AM' of the Almighty." See also The New Man, pp. 32, 44.

This is not to say that man first finds himself and then, after the true self has been made known, he begins to find God. Man discovers God and his true self simultaneously. Nevertheless, even though Merton usually speaks as if, in fact, the movement is a process that descends first into the depths of the self and then through that self to God, he never hesitates to proclaim that God is the initiator of the process. As far as man's existential encounter is concerned, he may very well first experience a self-awakening before he experiences an apprehension of the divine, but ultimately this was made possible by the action of God. "Grace," wrote Merton, "is given us for the precise purpose of enabling us to discover and actualize our deepest and truest self."¹ Without Grace we will never know ourselves as we really are and we will never know God. Grace is God's action within us. The nature of the search for God is the realization that God and the self have already discovered each other, or in Merton's words, "we seek Him successfully when we realize that we cannot find Him unless He shows Himself to us, and yet at the same time that He would not have inspired

¹The New Man, p. 32.

us to seek Him unless we had already found Him."¹

Merton defined grace in terms of the reconciliation of man and God. Grace stands in opposition to what Merton has called "Promethean theology":² the understanding, often subtly stated, that man and God are opposed to one another and that man has to struggle to achieve perfection, freedom, love, and union with God. Such a theology, which Merton understood as actually a description of man at odds with himself rather than with God, has no need of grace. It assumes a cleavage that is bridged by man's strivings. Grace, on the other hand, is used to describe a situation in which the separation between man and God is overcome by God Himself. Union with God is a gift of God, and as such it cannot be produced through meditative techniques, asceticism or any other kind of spiritual discipline. Any Promethean element is discarded. Discipline has its function, but it is a matter of preparation only; it in no way produces union with God.³

¹Thoughts in Solitude, p. 64. Also, Bread in the Wilderness, p. 11; No Man Is An Island, p. 224.

²See above, pp. 96f.

³See Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 161f; The Waters of Siloe, p. 20; "Contemplation and Ecumenism," p. 133; Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 203; Seeds of Contemplation, p. 32; and Silence in Heaven, p. 20.

Its only function is the overcoming of the superficialities of the false self. One may be able to overcome those superficialities, and may very possibly descend into the depths of the self, but without grace such a descent will never reveal the ultimate truth of the person, for the ultimate truth of the person participates in the ultimate Truth which is God. Man cannot reach God by his own efforts. Merton insists that the good news of the Christian message is that God is already dwelling in the depths of man, and hence, human efforts are not necessary. Opposition between man and God has been overcome without any effort on the part of man. Grace means that there is no ultimate opposition:

"Grace is not a strange, magic substance which is subtly filtered into our souls to act as a kind of spiritual penicillin. Grace is unity, oneness within ourselves, oneness with God. Grace is the peace of friendship with God...Grace means that there is no opposition between man and God, and that man is able to be sufficiently united with himself to live without opposition to God. Grace is friendship with God. And more - it is sonship."¹

God's action, therefore, is the cause of the two-fold descent: the descent to the depths of the true self and the descent (or ascent) to God Himself. Self-

¹The New Man, p. 31.

discovery and the discovery of God is all part of the same process, a process which Merton calls by a number of names: mysticism, mystical prayer, mystical contemplation, contemplation, infused contemplation, contemplative prayer. These words, often used interchangeably,¹ describe the experience that a person undergoes when, having stripped away the false self through whatever means are appropriate and necessary, he encounters the truth of himself as he is encountered by God. It is the experience of an "immediate sense of what it means to be" for God is present in the very act of being.²

"Contemplation is the sudden intuitive penetration of what really IS. It is the unexpected leap of the spirit of man into the existential luminosity of Reality Itself, not merely by the metaphysical intuition of being, but by the transcendent fulfilment of an existential communion with Him Who IS."³

It is "the direct and pure experience of reality in its ultimate root,"⁴ the awareness of the reality of

¹See above, p. 14.

²Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pp. 220f.

³The New Man, pp. 15f; Cf. "Contemplation and Ecumenism," p. 133.

⁴Faith and Violence, p. 215.

the source of being and truth and life.¹ It is the "participation of our soul and all of its faculties in the life, knowledge, and love of God Himself,"² and since it is a participatory knowledge of God, it can also be described in terms of union with God.³

Merton recognized and appreciated the incommunicable nature of the mystical experience. The knowledge of God in the depths of the self is beyond intelligibility and beyond adequate means of expression. Nevertheless, the mystic does not have to remain silent about his experience. Although he realizes that anything he might say about an experience which is ineffable will be less than adequate, he realizes that words can serve a useful function. St. John of the Cross was well aware of the inadequacies of theological language, but according to Merton, he "did not conclude that therefore the theological language of revelation should

¹ See New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 1; cf. "Poetry and Contemplation: A Reappraisal" in A Thomas Merton Reader, p. 438.

² The Ascent to Truth, p. 16. Cf. Ibid., p. 62. "Community, Politics and Contemplation," p. 245; "Poetry and Contemplation: A Reappraisal," in A Thomas Merton Reader, p. 441. In The Inner Experience, p. 72, Merton wrote: "Contemplation is a supernatural love and knowledge of God, simple and obscure, infused by him into the summit of the soul, giving it a direct and experimental contact with him."

³ The concept of "union with God" will be discussed below; pp. 270ff, 337ff.

be completely revolutionized."¹ Neither did Merton:

"The personal and direct grasp of sacred realities by each individual soul is an incommunicable experience. The mystical vision cannot be passed on from father to son. But the aptitude for that vision may be inherited...It needs to be brought to life by the proper signs and symbols."²

"Words," he wrote, can become "sacred signs."³ As inadequate as it may be, language has a necessary place in the sharing of religious experience. The experience itself is beyond sharing but language, which in Merton's case meant theological or poetic language, "can make known to other men the unsearchable mystery"⁴ found in the encounter with God. It can open up to others the possibilities and the potentialities for mystical experience. Therefore, within the contemplative community there is a vocation that calls for speech.

¹Faith and Violence, p. 271.

²The New Man, p. 56.

³Ibid., p. 55.

⁴"Poetry and Contemplation: A Reappraisal," in A Thomas Merton Reader, p. 449. Other references in Merton's writings to the ineffableness of the mystical experience include, The Secular Journal, p. 120; The Sign of Jonas, p. 55; Seasons of Celebration, pp. 20f; Merton's Preface to William Johnston's The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing (New York: Desclee, 1967), p. x; Zen and the Birds of Appetite, pp. 39, 42f.

Although Merton never referred to himself as a mystical theologian, he accepted the vocation of one who speaks about the mystical experience.

It has been made clear that Merton understood mysticism in terms of an experience of God. Mysticism, for him, is theistic. However, before we undertake an examination of Merton's understanding of theistic mysticism, it must be noted that he was able to appreciate and speak to the forms of mysticism, for the most part within the oriental religions, that made no explicit reference to a divine entity or concept.¹ His interest in Zen Buddhism is well-known and is expressed in a number of his books and articles, especially his later work. So, too, is his interest in the classics of Chinese religious traditions, especially those of Taoism. He admitted that it was "no easy task" to find a common ground between Eastern and Christian forms of mysticism but that the difficulties should not prevent a thorough and appreciative dialogue from occurring. It was his understanding that Christianity and the form of mystical awareness discovered in Zen

¹Cf. his earlier rejection of this possibility in The Ascent to Truth, p. 63.

were complementary.¹ The former had a particular message to impart whereas the latter was concerned with the pure state of awareness. Zen is not a matter of a message or a kerygma, its purpose is the awakening of a deep ontological awareness in the ground of the being of the one awakened.² Christianity, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with revelation. In it "the objective doctrine retains priority both in time and in eminence."³ Therefore, there is a great difference in the intention and the direction of these two traditions, but this difference does not at all invalidate the complementary nature of the relationship that could and should exist between them. The supernatural Kerygma of Christianity and the metaphysical intuition of the ground of being of Zen "are far from being incompatible. One may be said to prepare the way for the other."⁴ As long as one

¹Zen and the Birds of Appetite, pp. 41, 47. The question of whether or not Zen can properly be called mystical is by-passed by Merton, but referred to in Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 207.

²Ibid., p. 48.

³Ibid., p. 45.

⁴Ibid., p. 47.

is able to differentiate between doctrine and experience, one can see how Christianity and Zen can co-exist.

Merton explained:

"...I believe that Zen has much to say not only to a Christian but also to a modern man. It is nondoctrinal, concrete, direct, existential, and seeks above all to come to grips with life itself, not with ideas about life, still less with party platforms in politics, religion, science, or anything else."¹

"It is therefore possible to say that both Christians and Buddhists can equally well practise Zen? Yes, if by Zen we mean precisely the quest for direct and pure experience on a metaphysical level, liberated from verbal formulas and linguistic preconceptions. On the theological level the question becomes more complex."²

Christianity begins with revelation, but it would be far too simplistic to reduce the Christian revelation to theological and doctrinal statements. The revelation to which the Christian tradition witnesses is the revelation of God Himself, communicated to us in words and symbols, but always beyond those words and symbols. Therefore, the Christian would do well to avoid "obsession with doctrinal formulas" and remember that the heart of

¹Ibid., p. 32.

²Ibid., p. 204.

Christianity is "a living experience of unity in Christ which far transcends all conceptual formulations."¹ If the Christian experience is reduced to the intellectual acceptance of certain doctrines, then the Christian tradition will be reduced to a "world view, at times a religious philosophy and little more, sustained by a more or less elaborate cult, by a moral discipline and a strict code of Law."² As long as the Christian remembers this experiential side of his tradition, a dialogue with Zen will be productive. Zen could well provide a methodology which would enhance the life of the Christian.

At the same time, Merton wanted to avoid a "loose and irresponsible syncretism" that tried to unite all religions in so far as they "meet at the top," making all theological and philosophical differences irrelevant. Such a synthesis has never been adequately demonstrated to exist, Merton argued, in spite of what he considered to be the brilliant ways in which it has been promoted. On the one hand, it fails to take into account the importance of the doctrinal differences, differences which cannot be easily dispensed with. Doctrines are

¹Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 39.

²Ibid., p. 40.

more important than something "that a mystic could throw off like a suit of clothing" and the experience itself may be in some way modified by the beliefs held by the mystic as he underwent his experiences. On the other hand, "the personal experience of the mystic remains inaccessible to us and can only be evaluated indirectly through texts and other testimonials." It is never easy, therefore, to assume that what a Christian mystic, and a Sufi, and a Zen Master experience is really "the same thing."¹

Along with his warnings to those who would wish to syncretize all theological and experiential differences, Merton also issued warnings to those who refused to acknowledge the revelation of God outside of the Christian tradition. "God is in no way limited in His gifts," he wrote, and consequently "there can be no absolutely solid grounds for denying the possibility of supernatural (private) revelation and of supernatural mystical graces to individuals, no matter where they may be or what may be their religious tradition, provided that they sincerely seek God and His truth."² Whereas a rash syncretism is to be avoided, nonetheless genuine dialogue and ecumenism requires communication and sharing, the

¹ Ibid., pp. 43f.

² Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 207.

the seeking of "the inner and ultimate spiritual 'ground' which underlies all articulated differences."¹ The clarification of various points of theological language (such as the meaning of the idea of 'personality' both human and divine),² as well as a sharing of experience and discipline, are areas in which Merton felt the Christian and the Eastern contemplative could engage in fruitful dialogue. In the realm of mystical experience there is no single set of standards: the great rule of mysticism is that there are no rules.³ Contemplation is open to all.⁴ It is neither the possession of one religious tradition nor the possession of an elite group within all religions. No examination

¹Ibid., p. 204.

²Ibid., p. 210.

³Ibid., p. 148. The context for this statement is a criticism of David Knowles' judgment of the English mystics, which Merton believed was too narrowly focused on the standards of apophaticism as found in the tradition of Dionysius the Areopagite. See David Knowles, The English Mystical Tradition (London: Burns and Oates, 1961).

⁴ See Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 209; "Poetry and the Contemplative Life," p. 95; "Is Mysticism Normal?," p. 95. Merton often said that he had more in common with many non-Christian contemplatives than he had with traditional Christians. On this see, among others, Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 209, Faith and Violence, p. 219, and "A Conference on Prayer," p. 450f.

of Merton's explicitly theistic and explicitly Christian mysticism can fail to take into account the breadth and width of his interest in the universality of the mystical experience on the one hand, and on the other, the quest for the discovery of that which underlies the experiences.

There are forms of mysticism, however, which Merton labels as false. He warns against, and in effect attacks as inauthentic, any form of mysticism which becomes centred in the empirical, subjective ego, that which he calls the "false self." The temptation to self-centred mysticism is present in all forms of mysticism, whether they are intended to be theistic or not. Merton can see and analyze this temptation in various forms of mysticism but most definitely within his own monastic tradition and the life of prayer which it engenders:

"Most serious and good monks, idealists, desire to make of their lives a work of art according to an approved pattern. This brings with it an instinct to to study themselves, to shape their lives, to remodel themselves, to tune and re-tune all their inner dispositions - and this results in full-time meditation and contemplation of themselves."¹

¹Contemplative Prayer, p. 47.

Merton continues immediately to mention why this is a danger: concentration on the self can blind one to the presence of God:

"They may unfortunately find this so delightful and absorbing that they lose all interest in the invisible and unpredictable action of grace. In a word, they seek to build their own security, to avoid the risk and dread implied by submission to the unknown mystery of God's will."¹

Contemplation becomes little more than a "psychological trick,"² a "cult of the self" rather than a "cult of God."³ For a Christian monk this is antithetical to his vocation, which is to come in contact with God. It is also antithetical to Zen, in which the focus is "the Self which is the Void...that is to say precisely not the ego self."⁴ Merton believed that it was basic to all forms of mysticism with which he was familiar, i.e. Zen, Sufism, and Christian mysticism, "to radically and unconditionally question the ego which appears to be the subject of the transcendent experience, and thus

¹Loc. cit.

²No Man Is An Island, p. 219.

³Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 376.

⁴Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 74.

of course to radically question the whole nature of the experience itself precisely as 'experience.'¹ Any mysticism which centred upon the individual, or the individualistic enjoyment of experience, or upon "the individual self experienced as without limitation" was a "pseudo-mysticism."²

Merton criticizes pseudo-mysticism under the various forms which he found it to take, for instance, under what he calls "Promethean mysticism," exploitative or manipulative forms of prayer, and quietism. He criticizes "Promethean mysticism" in which God is regarded as an "object" or as a "thing" which is foreign to oneself and with whom union is possible only if one is willing to pay a particular price. This form of mysticism misrepresents not only the nature of God and of grace, but the nature of the self as well. The self is seen as an operative subject, one who brings about the eventual union with the divine.³ He criticizes any form of mysticism or prayer which tends to become exploitive or which attempts to manipulate God by making "deals."⁴ Whenever prayer becomes exploited for purposes

¹Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 73f.

²"Symbolism: Communication or Communion?" p. 347.

³e.g. The New Man, pp. 23ff; New Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 182f.

⁴Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 334.

which are beneath its dignity as a matter of orientation to God it becomes "strictly impure."¹ He criticizes any form of mysticism which tends to become a means of escape from involvement in or responsibility for the world, and therefore he criticizes that form of mysticism which has been called "quietism." Merton sees quietism as an anti-incarnational heresy "which encloses a man within himself in an entirely selfish solitude which excludes not only other men but even God Himself."² Contemplation, although it includes silence and stillness, can never be the total cessation of all activity. The "blacking out" of all sensible realities and the entering into a total solitude result in the mystic's being alone not with God but only with his own ego. "He is not in the presence of the Transcendent One, but of an idol: his own complacent identity."³ Promethean, manipulative, or quietistic forms of pseudo-mysticism are not subdivisions of mysticism which Merton clearly and explicitly

¹Contemplative Prayer, p. 143. Cf. The Inner Experience, p. 58: "The contemplative's only safeguard is humility and self-forgetfulness and the renunciation of all desire to exploit the experience for any purpose whatever." On a concept of God and prayer based on a strict cause-effect relationship, see Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 159f. Cf. Ibid., pp. 102f, 334.

²"What is Contemplation?", p. 27; also The Inner Experience, p. 95

³Contemplative Prayer, p. 113. On Merton's under-

defines. Rather they are for him modes in which the selfish element that is a possibility and a temptation in all forms of mysticism can find concrete expression.

It is the self-orientation itself which is at the heart of Merton's criticisms. Whenever the self becomes the telos of the mystical experience it is a false mysticism. The true telos, God, has become secondary to the self, and whenever God who is ultimate Truth becomes penultimate at best, truth is sacrificed and falsity reigns. Throughout his life as a commentator on mystical experience, Merton insisted on being included among those who warn against seeking spiritual

standing of quietism, see also Disputed Questions, p. 214; The Ascent to Truth, pp. 66ff, 199f; "Love and Maturity," p. 46. On the quietism of Molinos see Bread in the Wilderness, pp. 17f. For his appreciation of Fenelon, one writer who has often been accused of quietism, (chiefly because of his relationship with Madame Guyon), see "Reflections on the Character and Genius of Fenelon," in Fenelon Letters (London: Harvill Press, 1964), pp. 9-30. On quietism within the Christian tradition see Underhill, Op. Cit., especially pp. 321-327; Heiler, Op. Cit., pp. 220-224; T.K. Connolly, "Quietism" in the New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 12, pp. 26-28, and Inge, Op. Cit., pp. 231-245.

experiences as goals in themselves.¹ Spiritual or mystical "experiences," enhanced feelings and emotions, and ecstasies and visions are treated by Merton as areas of contemplative life which must be approached with utmost caution. If they are not so treated, the result is not contemplation in its true sense, but rather, "consecrated narcissism,"² a kind of concentration on the superficial ego that, by its very nature, precludes any genuine experience of the divine. Spiritual experience, sought as an object and as an end in itself, is an idol.³ Strong emotions should not be mistaken

¹For instance, Merton cites St. Benedict, St. John of the Cross, St. Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysius the Areopagite as well as the Zen Masters as warning against trusting in visions. "According to the language of the Christian apophatic theologians, in the tradition of Saint Gregory of Nyssa and the Pseudo-Dionysius, if you have a vision in which you think you see God clearly, you have not seen God." Ascent to Truth, p. 68. On John of the Cross see Ascent to Truth, pp. 67f, 148, 201f and Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 77 in which he refers to John of the Cross as well as the Zen maxim, "If you meet the Buddha, kill him." Cf. Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 35. On St. Benedict see Basic Principles of Monastic Spirituality, p. 6.

²Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 213.

³e.g. "Symbolism: Communication or Communion?", p. 347. Cf., Life and Holiness, p. 97, "The Transforming Union in St. Bernard and St. John of the Cross," p. 31, and The Inner Experience, p. 100: "Once spiritual experience becomes objectified, it turns into an idol."

for the voice of God¹ and the value of meditations cannot be judged according to "how we feel."² Feelings, visions, and similar spiritual experiences either do not count, or, at best, are a "dangerous form of success" in the life of mystical prayer.³ The danger lies in so far as the contemplative will often mistake the "nice warm feeling" that has been brought about by a particular ascetic or meditative discipline with the action of God and therefore fall into the error of self-justification, self-righteousness, and self-salvation.⁴ This becomes a problem not only for the individual mystic who has mistaken his own feelings for the reality of God, but for the world as well, since the self-righteousness that can be generated by a self-seeking form of mysticism can wreck havoc with the lives of others, both in terms of the spiritual development and their society. A mystic who relies totally on his own subjectivity can be a very dangerous person. According to Merton, such a person:

¹Love and Maturity," p. 47.

²Contemplative Prayer, p. 40.

³Spiritual Direction and Meditation, p. 57.

⁴Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 116.

"...identifies the will of God with anything that makes him feel, within his own heart, a big, warm, sweet interior glow. The sweeter and the warmer the feeling is the more he is convinced of his own infallibility. And if the sheer force of his own self-confidence communicates itself to other people and gives them the impression that he is really a saint, such a man can wreck a whole city or a religious order or even a nation. The world is covered with scars that have been left in its flesh by visionaries like these."¹

Therefore, time and time again, Merton warns against seeking spiritual experiences as either ends in themselves or even as important constituents of mystical prayer. At best they can serve as signs, at worst they confirm the superficial self in its own illusions.²

In some of his earlier writings Merton spoke about the gradual steps and degrees of mystical prayer as they

¹Seeds of Contemplation, p. 118. (The intensity of Merton's fear of false mysticism in this passage is somewhat abated in the next paragraph in which he wrote, "However, very often these people are nothing more than harmless bores.")

²Warnings against self-centred mysticism are very numerous in the Merton corpus. See for example: Sign of Jonas, p. 54; The Silent Life, p. 102; Thoughts in Solitude, p. 118; New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 234, 245-247; Contemplative Prayer, p. 54; Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 237. See especially, New Seeds of Contemplation, Chapter 2, pp. 6-13, called "What Contemplation is Not;" Ascent to Truth, pp. 84f, and Chapter IV, pp. 59-73, called "False Mysticism."

have been traditionally outlined by mystical theologians, especially since the writings of St. John of the Cross;¹ nevertheless, he warned, concern about the degrees of prayer leads to constant self-analysis and the contemplative would do better to refrain from such analysis. It becomes too self-centred.²

Merton's concern for false spirituality was primarily focused on the contemplative practices within the monastic life. Two other areas in which he spoke critically about this problem were the drug culture that became wide-spread in America in the 1960s, and the attempts of the churches to present Christianity as an alternative to drugs, what Merton called religion as a "happiness cult."

The hope that psychedelic drugs could serve as a short cut to mystical awareness was a prevalent one in America in the 1960s. Timothy Leary had written about LSD with a catching enthusiasm, similar to the enthusiasm with which Aldous Huxley had spoken of the

¹See No Man Is An Island, pp. 62ff, and the arguments of The Ascent to Truth and Seeds of Contemplation.

²e.g., No Man Is An Island, p. 217; "Poetry and the Contemplative Life," in Figures for an Apocalypse, p. 108; Seeds of Destruction, p. 286; and Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 31.

effects of mescaline.¹ Merton, on the other hand, felt that the use of drugs led only to a pseudo-mysticism, one in which the user was never taken beyond the superficial self but delighted, instead, in an illusory feeling of self-transcendence. On one level, drug usage was a matter of the seeking of an experience for its own sake, enabling one "to 'turn on' with a minimum of delay and inconvenience."² On another level he saw drug induced mysticism as being "a substitute for metaphysical and mystical self-transcendence...perhaps also a substitute for love."³ However, the advent of the cult of psychedelic drugs had a message for modern contemplatives as far as Merton was concerned:

¹Timothy Leary, The Politics of Ecstasy (New York: Putnam, 1968), Aldous Huxley, The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell, published in one volume (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959). See also Alan W. Watts, The Joyous Cosmology (New York: Pantheon, 1962).

²Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 115.

³Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 28. See also "Symbolism: Communication or Communion?", p. 347; Merton's Introduction to William Johnston's The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing; and, The Inner Experience, pp. 22, 101. Merton is in agreement, in principle, with R.C. Zaehner's research into the mysticism of the drug culture. See Mysticism: Sacred and Profane (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), and Drugs, Magic and Makebelieve (London: Collins, 1972). Others who reject drugs as a means toward a religious enlightenment include Georgia Harkness (Op. Cit., pp. 161-164) and Hal Bridges who, in American Mysticism, not only provides his own understanding (pp. 120-142) but also includes a statement

"Whatever one may think of psychedelic drugs, as a sociological fact they clearly indicate that the desire for inner experience is not something buried in the medieval past. The fact that the Beatles took LSD and then went to an Indian monk and guru for guidance, then dropped LSD when he told them to, and practiced meditation under his instruction, is certainly salutary for so-called contemplative monks."¹

The drug culture, although it led to a false and superficial mysticism, did indicate a desire for mystical experience, and this desire was a sign to the classical mystic and contemplative, (i.e., for Merton, the contemplative monk) to offer his own experience to help meet this need. The monk could offer first his mode of discipline (although Merton warned that the problem inherent in the use of psychedelics is shared by all forms of ascetic disciplines),² second the theistic and Christocentric telos of mysticism, and third, the warning about the dangers of seeking mystical experience as a "turn-on":

by Swami Prabhavananda denying the religious authenticity of a drug-induced experience, (pp. 151-153).

¹Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 107; Cf., p. 161; The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton, p. 144, and "The Monk as a Marginal Man," Center Magazine 2 (January, 1969), No. 1, p. 33.

²Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 115.

"What needs to be made clear, however, is that contemplation is not a deepening of experience only, but a radical change in one's way of being and living, and the essence of this change is precisely a liberation from dependence on external means to external ends. Of course one may say that an opening of the 'doors of perception' is not entirely 'external' and yet it is a satisfaction for which one may develop a habitual need and on which one may become dependent. True contemplation delivers one from all such forms of dependence. In that sense it seems to me that a contemplative life that depends on the use of drugs is essentially different from one which implies complete liberation from all dependence on anything but freedom and divine grace. I realize that these few remarks do not answer the real question¹ but they express a doubt in my own mind."¹

To offer Christocentric contemplation is the task of the monk. The Christian Church at large, however, was failing in its vocation to meet the spiritual needs made evident by the popularity of drugs. Drugs promise instant contemplation. They promise the ability to be a mystic without having to make any sacrifices. Merton however, does not blame this situation simply on those involved in the drug culture. Official religion has

¹Faith and Violence, p. 217.

contributed to this confusion.

"It has after all been the claim of official religion - more or less in all the Churches - that religion would act as a happiness pill, would help people to solve their problems, would make life easier and more jolly, and so on. If religion is enthusiastically advertised as a happiness pill, and then a real happiness pill comes along, then I see no justification for religious people complaining that the public likes the competitor's product better. After all, it is cheaper and more effective."¹

The Church's "happiness pill" alternative to drug-usage is no better than the drug culture itself. By offering religion as a competitor with drugs, the Church trivializes the Gospel. Religion as a "happiness pill" is a false idea of religion, in the same way that a self-centred mysticism is a false idea of mysticism.²

Merton's purpose in warning against self-orientation in mystical experience is, on the one hand, a negative form of his insistence that true mysticism is an awareness

¹Loc. Cit. Cf. "The Ascetic Life, Experience of God and Freedom," Cistercian Studies IX (1974), No. 1, pp. 60f.

²See also, "An Interview with Thomas Merton," p. 39; Seeds of Destruction, p. 244; New Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 186f. It should be noted that Sydney Ahlstrom in A Religious History of the American People (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972), discusses Merton in a chapter called "Harmonial Religion Since the Later Nineteenth Century." He views Merton positively against one who was a very popular adherent of religion as a "happiness pill," Norman Vincent Peale, p. 1,035. On

of God, and on the other hand, an acknowledgement that when the mystic is concentrating upon himself as the subject of an experience, he will be unable to go beyond the subject-object means of experiencing reality, a movement that Merton understood as essential in true mysticism.

The God-centredness of the mystical experience was of primary importance to Merton. In the contemplative life, he wrote, the most important thing "is not to live for contemplation but to live for God."¹ The concern of the contemplative should be not so much with the experience of God or with the gifts of God, but simply with God Himself.² This is implied in every warning Merton made against selfishness in contemplative prayer.

However, to seek to discover God in the mystical experience is not a matter of a particular subject experiencing a particular object. The subject-object scheme keeps a knowledge of God purely on the level of the intellect. But intellectual cognition of God is limited. It is limited in that God's infinity transcends

the "death of God" as a "necessary iconoclastic protest" against this sort of false religion see Faith and Violence, pp. 193, 208.

¹The Sign of Jonas, p. 38.

²e.g. Spiritual Direction and Meditation, p. 34.

utterly the finitude of the human intellect. Man cannot attain to God as He is in Himself by his own intellectual or moral or spiritual efforts. The mystical awareness of God, which is always the effect of grace, hopes to transcend this limitation and provide a knowledge of God that is not simply intellectual but participatory. It is a knowledge of God through love, or through union. Yet for such a knowledge of God to be realized, not only must God not be understood as an object, but neither must the self:

"The knowledge of which we are capable is simply a knowledge about him. It points to him in analogies which we must transcend in order to reach him. But we must transcend ourselves as well as our analogies, and in seeking to know him we must forget the familiar subject-object relationship which characterizes our ordinary acts of knowing."¹

In speaking to a group of nuns Merton made the same point: "I want to make it quite clear that the whole essence of contemplative prayer is that the division between subject and object disappears. You do not look at God as an object and you do not look at yourself as an object."² Hence, Merton's warnings against self-

¹Contemplative Prayer, p. 103.

²"The Life that Unifies," p. 65.

orientation also serves as a reminder to turn away from the dichotomy of subject and object. If God is to be experienced as something other than an entity among entities, the self too must cease to regard itself as a subject that has particular experiences.¹

For Merton, in this context, the type of epistemology implied in Descartes' Cogito is a curse laid on the life of prayer.² "We are plagued today with the heritage of that Cartesian self-awareness, which assumed that the empirical ego is the starting point of an infallible intellectual progress to truth and spirit..."³ When the empirical ego is the starting point of knowledge or when one "finds his basic intuition in the reflexive self-awareness of the individual thinking subject, standing, as it were, outside of and apart from other objects of knowledge"⁴ the resultant cognition

¹e.g. Faith and Violence, pp. 81f. In Opening the Bible, p. 71, Merton quotes Erich Fromm on the necessity to transcend the subject-object scheme. Cf., The Inner Experience, p. 148: "The contemplative is not one who directs a magic spiritual intuition upon other objects, but one who, being perfectly unified in himself, and recollected in the center of his own humility, enters into contact with reality by an immediacy that forgets the division between subject and object."

²Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 113.

³Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 26.

⁴Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 67.

is but a "chill glow" or an "arid light"¹ that leads only to alienation. In speaking of modern man "in so far as he is still Cartesian" Merton says that:

"The more he is able to develop his consciousness as a subject over against objects, the more he can understand things in their relations to him and to one another, the more he can manipulate these objects for his own interest, but also, at the same time, the more he tends to isolate himself in his own subjective prison, to become a detached observer cut off from everything else in a kind of impenetrable alienated and transparent bubble which contains all reality in the form of purely subjective experience."²

As long as one continues to think according to the subject-object structure, God too is seen as an object standing outside the subjective self. But Merton cannot define God in this way. For him, God is not

¹"Reflections on the Character and Genius of Fenelon," in Selected Letters of Fenelon (London: Harvill Press, 1964), p. 18.

²Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 22; Other attacks by Merton upon Descartes and the Cartesian consciousness can be found in New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 8: "Nothing could be more alien to contemplation than the cogito ergo sum of Descartes... This is the declaration of an alienated being," and also "As Man to Man," Cistercian Studies 4 (1969), p. 94; The Ascent to Truth, p. 38; Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pp. 264, 285; Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 211; The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 96; Zen and the Birds of Appetite, pp. 15, 68. Also, see above, pp. 218ff.

an object,¹ God is the "Absolute Ground of Being" and beyond that the Godhead is the "Urgrund" and is realized from "within."² He cannot be known according to the subject-object scheme of knowing for God transcends that scheme itself. He is known by loving participation:

"The unitive knowledge of God in love is not a knowledge of an object by a subject, but a far different and transcendent kind of knowledge in which the created 'self' which we are seems to disappear in God and to know him alone."³

The self undergoes an "apparent destruction" in order to know God, but what is destroyed is the superficial self, not the person. The superficial self cannot know God except as a matter of the intellect, it is incapable of transcendent union with God, the Absolute Ground of Being:

"The person in fact is rooted in that absolute Ground and not in the phenomenal contingency of egohood. Hence if the

¹e.g. No Man Is An Island, p. 69; Faith and Violence, pp. 81f. "St. Anselm and His Argument," The American Benedictine Review 17 (June, 1966), p. 241.

²Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 71. See below, pp. 366f.

³Contemplative Prayer, p. 94.

person were to attempt to go 'outside' this metaphysical ground in order to experience himself as being and acting, or observe himself as an object functioning among other objects, the unitive wisdom experience would become impossible, because now the person is split in two - hence the paradox that as soon as there is "someone there" to have a transcendent experience, 'the experience' is falsified and indeed becomes impossible."¹

It is not only impossible, it is absurd as well, to try to grasp God as an object which can be intellectually known by our minds, and thereby made a possible object for our manipulation. "In a word," Merton wrote, "God is invisibly present to the ground of our being: our belief and love attain to him, but he remains hidden from the arrogant gaze of our investigating mind..."²

All the mind can do is know about God, and this knowledge is only by way of very limited analogies. To know God personally, one must live on a different level than that level which is assumed by the superficial self. One must be purged of that self and the attitudes it cherishes, in order to plunge to the depths of the true self, the self which is grounded in God and not in egohood. Only then, when the self is no longer

¹ Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 78. Cf. "The Ascetic Life, Experience of God and Freedom," p. 64.

² Contemplative Prayer, p. 103.

viewed by itself as subject, and God as an object outside the subjective self, can the person be united to God in love.

Hence, to speak of "self transcendence" is to speak in a metaphor. Statements occurring in mystical writings, especially Christian ones, about the complete annihilation of the ego "have always to be taken with serious qualification."¹ What is annihilated is not the person in his true centre, but rather an ego-consciousness that in actuality hides instead of reveals the true person.

For Merton, the true person, the one who is the subject of transcendent consciousness, is not "the ego as isolated and contingent, but the person as 'found' and 'actualized' in union with Christ....the identity of the mystic is never purely and simply the mere empirical ego - still less the neurotic and narcissistic self - but the 'person' who is identified with Christ, one with Christ."² The Christological element in Merton's mysticism is central:

"All that has been said so far about man being made in the image and likeness of God and therefore being made for union with God is incomplete and indeed remains

¹Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 74.

²Ibid., p. 75.

meaningless for a Christian until we see it in its proper orientation - to the Person of the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. The whole theology of the Redemption, of man's supernatural vocation as a son of God, is summed up by St. Paul in his parallel between Adam and Christ: Adam the first man, the natural head of the human race and Christ the new Adam, the spiritual head of regenerated and spiritualized humanity."¹

Merton's Christology is, in effect, a commentary on this passage.

Merton focuses on two figures: Adam and Christ.²

When he uses the name Adam, he is referring not simply to the figure in the Genesis narratives, but to all men.

¹The New Man, p. 79. Earlier in his life, in writing about the theological insights of John of the Cross, Merton stressed the centrality of Christology for Christian mysticism: "God's revelation of Himself to the world in His Incarnate Word forms the heart and substance of all Christian mystical contemplation. This is just as true of Saint John of the Cross as it is of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, of Saint Bonaventure, or any of the mystics who are esteemed for their special devotion to the Humanity of Christ." The Ascent to Truth, p. 131.

²In this section of The New Man, Merton utilizes the hermenutical method known as "typology." Merton also stresses this method in Bread and the Wilderness, pp. 29ff, 51ff. See also The Living Bread, p. 96. (On The Problem of Typology as a Hermenutical Method, see G.W.H. Lampe, Essays on Typology (London: SCM, 1957), and J. Barr, Old and New in Interpretation (London: SCM, 1966), especially pp. 103-148).

Adam is the natural man.¹ He is man as created in the image of God but "fallen" in so far as that image is not made known in existence but remains hidden and unknown. When he uses the word Christ, he refers to one Person of the Godhead.² Christ is the eternal saving and redeeming action of God as known in existence.³ Although the Christ is present within the entire created order, He is known chiefly and primarily in His Incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth.⁴ Merton, therefore, used the word Christ to refer, on the one hand, to Jesus, and on the other hand, to "the whole economy of Redemption"⁵ which flows from the Incarnation. Christ is God as He is known in existence.⁶

Jesus is the Christ because in him God became known in existence. The image of God which is distorted in natural man was reestablished with the likeness of

¹The New Man, pp. 80f.

²On Merton's Trinitarian theology see The New Man, p. 102f and Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 177ff.

³The New Man, p. 102, Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 177f.

⁴The New Man, p. 81.

⁵The Ascent to Truth, p. 312.

⁶No Man Is An Island, pp. 184, 209.

God and thereby the uncreated image of God was made manifest in time and space. Hence Jesus Christ is the perfect image of God as well as "the perfect likeness of His own divine Image," and because of this unity "He is in fact identified with the image, co^substantial with the Father."¹ In Him the infinity of God and the concreteness of man are one. In Him the superficial ego was sacrificed so that the true person could become an existential reality. In so far as Jesus is different from other men, he is different not because of any sort of docetic denial of humanity, but because in him his true humanity found its actual Ground. His difference was in that he was "not personalized by the individuation of human nature."² The centre of his personhood was not in his ego but in God. He is the one who was able, on the Cross, to allow the true nature of his personhood to be completely and perfectly revealed. He is the new Adam, the new Man, and as such, Jesus becomes for all men

¹The New Man, p. 84. Cf. The Living Bread, p. 37, and The Inner Experience, p. 38: "In Him, we see a Man in every respect identical with ourselves as far as His nature is concerned, thinking and feeling and acting according to our nature, and yet at the very same time living on a completely transcendent and divine level of consciousness and of being for His consciousness and His being are the consciousness and being of God Himself."

²The New Man, p. 83.

"not only a divine and ontological exemplar of our own spiritual being, but He presents to us also a created exemplar of spiritual perfection."¹ He shows us what we really are and what we can really do. The Cross of Christ, however, is not simply a challenge and an inspiration but it is also "a power, a source of life and strength."² In so far as he is an exemplar, Jesus Christ is also more than exemplar: he is also mediator and saviour.³ The union between God and man that is reestablished in Him is reestablished in all men as well: "By His Spirit He Himself becomes the principle of new life and new actions which are truly and literally His life and His actions as well as our own."⁴ On the Cross he not only reveals to us the ontological ground of our being and the existential demands of the moral imperative, but by the very fact of his revelatory action he has given to us as well the means by which we too can be reunited with that ground and by which we too can share in the fulfilment

¹ Ibid., p. 84.

² Basic Principles of Monastic Spirituality, p. 14. Cf. "Seeking our Redeemer," Sponsa Regis 28 (February, 1957), p. 144.

³ The New Man, p. 81.

⁴ No Man Is An Island, p. 183. Merton refers here to Galatians 2:20.

of morality. He is the source of grace by which existential communion with God is effected in our own souls.¹

Jesus is the source of grace as well as the exemplar in so far as we share in his humanity in the same way in which we share in the humanity of Adam. "All men were united in Adam,"² wrote Merton, meaning that all mankind shares in the superficialities of the "false self." At the same time, since Jesus was fully human, all share in his humanity as well. However, his humanity is that of the new Adam, the humanity that is reestablished "in the state of union with God which had once been the privilege of Adam."³ In Jesus the reunion of man and God has taken place, and this reunion reveals to us that all men are "from the very moment we come into existence...potential representations of Christ simply because we possess the human nature which was created by Him and was assumed by Him in the Incarnation, saved by Him on the

¹The New Man, p. 84.

²Ibid., p. 80. Merton cites Sts. Bernard and Gregory of Nyssa on this point.

³Ibid., p. 81.

Cross and glorified by Him in His Ascension."¹

Simply by the fact of our humanity which is created in the image of God, we are "potentially united with the Word of God Who was to come and take human nature to Himself."² The reunion with God is already implicit in our humanity:

"And this is possible only because we are all one with Christ, we are all in Christ by virtue of our humanity, by the very fact that we are made in the image of God, and possess that human nature which the Word of God took to Himself."³

Merton differentiates between our natural and our supernatural union with God, the former based on our sharing in the humanity of Adam, the latter based on our sharing in the humanity of Jesus Christ.⁴ In both cases we are in union with God Himself. The difference is that of awareness. In the supernatural union made

¹Loc. Cit.

²Ibid., p. 82. Cf. Seasons of Celebration, p. 95.

³Loc. Cit.

⁴Ibid., p. 84. Merton cites Ruysbroek as the one who developed the Augustinian doctrine of image and likeness to its conclusion and outlines his theories in what follows. See Ruysbroek, Adornment of Spiritual Marriage, Sparkling Stone, Book of Supreme Truth, ed., E. Underhill (London: J.M. Dent, 1916), especially pp. 125ff and 155. I am indebted to Sister Anne Seward of Chimay, Belgium, for these references.

known in Jesus Christ "no longer is the divine Image present within us as unrecognized and unknown. We become aware of his presence. We plunge by supernatural understanding and love into the abyss of his light and being."¹ That which has been present in our depths all along is now made visible; that which has been implicit is made explicit. "We do not have to travel far to find Him. He is within us."² As Merton explained:

"You cannot be without God. It's impossible, it's just simply impossible. The only thing is that we don't see it..."

"And that people are transparent, and that the humanity of God is transparent in people...There is humanness, humanness, manness in God, which is manifested by every human being: not only by the fact that he is a creature of God but by the fact that he is redeemed in Christ... But this doesn't become apparent as long as we try to love the world for its own sake."³

In Jesus Christ, God becomes transparent in man. In Him, He who is within us as the ground of our being, is now made visible, and because we are able now to

¹The New Man, p. 87. Cf. Bread in the Wilderness, pp. 73-77.

²Seasons of Celebration, p. 68. Cf. Ibid., p. 70; Spiritual Direction and Meditation, p. 96.

³"A Life Free From Care," Cistercian Studies V (1970), pp. 222, 223. This article is a post-humously published transcription of a tape-recorded lecture.

become aware of the union with God in our ground, we begin to live as new creatures. We are born anew. Human life undergoes a radical reorientation.¹

Heretofore man was unaware of that which was implicit in his very being; now he is aware. Heretofore the natural union with God, being unrecognized, did not contribute to man's virtuousness ("except in a very imperfect way") or his happiness; now this can be changed. Heretofore the natural union, because it was unknown, did nothing "to reduce the distance of our exile from Him and his paradise"; now the distance is bridged. Heretofore our natural union contributed little to union among men;² now our supernatural union with God in Christ means that the history of the world has achieved an entirely new orientation which makes possible the reconciliation of men with one another.³

In Christ all creation, and especially mankind, is united in a whole new economy of God's redemption.⁴ In the

¹The New Man, p. 89.

²"Hence the terrible truth that a mankind which belongs to Christ without perhaps knowing it, or without being able to really evaluate the meaning of so astonishing a mystery, is spiritually alienated from Him and is tearing itself to pieces." Seasons of Celebration, pp. 95f.

³The New Man, pp. 88f.

⁴Ibid., p. 89.

same way that we are all in Adam, we are all, as well, in the New Adam.¹ Salvation comes through the recognition and realization of that which has been given to us from all eternity. That apprehension is made possible through the recognition of Jesus as the Christ and the realization through our identification with his death and resurrection that we share a common humanity with him, a humanity that is at one with God. Christian mysticism is, therefore, not a matter of self-introspection. Rather, it is the discovery that the ground of our being is revealed to us not in the intricacies of our own individual egos, but in the Christ who is in all. For Merton, mere ego analysis will never reveal the true person. "The discovery of ourselves in God, and of God in ourselves, by a charity that also finds other men in God with ourselves is, therefore, not the discovery of ourselves but of Christ."²

¹Ibid., pp. 82, 93, 95, 96.

²No Man Is An Island, p. 15. Cf. Disputed Questions, and Seasons of Celebrations, pp. 134, 156. Cf. "Rebirth and the New Man in Christianity," (unpublished) but which forms the basis of the Preface to the Japanese edition of The New Man. "To be born again is not to become somebody else, but to become ourselves...To be born again is to be born beyond egoism, beyond selfishness, beyond individuality in Christ." pp. 5, 7. See also The Inner Experience: "The Christian life is a return to the Father, the Source, the Ground of all existence, through the Son, the Splendor and the Image of the Father, in the Holy Spirit, the love of the Father and the Son. And

The discovery of Christ as the true centre of our beings is why Merton stresses that the Incarnation and the Cross are at the heart of all Christian mysticism.¹ It is the Gospel of Christ that makes false mysticism impossible,² that keeps one from becoming centred in the individual ego. Methods of meditation, ascetical techniques and cultic observances are all secondary. "We have a man who, mysteriously, is God. He does not expound to us a way. He Himself, eternal and divine, is 'the way.'"³ To discover Jesus as the Christ is to discover Christ at the ground of all humanity and hence as our own ground. Such a discovery entails the awareness that our ego-consciousness is precisely not that ground. But in a mysticism based on the Incarnation such a "self annihilation" is never negative. Rather,

this return is only possible by detachment and 'death' in the exterior self, so that the inner self, purified and renewed, can fulfil its function as image of the Divine Trinity...As a result of this union of God and Man in the one Person of Christ it was possible for everyman to be united to God in his own person, as a true son of God, not by nature but by adoption."

¹See above, pp. 274f. Also, "Contemplation and Ecumenism," p. 141, and Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 212.

²The Living Bread, p. 105.

³The New Man, p. 101. Cf. Contemplative Prayer, p. 115, and Faith and Violence, p. 223.

it is the victory of the new man. It is the beginning of man living in union with God, living that is, according to his true being - living as the Christ:

"So it is that we ourselves are 'the Second Adam' because we ourselves are Adam, we ourselves are Christ, and that we are all dwelling in one another, by virtue of the unity of the divine image reformed by grace...We are in the world as Christ-bearers and temples of the Holy Spirit, because our souls are filled with His grace...This, then, gives us a beginning of awareness of who we are. It is an awareness that is necessary for us to play our full part in the plan of God."¹

This understanding of the Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, as the ground of our being allows Merton to follow a particular tradition in Christian mystical theology in speaking explicitly in terms of deification or "divinisation."² Merton uses this language often, at the same time insisting

¹ Ibid., p. 96.

² This tradition is particularly strong in Eastern Orthodoxy. See Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church (London: James Clarke, 1957), especially Chapter V. Merton was familiar with this book (see "Prayer, Personalism, and the Spirit," Sisters Today 42, November, 1970, pp. 130ff) but his understanding of this concept came from his familiarity with the Fathers. He cites, for instance, Leo (Bread in the Wilderness, p. 83), Bernard ("Action and Contemplation in St. Bernard," p. 210), Athanasius (The Inner Experience, p. 36), and the Rhenish mystics ("Rebirth and the New Man in Christianity," p. 9).

that although man never ceases to be himself¹ and that God and man are and remain "metaphysically distinct," in mystical union in Christ man and God are "practically and experientially 'one Spirit.'"² To be divinised is to become other Christs,³ and to become other Christs is to allow Him who dwells in human depths to become transparent. Hence Merton can say that man's vocation is to become divine: "It is man, in Christ, who has the mission of not only making himself human but of becoming divine by the gift of the Spirit of love."⁴ To be divinised, therefore, is the same thing as to be humanized. It is to become fully human by the recognition and the making existentially real of the divine Ground of Being. The

¹Cf. Bread in the Wilderness, p. 76; Seasons of Celebration, p. 126.

²Preface to The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing (William Johnston, S.J.), p. ix. In this context Merton cites I Corinthians 6:16; cf. The Ascent to Truth, p. 281.

³Cf. Bread in the Wilderness, pp. 79, 80; The Living Bread, p. 101; The New Man, p. 119; No Man Is An Island, pp. 139, 175; Seasons of Celebration, p. 54; The Silent Life, p. 23; "A Life Free From Care," p. 219.

⁴"Christian Humanism," Spiritual Life 13, (1967), p. 230. Cf. The New Man, p. 46; Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 19; "The Catholic and Creativity," p. 210; "The Transforming Union in St. Bernard and St. John of the Cross," p. 211. These citations in no way exhaust the references Merton made to divinisation. See below pp. 473ff.

divinization of man is, for Merton, nothing other than man living according to his true being, which is grounded in Christ. In Christ man and God are united. Therefore, divinization and humanization are existentially identical.

The existential awareness and communion with the Ground of Being is not an intellectual cognition of the essence of a mystery. The mystery remains mysterious. The knowledge that one may have of his inner ground is a "knowing by unknowing."¹ It is an awareness of the divine, which although infinitely close to man, is also infinitely distant. Such knowledge is not propositional in character, and wherever it is spoken of in terms that are more applicable to propositional knowledge, those terms are always analogical and as such are never fully adequate to encompass or reveal the divine mystery. Therefore, although Merton was able to describe the salvific action of Christ as that of making us aware of what is already ours by the eternal graciousness of God, he is also

¹Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 171, et. al. Cf. The Inner Experience, p. 69: "In 'unknowing' the gap between our spirit as subject and God as object is finally closed, and in the embrace of mystical love we know that we and He are one."

an exponent of the apophatic tradition.¹

"This 'apophatic' tradition concerns itself with the most fundamental datum of all faith - and one which is too often forgotten: the God who has revealed Himself to us in His Word has revealed Himself as unknown in His intimate essence, for He is beyond all merely human vision...The heart of the Christian mystical experience is that it experiences the ineffable reality of what is beyond experience. It 'knows' the presence of God, not in clear vision but as 'unknown.'.... It goes beyond words and ideas and attains to God Himself...Relinquishing

¹See above p. 247. See also Redeeming the Times (London: Burns and Oates, 1966), pp. 25f: "After all, it is no new thing to say that God as he is in himself is unknown to us and indeed unknowable to any created intelligence. The tradition of apophatic ('non-apparent') theology goes back beyond Pseudo-Dionysius and the Cappodocian Fathers of the fourth century who long ago taught that if we say 'God is,' indicating that in him is the fullness of all that we can conceive of as Being, we must complete it also by saying 'God is not' to indicate that the fullness of his Being is far beyond anything that we can conceive of as existing (since all existents we know are limited and circumscribed by their existence). However, we must remember that this tradition of mystical negation always co-exists, in Christianity, with a tradition of symbolic theology in which positive symbols and analogies of theological teaching are accepted for what they are: true but imperfect approximations which lead us gradually toward that which cannot properly be expressed in human language...Religious formulas and symbols, articles of faith, creeds, are not intended to prove anything. They are expressions of what has been revealed. They are not themselves the whole of revelation." (Cf. Faith and Violence, pp. 269-271). On the apophatic tradition see also, on John of the Cross, Disputed Questions, p. 212f; Ascent to Truth, p. 89; on Aquinas, Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 293; on Eckhart, Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 63; in the Zen philosophy of Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945), Ibid., p. 89.

every attempt to grasp God in limited human concepts, the contemplative's act of submission and faith attains to His presence as the ground of being itself...Here obviously we enter a realm of apparent contradictions which elude clear explanation, so that the contemplative prefers not to talk about it at all. Indeed, in the past, serious mistakes have been made and deadly confusions have arisen from inadequate attempts to explain the mystery."¹

Merton himself did not choose the option of never talking about it at all, nor did he attempt to translate the experience of mysticism into precise and distinct theological language. He recognized the impossibility of such a task. The mystical experience was, for him, too 'existential' for an objective analysis. Its existentialism resided in that the reality comprehended in the mystical experience was "not under clear objective forms, but in darkness, without form and without figure, apprehended only in the intimacy of the most personal and incommunicable experience."² The Christian mystical

¹Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 171f, 172.

²The New Man, pp. 139f. See below pp. 353-357.

experience was, for Merton, "a living theological experience of the presence of God in the world and in mankind through the mystery of Christ."¹ It was not the recognition of a system of truths about God. God reveals Himself to man in the mystical experience; he does not reveal propositions about Himself. But this self-revelation never negates the essential mystery of God as He is in Himself. Man finds his salvation in the revelation of God as dwelling in the Ground of our Being, but the essence of God remains beyond man's cognition. All man can do is stand in awe before the mystery that he has discovered deep within himself.

4. Return: Merton's Ethics

It has been shown how Thomas Merton based his understanding of the mystical experience on the doctrine of the Incarnation. He understood that as we recognize our true selves and the true selves of all men in the ground of being, we discover God's self-manifestation

¹Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 40.

in terms of concrete human existence.¹ In other words, we discover Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, who has been made known to history perfectly and definitively in Jesus. This understanding of Christ's Incarnation is the bridge between Merton's understanding of God and his understanding of ethics. It is the Incarnation that synthesizes mysticism and social ethics, contemplation and action, faith and works. His understanding of the doctrine of the Incarnation forced Merton to state the necessity of treating all men as Christ and the necessity of seeking Christ in all men:

"Since the Word was made Flesh, God is in man. God is in all men. All men are to be seen and treated as Christ. Failure to do this, the Lord tells us, involves condemnation for disloyalty to the most fundamental of revealed truths. 'I was thirsty and you gave me not to drink. I was hungry and you gave me not to eat...' (Matthew 25:42) This could be extended in every possible sense: and is meant to be extended, all over the entire area of human needs, not only for bread, for work, for liberty, for health, but also for love, for acceptance, for fellowship and understanding."²

Again and again in his writings Merton stressed that all men are Christ. He refused to limit this sharing in Christ to those who were expressedly Christian,

¹See above, pp. 276-287.

²Emblems of a Season of Fury, p. 79.

although he often referred to the Christian and to the Church as being Christ.¹ Rather, he extended the definition of the word "Christ" to include, at least potentially, all men:

"I must learn that my fellow man, just as he is, whether he is my friend or my enemy, my brother or a stranger from the other side of the world, whether he be wise or foolish, no matter what may be his limitations, 'is Christ.'²

"For in becoming man, God became not only Jesus Christ but also potentially every man and woman that ever existed. In Christ, God became not only this man but also, in a broader and more mystical sense, yet no less truly, 'every man.'... If we believe in the Incarnation of the Son of God, there should be no one on earth in whom we are not prepared to see, in mystery, the presence of Christ."³

With this broad understanding of the Incarnation and the meaning of Christ, Merton can therefore state that the Incarnation is the heart and ground of all true humanism.⁴ Because of the Incarnation no man

¹ e.g., The Ascent to Truth, p. 260; The Living Bread, pp. 4, 80; Disputed Questions, p. 119.

² Disputed Questions, p. 124.

³ New Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 294f, 296; cf. Seasons of Celebration, p. 95.

⁴ e.g., "Christian Humanism," p. 226; cf. Life and Holiness, p. 131.

who has been grasped by this mystery in the depths of his being can ever be indifferent to the fate of any other person,¹ even those who are unjust or who are enemies. Human nature, which is identical in all men, "was assumed by the Logos in the Incarnation" and Christ died for all men "in order to live for all men."² Those who explicitly call themselves by the name of Christ are the bearers of a humanism which Merton felt to be the only humanism that was grounded in the truth that can unite man to man and man to God:

"No humanism has retained the respect for man in his personal and existential actuality to the same extent as Christian humanism. The center of Christian humanism is the idea that God is love, not infinite power. Being love, God has given himself without reservation to man in that he became man. Henceforth, by reason of the incarnation, the love which is also the infinite creative secret of God in his hidden mystery becomes manifest and active through man, in man's world."³

What we do to one another, we do to Christ.⁴ Therefore, the Christian is deeply and ultimately concerned with

¹"The Challenge of Responsibility," Saturday Review 48 (February 13, 1965), pp. 28-30.

²Thomas Merton on Peace, p. 112.

³"Christian Humanism," p. 229.

⁴e.g. Seasons of Celebration, p. 99. Merton says almost precisely the same thing in respect to the American racial problem in Seeds of Destruction, pp. 16f, 126f.

the way in which he actualizes his relationship to his brother. But the Christian is not primarily concerned with ethical perfection but is concerned, primarily, with the "new being" in Christ. Morality will necessarily fail unless it is preceded by union with God in Christ. One cannot gather figs from thistles.¹ However, when man is born again in Christ, morality is fulfilled:

"For after Christ has been born in our hearts, He reaches out to Himself in the heart of our brother by the love of His own Spirit. Binding Himself as He is in us, with Himself, as he is in our brother, He restores us, in that same Holy Spirit, to the embrace of the heavenly Father."²

In Christ, we are one with each other, one within ourselves, and one with God. Humanism, or personalism, in the Christian context is therefore, a discovery of one's inmost self, and the inmost self of one's neighbor (which for Merton meant everyone in the world) as grounded in Christ.³

¹"Christ the Way," p. 146.

²Seasons of Celebration, p. 105.

³Ibid., p. 22.

"Therefore when you and I become what we are really meant to be, we will discover not only that we love one another perfectly but that we are the same Mystical Person, and that we are both living in Christ and Christ in us, and we are all One Christ."¹

This could be put another way. When the ground of a person's being is revealed to him he becomes aware that the ground of his being is no different from the ground of all that is. The same ground grounds everything. Therefore, one discovers the world by discovering his deepest self, because in discovering the ground of one's self, one discovers, at the same time, the ground of all reality. This ground "is not a visible objective and determined structure with fixed laws and demands. It is a living and self-creating mystery of which I am a part, to which I am myself my own unique door."²

Therefore, when one discovers the world in his own ground, he is no longer able to remain alienated from it. He does not renounce the alienated and false self in order to escape from and remain separate from the world; he does so in order to find his true self reconciled with the world as it exists in Christ - in its ground. By discovering his own true self, he finds the world's

¹Seeds of Contemplation, p. 48.

²Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 155.

true "self" as well:

"If the deepest ground of my being is love, then in that very love itself and nowhere else will I find myself, and the world, and my brother and Christ. It is not a question of either-or but of all-in-one. It is not a matter of exclusivism and 'purity' but of wholeness, wholeheartedness, unity and Meister Eckhart's Gleichheit (equality) which finds the same ground of love in everything."¹

"Christ the Lord is the Word Who has assumed our nature, which is one in all of us."² The Image of God is the same in all.³ This, for Merton, was the basis of all ethical speculation. Contemplative prayer or mystical experience, if it is an authentic descent to the deepest level of one's being, awakens man to his ethical responsibility. It does this first by awakening the person to the truth of his connaturality with all beings, and secondly, by allowing him to experience that the Ground in Whom all are one is love.

Ethics, for Merton, "must be based on an experience or realization of connaturality with our brother."⁴ Merton believed that there could be no natural law

¹Ibid., pp. 155f.

²Seeds of Destruction, pp. 256f.

³See above, pp. 232ff. See also The New Man, pp. 85f.

⁴Seeds of Destruction, p. 257.

without this kind of realization, and that it is this realization that forms the basis of the Mosaic law, the gospel ethic and the ethical implications within most ancient religions.¹ This unity between beings is prior to any existential separation. We do not discover a new unity when we are confronted with the Ground of Being; we discover an older unity. "My dear brothers," Merton addressed a gathering of monks in Calcutta shortly before he died, "we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are."² He believed that there is a basic solidarity of all humanity, but that because men are separated from the Ground of their Being, they are unaware of this solidarity and that therefore their relationship to their brother is not properly understood. Until persons are able to see the truth of their own depths, they are unable to live in solidarity with others.

"The original solidarity of man, on which our perfect happiness and fulfillment depend, was destroyed by sin

¹e.g., Seeds of Destruction, p. 257; The Way of Chuang Tzu, p. 27.

²The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton, p. 308.

and man cannot find peace and unity within himself, or in society, until he is reconciled to God in Christ."¹

Merton understood contemplation's task as making this solidarity explicit by assisting the individual in becoming open to and aware of his own Ground so that not only will he come to know himself as he really is, but also so that he may come to know others as they really are and come to know the Ground that unites his inner self with the inner reality of all creatures.² We are all "one Man."³ No person is complete and self-sufficient in himself.⁴ All find their identity in Christ "in Whom we complete one another...."

"When we reach that perfection of love which is the contemplation of God in His glory, our inalienable personalities, while remaining eternally distinct, will nevertheless combine into one Person so that each one of us will find

¹Basic Principles of Monastic Spirituality, p. 15.

²e.g., "Concerning the Collection in the Bellarmine College Library," p. 14; Spiritual Direction and Meditation, pp. 66f.

³Bread in the Wilderness, p. 94.

⁴e.g., Seasons of Celebration, p. 229; Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 41f.

himself in all the others: and God
will be the life and reality of all."¹

According to Merton, therefore, one task of contemplative prayer is the awakening of the person to the awareness of the solidarity of all creation.²

But contemplation has a further task. At the same time that it awakens the person to the fact of his solidarity with his brother, it awakens him to the loving quality of that relationship. It is not enough to have an intellectual cognition of the unity of all in the ground of being, but any intellectual cognition is only valid in so far as it gives rise to a volitional dimension. One cannot be said truly to know of the solidarity if one refuses to give expression to it in actual, concrete relationships. Herein lies the paradox of Merton's understanding of the Christian mystical life: "a man cannot enter into the deepest center of himself and pass through that center into God, unless he is able to pass entirely out of himself and empty himself and give himself to other people in

¹Seeds of Contemplation, p. 53. Note that Merton called one of his books No Man Is An Island.

²Merton related this insight directly to the racial problems he witnessed in American society and to the war in Vietnam. See below pp. 537ff.

the purity of a selfless love."¹ The ground of being in which one finds the basis of his solidarity with the other is love. The Image of God which is discovered in that ground is the image of the God who is love. "To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence: for God is love. Love is my true identity."² Thereby it is futile for man to attempt to seek his true identity outside of a relationship of love to his fellow man. Only by loving can one hope to discover his true self; conversely, when one fails to be involved in loving relationships with others self-discovery is inhibited. The person who descends to the depths of his true self discovers in those depths a command to love. The true person cannot be separated from this imperative. The command to love is "the deepest law of our nature, not something extraneous and alien to our nature. Our nature itself inclines us to love, and to love freely."³ This command is "not a demand for this or that work, it is a word of life, a creative word, making man into

¹Seeds of Contemplation, p. 47.

²Ibid., p. 46.

³Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 121.
Cf. No Man Is An Island, p. 234, and The New Man, p. 108.

a new being, making his society into a new creation."¹
It frees man to be able to love and to be able to create a true society, because it operates at the deepest level of human reality. Love, as it is practised by the false self living under the domination of the ego, creates superficial relationships and tenuous societies. True and creative social structures cannot be built upon a level of relationship that is only superficial. True society is only possible when true persons enter into communion with each other, for only true persons are capable of loving freely. "To build the Kingdom of God is to build a society that is based entirely on freedom and love. It is to build a society which is founded on respect for the individual person, since only persons are capable of love."² Contemplation, which is the drive to Reality, makes true love possible, for in contemplation the understanding of relationships which heretofore was based upon a strict distinction between subject and object, is overcome and the lover recognizes the beloved as his "other self."

¹Disputed Questions, p. 122.

²Ibid., p. 142.

"Love means an interior and spiritual identification with one's brother, so that he is not regarded as an 'object' to 'which' one 'does good.'...Love takes one's neighbour as one's other self, and loves him with all the immense humility and discretion and reserve and reverence without which no one can presume to enter into the sanctuary of another's subjectivity. From such love all authoritarian brutality, all exploitation, domineering and condescension must necessarily be absent...Love demands a complete inner transformation - for without this we cannot possibly come to identify ourselves with our brother. We have to become, in some sense, the person we love."¹

Contemplation therefore, is a paradox. One must enter into solitude in order to become free from the illusions which characterize ego-centred existence; but in freeing man, contemplative solitude both awakens him to the imperative of love and makes it possible for him to love. Only with free persons is true communication and true communion possible,² and a person is free only if he is able to become one with

¹ Wisdom of the Desert, p. 18. Cf. Thoughts in Solitude, p. 160; Disputed Questions, p. 207; The Living Bread, p. 141; The Inner Experience, p. 22: "Solitude is necessary for spiritual freedom. But once that freedom is acquired, it demands to be put to work in the service of a love in which there is no longer subjection or slavery."

² e.g., Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 267.

the source of all freedom. Withdrawal without a subsequent return is an imperfect spirituality, yet an attempt to build a new society without having first undergone a withdrawal is no better. Social ethics depend on a prior withdrawal into contemplative prayer.¹

Therefore, it can be stated that Merton's understanding of withdrawal did not mean a disdain for the world and a rejection of its needs. His understanding included an idea of contemptus mundi only in so far as the world could be found within the individual. One was called to withdraw from the world by withdrawing from certain sets of illusions, superficial understandings and trivial concerns as they occur within the self.

This, more often than not, necessitated some kind of withdrawal from the actual physical world. Without the silence and the solitude provided by such a retreat into the desert, Merton believed, withdrawal from the false self would be difficult if not impossible. Nevertheless, withdrawal from the false self was a step toward

¹As an example of this, Thomas Merton organized a retreat in November, 1964, on the "Spiritual Roots of Protest," (see above, p. 57f). His notes for the retreat include the following: "What we are seeking is not the formulation of a program, but a deepening of roots. Roots in the 'ground' of all being, in God, through His word." Thomas Merton on Peace, pp. 259f.

the recovery of the true self, and consequently, withdrawal from the world was a step toward a recovery of the world according to its true nature, that is, as it is in its redeemed state. As has been said, for Merton any withdrawal from the world which did not include as its goal a subsequent return to the world was a mistaken notion of withdrawal. "The contemplative life," he wrote, "is not, and cannot be, a mere withdrawal, a pure negation, a turning of one's back on the world with its sufferings, its crimes, its confusions and its errors."¹ Merton could not accept a concept of contemplation which would allow one to retire into "an ivory tower of private spirituality,"² and abandon the rest of the world to run its own course. He regarded any such attempt as being both illusory and immoral; illusory in that no one is ever able to extract himself totally from society, immoral in that it would be a rejection of the world which Christ loved and came to redeem, a refusal to share with Christ in that redemption. Withdrawal is never solely for the good of the one who withdraws. It is for the good of the world. Withdrawal is for the purpose of return. As early as the mid-1950s Merton wrote, "We

¹Seeds of Destruction, p. xiii.

²Breakthrough to Peace, p. 11.

must return from the desert like Jesus or St. John, with our capacity for feeling expanded and deepened, strengthened against the appeals of falsity, warned against temptation, great, noble and pure."¹ Earlier still he was examining the relationship between contemplation and action as seen in the Fathers of the Church.² Never did he see contemplation as a withdrawal from the real. To withdraw is to seek truth, and truth is discovered in concrete existence, not in a realm of ideal essences. Truth can be discovered through a process of withdrawal from the superficialities of the self and the world, but it cannot be discovered by a rejection of the concrete reality of the self and the world. Withdrawal, experience, and return are but different movements within an ongoing process. It is the process as a whole that leads to ultimate truth. The absence of one of the movements within the process frustrates the discovery of that truth. To those whose lives in the busy world that was America in the 1950s and 1960s blinded them to the necessity for withdrawal, Merton preached a word that stressed silence and solitude.

¹Thoughts in Solitude, p. 28.

²e.g., "Action and Contemplation in St. Bernard." See also his chapters on Gregory the Great and Bernard in Contemplative Prayer, pp. 60-69.

However, to those who failed to see the supreme importance of involvement in the struggles of the world whether they were apathetic monks or apathetic churchmen in the secular world, Merton preached a word that stressed return and social action.

"Christianity cannot reject history," he wrote:

"It cannot be a denial of time. Christianity is centered on an historical event which has changed the meaning of history. The freedom of the Christian contemplative is not freedom from time, but freedom in time. It is the freedom to go out and meet God in the inscrutable mystery of His will here and now, in this precise moment in which He asks man's cooperation in shaping the course of history according to the demands of divine truth, mercy and fidelity."¹

The process of withdrawal and return aims at integration,² and man is unable to be integrated within himself if relationships with other persons and with the events of history are excluded.³ A

¹Seeds of Destruction, p. xiv. See below pp. 577ff. for an exposition of Merton's ideas of history.

²See above, p. 199 for references to Merton's essay, "Final Integration; Toward a Monastic Therapy."

³e.g., Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 111.

mysticism which does not turn outward and remains enclosed within itself is an escape from reality,¹ and for Merton this was antithetical to all that he understood Christian spirituality to be. Contemplation is seen in a dialectical relationship with action. Merton repudiated any "crude divisions" between the two that might have appeared in his earlier writings.² He saw that within the monastic life there was both a contemplative and a prophetic element, and that any dilemma between the two or any dilemma between the mystical life and the moral life was resolved in the discovery of God as revealed in the mystery of the Incarnation.³

¹e.g., The New Man, p. 27. Cf., The Inner Experience, pp. 22, 143f: "Mere withdrawal, without return to freedom in action, would lead to a static and death-like inertia of the spirit in which the inner self would not awaken at all.....Contemplation must not be confused with abstraction. A contemplative life is not to be lived by permanent withdrawal within one's own mind...the true contemplative is not less interested than others in normal life, not less concerned with what goes on in the world, but more interested, more concerned."

²"Poetry and Contemplation: A Reappraisal," in A Thomas Merton Reader, p. 437.

³e.g., Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 199; The Sign of Jonas, p. 273.

"There has always been a tendency for Christian society to pass from an almost exclusive emphasis on the spiritual character of the Christian vocation, to an equally exclusive emphasis on the social and humanistic aspects of that vocation. The fact remains that both points of view are obligatory."¹

In Christ the opposition between the two vanishes.² Both are revealed as "two aspects of the same love of God."³ Merton differentiated between the two not according to their essential nature, but according to their function. "Action is charity looking outward to other men," he wrote, "and contemplation is charity drawn inward to its own divine source. Action is the stream, and contemplation is the spring."⁴ In so far as it is the source of action, contemplation has a primacy. Activity, if it is to be redemptive, is born of contemplation and resembles it.⁵ Nevertheless, the

¹"Christianity and Mass Movements," in Cross Currents 9 (Summer, 1959), p. 201.

²e.g., The New Man, p. 51.

³Seeds of Contemplation, p. 115.

⁴No Man Is An Island, p. 84.

⁵e.g., Seeds of Contemplation, p. 115; Faith and Violence, p. 222.

essential primacy is neither to contemplation in itself or action in itself; charity is always primacy.¹

The highest vocation is neither the contemplative nor the active, but one in which "the fruits of contemplation are shared with others."² To leave the world is not to abandon the world, but to help save it. One can only help to save the world if he is not himself in bondage to the malaise from which the world suffers. Therefore withdrawal has a special work which is important to the world. Its work is to deepen awareness, including awareness of the world's needs. "True solitude," wrote Merton, "is deeply aware of the world's needs. It does not hold the world at arm's length."³ It enables man, by giving him a vision of the world as it is redeemed in Christ, to have a redemptive social ethic.⁴ Far from blinding the contemplative to the

¹"Action and Contemplation in St. Bernard," p. 210.

²No Man Is An Island, p. 161. In this stance Merton claims the support of St. Thomas Aquinas (S. T. 2a 2ae Q. 182), (See also The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 497), and St. Francis of Assisi as a "perfect embodiment" of this ideal.

³Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 19.

⁴e.g., Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 179.

needs of the world, contemplative prayer does the opposite. It transforms his vision of the world, enabling him to see the world, all its inhabitants and its history in the light of God.¹ It enables man to be free from the powers which distort the true nature of the world, and by being free, to be able to save it. Merton found the Desert Fathers of fourth century Egypt to be an inspiration and a model for him: he interprets their withdrawal as an attempt to save the world through their search for reality.² This same theme is found in the chapter "Solitude Is Not Separation," in New Seeds of Contemplation in which he stresses that the only justification for a life of solitude is the conviction that it will enable one to learn to love both God and other persons. For Merton, solitude was both a necessary and a sufficient cause of true love and concern:

"Without a certain element of solitude there can be no compassion because when a man is lost in the wheels of a social machine he is no longer aware of human needs as a matter of personal responsibility. One can escape from

¹Contemplative Prayer, p. 139.

²e.g., The Wisdom of the Desert, p. 23. See above, pp. 94f.

men by plunging into the midst of
a crowd!"¹

Solitude, therefore, was the source of a social ethic in so far as solitude provided the locus for one's experiencing and reflecting upon the presence of Christ at the ground of one's being. But as has been stated, solitude without a subsequent return was not true solitude. Any monasticism based on such solitude, that is, based on an understanding of withdrawal that did not consider some form of return as a correlative of the act of withdrawal, was regarded by Merton as being founded not so much in Christ as in Plato. Merton was critical of Platonism wherever it implied a rigid dualism,² and he saw Christian spirituality as a means of recognizing that any dualism between the sacred and secular realms is not of an essential nature. No longer, he felt, was it possible to build a contemplative life on the premises with which the middle ages built monasticism. "The whole world view of medieval civilization was structured on the

¹New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 53.

²e.g., Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 133, and Seeds of Destruction, p. 313. Also, "This is God's Work," Sisters Today 42, p. 6. Merton relates in his autobiography how he did not like Plato when he was in school (The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 95), and was also upset by Plato's rejection of poets from his ideal Republic. (Raids on the Unspeakable, p. 161).

ideas of eternity and divine transcendence. Secular life itself was understood in this framework of unworldliness." The monk had had a role within society. Their renunciation of the world "paradoxically gave them a key place in the world of their time, and their asceticism, their mystical life, were understood to be an essential contribution to a religious culture in which everyone participated."¹ But this is no longer the world view in which the contemplative life finds itself. Today the contemplative's role is necessarily different. No longer can he contribute to the world simply through his asceticism, but he must now show an openness to the world, an openness which is "demanded by the realization that the world of today, in which man's whole future for good or for evil now rests in his own hands, is for all men the place of God's epiphany as Judge and as Savior, as the Lord of History."² He

¹Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 134. Merton added that the "Cistercians of northern England in the twelfth century played somewhat the same role in their society as General Motors plays in American society today." Merton bases this understanding on the Cistercian wool trade as well as their asceticism! On the place of the monk in medieval society see the summary in R.W. Southern's Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), pp. 214-299.

²Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 136.

can show this openness to the world only if he is not totally immersed in the world's own illusions. How the openness is manifested is not Merton's point. He does not think it necessary for Cistercians, for instance, to begin preaching missions.¹ The contemplative's return may be much less direct; it may simply be a matter of sharing with others "their privilege of silence, worship and meditation, their ability to listen more deeply and more penetratingly to the Word of God, their understanding of sacrifice, their inner vision."² But even in a simple, non-direct manner, there must be some form of return.

Merton spoke of the malaise of the world in terms of "alienation."³ He could not see how there could be a redemptive humanism in an alienated society

¹Ibid., p. 137.

²Ibid., p. 137f.

³"The term alienation is used of a human being who is systematically kept, or who allows himself to be kept, in a social situation in which he exists purely and simply for somebody else." Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 71. Alienation is a psychological state in which "the 'center' of identity is experienced to some extent not in oneself but in the other." Ibid., p. 60. Cf. pp. 78f, 238, 350; "Christian Humanism," pp. 225, 227; "This is God's Work," pp. 3f; Faith and Violence, p. 54; Thomas Merton on Peace, p. 222.

without a divine dimension,¹ since unless one was able to transcend the illusions that were inherent in an alienated society, one would never be able to save that society. The source of alienation is technology (although Merton admitted that a superficial practise of religion can have an alienating effect):

"There is alienation among us, and there is still more among the Marxists. In either case it is due not to religion or pseudo-religion. It is due to technology and to the moral collapse of a materialist world. And, yes, when ideologies try to spirit this alienation off into thin air, then ideologies aggravate the problem."²

Moral evil is not, for Merton, caused by a belief in God, but by alienation from Him. Only when the belief in God posits Him as something totally foreign to man and not as "closer to us than we are to ourselves" that religion can be a source of alienation. "The moral evil in the world is due to man's alienation from the deepest truth, from the springs of spiritual life within himself, to his alienation from God."³

¹e.g., Disputed Questions, p. xi; Emblems of a Season of Fury, p. 88.

²Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 60; cf. Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 153, 331.

³Thomas Merton on Peace, p. 222.

Merton understood the contemplative life as one of, if not the only means, of extricating humankind from its alienated state and restoring persons and society to a state of unity, harmony and integrity. In a world that is in a state of alienation, the contemplative answer was personalism. This is what Merton saw as the vocation of monasticism (which can be interpreted as the vocation of those who willingly enter into an explicit process of withdrawal-experience-and return) in today's world:

"The monastic life today stands over against the world with a mission to affirm not only the message of salvation but also those most basic human values which the world most desperately needs to regain: personal integrity, inner peace, authenticity, identity, inner depth, spiritual joy, the capacity to love, the capacity to enjoy God's creation and give thanks.....Our first task is to be fully human, and to enable the youth of our time to find themselves and develop as men and as sons of God. There is no need for a community of religious robots without minds, without hearts, without ideas and without faces. It is this mindless alienation that characterizes 'the world' and life in the world. Monastic spirituality today must be a personalistic and Christian humanism that seeks and saves man's intimate truth, his personal identity, in order to consecrate it entirely to God."¹

¹Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 81f.

To withdraw from the world, therefore, means "not the rejection of a reality, but the unmasking of an illusion."¹ The monk assumed, according to Merton's understanding of the monastic vocation, full responsibility for the world and for his own individual personhood for only by assuming such responsibility can the monk, or anyone else, be said to be living for God. Alienation occurs not whenever a person withdraws from the illusions of the world and the ego, but on the contrary, alienation occurs whenever a person does not withdraw from those illusions. As long as he is living at the level of the superficial self which is grounded in its own ego-consciousness, the person is alienated from his inner ground and from all other persons and existents. As soon as one is able to discover his inner ground, he will discover, as well, the inner ground of all others, and thereby be free to be reconciled. Only at the level of the deepest ground of being is such reconciliation possible.

In order for there to be a society that is based on truth there must be love, but in order for there to be love there must be "a communion between persons," and in order for there to be such a communion, there

¹Ibid., p. 154.

must first be "interiority and depth."¹ At the same time, in order for there to be love, there must be concrete and existential manifestations of that love. Love must be acted. But action that is not a response to the God of Love in whom all reality is grounded, results in a useless frenzy.² On the one hand, Merton addressed Americans who had acquiesced to the inerent injustices and inequalities within their society, calling them to recognize the moral imperative that was coextensive with a belief in the Incarnation. On the other hand, he was addressing those who, especially in the 1960s, were passionately involved in social change and revolution, calling them to seek the spiritual roots of their protest. He spoke these correlative messages at both the beginning and the end of his career. In the opening pages of one of his earliest books he proclaimed:

¹Disputed Questions, p. 118. Cf. Thoughts in Solitude, p. 13.

²On the frenzy of "activism" (as opposed to "Christian action"), see No Man Is An Island, p. 133; Thomas Merton on Peace, p. 15; Raids on the Unspeakable, p. 60; Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, pp. 86, 195f; Life and Holiness, p. ix; Mystics and Zen Masters, pp. 222, 278; Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 112; "Action and Contemplation in St. Bernard," p. 110; "Conference on Prayer," p. 449f; "Love and Solitude," p. 36; "What is Contemplation?," pp. 26f. Also see below, pp. 570f.

"The only thing that can save the world from complete moral collapse is a spiritual revolution. Christianity, by its very nature, demands such a revolution. If Christians would all live up to what they profess to believe, the revolution would happen. The desire for unworldliness, detachment, and union with God is the most fundamental expression of this revolutionary spirit. The one thing that remains is for Christians to affirm their Christianity by that full and unequivocal rejection of the world which their Baptismal vocation demands of them. This will certainly not incapacitate them for social action in the world, since it is the one essential condition for a really fruitful Christian apostolate."¹

In one of his last books, he proclaimed essentially the same message:

"Without contemplation and interior prayer the Church cannot fulfill her mission to transform and save mankind. Without contemplation, she will be reduced to being the servant of cynical and worldly powers, no matter how hard her faithful may protest that they are fighting for the Kingdom of God.

"Without true, deep contemplative aspirations, without a total love for God and an uncompromising thirst for his truth, religion tends in the end to become an opiate."²

¹The Ascent to Truth, p. 3.

²Contemplative Prayer, p. 144.

There can be no social ethic in a society which lacks a contemplative dimension, for contemplation, by bringing man into an immediate contact with the Ground of all Being, awakens him to the truth of himself, his brother, his world, and ultimately, to God who is Truth. In other words, contemplation makes a person sane. The problems of society cannot be solved other than by individual persons who have regained their basic sanity. "If the citizens are sane, the city will be sane."¹ Merton's word to the world was a call for both individual and corporate sanity:

"It is certainly true that I have written about more than just the contemplative life. I have articulately resisted attempts to have myself classified as an 'inspirational writer.' But if I have written about interracial justice, or thermonuclear weapons, it is because these issues are terribly relevant to one great truth: that man is called to live as a son of God. Man must respond to this call to live in peace with all his brothers in the One Christ."²

Thomas Merton lived life at the extreme. His mode of withdrawal took the form of a cloistered, silent monasticism and finally the solitude of a

¹The Ascent to Truth, p. 7.

²"Concerning the Collection in the Bellarmine College Library," p. 15.

hermitage. His mode of experience was in the tradition of Eckhart and St. John of the Cross, and had affinities with the Eastern mystical traditions, particularly with Zen. His return marked him in the forefront of Christian social action in the America of the 1960s, along with Martin Luther King, the Berrigan brothers, and Dorothy Day. This chapter has been an attempt to draw out of his many writings an implicit understanding, or theology, of social action. That theology is based on a withdrawal from the superficialities and trivialities within the world and the self in order for one to experience his essential unity with God and subsequently to share an active love with his brother based on the unity that all share at the deepest level of being. However, as was said at the beginning of this chapter, withdrawal-experience-and return are to be seen as parts of an ongoing process that only makes sense when seen as a whole. At the same time, any one of those activities can be isolated from the others, and in actual practise often are. Withdrawal from the unreal is necessary for an experience of the real and the experience of the real is necessary for a transformation of the unreal so that it may be redeemed, changed, and made real. One need not necessarily live each one of these stages as vividly as Merton lived them. One individual may live more at one end of the spectrum than at the other. Merton's understanding of the Church

led him to emphasize that "no one Christian has to realize in himself all the truths and all the mysteries of the Christian faith...what one cannot do, another does for him."¹ Not all persons are called to live the monastic life and not all people are called to live the life of active service. In the Biblical typology that was used by St. Bernard and subsequently by Merton,² not every one is a Martha and not every one is a Mary. Both vocations are valid. But a rigid division between the activism of Martha and the contemplation of Mary is a false division; it is only apparent and its unity is found through love. In the community of those who have been made aware, by the Incarnation of the Christ in Jesus, of the love that unites all its members, the contemplative and the activist share their individual vocations in order to fulfill a common mission: the redemption of the world and each individual person in the world.

¹Ibid., p. 14.

²e.g., "Action and Contemplation in St. Bernard," and Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 373f.

IV. THE MYSTICAL THEOLOGY OF THOMAS MERTON COMPARED
WITH THE THEOLOGY OF PAUL TILLICH.

In this chapter there will be an evaluation of Thomas Merton's thought in so far as it is either directly or indirectly concerned with the relationship between mysticism and social ethics. This evaluation will be by the way of a comparison of Merton's theology with certain features of Paul Tillich's theological system. First, as an introduction, there will be an examination of the ways in which these two men agree or disagree in their understandings of the basic nature of mysticism. Then there will be an examination of a number of points in Merton's thought, points which focus on the doctrine of God, the doctrine of man, Christology, the doctrine of atonement, and ethics. The chapter will conclude by showing how Merton and Tillich define the explicit relationship between mystical prayer and social concern. In all sections of this chapter the same method will be used. First there will be a summary, in as much detail as is necessary, of Paul Tillich's understanding of the particular topic under consideration. Second, Merton's understanding of that topic will be reviewed. Since the major portion of this thesis to this point has

been an exposition of Merton's life and thought, this step may at times be rather brief and certainly not as detailed as the corresponding treatment of Tillich's point of view. Therefore, this examination of Merton's thought will necessarily involve references to earlier chapters of this work so that, wherever possible, repetition can be avoided. Finally, points of agreement or disagreement between the two thinkers will be discussed. The intention of this comparison is not to defend or attack either Tillich or Merton, nor to indicate one to be the more adequate Christian thinker than the other (which would be impossible - in this sense the two men are not comparable, one being a Protestant systematic theologian and the other an unsystematic but articulate Roman Catholic monk). The explicit intention is to discover where and how these two men, seen in a mutual relationship, can help the Church discover or rediscover an approach to the interdependence of ascetical and moral theology. An implicit intention is to indicate how it is possible to apply criticisms of Tillich's theology to that of Merton, and conversely, how Merton's life and thought can contribute to a reevaluation of the contribution that Tillich made in this particular area.

Introduction: Mysticism and Depth

In 1929, long before Tillich's theology had been fully systematized and developed, he wrote, "The controversy over mysticism can be settled in principle if we distinguish between mysticism as a technique and mysticism as a form of grace."¹ This early statement remains as a key to understanding Tillich's approach to mysticism. In so far as mysticism is a technique, Tillich was one with his contemporaries in rejecting it. But, unlike most Protestants, Tillich was not only able to understand mysticism as a form of grace, but as such he was able to accept it avidly, for he understood it as the experience of the immediate presence of the divine without which there would be no religion at all. Mysticism can be a distortion, a futile attempt at self-salvation. But mysticism can also be the existential element in religion, the experience in which one participates in the immediacy of the divine, the experience of being grasped by the divine Spirit.

¹ "Protestantism as a Critical and Creative Principle," in Political Expectation, ed. James Luther Adams (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 26.

Mysticism as a technique is rejected because it fails to take with seriousness the fact of what Tillich considers to be man's existential estrangement. Having fallen from essence into existence, man is estranged from the ground of his being. There is a gulf between man and God, a gulf between the finite and He who transcends both finitude and infinity. Finite man can never hope to be able to bridge that gulf by his own efforts. Tillich continuously stressed that "in relation to God, God alone can act and...no human claim, especially no religious claim, no intellectual or moral or devotional 'work' can reunite us with him."¹ If the gulf is to be bridged, the initiative must be God's. Tillich's Lutheranism makes him insist on the principle of "justification by grace," that is, man's salvation occurs through the action of God and not through the action of man. Wherever mysticism tries to reach a reunion with God through bodily and mental exercises it is an attempt at "self-salvation" and therefore is impossible. Tillich recognized that "much Eastern and parts of Western mysticism do have this character,"²

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 238.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 96.

and he was critical. The "Protestant principle," which Tillich defined as "the ultimate criterion of all religious and all spiritual experiences,"¹ and which states, in its simplest form "that in relation to God everything is done by God,"² was a principle which could not be violated.³

At the same time Tillich was able to see that not all forms of mysticism violated the Protestant principle. The classical tradition of Christian mysticism, he insisted, was as strong as Protestantism in denying the possibility of self-salvation. To dismiss mysticism out of hand as being simply a form of self-salvation is a lamentable error. On one level it exposes the ignorance of the one who is rejecting mysticism. "If theologians paid more attention to the limits seen by the mystics themselves," Tillich wrote, "they would have to give a more positive evaluation of this great tradition."⁴ On a deeper level, the rejection of

¹The Protestant Era (London: Nisbet, 1951), p. xxiv.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 144.

³Tillich does not provide a precise definition of the Protestant principle although it permeates his entire system. See, for instance, in addition to what has been quoted above, The Protestant Era, p. xxix and The New Being, (New York: Scribners, 1955), Chapter 18.

⁴Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 97.

mysticism is lamentable because it rejects what should be an essential element of all religion. Without the mystical element, religion itself is truncated. Tillich defined this essential element when he wrote:

"'Mystical' is, first of all, a category which characterizes the divine as being present in experience. In this sense, the mystical is the heart of every religion as religion. A religion which cannot say 'God himself is present' becomes a system of moral or doctrinal rules which are not religious, even if they are derived from originally revelatory sources. Mysticism, or the 'felt presence of God,' is a category essential to the nature of religion and has nothing to do with self-salvation."¹

In no way does this violate the Protestant Principle for Tillich. Without diminishing his insistence on that principle, he can accept mysticism whenever it can be shown to be an expression of the experience of being grasped by the Spirit of God. In the state of existence man is estranged from God, who is the ground of being, or Being-itself, but since Being-itself participates in individual beings, the estrangement

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 96. Cf., What is Religion?, pp. 90f. It should be noted that Tillich is willing to accept the term "religion" in contrast to a number of theologians within the "neo-orthodox" tradition. See "The Conquest of the Concept of Religion in the Philosophy of Religion," (1919), in What is Religion?; also, Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 110f.

is not ultimate separation. Reunion between man and God is possible. It is possible only through the grace of God, but it is possible, and when it occurs, it can be experienced. Mysticism is the experiential element in religion. It is the experience in which one participates in the immediacy of the divine presence.

"The main concept of mysticism is immediacy: immediate participation in the divine Ground by elevation into unity with it, transcending all finite symbols of the divine, leaving the sacramental activities far behind and sinking cult and myth into the experienced abyss of the Ultimate."¹

This participation in the divine Ground, or reunion of man and God, occurs within the limits of human finitude and estrangement and is, therefore, "fragmentary, anticipatory and threatened by the ambiguities of religion,"² but it is nonetheless authentic and integral to true religion.

Tillich uses the word "ecstatic" to refer to the mystical experience of God. It is a word that he finds etymologically significant, stemming from

¹Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 91f.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 257.

ek and stasis, which he interprets as a "standing outside one's self."¹ He does not use the word ecstasy to mean over-excitement or exuberance or anything that has the connotation of irrationality or nonsense. Ecstasy is self-transcendence and as such it leads, however fragmentarily, to the personal knowledge of the unconditioned in the midst of the conditioned.

"Religion tries to surpass the given reality in order to approach the unconditional. The means for achieving this is rapture and ecstasy. Wherever we transcend the limits of our own being, moving toward union with another one, something like ecstasy...occurs. Ecstasy is the act of breaking through the fixed form of our own being. In this sense of the term we must say: Only through ecstasy can the ultimate power of being be experienced in ourselves, in things and persons, and in historical situations."²

Only in the ecstatic or mystical moment is man able to have an immediate and experiential and participatory knowledge of the divine Ground. Therefore, for Tillich, mysticism is of the essence of religion.

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 124.

²The Protestant Era, p. 89.

The unconditional, or the Ground of Being, is revealed to man in the ecstatic moment. But this revelation does not occur in anyway that either contradicts or overpowers the given realities in which man exists. Revelation, for Tillich, "is a special and extraordinary manifestation which removes the veil from something hidden in a special and extraordinary way." This hiddenness, he explains, is often called "mystery" but by "mystery" Tillich does not mean something that is simply puzzling or not yet understood by technical reason. Mystery has a deeper meaning: it is "something which would lose its very nature if it lost its mysterious character." The reality of the mysterious can be experienced, and our relationship to the mysterious can be known. Nevertheless, such knowledge of the mystery is not at all analogous to the knowledge of a thing within the subject-object structure of reality. "Mystery characterizes a dimension which 'precedes' the subject-object relationship...whatever is essentially mysterious cannot lose its mysteriousness even when it is revealed." Revelation, therefore, is not the revealing of information about reality. It does not include knowledge about nature or history or about "hidden things." Rather "revelation is the manifestation of that which concerns us ultimately...the ground of our being...Only that mystery which is of ultimate concern

for us appears in revelation."¹

Ecstasy, or mysticism, is the receiving of revelation. It is the subjective aspect of revelation which has an interdependent relationship with the objective aspect of revelation, which Tillich calls "miracle." No miracle is a miracle, for Tillich, without its having been received by man. The mystical element of religion represents the receiving aspect of revelation. The movement is circular. The spirit of man is grasped by the divine Spirit, and in being grasped, discovers the presence of the "mystery" within ordinary experience. Neither the mysterious character of the mystery nor the ordinary character of existential reality are destroyed in revelation. Ecstasy is "...the experience of the holy as transcending ordinary experience without removing it."²

In mystical ecstasy man stands outside of himself, and in this state of self-transcendence, he is able to plunge to the depths of his being and discover in those depths the Ground of all being, which is God.

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. I, pp. 120, 121, 123. In this sense, to know revelation is to know by "unknowing". See below, p. 350, fn. 2.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 8.

Wherever man seeks a knowledge of God that is concrete rather than abstract, a knowledge in which man is able to know through participation, man is within the realm of the mystical. Tillich refuses to limit the use of the word "mystical" to those forms of mysticism in which the Protestant Principle is distorted or is in danger of being distorted. To reject the idea of mysticism because of such a limitation is to create a religious vacuum which will be filled one way or another, either through a rejection of Christianity in favour of various Eastern religions or in an acceptance of pietistic forms of Christianity which accept the possibility of ecstasy, even though in distorted forms. But the vacuum will be filled, for whenever mysticism is rejected an essential element of religion is rejected, namely, the immediacy of the experience of God.

Two points can now be made to show a basic similarity between Tillich and Merton in their understanding of mysticism as the subjective aspect of revelation. The first point is that Thomas Merton agrees with and exemplifies Tillich's Protestant Principle. The second is that, whereas Merton often speaks of mysticism as a form of "union" and Tillich speaks of it more often in terms of "immediacy" or "felt presence," their two approaches are nevertheless far from being in opposition and are, in fact, mutually

inclusive.

Merton is in full agreement with Tillich in regard to the distortions of mysticism under the norm of the Protestant Principle. This principle also permeates Merton's writings, and it can be argued that it is as much a part of Merton's approach to the relationship between man and God as it was a part of Tillich's. It could only be a "protestant" principle in a very broad sense of the word, a sense which Tillich himself accepts when he defines Protestantism as a "prophetic spirit" that "will operate through Catholicism as well as through orthodoxy."¹ The Protestant Principle is very evident in the Catholicism of Merton. In his early (1951) study of mystical contemplation, The Ascent to Truth, he warns against a "false mysticism" which "ascribes to a human nature the power and the right to acquire supernatural illuminations by the effort of our own intelligence."² In its place is "true contemplation" which is the gift of God:

"True contemplation is, then, the experience of a union that is so purely and perfectly supernatural

¹The Protestant Era, p. 233.

²The Ascent to Truth, p. 16.

that no created nature could possibly bring it about. Indeed, no spirit less than the Spirit of God can possibly produce even a plausible imitation of true mystical union."¹

The "Protestant Principle" can clearly be seen in this passage in spite of the fact that Merton uses terminology which Tillich would not have used. Tillich would have refused to use a word like "supernatural," nor would he have wanted to leave the possible impression that the Spirit of God was an existent, albeit an infinite one. Nevertheless, in spite of these theological differences it can be seen that even in his earliest writings on mysticism Thomas Merton affirmed the Protestant Principle, being aware of the pitfall that Tillich consistently warned against.

This is so, too, in writings from all periods of Merton's life. It can be seen in such other early writings as "Is Mysticism Normal?" and Seeds of Contemplation in which he writes:

"If, like the mystics of the Orient, you succeed in emptying your mind of every thought and every desire, you may indeed withdraw into the center of yourself and concentrate everything within you upon

¹ Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 31f.

the imaginary point where your life springs out of God: yet you will not find God. No natural exercise can bring you into vital contact with Him. Unless He utters Himself in you, speaks His own name in the center of your soul, you will no more know Him than a stone knows the ground upon which it rests in its inertia."¹

It can be seen, as well, in the writings of the middle portion of his life, in such works as Life and Holiness, ("If we are called by God to holiness of life, and if holiness of life is beyond our natural power to achieve (which it certainly is), then it follows that God Himself must give us the light, the strength, and the courage to fulfill the task he requires of us.")², and New Seeds of Contemplation ("And so the contemplation of which I speak is a religious and transcendent gift. It is not something to which we can attain alone, by intellectual effort, by perfecting our natural powers...It is not the fruit of our own efforts.")², and it can be seen, also, in some of the last pieces he wrote. "The New Testament," he wrote in Contemplative Prayer, "does not offer us techniques

¹Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 31f.

²Life and Holiness, pp. 10f.

³New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 4.

and expedients: it tells us to turn to God, to depend on his grace, to realize that the Spirit is given to us, wholly, in Christ."¹

These almost arbitrarily selected examples suffice to show, first of all, that the so-called Protestant Principle, is a factor throughout Merton's life as a writer, and secondly, that Merton's terminology and emphasis have a number of points of affinity with classical Protestantism. In the examples quoted above one can see an interest in various themes that are dear to Protestantism: The Word of God spoken to the depths of man, God's call, dependence on Grace, and the mediation of Grace through Christ. Not only, therefore, is there a basic agreement between Tillich and Merton on this point, there is a basic agreement between Merton and the even more critical emphases of orthodox Protestantism. Occasionally Merton expressed that Protestantism stressed its critical principle "too much" but nonetheless he insisted that it needed to be seen "very clearly, because it is very important."²

¹Contemplative Prayer, p. 48.

²"Building Community on God's Love," Sisters Today 42 (December, 1970), No. 4, p. 187. Bernard Martin, in Paul Tillich's Doctrine of Man (London: Nisbet, 1966) makes a much more emphatic criticism of Protestantism, and especially Tillich's 'cavalier' rejection of the possibility of self-salvation. (p. 177) Martin is a rabbi and writes from his own perspective.

Generally speaking, wherever Merton discusses what he refers to as "Promethean Theology," he is emphasizing the same critical point that Tillich makes in the name of the Protestant Principle. Promethean theology is, according to Merton, the expression of a relationship between man and God in which man strives to win his salvation from God; in which man and God are seen as in total opposition, and in which man is able both to express his opposition and to have the possibility of overcoming that opposition by his own efforts. Merton totally repudiates such a theology, either when it stands as a system in itself, or when it becomes an element within the mainstream of Christian thought.¹ According to Tillich's terminology, whenever he does so, Merton stands within the "protestant" tradition.

The second statement that is to be made at this point is that although Merton and Tillich write from the perspectives of different traditions, one Catholic monasticism and the other Protestant intellectualism, and although they employ somewhat different uses of language, they nevertheless share a common understanding of the essential meaning of the mystical experience. It has been shown that Merton, under the influence of the Catholic mystical tradition, can speak of mysticism

¹See above, pp. 96f, 244, 257.

in terms of union between God and man, a union in which distinctions are minimized if not totally overcome.¹ Tillich, on the other hand, although he can speak of mystical union, usually saves the word "union" for a description of the restoration of the union between essence and existence within man, and speaks of the mystical relationship with God in terms of "felt presence" or "immediacy." These two positions are complementary, and the difference is primarily one of emphasis. This can be seen by making a four-step examination of the ways in which Merton qualifies the meaning of the word "union" and showing how these qualifications coincide with various aspects of Tillich's theology. These steps, which will be examined in detail shortly are as follows: first of all, it can be shown how both Tillich and Merton talk about the necessity and possibility of transcending the subject-object scheme of reality. Secondly, it can be shown how in Merton's instance, that within the idea of union there is no implication of a mysticism of total absorption, a type of mysticism in which the centred-self would be considered to be destroyed. This coincides with Tillich's insistence

¹See above, pp. 268-274, 281-283L.

that for authentic existence there is the necessity of balancing the tension between the poles of individualization and participation. Third, both Tillich and Merton speak of the knowledge of God as "participatory" and this concept is a part of what Merton means by union. Finally, Merton can speak of mystical union as "existential communion," a phrase that lends itself to a comparison with the entire thrust of Tillich's theological stance. These four areas will now be examined in more detail to show their relevance in indicating the general agreement of these two thinkers.

Both Tillich and Merton speak of the necessity for and the possibility of transcending the subject-object scheme of ordinary knowledge. As we have seen, for Merton, union with God is a union of love, and love requires a passing beyond a relationship in which subject and object are clearly distinct.¹ Whenever love is "a mere subject-object relationship, it is not real love at all."² Love is concerned to encounter the beloved not as object but as another

¹See above, pp. 268-274.

²Disputed Questions, p. 102.

subject.

"Love brings us into a relationship with an objectively existing reality, but because it is love it is able to bridge the gap between subject and object and commune in the subjectivity of the loved one. Only love can effect this kind of union and give this kind of knowledge-by-identity with the beloved..."¹

This type of relationship, Merton thinks, is essential to all forms of love. Yet it is most essential to the relationship between man and God. "For it is above all," he continues, "in our relationship with God that love, considered as a subject-object relationship, is utterly out of the question."² The essence of contemplative prayer is that, in man's union with God, the division between subject and object disappears. If it does not, then actual union with God has not occurred. One cannot enter into union with God, Merton thinks, as long as God is considered to be an object standing over and against man, and man is seen as able to have particular experiences of God's presence.

¹Disputed Questions, p. 103.

²Ibid., p. 104.

Similarly, throughout his writings, Tillich emphasized the need to break away from a strict dichotomy between subject and object.¹ As has been seen, mysticism, or the ecstatic moment is, for him, the receiving of a mystery, and mystery precedes that dichotomy.² To be confronted by God is to be confronted by that which is beyond subject and object. The God who is seen in terms of the subject-object structure of being "ceases to be the God who is really God." Tillich thinks that the classical mystical tradition, in trying "to overcome the objectifying scheme by an ecstatic union of man and God" has a lesson for all theology: "Theology always must remember that in speaking of God it makes an object of that which precedes the subject-object structure and that, therefore, it must include in its speaking of God the acknowledgement that it cannot

¹Tillich recognizes, along with Merton (see above, pp. 270f, especially fn. 2 on p. 271. that Rene Descartes is the philosopher who epitomizes the sharp distinction between subject and object, and in this regard Tillich insists that Descartes be over-ruled. Cf. Theology of Culture, p. 151; Perspectives on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Protestant Theology, p. 120; What is Religion?, pp. 128f, (It is one of the more delightful incongruities of Tillich that he named his son Rene Descartes Tillich.) On objectivity and personal involvement in science see Ian G. Barbour, Issues in Science and Religion (London, SCM, 1966), pp. 176-194.

²See above p. 331.

make God an object."¹ Tillich insists that the difference between subjectivity and objectivity is overcome in terms like "ultimate, unconditional, infinite and absolute."² This is what St. Paul means, Tillich thinks, when he writes (Romans 8) that successful prayer is not possible without God as Spirit praying within us. "The same experience expressed in abstract language is the disappearance of the ordinary subject-object scheme in the experience of the ultimate, the unconditional."³ Therefore, Tillich asserts that when a person is in the midst of a genuine ecstatic moment, such a transcendence is experienced, and in making this kind of assertion, he is in full agreement with Merton: "In the meditative act (which can, in some moments become contemplation) the cognitive subject and its object, the mystery of the holy, are united."⁴

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 191.

²Dynamics of Faith, p. 11.

³Loc. Cit. Cf. the discussion of Augustinian immediacy in Theology of Culture, p. 25. Schelling must be cited as one of the direct sources for Tillich's understanding of this concept. In Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness (1912) he quotes Schelling: "The divine is never a mere object of knowledge. God is either genuinely unknown, or he is at the same time the subject and object of knowledge." Tillich comments, "This is perfect mysticism." (Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness, p. 75) The reference can be found in Vol. VI of F.W.J. Schelling, Samtliche Werke, ed. K.F.A. Schelling, Stuttgart, 1856-1861.

⁴Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 215.

Furthermore, both men are agreed in asserting that without this transcendence, essential life is not possible. Merton called men to live at the level of the true self rather than the false self, at the level in which the self is in union with the Ground of its Being. And Tillich quite succinctly states, "Unambiguous life is impossible whenever the subject-object scheme is unbroken."¹

But Tillich issues a warning. The transcendence of the subject-object scheme must be seen in accordance with the Protestant Principle. Not only is it the result of God's action, but it also must be seen as occurring within the limits of man's finitude and is thereby in need of qualifications. Although mysticism transcends the subject-object scheme of man's finite structure "for this very reason it is in danger of annihilating the centered self, the subject of the ecstatic experience of the Spirit."² Whereas the subject-object scheme can be transcended, the self cannot be annihilated. Wherever mysticism speaks of total annihilation of the self, as it does in certain forms of Eastern mysticism, Tillich sees difficulties. Yet he states that Christian mysticism

¹Ibid., p. 81.

²Ibid., pp. 152f.

has avoided this danger.¹ Merton, writing as a proponent of the Christian mystical tradition, confirms Tillich's point. He does not acknowledge that mysticism of union with God is the same as a mysticism of absorption. Union with God and the transcending of the subject-object scheme does not mean the annihilation of the human self. He asserts that wherever Christian mystical writings, including his own, tend to speak in terms of the dissolution of the self, such writings must be seen as symbolic statements and must be read with great caution. The true self, Merton believes, is not annihilated or totally absorbed by God when it enters into union with Him. Rather, it is driven to its depths and enters into union with God in such a way that God and man remain "metaphysically distinct" while paradoxically becoming "one Spirit."² That which is dissolved is the superficial ego or the false self, and Merton's distinction between these two forms of the self must be remembered in any discussion of his theology of mysticism. In the context of the two selves it can be said that the self is annihilated, when self is seen in its superficial aspect. But the

¹Loc. Cit.

²See above, p. 286.

true self remains and, in fact, becomes existentially real. Therefore, Merton uses cautious language: in union with God the self only "seems" to disappear and undergoes only an "apparent" destruction.¹ Tillich indicates a similar understanding when he refers to St. Bernard's example of a drop of wine being poured into a cup of water. The wine remains wine and is therefore not lost, yet it is no longer "self-centered."² The subject-object scheme is transcended, but individuation is not destroyed. What is destroyed is the individual's self-understanding which places himself over and against that which is other than self. The self, as such, is not obliterated. Subjects and objects remain, but their relationship is radically redefined. This is very important, Tillich thinks, since there can be no real love (or no real hate) without a distinction between subject and object. "Now love presupposes a differentiation between the subject and the object of love. Even in imagining eternal life or eternal fulfillment, this differentiation

¹See above, p. 274.

²Ultimate Concern, p. 140. See Bernard of Clairvaux, De Diligendo Deo, Chapter X. Merton refers to the same example in "Transforming Union in St. Bernard and St. John of the Cross," Collectanea, XI 1, p. 48.

remains."¹ Therefore, for both Tillich and Merton, a mysticism of union in which the subject-object scheme is transcended (not destroyed), does not imply that by being absorbed into the Godhead the self is thereby obliterated. "Unity is not identity," Tillich wrote, "An element of separation is presupposed when we speak of unity."² And Merton wrote that, in the mystical encounter "there is not so much a fusion of identities as the disappearance of identities."³

A further definition of "union" is shared by both Tillich and Merton; that is, union can be described in terms of participatory knowledge. Merton will speak of man's union with God in terms of participation ("Essentially, mystical experience is a vivid, conscious participation of our soul and of its faculties in the life, knowledge, and love of God Himself.")⁴, but more often in terms of loving

¹Ibid. Cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 249; Love, Power and Justice, p. 27.

²Love, Power and Justice, p. 111f. Cf. A History of Christian Thought, p. 63, and Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 48.

³New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 292.

⁴The Ascent to Truth, p. 16.

knowledge, or knowledge by identity. "This knowledge by identity," he explains, is more than - not contrary to - scientific knowledge, or knowledge about certain aspects of God's Being, but it is knowledge of unity in love:¹

"Conceptual knowledge of religious truth has a definite place in our life, and that place is an important one. Study plays an essential part in the life of prayer. The spiritual life needs strong intellectual foundations. The study of theology is a necessary accompaniment to a life of meditation. But meditation itself is not 'study' and is not a purely intellectual activity..... In meditation we do not seek to know about God as though he were an object like other objects which submit to our scrutiny and can be expressed in clear scientific ideas. We seek to know God himself....."²

Merton saw that the major flaw of Fr. Paneloux in Camus' The Plague was that his knowledge about God far exceeded his personal participation in God himself.³

¹The Living Bread, p. 68.

²Contemplative Prayer, p. 98. Cf. The Inner Experience, p. 121: in which Merton argued that mystical knowledge is not anti-intellectual, "On the contrary, as Jacques Maritain's Degrees of Knowledge has made clear, the approach to God beyond concepts, in contemplation, means that one must have a conceptual knowledge beyond which he can go!" See Maritain, The Degrees of Knowledge (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1937), pp. 305-357.

³Albert Camus' The Plague: Introduction and Commentary, pp. 16, 38.

The knowledge that is obtained through the mystical encounter is not information. God is met as "a presence and as a meaning" which we apprehend even though we may not be able to conceptualize and fully understand.¹ But simply to have the ability to conceptualize and understand theological statements like Fr. Paneloux is not adequate to the full meaning of religious knowledge. Religious knowledge is a participation in love: "Knowing without love never enters into the inner secrets of being. Only love can truly know God as He is, for God is love."² Merton defended Camus' criticisms of the problematic priest, and saw the simplicity and humility of Dr. Rieux, in spite of his indifference to Paneloux's theologizing, as being much more indicative of a true understanding and knowledge of God. This understanding of participatory knowledge can be found throughout the entire Tillich corpus as well as in the writings of Merton. Mystical knowledge, for Tillich, is experience by participation,³

¹Contemplative Prayer, p. 140.

²No Man Is An Island, p. 166.

³Cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 50; Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 205; The Courage to Be, p. 157.

and knowledge that cannot reach a point of participation is truncated. In any genuine act of knowledge the subject-object scheme is overcome to some extent, involving a balance between the poles of individuation and participation.

"Knowing is a form of union. In every act of knowledge the knower and that which is known are united; the gap between subject and object is overcome. The subject 'grasps' the object, adapts it to itself, and, at the same time, adapts itself to the object. But the union of knowledge is a peculiar one; it is a union through separation. Detachment is the condition of cognitive union. In order to know, one must 'look' at a thing, and, in order to look at a thing, one must be 'at a distance.' Cognitive distance is the presupposition of cognitive union."¹

There is, in Tillich's terms, unity and estrangement in every act of knowledge. But true knowledge must include union, and because of this union knowledge can be described as something more than simply a quantitative filling of the mind with factual information. Knowledge can be seen as that which transforms

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 105; Cf. The Protestant Era, p. 76.

and heals.¹ Participatory knowledge is knowledge of rather than simply knowledge about, but does not necessarily exclude the possibility of cognitive knowledge about the object. This coincides with Merton's insistence that mystical knowledge is not anti-intellectual but that meditation needs intellectual foundations.² Tillich makes the same point: "To the degree that the subject-object structure is overcome," he writes, "observation is replaced by participation (which includes observation) and conclusion is replaced by insight (which includes conclusions)."³ Participatory knowledge is inclusive of cognitive knowledge, not opposed to it. The

¹Ibid., p. 106; cf. Ibid., p. 114 in which Tillich speaks of 'intuition' as 'knowing by participation.' Cf. What is Religion? p. 31.

²Merton is well aware, also, of the via negativa (see above, pp. 287ff), and follows directly in the tradition of Gregory of Nyssa, Dionysius, The Cloud of Unknowing, and John of the Cross when he writes about the possibilities of knowing God through "unknowing." This emphasis is seen throughout his life, from his early studies on John of the Cross, e.g. The Ascent to Truth, to his later works on the points of affinity between Christian mysticism and Zen, e.g., Zen and the Birds of Appetite. Tillich does not dwell on this theme, although he sees that it does coincide, and could be the unconscious source, for what he says in The Courage to Be on the "God above God," pp. 186-190. See A History of Christian Thought, p. 92. See also above p. 331, fn. 1.

³Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 271f.

experiential knowledge of God is essential for theology, Tillich insists; it is the medium through which the objective sources of theology (which for Tillich are the Bible, the history of Christian thought, and the histories of religions and culture)¹ are received.² Tillich cannot envision a true theology, one which would deal with ultimate concern, without a mysticism of union.

One final consideration remains in regard to various qualifications that can be placed upon Merton's understanding of the word "union." It is at this point that a discussion of Merton's use of the word "existential" is in order. Contemplation is, for him, more than a metaphysical exploration of the concept of being. It is communion with Being-Itself, the "transcendent fulfillment of existential communion" with the source of all Being.³ When Merton introduces the word

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. I, pp. 39-45.

²Ibid., pp. 50-52. Tillich sees experience as the medium, not as a source, of revelation. For a criticism of this point see George H. Tavard, Paul Tillich and the Christian Message (New York: Scribners, 1962), pp. 24-27. Tavard sees inconsistencies in Tillich's basic assertion and a limitation in so far as Tillich sees experience as being only personal rather than corporate or historical. See also Walter M. Horton, "Tillich's Role in Contemporary Theology" in The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 39.

³The New Man, p. 16. See above, p. 246.

"existential" into his thought, he implies all the qualifications that have previously been discussed. "Existential" implies the transcending of the subject-object dichotomy; it implies the maintenance and safeguarding of authentic personhood, and it implies the idea of participatory knowledge also. "Existential" means involvement rather than detachment; it is experiential rather than abstract. Therefore, a discussion of the existential nature of mysticism could have been contained within the foregoing discussions. It has, however, been saved until this point, not only because of Tillich's reputation as an existentialist and because of Merton's explicit appreciation for this philosophy, but because existentialism implies that reality is to be found in actual existence. To say that the mystical union of man and God is existential is to say that it takes place under the conditions of existence rather than in an idealized world. It is to say, with Merton, that the image of God in man becomes known in man's created existence. It is no longer merely a possibility. It is actualized in time and space.¹

¹See above, pp. 232-236, 275f, 281-283.

This is in accord with Tillich's insistence that New Being, as seen in Jesus the Christ, is the appearance of essence under the conditions of existence. Immediate participation in the divine Ground occurs within existence. It is concrete and actual. It takes place within, rather than outside of, history. When Merton uses the word "existential" to describe the union between man and God, he is in agreement with Tillich in so far as both men see salvation as occurring to man in the present moment rather than in some future, and within the ambiguities of existence rather than in a state of ideal perfection.¹

Merton recognized and defended existentialism as a philosophy that shared in the same vision of reality as mysticism, especially the type of mysticism found both within the apophatic tradition of Christianity and the non-objective outlook of Zen. He was able to see that the existentialist attitude had been a part of the historical Cistercian tradition and therefore, not foreign to monasticism. For instance, he saw the medieval Cistercian Father, Guerric of Igny, as a prototype of the existentialist:

¹Various points raised in this paragraph will be discussed more fully below in the section on "The Meaning of Christ" and in the conclusion.

"He (Guerric) speaks as a kind of existentialist, about the actual concrete experience of the person rather than just general abstract principles. That is what existentialist means in the nice sense of the word, the broad sense: a thinker who is interested in the validity of personal spiritual experience as a basis, a starting point, by which to judge everything."¹

However, on a deeper level than the merely experiential, he was more inclined to see existentialism as a style of thought that had affinities with mysticism and could thereby be appreciated by mystics:

"Existentialism is an experience and an attitude, rather than a system of thought. As soon as it begins to present itself as a system, it denies and destroys itself. Non-objective, elusive, concrete, dynamic, always in movement and always seeking to renew itself in the newness of the present situation, genuine existentialism is, like Zen Buddhism and like apophatic Christian mysticism, hidden in life itself. It cannot be distilled out in verbal formulas."²

The use of existential thinking in theology led to a number of admirable qualities: the existential theologian

¹"Guerric of Igny's Easter Sermons," Cistercian Studies VIII, (1972), p. 86.

²"The Other Side of Despair: Notes on Christian Existentialism," in Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 258.

stressed openness, freedom, grace and love rather than nature and law, and finally, "the most serious claim to consideration which the existential theologian can offer is the cogent diagnosis of our trouble,"¹ i.e., the reality of the crisis in which man finds himself in existence. Without making a direct reference at this point to Tillich's method of correlation, Merton obviously has this method in mind. Tillich saw that theology had a double task: "Theology formulates the questions implied in human existence, and theology formulates the answers implied in divine self-manifestation under the guidance of the questions implied in human existence."² It was the first part of the correlation that Merton cites as the most meritorious contribution of existential thought to theology.

Like Merton, Tillich wrote about points of affinity between existentialism and mysticism. For him, existentialism was the philosophical counterpart to the mystical element in religion. The existentialist philosophers "tried to discover the creative realm of being which is prior to and beyond the distinction

¹Ibid., p. 280 and passim.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 69. (It is true that Tillich is not explicitly mentioned by Merton in this context, but he is mentioned within the article from which we have been quoting.) For a fuller exposition of the role of existentialism in philosophy and theology, see John Macquarrie, Existentialism (London: Hutchinson, 1972).

between objectivity and subjectivity."¹ The ways in which Tillich proceeds to describe the mystical element in philosophical existentialism is reminiscent of Merton's distinction between the contemplation of being and the union with the Source of being. It also indicates that both existentialism and mysticism share a basic non-Cartesian approach to epistemology. He writes:

"Existential philosophy can be called the attempt to reconquer the meaning of life in 'mystical' terms after it had been lost in ecclesiastical as well as in positivistic terms. It is however necessary to redefine 'mystical' if we are to apply it to Existential philosophy. In this context the term does not indicate a mystical union with the transcendent Absolute; it signifies rather a venture of faith toward union with the depths of life, whether made by an individual or a group. There is more of the Protestant than the Catholic heritage in this kind of 'mysticism'; but it is mysticism in trying to transcend the estranged 'objectivity' as well as the empty 'subjectivity' of the present epoch. Historically speaking, Existential philosophy attempts to return to a pre-Cartesian attitude, to an attitude in which the sharp gulf between the subjective and the objective 'realms' had not yet been created, and the essence of objectivity could be found in the depths of subjectivity - in which God could be best approached through the soul."²

¹Theology of Culture, p. 107.

²Loc. Cit.

Merton and Tillich approach theology with an appreciation for the points of affinity between mysticism and existentialism. Therefore, Merton is able to utilize existential ideas and attitudes in his exposition of Christian mysticism, and Tillich is able to show the importance of mysticism within his theological system. For both men, mysticism is the existential participation of man in the life of God. It is the experiential awareness of God and communion with Him as He gives himself to man in His self-revelation. For both Merton and Tillich, religion is incomplete without the mystical element.

1. God as the Ground of Being

Paul Tillich looked to the classical tradition of Christianity for his basic definition of God. "In classical theology," he wrote, "God is, first of all, Being as such. Deus est esse....the power of Being in everything that is."¹ Tillich uses this classical tradition to form the basis of his own understanding

¹The Protestant Era, p. 70. On the traditional definition of God see E.L. Mascall's He Who Is: A Study in Traditional Theism (revised edition), (London: Darton, Longeman and Todd, 1966). Mascall

of God. For him, God is Being-Itself, or alternatively, the Ground of Being or the power of Being. His chief modification of the classical view is that he insisted that, since God is Being-Itself, or the Ground of Being, He cannot be a being. If God is thought of as a being, it logically follows that He be thought of as one being among other beings, and He is thereby diminished even though He is considered to be the "highest" or the "most perfect" or the "most powerful" being. To think of God in this way, Tillich believed, undermined His total transcendence. God is totally other than all existent beings. Superlatives, when used to describe Him, have the opposite effect from that which is intended. Rather than elevate Him, they actually detract from His aseity. On the other hand, to say that God is Being-Itself is to say that God is not on a level with beings as such but that He totally transcends them. As Being-Itself, God is beyond what classical ontology calls the contrast between essential and existential being. Difficulties arise, Tillich claimed, when God is described either in terms of universal essence (which he saw as pantheism) or in

refuses "to pass final judgement" on Tillich's theism but feels it is hardly traditional, p. ix.

terms of existence. "It is as atheistic to affirm the existence of God as it is to deny it. God is Being-itself, not a being."¹ Tillich thought that the words "God" and "existence" need to be separated permanently since being consists of both essence and existence. God, for Tillich, is prior to any split between the two. Therefore, to speak of his "existence" in the way that much theology and popular piety does is confusing and erroneous. Tillich insisted on speaking about the "reality" or the "actuality" of God, rather than the "existence" of God. "God does not exist," he wrote, "He is being-itself beyond essence and existence. Therefore to argue that God exists is to deny him."² To argue that God exists is to argue that He is not beyond the cleavage between essence and existence and that therefore He is on a level with all other existants. This is to deny His utter transcendence. For Tillich, this is a fundamental error. "Being-itself infinitely transcends every finite being."³

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 263.

²Ibid., p. 227.

³Ibid., p. 263.

At the same time, however, "everything finite participates in being-itself and in its infinity."¹ Everything that has being participates in but is not identical with, Being-itself. Without such participation things would be either swallowed by nonbeing or would never have emerged from nonbeing. Every created thing contains within itself the power of being because every created thing participates in the infinite power of being in a finite way. Hence Tillich, using spatial metaphors, refers to God as the ground of being, the depth of life itself.

"The name of this infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being is God. That depth is what the word God means. And if that word has not much meaning for you, translate it, and speak of the depths of your life, of the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without reservation. Perhaps, in order to do so, you must forget everything traditional that you have learned about God, perhaps even that word itself. For if you know that God means depth, you know much about him."²

¹Loc. Cit.

²The Shaking of the Foundations, p. 57.

Tillich's use of such spatial terms as "ground" and "depth" have, of course, symbolic meaning. The only non-symbolic statement about God is that God is Being-itself, anything else that is said about God is said on this basis and by necessity has to be symbolic.¹ Tillich defended the symbolic term "the creative and abysmal ground of being" as being an adequate way of talking about God,² and it is this definition of God that makes it possible for Tillich to develop a theology which has mystical implications:

"Since God is the ground of being, he is the ground of the structure; the structure is grounded in him. He is this structure, and it is impossible to speak about him except in terms of this structure. God must be approached cognitively through the structural elements of being-itself."³

In other words, man can know God by discovering the depths of his own being. For Tillich, a segment of

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 264; cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 10 in which Tillich states that the only non-symbolic statement that can be made about God is that everything we say about God is symbolic. On this see J. Heywood Thomas, Paul Tillich (London: Corey Kingsgate, 1965), p. 12.

²Ibid., p. 264 for a full treatment of this defense.

³Ibid., p. 264.

finite reality, since it participates in Being-Itself, can become the basis for assertions about infinite Being-Itself. The analogia entis is basic to man's search for the ultimate. It gives man the "only justification of speaking at all about God."¹ Man does not attempt to deduce God from nature, but, in accordance with the Protestant Principle, it is through the natural that God reveals himself to man. Man himself is the door to the deeper levels of reality,² because the self can point beyond itself ("In other words, it is self-transcendent").³ Tillich distinguished two ways of approaching God; one in which estrangement is overcome; the other, which he rejected, meets God as a stranger, as one alien to himself:

¹Ibid., p. 266. On Tillich's use of the analogia entis, see Lewis S. Ford, "Tillich and Thomas: The Analogy of Being" in The Journal of Religion 46 (April, 1966), no. 2, pp. 229-245; Kenneth Foster, "Paul Tillich and St. Thomas" in Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought, Thomas P. O'Meara and Celestin D. Weisser (eds.), (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1965), pp. 97-105; Donald J. Keefe, Op. Cit., passim; George MacLean, "Symbol and Analogy: Tillich and Thomas" in O'Meara, Op. Cit., pp. 145-183; Edward D. O'Connor, "Paul Tillich: An Impression" in O'Meara, Op. Cit., pp. 37f; Gustave Weigel, "The Theological Significance of Paul Tillich" in O'Meara, Op. Cit., pp. 3-24; and "Myth, Symbol and Analogy" Ibid., pp. 184-196.

²Ibid., p. 70.

³Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 8.

"In the first way man discovers himself when he discovers God; he discovers something that is identical with himself although it transcends him infinitely, something from which he is estranged, but from which he never has been and never can be separated."¹

"Revelation is the manifestation of the ground of being for human knowledge."² When God reveals himself to man, man discovers that which is infinitely distant from him while at the same time he discovers that which is infinitely close to him. He discovers his own ground, the structure of his own being, but discovers as well, that this ground and this structure infinitely transcend the human self. Therefore Tillich can paraphrase both Meister Eckhart and St. Augustine and say that God "is nearer to the ego than the ego is to itself,"³ and he can quote St. Bonaventure on the immediacy of God: "God is most truly present to the very soul and immediately knowable."⁴ He is such because he is the very ground of the soul's being.

¹Theology of Culture, p. 10; Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 7.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 105.

³Ibid., p. 301; see Eckhart, Sermon 69 in Pfeiffer's Meister Eckhart (Original 1857), ET (London: Watkins, 1924), p. 171; cf. Augustine's Confessions III, 6, iii. See also A History of Christian Thought, p. 248, in which Tillich shows this understanding in Luther.

⁴Theology of Culture, p. 13.

Tillich sides conclusively with what he calls the Augustinian-Franciscan school against the Thomists. "I would say," he addressed a class, "almost unambiguously, that I myself, and my whole theology, stand much more in the line of the Augustinians than in the Thomistic tradition."¹ The Augustinians, he argued, saw God as the prius of all knowledge, while the Thomists saw God as exterior to man, a res singularissima (Occam). It was the Augustinians therefore, including Bonaventure, Meister Eckhart and Jacob Böhme, who supplied Tillich with a doctrine of God that had the necessary paradox for a theological defense of mysticism.²

Like Tillich, Thomas Merton stressed the immediacy of God, and like Tillich, he emphasized the point that God "is closer to us than we are to ourselves."³

¹A History of Christian Thought, pp. 104, 111. See also John Herman Randall, Jr., "The Philosophical Legacy of Paul Tillich" in James R. Lyons (ed.), The Intellectual Legacy of Paul Tillich, pp. 34f; and John P. Dourely, Paul Tillich and Bonaventure.

²The difference between the Augustinian and Thomist schools are spelled out in the essay, "The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," (1946), in Theology of Culture, pp. 10-29. On Böhme, Eckhart, Bonaventure, Bernard of Clairvaux and others whom Tillich includes in the "Augustinian" camp see especially A History of Christian Thought, passim. Rollo May in his biography of Tillich, Paulus, (New York: Harper, and Row, 1973), mentions Böhme's influence on Tillich, pp. 67, 87.

³This statement occurs in many places throughout Merton's writings, among which are No Man Is an Island, pp. 138, 229, and The New Man, pp. 16, 83.

Although Merton's theological education was decidedly Thomist, as was all Roman Catholic seminary training in the 1940s, and although in his early writings he was a champion of various Thomistic positions,¹ he was, like Tillich, principally at one with what Tillich called the Augustinian-Franciscan tradition. He recalled that Dan Walsh, who had taught him philosophy at Columbia University, was quick to see his Augustinian tendencies soon after he had converted to Catholicism.² This Augustinianism remained with him all his life, in spite of a grounding and a serious interest in scholasticism. E. Glenn Hinson argues convincingly that Merton's Augustinian bent was hidden during the years in which he was attracted to scholasticism but that it reemerged as the years passed.

¹For instance, he argues in The Ascent to Truth, p. 37, that if the Five Ways of Thomas Aquinas are rejected by modern philosophy, the fault is with "the complete philosophical confusion that prevails outside the Church" and with intellectuals who suffer from a "powerlessness to think." The fault is not with the arguments themselves. If Merton was familiar with the criticisms of Immanuel Kant and David Hume, he does not let on.

²The Seven Storey Mountain, p. 265.

and as Merton's scholastic interests gave way to his mystical interests. Scholasticism, thinks Hinson, "ran too much against the grain for one who sought the intuitive apprehension of reality."¹ However, it was a student of scholasticism, Etienne Gilson, who in his book The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, introduced Merton to the possibility of describing God in terms of Being,² and it is this description which served, as it did with Tillich, to provide Merton with a doctrine of God upon which he could base his mystical theology.

Merton did not define God in a systematic theological fashion, as did Tillich, and it would be beyond the scope of this study to try to discover a clear and precise description of God within his many writings. There are numerous ambiguities (as, indeed, there must be) in his references to God. He can describe God as the Void or the Abyss,³ but he can also say that God is found in the void.⁴

¹"The Catholicizing of Contemplation: Thomas Merton's Place in the Church's Prayer Life," Cistercian Studies X, Nos. 3, 4, (1975), pp. 178f.

²See above, pp. 35f.

³e.g., The Ascent to Truth, p. 238; Mystics and Zen Masters, pp. 39f.

⁴e.g., Contemplative Prayer, p. 32; Cables to the Ace, p. 58.

He can say that God is the Ground of Being,¹ but he can also say that God is found in the ground of one's being.² He can say that God is "Pure and Absolute Being,"³ but he can also say that His Being is beyond all being.⁴ Ultimately, for Merton, the Christian idea of God is contained in the three words of St. John's epistle: "God is Love."⁵ This is not intended to contradict his description of God as Being, but rather to describe further the nature of Being as dynamic rather than static.⁶ It is the description of God in ontological terms

¹e.g., Zen and the Birds of Appetite, pp. 10, 71; "Blake and the New Theology," Sewanee Review 76 (August, 1968), p. 680; "The Significance of the Bhagavad-Gita" in The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton, p. 349.

²e.g., Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 101, 160; Contemplative Prayer, p. 103; Faith and Violence, p. 270; "The Ascetic Life, Experience of God and Freedom," p. 64.

³Life and Holiness, p. 95, for example.

⁴e.g., The Silent Life, p. 18; "Contemplatives and the Crisis of Faith," p. 271.

⁵e.g., The Living Bread, p. 48; "Christian Humanism," p. 229. (In the Introduction to the Japanese edition of Seeds of Contemplation, Merton refers to God as both Pure Being and Pure Love.)

⁶The Living Bread, pp. 48-51.

which Merton sees as the basis for mysticism:

"The thinking and feeling and willing self is not the starting point of all verifiable reality and of all experience. The primal truth, the ground of all being and truth, is in God the Creator of all that is. The starting point of all Christian belief and experience (in this context) is the primal reality of God as Pure Actuality. The 'existence of God' is not something seen as deducible from our conscious awareness of our own existence. On the contrary, the experience of the classic Christian mystics is rooted in a metaphysic of being, in which God is intuited as "He Who Is," as the supreme reality, pure Being."¹

In speaking of God as "Pure Actuality," Merton is stressing His transcendence. But, in order for there to be a mystical encounter between man and God, God must also be seen in terms of immanence, as Merton emphasizes when he says, in so many places, that God is closer to the person than the person is to himself. "Now it happens," he wrote, "that the immanentist approach, which sees God as directly and intimately

¹Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 26. Cf. The Ascent to Truth, pp. 197f, and Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 221. Merton gives a detailed analysis of the various ways in which God as Being has been derived from the word YHWH in Exodus 3:14 in Seasons of Celebration, pp. 183-203, especially pp. 192-195.

present in the very ground of our being (while at the same time infinitely transcendent), is actually much closer to the contemplative tradition."¹ The mystic needs a doctrine of God that does not stress His transcendence to the neglect of His immanence but rather, the mystic needs to keep both transcendence and immanence in balance. "We awaken," Merton continued, "not only to a realization of the immensity and majesty of God 'out there' as King and Ruler of the universe (which He is) but also a more intimate and more wonderful perception of Him as directly and personally present in our own being."² But man's union with God in the depths of the self can never be seen as a merger or as a blurring of the distinction between man and God. God is, and always will be, distinct from and totally Other than all parts of his creation, including the mystic. To speak of the union between man and God is to speak paradoxically. Merton rules out pantheism:

¹Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 160.

²Loc. Cit.

"On the contrary, there is a distinct conflict in the realization that though in some sense He is more truly ourselves than we are, yet we are not identical with Him, and though He loves us better than we can love ourselves we are opposed to Him, and in opposing Him we oppose our own deepest selves."¹

The paradox of the "God Who is at once infinitely above us and Who yet dwells in the depths of our being"² is the paradox that the mystic personally experiences. From this personal experience, the mystic can make ontological statements about the relationship between God and the entire created order. The movement is circular: an ontological doctrine of God describes the starting place for the mystic. God is the prius of all thought. However, the experience of God in the depths of the self makes it possible for man, who has received the revelatory action of God in his experience, to begin to formulate statements (albeit symbolic, paradoxical statements), about God. The mystic, or in Merton's view, the monk, is called upon to experience, or to know through participation, that of which the philosopher of religion speaks when he uses terms like "transcendence"

¹Ibid., pp. 160f.

²Thoughts in Solitude, p. 152.

and "immanence." The mystic, unlike the philosopher, does not come to truth by way of speculation, but since the philosopher, too, can know through participation, the philosopher and the mystic need not be in different camps. Both can describe the same understanding of reality; both can describe the same paradox:

"God, says philosophy, is both immanent and transcendent. By His immanence He lives and acts in the metaphysical depths of everything that exists. He is "everywhere." By His transcendence He is so far above all being, that no human and limited concept can contain and exhaust His Being, or even signify it except by analogy. He is so far above all created being that His Being and finite being are not even said to 'be' in the same univocal sense. Compared with God, created being 'is not': again, compared with created being, God 'is not.' For He is so far above His creation that the concept of Being, applied to Him, means something basically different from what it means when applied to everything else. In this way, God 'is nowhere.'¹

The difference between the monk and the philosopher, Merton continued, is that the monk is called "to enter into this dilemma and this mystery even if he is unable to express or even understand the philosopher's language. Indeed, thought Merton, the non-philosophical

¹The Silent Life, pp. 17f.

monk has a less complicated and easier time. To experience revelation is challenging enough without one's having to try to systematize and explain it! Yet, he recognized, as we have seen,¹ that within the contemplative community, there are those whose vocation it is to speak about that which is beyond rational discourse. These are the ones who, according to Tillich, live "on the boundary," a position which can be fruitful, but difficult and dangerous as well.² Tillich described himself as one who lived on the threshold of a number of boundaries. Merton experienced the same tension. To attempt to describe, in adequate language, the paradoxes of the transcendent and immanent God who is totally beyond and yet totally near, is to attempt the impossible. Yet it must be attempted, since only through the articulation of this paradox can man even begin to have a cognitive understanding of that which is really Real.

Tillich and Merton, in so far as they stress the immediacy of God, stand together within the Augustinian tradition. Merton, in fact, recognized this point

¹See above, pp. 247f.

²On the Boundary, p. 13, passim.

of affinity (although, unlike Tillich, he was able to find a place for St. Thomas Aquinas within this tradition):

"If the truth be told, there is a great deal in common in the psychological and spiritual insight of the Church Fathers and in the psychoanalytically oriented Christian existential thinking of men like Tillich, himself more influenced than many realized by the Augustinian tradition."¹

Merton and Tillich both claimed some of the same spiritual fathers: Plotinus, Augustine, Dionysius, Bernard, Eckhart and Böhme.² It is because of this shared tradition that both men can recognize and write about the paradox of transcendence and immanence, sometimes in language which is almost identical, and it is to a large extent because of this tradition that both men were able to appreciate the centrality of mysticism in the Christian experience.

¹Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 64.

²Tillich claims others, including Hegel, Schelling and Schleiermacher in his camp, whereas Merton claims specific indebtedness to Gregory of Nyssa, the school of St. Victor, and John of the Cross, among others. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to claim that these two thinkers shared totally in the same tradition.

Tillich and Merton agree, also, upon the adequacy of the equation of God and Being, although Merton does not insist, as does Tillich, on the impossibility of speaking of God as a being.¹ Nevertheless, Merton insisted as strongly as did Tillich about the dangers of thinking of God as an Object within the subject-object structure of knowledge. If God is seen as object, he inevitably "dies." "God as object is not only a mere abstract concept, but one which contains so many internal contradictions that it becomes entirely nonnegotiable except when it is hardened into an idol that is maintained in existence by a sheer act of will."² Merton insisted that such a "Holy Object" must be destroyed, and he interpreted John of the Cross' hostility to visions and the Zen Masters' saying, "If you meet the Buddha, kill him," as warnings against the tendency to objectify God.³ Merton's stress on the dangers of turning God into an idol is as dominant and as pervasive a part of his thought as Tillich's Protestant Principle or his insistence that

¹Cf. The Ascent to Truth, pp. 197f, where God is referred to as "the Absolute Being," a term that Tillich would reject.

²Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 23.

³Ibid., p. 77.

God is not a being is a part of his.

Two further points deserve brief mention. First of all, Merton and Tillich agreed in so far as they saw Being as that which overcomes non-being, although whereas Tillich bases much of his discussion about God upon this point,¹ there are only occasional, yet explicit, mentions of this idea in Merton's writings.² Secondly, both Tillich and Merton are agreed (as against the process theologians) that Being preceeds and is superior to becoming. Tillich saw that the term "being" comprised both becoming and rest,³ and Merton (who saw himself as having "an incurable case of metaphysics"), felt that "the activity of becoming is considerably less alive and dynamic than the act of Being."⁴

¹e.g., Systematic Theology, Vol. I, pp. 207-209; The Courage to Be, pp. 32-36.

²Cf. Thoughts in Solitude, p. 86; New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 34; The New Man, pp. 104ff.

³Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 273; cf. Charles Hartshorne's response to this in "Tillich's Doctrine of God" in Kegley and Bretall (eds.), The Theology of Paul Tillich, pp. 164-195.

⁴"Blake and the New Theology," pp. 679f.

Hence it can be seen that Tillich and Merton share what is, for the most part, a common doctrine of God. Merton has not, of course, received the careful and thorough critical attention on this point that Tillich has received, because, unlike Tillich, his is neither an original nor a systematic restatement of this doctrine, and furthermore, it does not stand as one of the unique contributions which he has made to contemporary theology. It has been necessary however, to indicate the points of comparison between Merton's understanding of the doctrine of God and Tillich's because it is the emphasis on the Ego sum qui sum which underlies the mystical element in the thought of both men.

2. Essence and Existence

Paul Tillich followed in the tradition of the Existenzphilosophie as formulated in nineteenth century thought in his concern for the meaning of "existence," and he followed in the scholastic tradition in affirming that a clear and precise distinction between "essence" and "existence" was a step toward a more significant

understanding of existence.¹ Even within philosophies that refused to make this distinction, Tillich believed that the distinction was nonetheless implicit "whenever the ideal is held against the real, truth against error, good against evil."² Both terms are, and must remain, ambiguous. "Essence" can be seen in both an empirical and in an evaluative sense. Both ways are necessary. Essence is, first of all, the nature of a thing, or the quality in which a thing participates, or a universal, or the ousia of a thing. In the second sense, essence is that from which a thing has "fallen" and is therefore the basis of value judgements, it is "the true and undistorted nature of things." These two definitions of essence are necessary in order to understand the ambiguous nature of existence. Essence can have a purely logical character, defining what a thing is, and essence can also have an evaluative character, expressing that which appears in an imperfect and distorted way in that which exists. "Essence empowers and judges that which exists." Essence gives a thing its power of being, and at the same time, it stands

¹e.g., Theology of Culture, pp. 80f; cf. The Courage to Be, p. 127.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 224.

against it.¹

"Existence," too, is a word with ambiguities. Tillich sees the root meaning of "existence" as coming from the Latin existere, to stand out. That which exists, therefore, stands out of relative non-being or mere potentiality. That which exists "is more than it is in the state of mere potentiality and less than it could be in the power of its essential nature." This ambiguity has been approached in different ways by different philosophers. Plato, thought Tillich, approached it negatively. The good is identified with the essential. The medieval nominalists, on the other hand, valued existence positively. Essence, for them, was "nothing more than the reflex of existence in the human mind." Tillich maintained that only a mediating position, one which he attributed to Aristotle, could be an adequate one. Existence, for Christianity, is good. It is the fulfillment of creation. Yet Christianity has also been aware of the "split between the created goodness of things and their distorted existence."² The Christian

¹Ibid., p. 225; cf. Theology of Culture, pp. 80f.

²Ibid., p. 226.

symbol of "the Fall," in Tillich's interpretation, is the mythological expression of the "transition from essence to existence."¹

The ambiguous nature of existence is maintained, says Tillich, in so far as the Fall is not a break between essence and existence, but is an imperfect fulfillment. The Fall, furthermore, is not an event in the past - although it is expressed as such in the necessarily mythological language of religious symbols - and its meaning has "universal anthropological significance."² It is not about a person called Adam; it is about all men in their existential condition. It is about the one creature who is able to discover that his existence is estranged from his essence; it is about the one who is able to recognize that he contradicts his essential being in all that he does and is cut off from his "potency for goodness."³ The Fall is a symbolic way of saying that "man as he exists is not what he essentially is and ought to be. He is estranged from his true being."⁴ Tillich

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 33.

²Loc. Cit.

³Ibid., p. 69.

⁴Ibid., p. 51.

could speak of this movement in terms of "sin" and called for the reinterpretation of the doctrine of "original sin." He wished to show that man's existential self-estrangement is the root meaning of that doctrine. Sin is estrangement.¹ But at the same time that man is estranged from his true being, and therefore in a state of sin, he "is not a stranger to his true being, for he belongs to it."² Tillich is a Platonist in so far as he regards essence as being good and as that which stands as the power of being and the judge of that which exists. But he differs from Platonic idealism in so far as he sees goodness as residing not simply in the realm of essence, but as the restitution of essence and existence. Things hide their true being, they distort their true being, but they do not cease to have true being. If the true being of a thing is to be discovered, wrote Tillich, then

"....it must be discovered under the surface of sense impressions, changing appearance, and unfounded opinions..."

¹Ibid., pp. 40-45, 51-53; cf. The Boundaries of Our Being, pp. 40-49.

²Ibid., p. 52.

"The surface must be penetrated, the appearance undercut, the 'depth' must be reached, namely, the ousia, the 'essence' of things, that which gives them the power of being...The seemingly real is not unreal, but it is deceptive if it is taken to be the really real."¹

Existential elements and essential elements, in other words, are ambiguously combined in all beings. The concrete actuality of being, namely "life," is neither purely existential nor purely essential. It is made up of both elements. Essence and existence are abstractions - necessary abstractions for an analysis of being.² In actuality they cannot be separated. Existential distortions are as real as the essential 'depth' is real, but the really real will only be known when essence and existence are seen together in a state in which their estrangement is overcome.

Thomas Merton did not articulate the difference between "essence" and "existence" in the thoroughgoing manner of Tillich, although it is certain that he was well aware of this distinction since he had an intimate knowledge of the literature of both scholasticism

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. I, pp. 112f.

²Cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 32f.

and existentialism. It appears occasionally in his writings, but it is not explicitly developed.¹ Nevertheless, although he rarely speaks of "essence" and "existence" as such, the understanding of being that this language expresses can be found throughout Merton's work. The distinction between essence and existence is an unexpressed concept behind his own anthropology. For instance, in his interpretation of the doctrine of the Fall, he expressed the viewpoint first formulated by Irenaeus, that in his fallen state man still maintains the "image" of God but has distorted the "likeness."² Merton's understanding of the distinction between the two terms can be interpreted as saying basically the same thing that Tillich was saying, that is, man has fallen from a state of essence, in which the image of God in man was united with the likeness of God, into a state of existence in which the likeness of God is distorted.³

¹Cf. Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 145f; Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 7.

²Cf. The New Man, pp. 37-46; see above pp. 232-237.

³It will be noted that Tillich held that, in the state of existence, man still maintained the image of God. See Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 37.

To speak of "image and likeness" is to speak of essence; to speak of "distorted likeness" is to speak of existence. There are examples within the writings of Thomas Merton that further amplify this point of affinity with Tillich. Merton recognized that, in so far as we have a sense of sin (which he saw as a healthy awareness) and a feeling of guilt (which he saw as tending to be pathological), we recognize that we "are alienated from the sources of our life... that we are not what we ought to be" and "that we have used our freedom against ourselves and against God."¹ In other words, we recognize, either in a healthy or in an unhealthy way, that our lives are distortions of what they ought to be, that we are separated from our true being. Furthermore, Merton saw that "the traditional Christian idea of sin, particularly original sin," had much in common with "the modern psychological concept" of alienation.² This is to say, with Tillich, that the doctrine of original sin might best be interpreted in terms of alienation, or estrangement. Again, both agree that

¹The Living Bread, pp. 33f. Cf. Tillich's distinction between ontological and pathological anxiety in The Courage to Be.

²"Christian Humanism," p. 227.

the Christian doctrine of the Fall, i.e., a combination of the original Genesis story and the interpretations of it in the epistles of St. Paul, is not simply the story of an historical (or quasi-historical or mythological) figure called Adam, but is a cosmic myth which pertains to all of humanity.¹ Finally, both men agree that it is possible to have a restoration of essence and existence within time and space. This will be discussed later in this chapter when we examine what Tillich calls "essentialization," a term which he borrows from Schelling and modifies, and what Merton calls "divinization," a term which he borrows from the early Greek Fathers. However, before essentialization and divinization are discussed in detail it is necessary to examine certain areas in which the abstract distinction between essence and existence can be seen in concrete embodiments. This includes, first of all, an examination of the meaning of human personhood, and secondly, an examination of what Christianity claims to be the epitome of personhood, the person in whom the restoration of essence

¹The New Man, p. 80f. Merton is not as insistent as was Tillich about the mythological nature of the doctrine of the Fall in his treatment of the subject in The New Man. It was not his purpose to discuss the possibility or validity of demythologizing. For his appreciation of Bultmann's contribution to biblical studies, see Opening the Bible, pp. 60-62, 75. On 'myth' see the essay, "Mircea Eliade: A Critical Observer of the Archetypal Myth," The National Catholic Reporter, (August 23, 1967), p. 9.

and existence has taken place unambiguously, namely, the Christ. It will become increasingly clear throughout these sections how Tillich's distinction between "essence" and "existence" is adequate to explain a number of points of Merton's theology. Furthermore, it will become clear how man's ethical maturity depends upon the healing of estrangement between essence and existence, and how this healing can be described in terms of mystical experience and can be known in the practise of contemplation. Hence the distinction between essence and existence forms a fundamental, although not always articulated, part of the understanding of the relationship between mystical prayer and social action in the thought of Thomas Merton.

3. The Meaning of "Person"

One can discover Tillich's understanding of the meaning of "person" within his discussion of life and its ambiguities. Life as the "actuality of being,"¹

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 12.

he believed, is a multi-dimensional unity comprising the inorganic, the organic, and the psychological and the spiritual realms. However, as far as it is humanly possible to tell, only man has actualized the spiritual dimension, the dimension which Tillich defined (borrowing from Hegel) as "the unity of power and meaning."¹ Furthermore, since Tillich accepts that man, under the predominance of the dimension of the spirit, includes the other dimensions and does not contradict them, then the most adequate approach to the study of life is the study of human life.

Therefore, one can go to Tillich's exposition of the meaning of "life" to discover his understanding of the meaning of "person."

As we have seen, Tillich used "essence" and "existence" to define being, but that he considered these terms to be abstractions and saw life itself as an ambiguous mixture of both:

"Every life process has the ambiguity that the positive and negative elements are mixed in such a way that a definite separation of the negative from the positive is impossible: life at every moment is ambiguous."²

¹Ibid., p. 22.

²Ibid., p. 34.

Therefore, he does not analyze the meaning of life by concentrating on either its essential nature alone or its existential distortion alone. Rather in his study of life he tries to discover the ontological structures of being and how these tend, within existence, to become distorted. He does this by concentrating on what he calls the three functions of life, their polarities, their principles, their distortions and their manifestations within the dimension of the spirit, i.e., how they actualize their meanings. These functions are self-integration, self-creativity, and self-transcendence. These are the processes in which potential being becomes actualized. In each of them, elements of self-identity are united with elements of self-alteration. However, the unity is threatened by existential estrangement, and therefore, actual life is, even at its best, ambiguous. There is essential unity coupled with existential disruption, or at least the threat of existential disruption. Each of these processes, when examined, combine to provide a comprehensive understanding of Tillich's analysis of life.¹

¹These processes are discussed first in terms of the ontological structures of being in Systematic Theology, Vol. I, pp. 193-206, then according to their existential distortions in Systematic Theology, Vol.

The first process to be examined is that of self-integration. This implies that, in order to actualize itself life must move between the poles of individualization and participation. One must be able to be one's self, and at the same time one must be able to be a part of the lives of others. To be a person, one must remain in a state of balance between these two poles. To gravitate to the pole of individualization results, in simple terms, in one's failure to become anything more than an individual, "shut up within himself and cut off from participation."¹ On the other hand, to gravitate to the pole of participation, results in the centred-self becoming overwhelmed by that which it participates in, and thereby losing its own centredness. A balance must be maintained or there will be personal disintegration: either through the calcification of the centred-self which would

II, pp. 72-76. Finally they are seen within the ambiguities of life in Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 32-117, and in terms of the impact of the Divine Spirit, Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 173-300, and the Kingdom of God, Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 411-419. See also The Courage to Be, pp. 86-154. Alexander J. McKelway gives a complete summary in The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich (London: Lutterworth, 1964), pp. 190ff.

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 75.

inhibit it from growth, which Tillich calls a "death of mere self-identity;"¹ or through the weakening and dispersing of the centred-self to the extent that it could lose its centredness altogether, or what Tillich calls "death of mere self-alteration."² However, there is a profound ambiguity in all of this. That is because "the more individualized a being is the more he is able to participate."³

"The most individualized being is the most unapproachable and the most lonely one. But, at the same time, he has the greatest potentiality of universal participation. He can have communion with his world and eros towards it...He can participate in the universe in all its dimensions and draw elements of it into himself."⁴

In short, in order to participate, one must simultaneously be individualized.

Yet there is a definite limit to the ability of man to draw all elements of his world into his own centre. That limit is the other self. Only in the encounter with other selves can the self exist in the dimension of the spirit. Only in such an encounter can it find a unity of both power and meaning. The

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 36.

²Loc. Cit.

³Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 75.

⁴Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 35.

other person defines limits to one's desire to assimilate all of the world into one's self, and "the experience of this limit is the experience of the ought-to-be, the moral imperative." Tillich explains this further:

"The moral constitution of the self in the dimension of the spirit begins with this experience. Personal life emerges in the encounter of person with person and in no other way. If one can imagine a living being with the psychosomatic structure of man, completely outside any human community, such a being could not actualize its potential spirit. It would be driven in all directions, limited only by its finitude, but it would not experience the ought-to-be. Therefore, the self-integration of the person as a person occurs in a community, within which the continuous mutual encounter of centred self with centred self is possible and actual."¹

In other words, "Man becomes man in personal encounters. Only by meeting a 'thou' does man realize that he is an 'ego.'"² The perfect form of individualization, therefore, is called "person" and the perfect form of participation is called "communion."³ Persons exist

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 43; cf. Ibid., p. 329.

²Love, Power and Justice, p. 78.

³Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 195.

only in communion with other persons, and communities are made up of persons. However, it must not be forgotten that the person must not lose the "centredness" of the self. This "self-centredness" (by which Tillich does not mean "selfishness") is the basic principle of the process of self-integration. It is a metaphor that describes both the quality of the indivisibility of the self and its ability to incorporate objects into the self. Complete centredness is essentially given to man, but it is not actualized except when man acts within the spiritual dimension. Again, the ought-to-be as discovered through the experience of the other person, determines personhood. For Tillich, the act in which man actualizes his essential centredness is the moral act. "Morality is the constitutive function of the spirit."¹ It creates the person, and it does so within the community of other persons.

The second process of life that Tillich examines is that of self-creativity. Within this process the self must move between and maintain a balance between the poles of form and dynamics. As in the

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 40.

process of self-integration, here also the self moves between self-identity and self-alteration, but in this process it does so under the principle of growth.

"Growth is dependent on the polar element of dynamics in so far as growth is the process by which a formed reality goes beyond itself to another form which both preserves and transforms the original reality. This process is the way in which life creates itself."¹

"Dynamics," Tillich explains in his discussion of the ontological structures of being, is not something that is but rather, "is the me on, the potentiality of being, which is non-being in contrast to things that have form, and the power of being in contrast to pure non-being."² It is essential to life. However, it must be seen in interdependence with form. "Self-creation of life is always creation of form."³ But growth is more than a continuous series of forms. The pole of dynamics means that "every new form is made

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 53.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 198.

³Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 53.

possible only by breaking through the limits of an old form."¹ There is a risk involved, and that risk is that, instead of the creation of a new form, chaos could result. Creation implies the risk of destruction, and the fear of destruction could result in the inability to actualize life by a refusal to take part in the process of self-creativity. Chaos, or the fear of chaos, can be equally destructive to the principle of growth. For growth to occur, the poles of dynamics and form must be balanced. To gravitate to either pole results in distortion. In the face of possible chaos life may be pulled in one of two directions: "...life may fall back to its starting point and resist creation, or it may destroy itself in the attempt to reach a new form."² Only when the dynamic element of life is operative and, at the same time, leads to the creation of new form rather than to chaos, are the poles in balance. Tillich notes numerous examples of the existential ambiguities which are the result of this tension both within and outside of the spiritual realm. Outside of the spiritual realm these ambiguities can be seen, for instance, in terms of the ambiguities of labour, of sexuality, of

¹Loc. Cit.

²Ibid., p. 54.

³Ibid., pp. 55-61

the "life-instinct" and the "death instinct," and of pain and pleasure. Within the realm of the spirit, that is in that dimension which is unique to humanity and involves the unity of power and meaning, the self-creativity of life is expressed in culture. Culture is the creation of new forms on the horizontal plane. Its principle forms of creation are language and the technical act. And in this dimension, too, one can see numerous ambiguities. "The inherent ambiguity of language is that in transforming reality into meaning it separates mind and reality."¹ Subject and object are split, and this creates a whole cluster of ambiguities. In the area of technical production Tillich sees three basic ambiguities: (which we will only mention), "the ambiguity of freedom and limitation" in technical production, "the ambiguity of means and ends," and the "ambiguity of self and thing."² Through his discussion of these ambiguities Tillich indicates that self-creativity, like self-integration, although part of the essence of man, is distorted under the conditions of existence.

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 73.

²Ibid., pp. 77-79.

The third and final life process which Tillich defines is that of self-transcendence. Whereas self-integration could be described as circular (a going out from and a return to the self) and self-creativity could be seen as horizontal movement, self-transcendence is best described under the metaphor of the verticle.¹ It is that function of life "in which life drives beyond itself as finite life."¹ It is the striving toward the sublime, toward infinite and ultimate being. It is the process in which life tries to free itself "from a total bondage to its own finitude."² It "transcends both the circular line of centredness and the horizontal line of growth,"³ and because of this "verticle" dimension it is not empirically observable. It is known "only through the mirror of man's consciousness" but as such it is expressed and effective in all periods of man's history. The opposite of self-transcendence of life is the profanization of life. This, too, although not empirically observable, is known in man's consciousness. To be profane, according to Tillich,

¹Ibid., p. 33.

²Ibid., p. 92.

³Loc. Cit.

means both "standing outside the body" and "resisting self-transcendence."¹ Life then is meant to be holy. It is meant to be more than simply that which can be observed. It is called to a "greatness" and a "dignity" that are qualitative rather than quantitative, and this greatness "shows a power of being and meaning that makes it a representative of ultimate being and meaning and gives it the dignity of such representation."² Because life is actualized under the conditions of existence this holiness, greatness and dignity are distorted. They are mixed with elements of the profane, the tragic and the small. Life essentially represents the ultimate, but in existence it does so only ambiguously.

The ambiguities exist as the result of a failure on the part of the self to maintain a balance between the poles of freedom and destiny. By "destiny" Tillich means neither fate nor necessity. "Destiny," as he defines it, "points to this situation in which man finds himself, facing the world to which, at the same time, he belongs."³ It represents not the opposite of

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 93.

²Loc. Cit.

³Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 202.

freedom (as does the word 'fate') but represents the conditions and limitations of that freedom. Tillich insists that man's freedom is finite. The freedom of a person operates effectively only when it is in a polar relationship with its own destiny. This freedom "is experienced as deliberation, decision, and responsibility."¹ Out of an analysis of these terms Tillich further defines destiny:

"Our destiny is that out of which our decisions arise; it is the indefinitely broad basis of our centred selfhood; it is the concreteness of our being which makes all our decisions our decisions...Destiny is not a strange power which determines what shall happen to me. It is myself as given, formed by nature, history, and myself. My destiny is the basis of my freedom; my freedom participates in shaping my destiny."²

The polarity must be maintained. Freedom that departs from destiny ends up in tragedy since the limits of finitude have been transgressed. But this is tragedy, rather than smallness, since it is the result of the risk that is inherent in any pursuit

¹Ibid., p. 203.

²Ibid., p. 204.

of greatness. Only the great can participate in the tragic. On the other hand, to gravitate to the pole of destiny to the neglect of freedom results in smallness and makes the realization of the holiness, greatness and dignity of life impossible.¹ To actualize freedom within the limits of destiny is to achieve greatness.

Under the dimension of the spirit, the self-transcendence of life is seen as religion, and religion, as an existential reality, has ambiguities. Since it is the highest expression of the greatness and dignity of life, it can become the most profanized, the most desecrated.² Nevertheless, religion, as the manifestation of the self-transcendence of life in the dimension of the spirit, is the vehicle for the great becoming the holy. In religion, the great is called holy because "religion is based on the manifestation of the holy itself, the divine ground of being."³ Only when that which is great is able to

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 93f.

²For a full discussion of the ambiguities of religion see Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 104-113.

³Ibid., p. 105.

realize that its greatness depends upon its relation to the ultimate can it become holy. Only then can it transcend itself beyond tragedy, and even then, in so far as it is actualized within existence and therefore within relationship to other beings, it may still participate in the tragic.¹

In summary, it can be said that Tillich defines three life-processes: self-integration, self-creativity and self-transcendence. In self-integration the poles to be balanced are those of individualization and participation. In self-creativity the poles are those of dynamics and form. In self-transcendence the poles are those of freedom and destiny.

These three life-processes under the dimension of the spirit are manifested as morality, culture, and religion. Since Tillich believes that in man the spiritual dimension is the dominant one, he therefore holds that these three functions are constitutive of the full meaning of personhood. Essentially they interpenetrate. Culture gives form to morality and religion makes morality unconditional. "There is no self-transcendence under the dimension of the spirit

¹Ibid., p. 100. Cf. the section on the tragic involvement of the Christ, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, pp. 151-153.

without the constitution of the moral self by the unconditional imperative, and this self-transcendence cannot take form except within the universe of meaning created in the cultural act."¹ Essentially, the self-transcendence of life can be seen within the other functions as well. Within the moral act and within cultural creation life transcends itself in a vertical dimension. Therefore there is a sense in which self-transcendence of life cannot be regarded as a function of life beside the others for it would then have to be itself transcended. Religion, therefore, "must first of all be considered as a quality of the other two functions of the spirit and not as an independent function."² However, existentially, morality, culture and religion do not interpenetrate. Religion exists as a quality in morality and culture, but it also has its own independent existence and as such it serves a particular function: it serves to point to the depths of both morality and culture. It serves to make morality and culture aware of its ambiguities, but religion itself is beset by its own ambiguities,

¹Ibid., p. 101.

²Ibid., p. 102.

it is not necessarily aware of its own depths. Because of this peculiar state in which religion finds itself, Tillich insists that the quest for unambiguous life must be found both within and outside of religion: "religion is not the answer to the quest for unambiguous life, although the answer can only be received through religion."¹

Therefore, for Tillich, the person is one who is under the domination of the dimension of the spirit in which he actualizes life's meanings through morality, culture and religion. But, for Tillich, man in existence is estranged from his essence. The true person would be the one in whom essence is known ambiguously in existence and in whom life would actualize itself without distortions. The true person, by this definition, would be a fiction, for existence necessarily distorts essence. The true person would exist only in a new creation. In creation as we know it, it would be impossible. Nevertheless, in his quest for unambiguous life, man attempts the impossible. He seeks to be able to actualize the life processes unambiguously, achieving perfect balances between the poles of individuation and participation, form and dynamics,

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 113.

and freedom and destiny. He seeks the restoration of essence and existence in numerous ways: through legalism, asceticism, various forms of mysticism, as well as sacramental, doctrinal and emotional attempts at self-salvation.¹ All of these fail, says Tillich, because man is powerless to overcome estrangement between the finite and the infinite. His freedom is limited. His powers of self-transcendence are limited. He is free to transcend himself only so far without destroying himself. Tillich insists that "Attempts to overcome estrangement within the power of one's estranged existence lead to hard toil and tragic failure."² Man's only hope is to seek for a new creation, a new being that is beyond the estrangement of essence and existence, and to be prepared to accept that new being when it is revealed to him. Only through the acceptance of new being, Tillich argues, can man find his estrangement healed. Man cannot unambiguously balance the polarities of his existence, only a new being could possibly do so.

¹For a full treatment of the various means that man has tried to achieve self-salvation see Systematic Theology, Vol. II, pp. 92-100.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 92.

The Christian claim according to Tillich's interpretation, is that Jesus as the Christ is the bearer of new being and that, through participation in that new being through the impact of the divine Spirit¹ in the spirit of man, every person can know unambiguous life.

"Reconciliation, reunion, resurrection - this is the new creation, the New Being, the new state of things. Do you participate in it? The message of Christianity is not Christianity, but a new reality. A new state of things has appeared, it still appears; it is hidden and visible, it is there and it is here. Accept it, enter into it, let it grasp you."²

Tillich's full treatment of the unambiguous union of essence and existence will be discussed in the following section on the meaning of Christ. In anticipation

¹In the third volume of his Systematic Theology, Paul Tillich differentiates between the spirit of man and the divine Spirit. The divine Spirit is the unconditional and ultimate which grasps man's spirit and drives him into successful self-transcendence. "Ecstasy," he explained, "is the classical term for this state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence." See Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 118ff.. See also Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 287; "In the Spiritual Presence, man's essential being appears under the conditions of existence, conquering the distortions of existence in the reality of the New Being. This statement is derived from the basic christological assertion that in the Christ the eternal unity of God and man becomes actual under the conditions of existence without being conquered by them."

²The New Being, Chapter 2; see Boundaries of our Being, p. 170.

it can be stressed that Tillich, on the one hand, insisted on the reality of the New Being in history, and on the other hand, insisted that the New Being was the result of God's grace and not man's action. The Protestant Principle is maintained. Furthermore, the presence of the New Being in history is never complete, its presence is fragmentary and anticipatory. "The New Being is fragmentarily and anticipatorily present, but in so far as it is present it is so unambiguously."¹ What is impossible for man to achieve by his own efforts is made possible for him by the appearance of the New Being. Nevertheless, although man can participate in the New Being and thereby participate in unambiguous life, he always does so with limitations. Wherever New Being is seen in the lives of people or groups it is seen in a fragmented manifestation, and it is seen as pointing to an ultimate fulfillment. But, at the same time, it is unambiguous.

Man participates in New Being in the depths of the self. It is beyond the existential distortions that can be empirically observed. The really real

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 150.

is different from the seemingly real. The surface must be penetrated in order to discover the true being.¹ In one of his sermons Tillich spoke directly to this situation in so far as it relates to the common problems of everyday life:

"Most of our life continues on the surface. We are enslaved by the routine of our daily lives, in work and pleasure, in business and recreation. We are conquered by innumerable hazards, both good and evil. We are more driven than driving. We do not stop to look at the height above us, or the the depth below us. We are always moving forward, although usually in a circle, which finally brings us back to the place from which we first moved. We are in constant motion and never stop to plunge into the depth. We talk and talk and never listen to the voices speaking to our depth and from our depth. We accept ourselves as we appear to ourselves, and do not care what we really are. Like hit-and-run drivers, we injure our souls by the speed with which we move on the surface; and then we rush away, leaving our bleeding souls alone. We miss, therefore, our depth and our true life. And it is only when the picture that we have of ourselves breaks down completely, only when we find ourselves acting against all the expectations we had derived from that picture, and only when an earth-quake shakes and disrupts the surface of our self-knowledge, that we are willing to look into a deeper level of our being."²

¹See above, pp. 380f.

²The Shaking of the Foundations, pp. 55f.

Thomas Merton's understanding of the nature of man was expounded at length in the section of his interpretation of the process of withdrawal.¹ It was shown how he interpreted withdrawal as a process of moving away from the superficial, or "false" self to the inner, or "true" self.² In that section it was shown how Merton was able to describe the superficial self in a variety of ways, but that when he attempted to describe the inner self, he conceded that words failed him. The experience of the true self was ineffable; it remained, like its ground, in the realm of mystery. At that point, as has been seen in the structure of this thesis, it was useless to continue talking about man and necessary to begin to talk about the God who was discovered as the Ground of one's being.

In making the distinction between the superficial self and the inner self which is hidden behind that outer self, Merton shows a remarkable similarity to the passage from Paul Tillich which has just been quoted. Both men speak of surface and depths, and speak of the superiority of the depths. Both men

¹See above, pp. 215-240.

²Merton described this distinction in the novel he wrote before he entered the monastery. See above, pp. 148f for relevant quotations from My Argument With the Gestapo.

speak of the injuries which man brings upon himself by living only at the level of the surface self. Both men call their fellows to seek the depths of their being. Both men realize that it very often takes a "shaking of the foundations" before one is, as it were, forced to look into the deeper reality of the self. And both men agree that the deeper reality of the self is, paradoxically, both identical with and separate from God. Although Merton's writings are full of very vivid descriptions of the ambiguities of life, he did not, however, attempt as systematic a description of man's ambiguous situation as did Tillich in his exposition of the three life-processes. It remains to be demonstrated how Tillich's three life-processes are not only valid descriptions of some of the things that Merton was saying in other language, but also, how an analysis of these processes is helpful in developing a theology which unites mysticism and social ethics.

The self-integration of life, as described by Tillich, is possible only when there is a balance between the polarities of individualization and participation. Merton agreed fully. On the one hand, he stressed the importance of the centred-self, and on the other hand, he recognized that in order to be a person (as distinct from being simply an "individual"), one must see himself in relationship with others.

For the entire process of one's life to make sense, Merton wrote, "it must represent a complete integration of his inner and outer life, or his relation to himself and to other men."¹ For true self-integration, participation and individualization cannot be separated. Merton outlined three possible distortions of the process of self-integration,² and throughout his career as a writer he elaborated on these distortions and tried to discover the proper balance. The first distortion occurs when one insists on loving only himself, which would be to gravitate to the pole of individualization. The second is when one loves only the other to the neglect of the self, a gravitation to the opposite pole. The third distortion would be to say that the most effective way of loving one's self is to love others. This would be a warped understanding of the true balance between individualization and participation.

Gravitation to the pole of individualization was seen by Merton as a common approach to life in modern, Western civilization. It could be seen in the cult of "rugged individualism" in which one affirmed one's self while denying anything more than superficial,

¹Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 111.

²See No Man Is An Island, pp. 17f.

pragmatically based, relationships with others, relationships grounded in strict and rigid dichotomy between the subjective self and the other as object. People who live this way do not know how to be real, thought Merton. They think that they can find their true selves by cutting themselves off from others. However, he wrote, "They do not know that reality is to be sought not in division but in unity for we are 'members one of another.'"¹ Individualization confirms only one's own self. The subjectivity of the other person is not acknowledged and he is seen only as an object. This causes any resultant relationship to be unbalanced, superficial, and manipulative, and thereby injurious to both parties.

Gravitation to the pole of participation is equally false. In order fully to participate in the life of another one must maintain his centred-self. If there is no centred-self there can be no true community for there can be no "common life" where one or both centred-selves are destroyed and where persons have been reduced themselves to the state of "machines."² Whenever one participates in another in

¹New Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 47f.

²The Silent Life, p. 105.

such a way as to destroy his own self, the result is an alienated existence. When one "exists purely and simply for somebody else," and when "the 'center' of identity is experienced to some extent not in oneself but in the other,"¹ there is not a communion of love, there is only slavery. "Alienation," Merton said in one of his lectures, "is the psychological condition of somebody who is never allowed to be fully himself... because he is always dominated by somebody else's ideas or somebody else's tastes or somebody else's saying that this is the way to act and this is the way to see things."² To deny one's own self-centredness is as strongly proscribed by Merton as it is by Tillich. In order to love another, one must have a self with which he can love.³

One can gravitate neither to one pole nor the other. A balance must be maintained, but it cannot be a balance in which one enters into a kind of a compromise, a compromise in which one pole is accepted

¹Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 71, 60.

²"This is God's Work," pp. 3f.

³"Notes on Prayer and Action," p. 3.

principally to enhance the other. Accordingly one cannot say that he will love others because by doing so he knows that he will thereby be enabled to love himself; nor can one say that he will love himself because then he will have the possibility of loving others. One pole cannot be used to serve the other. One does not first seek inner unity and then, when that is established, go on to love others.¹ Nor does one do the opposite and seek to love others, and through that loving, hope to achieve inner unity, for real love requires a self that can participate in the subjectivity of the beloved.² One must be an individual person and participate in the personhood of others simultaneously. One must accept that in order to be a person one must be in relationship to others but that, paradoxically, in order to be in such a relationship, one must first be a person. Merton stated the paradox succinctly: "We cannot love ourselves unless we love others, and we cannot love others unless we love ourselves. But a selfish love of ourselves makes us incapable of loving others."³ We must love

¹e.g., New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 51; Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 209.

²Disputed Questions, p. 103.

³No Man Is An Island, p. 19.

ourselves unselfishly. Merton's differentiation between "individual" and "person"¹ helps make the paradox clear: man seeks a balance between individualization and participation, a balance which will create both the "person" and the "community."

Tillich's second life-process is self-creativity, in which there must be a balance between the polarities of dynamics and form, and which results in the cultural act. As we have seen, much of what Merton wrote was a specific criticism of culture, and a call for man, as creator of culture, to seek his own spiritual depths. He was particularly critical of what Tillich called the two principle forms of the cultural act, language and technology. He saw language reduced to propaganda and technology become the basis for a distorted, dehumanized society. At the same time he was not against culture or against technology. He could not be criticized for gravitating to the pole of form to the exclusion of dynamics, resting in the form of medieval monasticism as a safeguard against the risks involved in creativity. First of all, he was resolved to apply to himself and the monastic life any of the criticisms he leveled at the world.² He

¹See above, p. 215 and passim.

²See above, pp. 201-215.

was particularly critical of monasticism when it did try to become an escape from a dynamic life.¹ Cultural activities, especially those of language and technology had a place within the monastic life. Although Merton was an advocate of silence, he saw silence in a dialectical relationship with language. "He who retires into silence," he wrote, "does not necessarily hate language. Perhaps it is love and respect for language which impose silence upon him."² The true value of silence is known only if one has a true respect and appreciation for language.³ Furthermore, although he was very critical of the technological society, he was not necessarily critical of technology in itself:

"I am as ready as the next man to admire the astonishing achievements of technology. Taken by themselves they are magnificent. But taken in the context of unbalance with the other aspects of human existence in the world, the very splendor and rapidity of technological development is a factor of disintegration."⁴

¹See in particular, the essays in Contemplation in a World of Action.

²Disputed Questions, p. 195; cf. Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 197.

³e.g., Thoughts in Solitude, p. 148.

⁴Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 72.

Far from simply decrying technological achievements, Merton believed that the monastery could serve as an example for the world. It could show the world the proper use of technology, that technology can be used to elevate and improve man's life if it remains subservient to man's real interests, that is, interests which are coincidental with man's true being.¹ "The monk - who can perfectly well use the latest technology on his monastic farm - is there to show that one can use technology without placing all his hopes in it and without depending on it for ultimate happiness."² Merton, then, as one who used language to a very considerable extent, and as one who could see the value in a proper use of the technological act, could not be seen as one who avoided the dynamic polarity. Secondly, Merton himself was both a poet and an artist. He was, in other words, one who made particular cultural creations. As any analysis of his poetry will show, Merton was not afraid to risk familiar forms in an attempt to arrive at new forms of expression.³

¹Ibid., p. 253.

²Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 230.

³See above, pp. 66, 76f, 140-142.

Nevertheless, in his discussions of the meaning of the cultural act, Merton implies that cultural creativity will only be balanced in its polarities when man has been able to transcend himself, seek the ground of his being, and be reunited with the source of all creation. Self-creativity as a process in and of itself is subservient to the process of self-transcendence and is discussed in terms of the latter. For instance, in an essay on the theology of creativity, Merton refers to Tillich and quotes him. It will be seen, however, that the dynamics of self-transcendence predominate:

"Paul Tillich has clearly seen the dialectic of creativity and destructivity which underlies the art of our time, a dialectic which expresses man's alienation from reality. Man is no longer able to preserve any depth in his encounter with reality which has 'lost its inner transcendence...its transparency for the eternal.' Struggling to adjust himself to a world which becomes opaque and replaces God, man tries to endow himself with God's own creative power. But in order to do so he has to forget his own limitations, his own essential reality. He lives in contradiction with himself....It is precisely pride that prevents man from achieving depth, even when he seeks it."¹

¹"The Catholic and Creativity: Theology of Creativity," The American Benedictine Review IX, 3 & 4 (September-December, 1960), pp. 204f. The quotation is from Tillich's Theology of Culture, p. 43.

Therefore, for both Merton and Tillich, the balance between form and dynamics is possible only when man is in a proper relationship with the ground of his being. Cultural creativity will enhance mankind only if it serves man's true interests, not simply his felt needs.

The third life-process which Tillich analyses is that of self-transcendence. It has already been mentioned as underlying Merton's understanding of the other two life-processes. Neither unambiguous self-integration nor unambiguous self-creativity are possible without self-transcendence. It is necessary, now, to inspect the points of affinity between Tillich and Merton in this operation. Tillich defines the polarities encountered in self-transcendence as freedom and destiny. Merton says that man is to be elevated to his proper state of dignity, he is to be liberated from the powers that keep him in subjection and that keep him from exercising his freedom.¹ But, at the same time, man must recognize the limits of his freedom. Transgression of those limits results in chaos and discord. Man is called to exercise his vocation to be a "son of God" and to actualize this sonship through

¹Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 82.

sharing in God's own "wisdom, power, providence, justice and kingship." Yet man is beset by a "fundamental temptation" which is to aspire to be "like unto God," rather than to be the "son of God." Man can achieve his greatness and dignity only through "participation, by love, in the life and power and wisdom of God who is Love."¹ He cannot achieve greatness if he tries to disregard his own creaturliness. He cannot deny his finitude, his destiny. "Pseudo-mysticism," thought Merton, erred in that it centred upon "the individual self experienced as without limitations."² True mysticism, on the other hand, recognized, became delighted in, and became secure in humility.³ The words "humility" and "nothingness" are frequent ones in Merton's vocabulary. Yet they are not negative terms. Rather they point to man's contingency, what Merton referred to as man's "moral and metaphysical helplessness before God."⁴ He saw that, in order to be free, men must accept and "love" their own nothingness, but must

¹The Power and Meaning of Love, pp. 4f.

²"Symbolism - Communication or Communion?", p. 347.

³e.g., Silence in Heaven, p. 19.

⁴Thoughts in Solitude, p. 52.

love it in such a way as not to repudiate anything that belongs to man. Man must accept all that is given and understand that which is given as constituting the limits within which his freedom can function. He called for a "clear-sighted recognition and mature acceptance of human limitations."¹ Only through such a recognition could man hope to come to know himself as he really is, that is, come to know his true self. And only by knowing and living according to the true self could man hope to know freedom. Man cannot gravitate toward freedom at the expense of his limitations, or what Tillich called, his destiny.

At the same time, man must not cling to his limitations and refuse to exercise his freedom. As a son of God, man is called to freedom: the freedom to love without impediment (i.e., the freedom to balance individualization and participation), freedom from compulsion, freedom in the realm of imagination (i.e., the freedom to balance dynamics and form), freedom to love what is important, freedom from habit and freedom from heedlessness.² Just like a freedom which refuses to accept its own limitations can lead

¹e.g., The Silent Life, p. 100.

²For a full discussion of these descriptions of freedom see "The Ascetic Life, Experience of God and Freedom."

to tragedy (it will be recalled that Merton used the tragic figure, Prometheus, as a symbol of inauthentic freedom), so too can a refusal to be free lead to smallness, or to mediocrity, a danger Merton criticized in monasticism.¹ Freedom itself can be trivialized if it is seen simply as a freedom of choice rather than as the freedom to be able to respond spontaneously with the whole self to reality.²

A person then, must be able to maintain both his identity and his freedom.³ Only by recognizing the self as it really is can man hope to transcend that self in freedom and, paradoxically, only by exercising freedom can man hope to recognize his true self. For Thomas Merton, the self that is to be transcended is the false self, the superficial self which is grounded in man's own ego-consciousness. The transcendence of that self leads to a discovery of the true self, the self that one cannot describe but which one can simply be.⁴ To transcend the self is to plunge into the

¹e.g., Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 224.

²"The Ascetic Life, Experience of God and Freedom," p. 61; cf. Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 360.

³Cf. Contemplative Prayer, p. 20.

⁴Cf. Raids on the Unspeakable, p. 15.

depths of the self, and in those depths discover one's true ground.

Of the three life-processes, the most important is self-transcendence. It embraces the others. Religion, which Tillich describes as the manifestation of self-transcendence within the dimension of the spirit, seeks not only the depths of man's person, but also the depths of his moral acts and his cultural creations. It points to the depths or the ultimate in every reality. Religion cannot be seen simply as a separate function, but both as a separate function and as a function inherent within all other functions of life. Furthermore, self-transcendence is the process that is most explicitly described by mystical theology. Christian mysticism, in Merton's interpretation, seeks to transcend the superficial ego so that man can recognize his union with God in the depths of the self.

Furthermore, it can be argued that in the theology of both Tillich and Merton, self-transcendence, of the three life-processes, is the one most central to a theology which attempts to show the relationship between mysticism and social ethics. No ethical act, and no creation within society, can be a manifestation of the Ultimate without its having transcended itself in the vertical dimension. Nevertheless, the development of a mystical-ethical theology cannot rely on an analysis of this process alone; it also depends to a

large extent on the process of self-integration. It is this process that describes the relationship between persons and communities and which therefore describes the moral act. An analysis of this process provides an understanding of the self that needs to be transcended, and the community of persons which is the aim and hope of self-transcendence within concrete, historical existence. Finally, the process of self-creativity must be seen in this context. Its role in the articulation of a mystical-ethical theology is not as central as that of the other processes, but nevertheless, it is within culture that, according to Tillich, one discovers the "contents" of morality. Culture provides "the concrete ideals of personality and community and the changing laws of ethical wisdom."¹ Although in life, which is an ambiguous mixture of essential and existential elements, religion, morality and culture are separated, they are essentially united.² The analysis of the life-processes of which they are the spiritual manifestations is basic to a theology which hopes to show that mystical self-transcendence is united with a social ethic. Tillich's precise analysis, which is implicitly affirmed and developed

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 101.

²See above, pp. 399ff.

by Merton, is one which could form the basis of a prologomena to a modern ascetical-moral theology.

4. The Meaning of "the Christ"

The abstractions of "essence" and "existence" can be given another concrete exemplification by an examination of what the Christian faith, in Tillich's words, sees as the person in whom essence and existence are in perfect union, in whom life is actualized unambiguously, and who is the bearer of New Being, that is, in Jesus of Nazareth, proclaimed as the Christ.

Throughout Tillich's theological system there is a stress on the importance of the concrete moment in the encounter between man and God. Religious experience, including mysticism, is always seen to be very much a here-and-now, concrete, aspect of man's existence. This stress is predicated on the Christian claim that the Logos has become flesh. If this claim is so, wrote Tillich, "Christian theology has received something which is absolutely concrete and absolutely universal at the same time." Flesh is absolutely concrete; the Logos is absolutely universal. He continued, "No myth, no mystical union, no metaphysical principle,

no sacred law, has the concreteness of a personal life."¹ It is, of course, possible to consider that "the human face of God" (to borrow a phrase used by J.A.T. Robinson) is not the only face that God may have, but in so far as human beings are able to comprehend and be grasped by God, the revelatory experience must be both absolutely concrete (if it is to speak to and grasp man) and absolutely universal (if it is to be truly of God.) "Priestly and prophetic theologies can be very concrete," Tillich explained, "but they lack universality. Mystical and metaphysical theologies can be very universal, but they lack concreteness."² Man cannot fully participate, or be in, that which is particular, but only that which is absolutely concrete and universal at the same time. He cannot participate in anything that lacks concreteness because of his own existential concreteness; he cannot participate ultimately in anything that lacks universality, because his participation will necessarily be only partial and limited and of no ultimate value. Concreteness without universality can lead only to a reunion with that which is penultimate

¹ Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 19.

² Loc. Cit.

at best; universality without concreteness can only lead to a relationship with the ultimate that does not transcend the ambiguities of life. It is therefore fundamental that these two elements be central in any theology which tries to describe the moment of man's reunion with the ground of his being. Tillich sees this central motif in the patristic doctrine of the Logos: "The Logos doctrine as the doctrine of the identity of the absolutely concrete with the absolutely universal is not one theological doctrine among others; it is the only possible foundation of a Christian theology which claims to be the theology."¹ Only such a doctrine can speak of the moment of ecstasy in which, by being grasped by the Spiritual Presence, estrangement between existence and essence can be overcome. Only a doctrine which gives thorough seriousness to both the concrete and the universal, accepting the reality of both and accepting the reality of their union as being possible within time and space, can answer the questions that man poses to himself when he confronts his own existence and his own finitude.

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 20.

For humanity, then, it is necessary that the New Being appear in a personal life. Man cannot participate in New Being and thereby transcend the paradoxes of life, if that New Being appears in a sub-personal dimension. By participation in that which is personal, however, man can participate also in all the other dimensions of being. Tillich sees man as a micro-cosm: "what happens to man happens implicitly to all realms of life, for in men all levels of being are present,"¹ the physical, the biological, the psychological, as well as the spiritual. Furthermore, for man there is nothing as concrete as a personal life. It was in order to express this relationship between the ultimate and the concrete in a personal life that, according to Tillich's interpretation, the doctrines of the Trinity were formulated. Trinitarian monotheism is not concerned about how three can be in one (which for Tillich is an absurdity), it speaks instead of qualitative matters rather than quantitative ones. "The Trinitarian problem," he states, "is the problem of the unity between ultimacy and concreteness in the living God."² Anything other than a Trinitarian concept

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 139.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 253.

of God distorts this unity. Exclusive monotheism, for instance, develops an abstract transcendence in which the concrete disappears. This occurs, too, in mystical monotheism, in which "the element of ultimacy swallows the element of concreteness."¹ The mystical element of religion needs concreteness if it is to be at all relevant to mankind. At the other extreme, polytheism stresses the concrete but does not give full weight to the ultimate. Only in a Trinitarian monotheism are the elements of concreteness and universality united, and this union is understood as occurring in a personal life, namely, Jesus as the Christ. In the event of Jesus as the Christ the New Being is present. That which is totally universal and ultimate (the Logos) is present under the conditions of concrete existence (Jesus of Nazareth). Therefore, the Christian church, Western Christianity especially, sees Jesus the Christ as the centre of all religion. "The Eastern church, when it asserted that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, left open the possibility of a direct theocentric mysticism...the Western church, in contrast, insisted upon applying the Christocentric criterion to all Christian piety..."² Tillich, at

¹ Ibid., p. 250.

² Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 158f.

this point, stands firmly with the West. For him, man can know the ultimate only in and through the concrete. The Spiritual Presence grasps man in so far as he is a participant in the New Being and it is in Jesus the Christ that New Being is manifested to humanity. He is the one point where existential estrangement is conquered and life is actualized unambiguously.

This leads Tillich to prefer a "low" Christology, one which stresses the humanity of Jesus, to a "high" Christology with its docetic tendencies.¹ A high Christology, in Tillich's mind, has a low value for man for "salvation can be derived only from him who fully participated in man's existential predicament, not from a God walking on earth, 'unequal to us in all respects.'"² The Protestant Principle demands a low Christology, which in actuality is the truly "high" Christology for it is of salvific value to

¹Tillich has been criticized for stressing the humanity of Christ and at the same time depreciating the possibility of historical research into the life of Jesus, and insisting that such research is unnecessary. See Systematic Theology, Vol. II, pp. 116-123. See also Paul Tavad, Paul Tillich and the Christian Message, especially pp. 105ff; Bernard Martin, Paul Tillich's Doctrine of Man, pp. 178f; J. Heywood Thomas, Paul Tillich, p. 18; cf. Paul Tillich: An Appraisal, pp. 87ff; D. Moody Smith, Jr., "The Historical Jesus in Paul Tillich's Christology," Journal of Religion 46 (January, 1966), No. 1, Part II, pp. 131-147.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 168.

mankind. Where the medium of revelation is extraordinarily irregular, it yields an individualistic and paradoxical religion. The extraordinarily regular medium of revelation yields, on the other hand, a religion that is social and ethical.¹ Tillich's theology sides with the extraordinarily regular when it stresses the importance of concreteness in the mediums of revelation. Everything, thought Tillich, is potentially a bearer of the Spiritual Presence. The entire creation is sacramental.² But the final and definitive revelation, at least for man, must be in a personal life.

This final revelation, according to Tillich, is discovered in the Christian understanding of Jesus as the Christ. By "final" he does not mean the last revelation, but "the decisive, fulfilling, unsurpassable revelation, that which is the criterion of all the others."³ Jesus as the Christ is, thereby, the standard for all revelations. "Every new manifestation of the

¹See Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 132.

²Since language transcends reality the "word" can become an ultimately more important medium than things. However Tillich criticized Protestantism for its exclusion of a full appreciation for the sacramental element of religion. See Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 402f.

³Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 148.

Spiritual Presence stands under the criterion of his manifestation in Jesus as the Christ."¹ The task of theology is to discover within the revelatory situation the criteria which make this revelation of Jesus as the Christ the final revelation. Tillich says that:

"...a revelation is final if it has the power of negating itself without losing itself. This paradox is based on the fact that every revelation is conditioned by the medium in and through which it appears. The question of the final revelation is the question of a medium of revelation which overcomes its own finite conditions by sacrificing them, and itself with them. He who is the bearer of the final revelation must surrender his finitude - not only his life but also his finite power and knowledge and perfection. In doing so he affirms that he is the bearer of final revelation (the 'Son of God' in classical terms.) He becomes completely transparent to the mystery he reveals. But, in order to be able to surrender himself completely, he must possess himself completely. And only he can possess - and therefore surrender - himself completely who is united with the ground of his being and meaning without separation and disruption. In the picture of Jesus as the Christ we have the picture of a man who possesses these qualities, a man who, therefore, can be called the medium of final revelation."²

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 158.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 148.

Jesus refused to claim ultimacy for his finite nature. The disciples wanted to make him into an idol, but he refused. The Cross is the end of Jesusolatry. Jesus is the Christ in that he is willing to sacrifice Jesus. Idolatrous powers are conquered in the Cross. "For us," wrote Tillich, "this means that in following him we are liberated from the authority of everything finite in him...Only as the crucified is he 'grace and truth' and not law."¹ His death is the final manifestation of his transparency to the ultimate. "Christian theology can affirm that finality of the revelation in Jesus as the Christ only on this basis. The claim of anything finite to be final in its own right is demonic."² Jesus is the final revelation because of two things: his unity with the ground of his being and meaning, i.e., God, and his willingness to sacrifice everything rather than exploit this unity for his own advantage. His disciples wanted to see the finite Jesus as ultimate. At Caesarea Philippi Simon Peter recognized and accepted Jesus as the Christ. But at this point Jesus realized that in order for him to be the Christ he had to be crucified

¹Ibid., p. 149.

²Loc. Cit.

(Matthew 16). "He who is the Christ has to die for his acceptance of the title 'Christ,'"¹ He turns to Jerusalem to die and rebukes Peter harshly for his insistence that Jesus be other than the one who is willing to sacrifice everything within him which is finite.

Participation in the New Being as revealed in Jesus as the Christ indicates that, because the divine manifestation was manifest in the cross of the Christ, man cannot understand salvation as a removal of the essential necessity of suffering. Tillich rejects substitutionary theories of the atonement. "God participates in the suffering of existential estrangement," he wrote, "but his suffering is not a substitute for the suffering of the creature....Not substitution, but free participation, is the character of the divine suffering."² For one to participate in New Being through the ecstatic moment is, by the very nature of the divine self-manifestation, to participate in the suffering of existential reality. Any attempt to escape the necessity of suffering is a distortion of New Being.

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 112.

²Ibid., p. 203.

Accordingly, Tillich understands the Resurrection as the narrative of the overcoming of the negativities implied in the death of Jesus:

"The negativity which is overcome in the Resurrection is that of the disappearance of him whose being was the New Being. It is the overcoming of his disappearance from present experience and his consequent transition into the past except for the limits of memory.....In an ecstatic experience the concrete picture of Jesus of Nazareth becomes indissolubly united with the reality of the New Being. He is present wherever the New Being is present. Death was not able to push him into the past."¹

He is eternally the bearer of the New Being, eternally the medium of God's final revelation. In his willingness to sacrifice his finitude to the possibility of total non-being, Jesus as the Christ becomes the moment of essentialization. The existential and the essential are reunited. It is a dialectical movement. Jesus as the Christ is united with his ground of being and in this unity he is able to sacrifice the finite elements of himself. But only by being able to sacrifice those elements is it true to say that he is at one with the ground of his being. He is the ecstatic moment of human history: the kairos. But he is such only for

¹Ibid., p. 181.

those who accept him. The revelation of Jesus as the Christ is final in that it is the kairos which provides the criterion by which all other kairoi are judged.

"The fact that the kairoi-experiences belong to the history of the churches, and that the 'great kairos,' the appearance of the centre of history, is again and again re-experienced through relative 'kairoi,' in which the Kingdom of God manifests itself in a particular breakthrough, is decisive for our consideration. The relation of the one kairos to the kairoi is the relation of the criterion to that which stands under the criterion and the relation of the source of power to that which is nourished by the source of power. Kairoi have occurred and are occurring in all preparatory and receiving moments in the church latent and manifest...But every moment which claims to be Spiritual must be tested, and the criterion is the 'great kairos.'"¹

For Tillich, Jesus as the Christ is universal revelation and is valid for all mankind, for all history, and because of the microcosmic nature of

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 395. Cf. The Protestant Era, p. 53, in which Tillich differentiates between the unique and the universal kairos, which is the appearing of Jesus as the Christ, kairos in a general sense, which is every turning point in history in which the eternal judges and transforms the temporal, and kairos in a special sense, which is the coming of a new theonomy to an old, autonomous culture. Here, and in The Religious Situation, Tillich sees the special kairos as being discovered in the rejection of the capitalistic world view by the Existentialists and the Religious Socialists. See below pp. 593ff.

personhood, for the universe. But "the final revelation, is correlative."¹ The objective side is seen in "miracle," namely in Jesus as the bearer of New Being, and the subjective side is seen in the ecstatic moment in which Jesus is accepted as the Christ.

The acceptance of the kairos is the ecstatic moment. It is a matter of vision, not an object of analysis and calculation. "It is not a matter of detached observation but of involved experience."² Observation, analysis and calculation are not to be excluded from the concept of vision, but they serve only to enrich the vision. The experience of the kairos is not produced by observation and analysis. The kairos is known by the impact of the Spirit. The dialectical nature of the Protestant Principle is maintained. One knows the kairos through ecstatic acceptance which is brought about by the Spiritual Presence of Him who reveals Himself in the kairos. Wherever the various kairoi occur, since they are in themselves the presence of the divine Spirit, man can commit himself totally. "There is always New Being in history," Tillich wrote, "There is always

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 152.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 395.

participation in the transcendent union of unambiguous life." However, as was noted earlier, "this participation is fragmentary...the New Being is fragmentarily and anticipatorily present, but in so far as it is present it is so unambiguously."¹

"This distinction between the ambiguous and the fragmentary makes it possible for us to give full affirmation and full commitment to the manifestation of the Spiritual Presence while remaining aware of the fact that in the very acts of affirmation and commitment the ambiguity of life reappears. Awareness of this situation is the decisive criterion for religious maturity."²

Salvation, Tillich reminds us, is healing (from salvus). It is the healing of the rupture between man as he is and man as he ought to be. It is what happens in the ecstatic moment: salvation is essentialization. It is man becoming a new creature, participating in the New Being that has been manifested fully and perfectly in Jesus the Christ. He is the centre of the mystical experience. But

¹Ibid., pp. 149f. See above p. 404.

²Ibid., p. 150.

healing, salvation, and mysticism can never be limited to him:

"In some degree all men participate in the healing power of the New Being... But no men are totally healed, not even those who have encountered the healing power as it appears in Jesus as the Christ (who) is the ultimate criterion of every healing and every saving process... therefore, wherever there is saving power in mankind, it must be judged by the saving power in Jesus as the Christ."¹

Christianity can be universalistic without being syncretistic. Everything is founded on the ultimate criterion which the Christian sees in Jesus as the Christ. This understanding of Jesus is, for Tillich, the basic contribution of Christianity to ecumenical dialogue: "the revelatory event upon which Christianity is based has a critical and transforming power for all religions."² For the Christian there can be mystical experiences outside of the cognitive knowledge of Jesus as the Christ; however what Christianity has to offer all forms of religion, including the mystical element in all religions, is the one, unique criterion under which all of creation is judged and redeemed. The norm of

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. II, pp. 193f.

²Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, pp. 53f; see also pp. 36f.

all religious experience, according to the theological thought of Paul Tillich, is the appearance of the New Being, the essential man under the conditions of existence, as manifested once and for all who are open to accepting him as the Christ, in Jesus of Nazareth. Mystical experience is an authentic experience of God only in so far as one participates in New Being, whether or not one is specifically aware of this participation, for only by a participation in New Being, which appears in history because of God's action, is unambiguous union with the ground of being possible.

Merton's Christology is centred around the comparison of Adam, the natural man, and Christ, "the new Adam, the spiritual head of regenerated and spiritualized humanity."¹ Adam is the representative of the superficial self, made in the image of God but fallen from the "likeness." In Adam the image of God in man is still present but is unactualized, it remains hidden and unknown. In Christ, the second Adam, the image of God which is distorted in man is

¹The New Man, p. 79. For the detailed treatment of Merton's Christology see above pp. 276-287. What is attempted here is simply a summary of that exposition.

restored to a state of unity with the likeness of God bringing the full and undistorted image of God into a temporal and spatial manifestation. The Christ is manifested in Jesus, but also, for Merton, the Incarnation of God in man incorporates "the whole economy of Redemption which flowed from it."¹ Christ is God known in existence, brought to earth, manifested to his creation. Jesus is proclaimed to be the Christ because in him we can see the restitution of image and likeness. In him we can find the true man, the true being, because the centre of his personhood was not his own ego-consciousness but God, the Ground of Being. His cross is a challenge to all humanity since it reveals to men the true nature of their being. It is also the source of power, enabling man to participate in this new life, because in the same way mankind shared in the fallen humanity of Adam, it shares as well in the glorified humanity of Jesus. All mankind, simply by virtue of its humanity, is a potential representative of Christ. Because of the union of man and God in Jesus, and because he himself was human, the reunion between man and God is implicit

¹The Ascent to Truth, p. 312. Also quoted above, p. 276.

in the humanity of each person. Merton speaks of a natural union with God, based on our participation in Adam, and a supernatural union based on our participation in the humanity of Christ. The difference is awareness. Jesus reveals to us what is ours all along. The ground of our being is made visible to us, we are shown who we really are. And because of the new awareness of our reality, we are able to live and act and create as new creatures. We discover ourselves in Christ, and conversely, we discover Christ in ourselves. Hence, there is a Christocentrism to Merton's mysticism. The discovery of God in the self is made possible by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. For Merton this is the central claim of the Bible:

"That the inner truth of man and of human existence is revealed in a certain kind of event. This event has the nature of Kairos, crisis or judgement. Challenged by a direct historical intervention of God (which may be doubtful and obscure but is none the less decisive), man can respond with the engagement of his deepest freedom, or he can evade the encounter by various specious excuses. If the encounter is evaded, man's freedom is not vindicated but is mortgaged and forfeited. (But the confrontation can be renewed in other circumstances. One may get another chance!) When the encounter is real and complete, a new kind of relationship is established between our own freedom and that ultimate Freedom and Spirit: the God who is Love and who is also the 'Lord of History.' At the same time a new

relationship with other men comes into being: instead of living for ourselves we live for them. Ideally speaking, if we all lived in this kind of altruistic concern and engagement, human history would culminate in an ephiphany of God in man. Mankind would visibly be 'Christ.'¹

If one responds to the encounter with God's self-manifestation in a way which accepts and incorporates it, it will lead to "divinization." But, because the central manifestation of God has occurred in a human life, to be divinized is, at the same time, to be humanized. To discover God in the depths of the self is to discover one's own deepest reality. To be united with God and to live in Him is to live human life in its truest, deepest, most perfect sense.

Tillich rejects certain of the terms that Merton feels free to use. In regard to the Christ, Tillich principally rejects talk about divine and human "natures." "Nature" when applied to man is ambiguous; when applied to God, Tillich believed it was simply wrong.²

Nevertheless, in spite of this discrepancy in the use of important theological terms, much of what

¹Opening the Bible, pp. 73f. (Merton capitalized this entire passage except for that which is in parenthesis.)

²See especially Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 164.

Tillich and Merton say about the Christ is similar. Merton was not attempting to create a new theological system, nor was he often writing for an audience which was interested in theological or philosophical precision. Therefore, he was willing and able to use uncritically terms that he inherited from the mainstream of Christian tradition, whereas Tillich's overall purpose demanded that he make clear and precise distinctions between various terms, rejecting some and accepting others. The different theological language should not, however, obscure the very close points of affinity in the Christologies of these two men.

These points of affinity are obvious, in spite of the use of different theological language. In speaking of "image and likeness" Merton, it has been argued, means very much what Tillich does when he uses the terms "essence and existence."¹ It follows therefore, that when Merton speaks of Jesus as the one who restores the union between image and likeness, he is speaking similarly to Tillich when he says that he who is the bearer of New Being conquers the gap between essence and existence.² Both men use the

¹See above, pp. 381ff.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 136.

Pauline symbol of new being, or new creation, or new man, and both see that it is because this New Being is revealed to man in a human life that man is subsequently able to participate in it. Both are able to recognize Jesus as the Christ because he was the one who was able to sacrifice his superficial ego, or in Tillich's language, the elements of finitude, so that his true being - or the image of God, or the New Being - could be perfectly seen under the conditions of existence. Both see that in Jesus there was no estrangement between essence and existence, between God and man. Both see the Cross of Christ as a challenge to man and, at the same time, a source of power. That is to say that in the Cross man sees a picture of what he is supposed to be - the ought-to-be of human life - and at the same time, by participation in the Cross through faith and love,¹

¹Space does not permit a detailed discussion of the meanings of the words "faith" and "love" in the thought of both Tillich and Merton. Tillich dedicated a book to the question of faith (Dynamics of Faith) in which he rejects the idea of faith as being "an act of knowledge that has a low degree of evidence," (p. 31) and defines it instead as "the state of being ultimately concerned." (p. 4) In Systematic Theology, Vol. III, he writes, "Faith is the state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence and opened to the transcendent unity of unambiguous life...being grasped by the New Being as it is manifest in Jesus as the Christ." (p. 139) There is also, he says, "obedience in faith" which is "the act of keeping ourselves open to the Spiritual Presence which has grasped us and

he discovers that he participates also in New Being and is able to live according to his true being and know unambiguous life. Both apply the word "kairos" to Jesus. Merton is not as specific on this point as is Tillich. However he implies what Tillich states specifically: Jesus as the

opened us." (p. 141) Merton defines faith in a number of ways. In The Ascent to Truth he can call it "a simple assent to authority proposing a truth to be believed in." (p. 211) Later, however, he expanded this in a direction which would bring him closer to Tillich. "Faith is not merely the acquiescence of the mind in certain truths, it is the gift of our whole being to Truth itself, to the Word of God." (Life and Holiness, p. 92) Faith "is the willingness to sacrifice every other value rather than the basic value of truth and life in Christ." (Life and Holiness, p. 99) It is "a total, unswerving acceptance of the person of Christ as a source of salvific power and of new life." (Life and Holiness, p. 92) This last statement, in Tillich's terms, is to say that faith is the act of making Jesus the Christ one's ultimate concern. Love, in this context, refers to the love man can have for God and for the appearance of the Christ. Tillich uses the terms libido ("the movement of that which is lower in power and meaning to that which is higher") as the principle means of describing this love. (Systematic Theology Vol. I, pp. 311ff.) (Agape, which is love "in spite of" cannot be used in quite the same way.) "Basically, however, one's love to God is of the nature of eros." (Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 312.) (Cf. Merton's The Living Bread, p. 49, in which he sees an element of eros in all human love.) Merton generally speaks of the love of man for God as the act in which the gap between subject and object is bridged (Disputed Questions, p. 104) as a union of wills (The New Man, p. 106), and as an opening of one's heart to Christ ("A Conference on Prayer," p. 452). In so far as this love of man for God is seen in terms of a longing, or a hope, it is similar to Tillich's idea. When it is spoken of in terms of a union which is already effected,

Christ is the final and determinative kairos, the one by which all other kairoi are defined and judged.¹ Finally both men seem unperturbed by the inability of historical criticism to give definitive assurances about the historical Jesus of Nazareth. Any one of these many points of affinity could be discussed at length. However, the intention of this thesis would make such a detailed treatment superfluous; it is not pertinent to develop a detailed understanding of their common Christologies. We will limit our discussion at this point, therefore, to the relationship between Christology and mysticism in their thought. In the next section we will examine the relationship between Merton's understanding of "divinization" and Tillich's understanding of "essentialization."

Tillich would insist (and Merton would not at all disagree) that the union is possible only because of God's initiative in love. Merton knew that God's love "is the very root of our being" and that we can love only in so far as we "live...on this level of love." ("A Conference on Prayer," p. 452.)

¹See for example, Merton's discussion of Christ as Judge in Seasons of Celebration, pp. 72-75; his treatment of how the awareness of Christ implies awareness of kairos and choice in the context of history in "The Historical Consciousness," pp. 2-3, and the discussion of the meaning of eschatology in Raids on the Unspeakable, p. 75.

Tillich and Merton both claim a Christocentric basis for mysticism, and both agree that this basis in no way negates the possibility of mystical experience or the reception of revelation outside of an explicitly Christian context. In discovering how these two thinkers see a necessary relationship between Christ and mysticism while at the same time expand their interpretation of this basis to a universalistic degree, we will encounter different language, different usage of traditional theological concepts, and different emphases. But we will discover a fundamental similarity and sympathy in their appreciation and understanding. The similarity is, to a large extent, derived from their sharing of a common tradition. Thomas Merton, to be sure, found much of his basic understanding of mysticism within the Cistercian tradition of its famous Father, St. Bernard.¹ Tillich, too, had a deep respect for St. Bernard's contribution to mystical theology. "Bernard is the most eminent representative of Christian

¹Merton wrote numerous studies of St. Bernard, many of which have been mentioned or quoted in this work. He also wrote a popular study of the Cistercian saint, The Last of the Fathers (London: Hollis and Carter, 1954).

mysticism," he said, and on the specifics of a Christ-centred mysticism he saw Bernard as the one Father who explicitly and definitively made the connection between Christ and mysticism. For Tillich, Bernard was the "baptizing father": the one who baptized mysticism and made it a concrete mysticism of love.¹ Furthermore, as we have mentioned, both men share in their appreciation for numerous other figures in the history of mysticism, both Christian and non-Christian.² Nevertheless, in spite of their shared heritage, both men approached the relationship from different perspectives.

For Tillich the mystical or ecstatic moment was the moment of correlation between the act of revelation and the act of acceptance. It was the moment in which revelation was received and participated in, the moment in which one participated in New Being, the moment in which "the Spirit takes the personal centre into the universal centre."³ But the New Being is manifested in Jesus as the Christ; his being

¹A History of Christian Thought, p. 173.

²See above, p. 373.

³Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 286.

is the New Being.¹ Wherever there is New Being,
the being of Jesus as the Christ is present:

"He 'is the Spirit' and we 'know
him now' only because he is the Spirit.
In this way the concrete individual
life of the man Jesus of Nazareth
is raised above transitoriness into
the eternal presence of God as
Spirit."²

In other words, to have a genuine mystical experience
is to participate in New Being and New Being can never
be separated from New Being which became known to
man perfectly and unambiguously in Jesus seen as
the Christ.

Jesus as the Christ is the centre of mysticism
because, for Tillich, there can be no mystical union
of man and God except through a mediator who is,
at once, both absolutely concrete and absolutely
universal. Without the picture of Jesus as the
Christ,³ concreteness would be lost, and man would
be unable to find himself united with God since
man cannot participate in that which is not concrete.

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. II, pp. 181ff.

²Ibid., p. 181; cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 156; also, The Shaking of the Foundations, pp. 131f.

³Cf. Ibid., p. 131f on Tillich's use of the concreteness of the "picture" of Jesus as the Christ as the creative power through an analogia imaginis in spite of historical scepticism.

Salvation which does not occur both in and through history interprets the New Being as the negation of beings, not as a personal, social, historical transformation of reality.¹ For Tillich, mysticism could only be baptized if it was concrete, and Jesus as the Christ makes the ultimate concrete.²

Tillich also sees Jesus as the Christ as the centre of all religious experience in so far as he is the criterion by which all religious experiences are judged. He is God's final and definitive self-manifestation. "Therefore," concludes Tillich, "wherever there is saving power in mankind, it must be judged by the saving power in Jesus as the Christ."³ He is "the keystone in the arch of Spiritual manifestations in History."

"The event 'Jesus as the Christ' is unique but not isolated....It is the qualitative centre in a process which

¹Ibid., p. 101; cf. Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 88.

²See A History of Christian Thought, p. 63 and Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 107f.

³Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 194.

proceeds from an indefinite future which we call, symbolically, the beginning and the end of history."¹

If the event of Jesus as the Christ, an event which includes both revelation (Jesus) and acceptance (the proclamation that he is the Christ) is both unique but not isolated, this opens the way for a universalistic interpretation of the Christ. Tillich is able to do this by accepting a Logos-Christology as well as a Spirit-Christology. That which was absolutely universal in the picture of Jesus as the Christ was the Logos, "the rational structure of reality which the mind can grasp and according to which it can shape reality."² Therefore, wherever man's subjective reason grasps the objective rationality of the universe, he has an experience of the logos structure of reality, and this same Logos became flesh

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 156; cf. Ibid., pp. 388ff for a further treatment of Christ as the centre of history. In Ultimate Concern Tillich gives a precise summary of what he means by the "uniqueness" of Jesus: There is "...lack of any scar that would show an estrangement from God...sacrifice of his finitude...and utter humility." (p. 156) See also, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, pp. 144ff. This is criticized by Martin (Op. Cit., pp. 178f) in which he accuses Tillich of picking and choosing the attributes of Jesus.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 86.

in Jesus the Christ.¹ Wherever man faces Logos, he implicitly faces Christ. Tillich also is able to base a universalistic idea of Christ on his understanding of the nature of faith. He defines faith as "the state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence and opened to the transcendent unity of unambiguous life" or, in Christological terms, "being grasped by the New Being as it is manifest in Jesus as the Christ."² Tillich insists that this definition of faith, although specifically Christian, is universally valid. Finally, Tillich insists that revelation occurs elsewhere besides the appearance of Jesus as the Christ:

"There is a history of revelation, the centre of which is the event Jesus the Christ; but the centre is not without a line which leads to it (preparatory revelation) and a line which leads from it (receiving revelation). Further, we have asserted that where there is revelation, there is salvation. Revelation is not information about divine things; it is the ecstatic manifestation of the Ground of Being in events, persons, and things. Such manifestations have shaking, transforming, healing power. They

¹See Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 109f.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 139; see above p. 442, (fn).

are saving events in which the power of the New Being is present. It is present in a preparatory way, fragmentarily, and is open to demonic distortion. But it is present and heals where it is seriously accepted."¹

To reject the idea of universalism, Tillich felt, inevitably forces one into a position where he must describe "the eternal destiny of the individual either as being everlastingly condemned or as being everlastingly saved." But such a doctrine, he saw, had "demonic implications: it introduces an eternal split into God himself." If Tillich had to choose between "the doctrine of an absolutely opposite eternal destiny of individuals" and a doctrine of universalism, he would unhesitatingly choose the latter "in view of both the self-manifestation of God and the nature of man."²

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 192f.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 434. It will be noted that much of what Tillich says about mysticism can be seen in his early thesis on Schelling's philosophy. For example: "Christianity creates communion with the God who became man in Christ, but who at the same time annulled himself as an individual and selfishness in himself. This inner dialectical movement, from the incarnate to the crucified to the exalted - from Jesus through the Christ to the Spirit - constitutes the essence of Christianity. In this living systol and diastole the contradiction is conquered through grace and that identity is fashioned which included guilt-consciousness overcome within itself. The principle of mysticism triumphs, but not in the form of mysticism, but rather as personal

Thomas Merton believed that Christianity is "the greatest of all mystical religions,"¹ and that "Christian Prayer is obviously centered in the Person of Jesus."² This emphasis can be discovered, not only in his early writings, but even in his treatment of Zen Buddhism. Christ, he felt, could provide certain forms of Zen with the "center" which it needs; he even is able to find traces of Trinitarian structures within Zen.³ Perhaps Merton oversimplified the complexities of Eastern thought,⁴ and was almost too ready to accept a basic affinity between Christian and

communion that overcomes contradiction: it is 'the religion of the Spirit and of freedom.'" Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development, p. 125. As stated earlier, see above, p. 5, fn. 2. David Hopper demonstrates how this early work of Tillich's forms the basis of much of his theological system. See Tillich: A Theological Portrait (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1967, Chapters IV and V.

¹"Christ the Way," p. 147.

²"The Humanity of Christ in Monastic Prayer," p. 1.

³Mystics and Zen Masters, pp. 40, 42. Cf. Tillich's Systematic Theology, Vol. I, pp. 276-279 in which he speaks of trinitarian principles within ontology as a "preparation" for the Trinitarian dogma of Christianity.

⁴As McInerny (Op. Cit., p. 95) suggests.

Eastern mysticism, nevertheless, the important thing was that he wanted to see Christ at the centre of all forms of mysticism. Merton was sure that in the same way that Augustine could accept and use Plotinus, Aquinas could accept Aristotle and Averroës, and Teilhard de Chardin could use Marx and Engels, so too, could he consort with Eastern philosophers.¹ In so far as he was able to see Christ in Zen, it was because his own basic understanding of mysticism had been derived from a tradition which interpreted mysticism as a Christ-centred phenomenon. He explicitly felt that the apophatic nature of the mystical theology of St. John of the Cross and St. Gregory of Nyssa was secondary to their understanding of the Christ: "Their supraconceptual experience of God cannot in fact be achieved without Christ." he said, "What is more it cannot even be arrived at without a concept of Christ as the Incarnate Word of God. This is essential to Christian mysticism." These mystics of the apophatic school, he insisted, did not leave "Christ outside the gates

¹e.g., The Way of Chuang Tzu, p. 11.

of their own contemplative Eden,"¹ and in no way did Merton want to propose a mysticism that did not have Christ at its centre.

Merton explained the Christocentric nature of mysticism in what amounts to two fundamental ways. First and foremost, he bases the possibility of man's return to God upon man's oneness with the human nature of Christ, and secondly, as we have already mentioned, Christ opens man's awareness to his own inner reality. In other words, Christ is both the source of grace by which union with God is effected, and an exemplar of our own true being. Union with God is possible because, in sharing in the humanity of Jesus, we share also in his divinity since his humanity and his divinity, although separate, cannot be divided. Following in a strict Chalcedonian orthodoxy, Merton insists that the two "natures" are concretely united in the Person of Christ. In mystical contemplation, man shares in the Person of Christ, not simply in one nature. The object of

¹The Ascent to Truth, p. 243. Merton recognized that Teresa of Avila tended to think of corporality as a possible hindrance to prayer. He thinks that she got around this by concentrating on the Resurrected Body of Christ. Molinos is cited as one who maintained that Christ's humanity was a hindrance. See "The Humanity of Christ in Monastic Prayer," pp. 1-3.

Christian prayer is "union with the Father, through the Person of the Son, by the Holy Spirit."¹ He concluded:

"The Patristic tradition distinguishes the humanity and divinity of Christ, not in order to separate but in order to unite them, because the Christ of monastic contemplation is neither the divinity alone nor the humanity alone, but the unity of the two natures in One Person."²

By sharing in the humanity of Jesus Christ, we share as well in the totality of his Person. Since he is the perfect likeness of the divine Image,³ it is through him alone that man can be restored to what is essentially his, namely, union with God. We are united with Jesus through our humanity, but inasmuch as he is united with the Father, through him we are united also. It is then, in union with Christ, that we become aware of our true nature, our true telos, for in Jesus Christ we have the exemplar of both our own spiritual being and of Spiritual perfection.⁴

¹"The Humanity of Christ in Monastic Prayer," p. 3.

²Ibid., p. 26f.

³The New Man, p. 84; see above pp. 276ff.

⁴Loc. Cit.

We cannot find God without Christ; it is Christ who makes God known to us. "The Word was made Flesh...this truth is the foundation stone of our monastic life. It is not just a truth which we know and periodically meditate on. It is a truth which we must live by."¹

Paul Tillich did not feel bound by the Christological formulations of Chalcedon, although he saw that these did, in fact, preserve the substantial truth about "both the Christ-character and the Jesus-character of the event of Jesus as the Christ," in spite of "very inadequate conceptual tools."² He stated his Christology differently, perhaps even inadequately.³ Nevertheless, Tillich and Merton were emphasizing a very similar truth: Jesus the Christ is the centre of any reunion between man and God

¹"Seeking God," Sponsa Regis 27 (January, 1957), No. 5, p. 118.

²See Systematic Theology, Vol. II, pp. 164-167.

³Tavard (Op. Cit.) thinks Tillich is incompatible with Chalcedon (pp. 124, 132) and errs both in a Sabbellian (p. 119) and Nestorian (pp. 129, 131) and even a possible Docetic (p. 131 - the humanity of Jesus really does not count for much) direction. In the Introduction to Systematic Theology, Vol. III, Tillich disregards any criticism which faults him for attempting to go beyond the language of Chalcedon, (p. 5).

because he combined within himself both the absolutely universal, or the Logos, or the divine nature, with the absolutely concrete, or the Flesh, or the human nature. Tillich's Christ has universal significance; so does Merton's. He wrote:

"For in becoming man, God became not only Jesus Christ but also potentially every man and woman that ever existed. In Christ, God became not only 'this' man, but also, in a broader and more mystical sense, yet no less truly, 'every man.'¹

But Tillich sees the final revelation in Jesus as the Christ in correlation with man's acceptance of him. Merton continues the passage just quoted:

"The presence of God in His world as its Creator depends on no one but Him. His presence in the world as Man depends, in some measure, upon men. Not that we can do anything to change the mystery of the Incarnation in itself: but we are able to decide whether we ourselves, and that portion of the world which is ours, shall become aware of His presence, consecrated by it, and transfigured in its light."²

Therefore, both Tillich and Merton see the Christ as potentially co-extensive with all mankind, indeed

¹New Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 294f.

²Loc. Cit.

with all creation, but unambiguously actualized only where man is able to recognize and accept the Christ wherever he is manifested, and chiefly, finally and definitively, in Jesus.

Merton has written that the state of man, and in fact, of all creation, should be one of "transparency."¹ However, in the fallen state, transparency has been marred by shadows. What should be transparent is now opaque. Using similar language, Tillich explicitly states that Jesus was the one who was the final (i.e., definitive) manifestation of transparency to the divine mystery.² It is this idea of transparency which is used by both men as a metaphor to explain the concept of the universal Christ.

¹Cf. Bread in the Wilderness, pp. 60f; "A Life Free From Care," pp. 222f; New Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 189, 264.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. I, pp. 149f. Tillich accepted Lewis Ford's criticism that the word "transparent" implied that the vehicle for revelation lent something new to the revelation. Tillich revised his metaphor and suggested that "translucency" would be better terminology. See "Rejoinder," in The Journal of Religion 46 (January, 1966), No. 1, Part II, pp. 187f. Since, however, Tillich used "transparency" in the bulk of his writings, this thesis will continue to use that word but attention must be drawn to the way in which Tillich, in his last year, redefined the meaning of the word.

Tillich, in accord with the Protestant Principle, will not ascribe the quality of "holiness" to any created being unless he first makes a fundamental qualification. Things are not holy in themselves, they are holy only in so far as they point beyond themselves to the ultimate:

"In this sense one can speak of Holy Scriptures, holy communities, holy acts, holy offices, holy persons. These predicates mean that all these realities are more than they are in their immediate finite appearance. They are self-transcendent, or, seen from the side of that to which they transcend - the holy - they are translucent toward it. This holiness is not their moral or cognitive or even religious quality but their power of pointing beyond themselves."¹

Accordingly, Tillich is only able to accept that idea of saints within the idea of transparency. The Protestant Principle rejects a state of perfection that denies the paradox of justification. "There are no Protestant saints," Tillich proclaimed, "or, more precisely, no saints under the criterion of the Protestant Principle."² In union with all of humanity "saints are justified sinners," never anything else.

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 105.

²Ibid., p. 252.

Protestantism, however, can accept "representations of the impact of the Spiritual Presence on man." It can find "representatives of the power of New Being in the religious as well as the secular realm, not as a particular grade of sanctity, but as representatives and symbols of that in which all participate who are grasped by the Spirit."¹ With these qualifications, Tillich is able to speak of saints:

"The Spiritual Community is the Community of Spiritual personalities, i.e., of personalities who are grasped by the Spiritual Presence and who are unambiguously, though fragmentarily, determined by it. In this sense the Spiritual Community is the community of saints. The state of saintliness is the state of transparency toward the divine ground of being; it is the state of being determined by faith and love."²

Or, earlier in his Systematic Theology:

"The term 'saint' has been misunderstood and distorted; saintliness has been identified with religious or moral perfection. Protestantism, for these reasons, has finally removed the concept of sainthood from theology and the reality

¹Ibid., p. 253.

²Ibid., p. 231.

of the saint from religion. But sainthood is not personal reflection. Saints are persons who are transparent for the ground of being which is revealed through them and who are able to enter a revelatory constellation as mediums. Their being can become a sign-event for others. This is the truth behind the Catholic practise of demanding miracles from every saint."¹

The saint, then, for Tillich, is one who is transparent toward the ground of being although this transparency is fragmentary and anticipatory. His holiness is not a matter of his own possession; he is holy because he points to that which is holy. Jesus was the one whose transparency was totally unambiguous and without distortion.² But transparency is not limited to him. It can be found wherever one has been grasped by the Spiritual Presence, wherever one has participated in the manifestation of New Being.

Merton, too, even from within the Roman Catholic tradition, was able to interpret sainthood in accordance with the qualification of the Protestant Principle. Of course he would not state it in that way; he would say, rather, that sainthood had to be seen as qualified by humility. "We will never be without some semi-

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 135.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 153.

deliberate faults of weakness," he wrote, echoing Tillich's understanding that sin is both ontological and moral. Furthermore, in agreement with Tillich, he saw this weakness as "true even of saints, who all retained their frailties and human limitations." In the history of Christian monasticism, he discovered, this point was not always appreciated. However, he himself concluded:

"It is a paradox of monastic history that the superhuman ideal of perfect conquest of all the passions in the present life is a pagan rather than a Christian concept; and therefore is an ideal of 'flesh' rather than of the 'spirit.' In Christian sanctity, a certain human weakness and imperfection are altogether compatible with the perfect love of God, as long as one acquires humility from the experience of his own wretchedness and thus learns to place an ever more total and perfect trust in the grace of God."¹

For Merton, a "saint" was a "sign" or a "sacrament of God's mercy in the world."² He is one who "is united to God in the depths of his own being."³ He is the one who is transparent for God:

¹Life and Holiness, p. 151.

²Disputed Questions, p. 274.

³Seasons of Celebration, p. 137.

"The saint, then, seeks not his own glory but the glory of God. And in order that God may be glorified in all things, the saint wishes himself to be nothing but a pure instrument of the divine will. He wants himself to be simply a window through which God's mercy shines on the world."¹

The saint, accordingly, "strives to be holy." But by this Merton does not mean that he strives to achieve a particular level of perfection. The striving for holiness is analogous to Tillich's definition of faith as including being opened to the Spiritual Presence. The saint strives to be open. He strives to live his life in the obedience of faith, which is, in Tillich's words, "the act of keeping ourselves open to the Spiritual Presence which has grasped us and opened us."² The saint is one who "strives to practise virtue heroically, not in order to be known as a virtuous and holy man, but in order that the goodness of God may never be obscured by any act of his."³ He is one who, because he is aware of his vocation to be transparent, attempts to the best of

¹Life and Holiness, p. 24.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 141; see above p. 442, fn. 1.

³Life and Holiness, p. 24; see also the quotation from "A Life Free From Care," quoted above on page 281.

his ability to live in such a way as to remove any hindrances to that transparency. This does not conflict with the Protestant Principle. Merton's insistence on humility coincides with Tillich's insistence on man's need for grace and justification. Furthermore, for Merton as well as for Tillich, "Only the Spirit of God can point out Christ to us."¹ The initiative is always with God; man does not create the Spiritual Presence, he is transparent to it.

In summary, both men not only agree in that they see man as being capable of being transparent toward the ground of being, but also in seeing that all men have, in Merton's words "an irreplaceable vocation to Christ"² or, in Tillich's words, a vocation to be a "medium of revelation" and a "bearer of New Being." Man's unity with God is eternal; it became actualized perfectly in Jesus the Christ, and is seen fragmentarily and anticipatorily, but nonetheless unambiguously, wherever man is grasped by the Spiritual Presence.³

¹Bread in the Wilderness, p. 76.

²"A Life Free From Care," p. 219.

³See Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 287 (quoted above in fn. 1, p 403) and pp. 149f (quoted above on pages 404 & 435f); and see The New Man, pp. 84-88, quoted in part above on page 279ff.

5. Essentialization and Divinization

Paul Tillich introduced the idea of "essentialization" in his treatment of the idea of eternal life. He borrowed the term from Schelling, but expanded its meaning. Tillich interpreted Schelling as referring to a Platonizing return from existence to essence; that in essentialization an existent, elevated into eternity, returned to that which it was before its fall into existence. The process would be basically circular. However, for Tillich, "Such an understanding of essentialization would make it into a concept which is more adequate to the India-born religions than to any of the Israel-born ones. The whole world process would not produce anything new."¹ The historical process would be, in the final analysis, static. The processes of life which he defined and analyzed, both in their individual and historical aspects, would be matters of falling away from essential unity by a participation in existence, and then a subsequent return to the original state. Adam would return to a state of dreaming innocence. But, for Tillich, this

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 427.

is impossible. Adam, having fallen into existence, can never again be innocent. This would, if it were possible, deny any positive reality to existence. Tillich, to be sure, understands existence as a state of estrangement, but he refrains from denying its positive elements. His re-interpretation of essentialization is an attempt to state those positive elements of existence and, in so doing, save him from making a final leap into a total Platonic idealism. He says:

"...the term 'essentialization' can also mean that the new which has been actualized in time and space adds something to essential being, uniting it with the positive which is created within existence, thus producing the ultimately new, the 'New Being.'.... Such thought, however metaphorically and inadequately expressed, gives an infinite weight to every decision and creation in time and space and confirms the seriousness of what is meant by 'ultimate judgment.' Participation in the eternal life depends on a creative synthesis of a being's essential nature with what it has made of it in its temporal existence. In so far as the negative has maintained possession of it, it is exposed in its negativity and excluded from eternal memory. Whereas, in so far as the essential has conquered existential distortion its standing is higher in eternal life."¹

¹Loc. Cit.

After the negativities implied in existence are exposed and negated, existence enhances essence. Essentialization should not imply that that which appears in existence is either unreal or lacking in goodness. Tillich continues, "The conflicts and sufferings of nature under the conditions of existence and its longing for salvation, of which Paul speaks (Romans, Chapter 8), serve the enrichment of essential being after the negation of the negative in everything that has being."¹

Essentialization occurs in the ecstatic moment. In this moment man stands outside himself in successful self-transcendence. In this moment essence and existence are reunited. But it is a union, not the obliteration of existential elements. Man is not simply reunited with what ought-to-be, or what used-to-be, but his existence adds something to his essence. Perhaps what is added is not very much; in the actuality of life one may discover that his existence is overwhelmingly negative. But whatever positive elements that are to be found under the conditions of existence, are elevated to form a new creation. Essence is enhanced because it has risked non-being by its participation in existence, and, at least in

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 432.

part, it has conquered non-being:

"The Christian assertion of the tragic universality of estrangement implies that every human being turns against his telos, against Eternal Life, at the same time that he aspires to it. This makes the concept of 'essentialization' profoundly dialectical. The telos of man as an individual is determined by the decisions he makes in existence on the basis of the potentialities given to him by destiny. He can waste his potentialities, though not completely, and he can fulfil them, though not totally. Thus, the symbol of ultimate judgement receives a particular seriousness. The exposure of the negative as negative in a person may not leave much positive for Eternal Life. It can be a reduction to smallness; but it can also be an elevation to greatness. It can mean an extreme poverty with respect to fulfilled potentialities, but it can also mean an extreme richness of them."¹

Tillich sees that essentialization is a matter of degree: "Small and great, poor and rich, are relative valuations."² They undercut the absoluteness of such religious symbols as "eternal life and eternal death," "being lost or being saved," or "heaven and hell ." Essentialization, Tillich feels, strikes a balance between on the one hand, the absoluteness of those

¹Ibid., p. 433f.

²Loc. Cit.

symbols and the seriousness implied in them, and on the other hand, Origen's doctrine of the "restitution of everything" in eternity. It strikes this balance because, Tillich argues, "it emphasizes the despair of having wasted one's potentialities yet also assures the elevation of the positive within existence (even in the most unfulfilled life) into eternity."¹ It is within this context that Tillich chooses the idea of universal essentialization over that of what he considers to be the "most questionable" form of the idea of the absoluteness of eternal damnation or salvation, namely, the doctrine of double predestination.² He also sees universal essentialization as an answer to "the question of the meaning of distorted forms of life - forms which, because of physical, biological, psychological, or sociological conditions, are unable to reach a fulfillment of their essential telos even to a small degree...."³ These forms of life are able to participate in Eternal Life because of the pole of participation in the process of self-integration. All creatures are interdependent. The

¹Loc. Cit.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 434-436; also see above p. 451.

³Ibid., p. 436.

weakest creature participates in the strongest and, conversely, "in the essence of the least actualized individual, the essences of other individuals and, indirectly, of all beings are present."¹ Because each individual participates in the other individual, essentialization is seen as a process that ultimately involves the entire created order. The individual is essentialized in union with all beings. Therefore, the one whose life is unfulfilled is able to participate in the essentialization of those who have reached a high degree of fulfillment. In the same way that the Protestant Principle will not allow for any human being to be unambiguously perfect, it will not allow an unambiguous imperfection either. In some degree, all creation is essentialized.

Within the confines of the ambiguities of life the manifestation of this union of essence and existence can be seen fragmentarily in faith and love, which, under the impact of the Spiritual Presence, are the same quality: "...in relation to God," Tillich explained, the distinction between faith and love disappears. Being grasped by God in faith and

¹Loc. Cit.

adhering to him in love is one and the same state of creaturely life. It is participation in the transcendent unity of unambiguous life."¹ Another way in which essentialization is manifested in temporal existence is in mystical contemplation. Contemplation, for Tillich, marks a particular way of participating in the reality of the New Being. He called it "the stepchild of Protestant worship,"² because of its long neglect in that tradition, but saw its vital place in the centre of religious experience. The response to the impact of the Spirit must itself be spiritual, "and that means transcending in ecstasy the subject-object scheme of ordinary experience."³ Since words are a part of the ambiguities of life, the response to the impact of the Spirit needs to transcend even language. Tillich sees the place of contemplation as being not only within the experience of worship, but also within the intellectual tasks of theology. A dialectical relationship exists between meditation and theology. One without the other is

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 147.

²Ibid., p. 205.

³Loc. Cit.

a distortion:

"In the meditative act (which can, in some moments, become contemplation) the cognitive subject and its object, the mystery of the holy, are united. Without such union the theological endeavor remains an analysis of structure without substance; on the other hand, meditation (including contemplative moments) without analysis of its contents and without the constructive synthesis cannot produce theology. This is the limitation of 'mystical theology.' It can become theology only to the degree that it exercises the discursive function of cognition."¹

Words must be transcended, yet they must be used, however inadequate they may be. Essentialization, then, although experienced in temporal life, is described only in ambiguous and paradoxical terms. Tillich saved his discussion of the idea until the end of his system - to his discussion of eternal life - and even so, he vaguely referred to these considerations as "almost poetic-symbolic."²

The final "poetic-symbol" that Tillich used to describe the ultimate reunion of essence and existence is that of "eschatological pan-en-theism." Eternal

¹Ibid., p. 215.

²Ibid., p. 432.

life does not exist as something separate from God, the eternal One. Eternal life, the inner aim or telos of all creatures, is life in God. By "in" Tillich means three things: the first meaning of the "in" in "in God" is that of creative origin. "It points to the presence of everything that has being in the divine ground of being" in the form of potentiality. The second meaning of "in" is the "in" of ontological dependence, the understanding that all finite things are never without divine supporting power. "The third meaning of 'in' is that it is the 'in' of ultimate fulfillment, the state of essentialization of all creatures."¹ Everything comes from the eternal and returns to the eternal. All of life is a matter of movement from essence and in which the new is created. And, for Tillich, in spite of existential estrangement, all creation is involved in a process that is always, in one way or another, "in God."

Thomas Merton explicitly uses the word "divinization" or its synonym "deification," to describe the healing of the split between God and man.² These

¹Ibid., pp. 449f.

²See above pp. 285ff, especially fn. 2 on p. 285.

words, or such similar phrases as "to become other Christs," or "to become God," occur throughout his writings. He finds it a particularly adequate symbol since, in his interpretation, it describes "the exact opposite of a Promethean exploit." He who seeks union with God through participation in the humanity and divinity of Christ "is not trying to steal something from God that God does not want him to have." Rather, he accepts "that which God has created him to receive," namely, "a participation in the life, and wisdom, and joy and peace of God Himself."

In Christ man sees his own true being. To participate in God through him is not simply a matter of being "in God" but also a matter of being in one's self in the truest and deepest possible sense. This is the two-fold character of divinization: man discovers his true self when he discovers "himself to be mystically one with God by Whom he has been elevated and transformed."¹ Man is elevated "to a level consonant with his dignity as a son of God, redeemed by Christ."² He is transformed into the person he really is: not the self represented by the superficial ego, but the

¹The New Man, pp. 34f.

²Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 82.

self that is seen and known in Christ.

For Merton, man is deified within the dimension of the Spirit. The deified man is one whose spirit is transformed by the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God. Following St. Thomas Aquinas, Merton uses the word "intelligence" to define spirit,¹ but broadens the definition by describing spirit as "the summit of man's nature and the source from which his most personal and characteristic and elevated activities are derived."² It is a natural faculty, and therefore subject to the conditions of man's fallen state. But this natural faculty can be transformed by the presence and action of the divine Spirit, and when this occurs, man can be said to have been deified or divinized. It is no longer simply the spirit of man:

"It is the deified or transfigured spirit of man, justified by faith and activated by divine grace, living a life of charity. The actions of this pneuma are strictly our own, and yet at the same time they belong to God."³

¹The New Man, p. 45. The reference to St. Thomas is given as Lectio. 2 in Caput. IV, Epistolae ad Hebraeos, from which Merton quotes, "The essence of the soul is one and the same...while its power...is called the intelligence."

²Loc. Cit.

³Ibid., p. 46.

The divine Spirit grasps man, man does not grasp God; deification is the action of God's Spirit within man's. But, at the same time, man becomes both a "new creature" and remains himself. He is not overwhelmed by the Spirit of God; rather, he is transformed by the Spirit. Deification does not mean annihilation.

The coming of the new Adam brings all who participate in the reality of his Person into a new relationship with God, but, for Merton, this new relationship is a greater one than the one enjoyed by the first Adam, the "innocent Adam." Since all men share in Adam's fall, no man is innocent. The divinized man is not one who is restored to innocence;¹ rather, he is one whose reunion with God is based upon pardon and forgiveness. God reaches out to man in the midst of his sin, in spite of his sin, and gives him "the courage to approach Him exactly as we are."² Since God accepts man as he is, man is enabled to see his own goodness in the midst of his own sin. This, for Merton, is a greater gift

¹Merton recognized (without comment) that certain mystics within the Christian tradition, particularly the English mystics of the 14th century, did speak of a "return to a primitive state of innocence." See Mystics and Zen Masters, p. 139.

²The New Man, p. 61.

than Adam's. Adam was accepted by God in a state of innocence; man is accepted by God in spite of his state of sin. Furthermore, Adam and his paradise are, in typological language, "simply a shadow of that substantial reality which is to be actualized in Christ, and His Mystical Body."¹ The first creation is secondary to the new creation, one which includes the redemption of all in existence, including matter:

"The recapitulation of the work of creation sublimated and perfected in Christ is a communion in the divine life, an infusion of the life, and glory, and power and truth of God not only into man's spirit but also, ultimately, into all the material creation as well. The end is not yet attained, but it is in view in the spiritual vision of the Church who looks forward to the Parousia, when Christ will not only appear on the clouds of heaven in judgement but will also at the same time shine forth through the transfigured trees and mountains and seas of a world divinized through its participation in the work of His Kingdom."²

The idea of divinization, including the eschatological note that is evident in this passage, is seen as well in the way Merton re-interprets the

¹Ibid., p. 90.

²Loc. Cit.

more psychological metaphor of "final integration." This term, as we have seen, is borrowed from the Persian psychoanalyst, Reza Arasteh, who happened also to be a student of Sufi mysticism and who incorporated Sufi ideas into his work.¹ Merton saw Arasteh's process of disintegration, existential moratorium, and final integration as an adequate description of the meaning of the monastic life. It provides, also, a valid pattern for an examination of Merton's life and thought, a pattern that was used in an earlier chapter of this work. Final integration, the end-point of the process, can be seen as analogous to divinization. He who has achieved this integration is in "a state of transcultural maturity far beyond mere social adjustment...He apprehends his life fully and wholly from an inner ground that is at once more universal than the empirical ego and yet entirely his own. He is in a certain sense 'cosmic' and 'universal man.'" Merton likens this state to St. Thomas Aquinas' interpretation of the Gifts of the Spirit which enable man to act "in a superhuman mode."²

¹See above pp. 199f. See also, "The Life that Unifies."

²Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 211.

However, Merton felt that an understanding of the full meaning of final integration could not be limited to the psychological realm; it had to be seen as well in its eschatological dimension:

"The rebirth of man and of society on a transcultural level is a rebirth into the transformed and redeemed time, the time of the Kingdom, the time of the Spirit, the time of 'the end.' It means a disintegration of the social and cultural self, the product of merely human history, and the reintegration of that self in Christ, in salvation history, in the mystery of redemption, in the Pentecostal 'new creation.'¹

Final integration in the religious dimension is, for Merton, the recapitulation of the entirety of creation, known partially and in the vision of hope, but known wherever man has himself found final integration, or divinization, through the Spirit of God. To be fully mature, finally integrated, in such a way that one incorporates in himself the whole of reality through a loving participation with its essence, is, in short, to become a mystic.²

There are a number of parallels between Merton's concept of divinization and Tillich's concept of essentialization. (Merton, at one point, even refers

¹Ibid., p. 216.

²"A Life Free From Care," p. 67.

to "essentiated unity."¹ First of all, it will be noted that Merton adheres strongly to the "Protestant Principle" in his description of divinization. In the relationship between man and God, God, through grace, is always the initiator. The deified spirit is not Promethean. Man steals nothing, he accepts what has been given to him. Acceptance, it should be recalled, is a word often used by Tillich, one in fact for which he is quite well known. It also occurs not infrequently in the Merton corpus.²

Secondly, in regard to divinization-essentialization, Merton and Tillich have similar approaches to the idea of man's spirit and God's Spirit. Although Merton does not define the spirit of man with anything like the thoroughness of Tillich, and although Tillich would hesitate to use the word "intelligence,"

¹The New Man, p. 87.

²See Tillich's sermon, "You Are Accepted," in The Shaking of the Foundations, pp. 153-163; cf. Morality and Beyond, p. 46. Compare these with the following extracts from Merton: "We must see and accept the mystery of God's love in our own apparently inconsequential lives." (The New Man, p. 131.) "The root of Christian love is not the will to love, but the faith that one is loved. The faith that one is loved by God." New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 75; "We must somehow strip ourselves of our greatest illusions about ourselves, frankly recognize in how many ways we are unloveable, descend into the depths of our being until we come to the basic reality that is in us, and learn to see that we are loveable after all, in spite of everything!" No Man Is An Island, p. 197.

in a description of spirit,¹ nevertheless when Merton describes spirit as "the summit of man's nature," and the source of his most elevated activities, he differs only in language from Tillich's description of the spiritual realm as that which incorporates all other dimensions of life and in which the unity of power and meaning is actualized. Also, Merton's portrayal of the presence of the Spirit of God in the spirit of man is parallel to the various phrases Tillich uses to represent the same relationship: being grasped by the Spiritual Presence or by the power of the New Being, the impact of the Spiritual Presence, and so forth. In the third place, both Tillich and Merton agree that the process of essentialization-divinization opens to man the fullness of his own self as well as opening to him a new relationship with God. Merton states that when man comes into union with God he comes, as well, to be his true self. Tillich says that when essentialization is effected and essence and existence are reunited, man can be said to be "in God" in a new way. In the

¹Tillich sided with what he called the Augustinian-Franciscans rather than with the Thomists. The former stressed the primacy of will over intellect. See A History of Christian Thought, p. 119.

fourth place, both Tillich and Merton see this process not as a matter of a return to some lost state, but as a moving forward into a new state. Tillich says that existence, or at least those positive elements within the existential domain, enhances essence and the new is created. Merton sees man's relationship with God based on forgiveness as a deeper relationship of love than a relationship based on Adam's pre-fall innocence. The two men disagree, therefore, on precisely why essentialization-divinization is not a matter of a return to a previous state, but both do share an understanding that the process is a forward moving one, in which the new is created. In the fifth place, both men state that the entire created order shares in the process. Merton expressly states that matter is included. Tillich expressly states that even those persons who have been totally unable to fulfil their essential telos are able to share in essentialization because of their participation in the world of those who have been essentialized. Furthermore, when Merton speaks of "transcultural" rebirth, and when Tillich speaks of self-transcendence including and being found within cultural acts, both point to a universality of the process of essentialization-divinization. In the sixth place, both men see that this process is not completed in history and must

be seen in an eschatological framework. It is known in history, surely, but only, in Tillich's words, fragmentarily and in anticipation, or in Merton's words, in hope or in the vision of the Church. Finally, it can be noted that both men see that essentialization-divinization appear in history in the acts of faith and love, and also in mystical contemplation.¹

Tillich was certainly familiar with the concept of divinization in the early Church. He discusses it explicitly in his lectures on Origen and Athanasius,² and he refers to it as well in a discussion of Meister Eckhart, in the context of which he interpreted the phrase homiosis to theou kata to dynaton ("becoming similar to God as much as possible" - a phrase which he saw as "always quoted in the later ancient world as the Platonic definition of telos") as meaning "becoming godlike, not God Himself, but godlike."³

¹Two of these points of affinity will be treated in length later: the idea of universality will be discussed again in the section on the solidarity of humanity, and the idea of mystical contemplation as the place in which the process is known will be mentioned at some length in the final summary.

²See A History of Christian Thought, especially pp. 53, 62, 73.

³Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue, pp. 138f.

Tillich refrained from talking about deification in such a way as to appear to endorse an idea in which man is seen as becoming God. His understanding of the reality of grace and of the Protestant Principle kept him from accepting a notion of transubstantiation in place of that of transparency. Catholicism erred in the direction of Monophysitism, he thought. It transmuted the finite form into a divine form, it elevated tangible reality into the realm of the holy, overlooking its finite character. Protestantism, on the other hand, he thought, "asserts that grace appears through a living Gestalt which remains in itself what it is. The divine appears through the humanity of the Christ, through the historical weakness of the church, through the finite material of the sacrament." In short, these things are transparent to the divine reality. "They are forms that are, so to speak, selected by grace, that it may appear through them; but they are not forms that are transmuted by grace so that they may become identical with it." Any identification of finite forms with grace itself is seen as "demonic hybris."¹ Deification, for Tillich, does not mean what it seems to literally

¹The Protestant Era, pp. 211f.

imply. Man does not become God. He can become godlike, he can be reunited with God, he may be said to be "in" God, but man is always man and is always finite; God is always God and is always infinite. Tillich does not believe that man becomes God.

But neither does Merton. In spite of a Catholic theological background which would accept and use the ideas of transubstantiation, and in spite of Merton's numerous references to "becoming other Christs," and "becoming God," Merton does not mean that man literally and ontologically becomes God or is absorbed into God. Merton clearly states a qualified idea of union. Union is possible between the spiritual substance of man's soul and the God who is pure Spirit, he says. However:

"The only restriction placed upon this union is that a contingent and finite substance can never become one nature and substance with the infinite and Absolute Being of God in such a way that everything that belongs to him by nature belongs to us by nature. The metaphysical impossibility of this is evident from the very notion of a substance being "changed into" what is, by nature, unchanging. We cannot 'become God.'"¹

¹The Ascent to Truth, pp. 280f.

Merton's language is unlike Tillich's, and the conceptual tools with which he works are those which Tillich rejected as inadequate; nevertheless, the conclusion drawn is identical. To be in union with God is not to say that one has become God. Merton will, in his typically unsystematic fashion, refer to "becoming God," and in this way he is open to misunderstandings and distortions. Nonetheless, he maintained that in the union of God and man, each remains "metaphysically distinct" while potentially becoming "practically and experientially 'one Spirit.'"¹

Tillich and Merton, therefore, substantially agree about the telos of man, although one speaks of it in terms of essentialization and the other in terms of divinization. Or, in other words, whereas Tillich sees maturity as a process that moves from essence to existence to essentialization, Merton sees it as a process that moves from union with God, to separation from God, to reunion with God. Both understandings with their differing emphases are pointing to what is fundamentally the same reality: man's telos "in" God.

¹See above p. 286.

6. Autonomy-Heteronomy-Theonomy

Man is estranged from his own essence; he is estranged from his own "law." Tillich sees that what is truly one's own, his very essence, under the conditions of existential estrangement can appear as if it were a "law" which stands over against the self and judges it. This is one way in which he interpreted St. Paul's evaluation of law: "the law is the expression of what man essentially is and therefore ought to be, but what he actually is not, as the law shows to him."¹ Essentialized man, on the other hand, since he is united with his own essential being by the power of the divine Spirit, sees that the "law" of his being is nothing exterior to him, and in fact does not appear as "law" to him at all. The one in whom essence and existence are totally unified is the one who has fulfilled the law. The ought-to-be actually is; the law is recognized as an expression of essential reality and that essential reality is known in existence. "If man were not estranged from himself," Tillich explained, "if his essential nature were not

¹Morality and Beyond, p. 48.

distorted in actual existence, no law would stand against him." Furthermore:

"The law is not strange to man. It is natural law. It represents his true nature from which he is estranged. Every valid ethical commandment is an expression of man's essential relationship to himself, to others and to the universe."¹

Wherever man lives in a state of essentialization (which is necessarily fragmentary) his reason, his ethics and his culture can be called "theonomous." Theonomy is a word that Tillich uses to represent the synthesis between autonomy on the one hand, and heteronomy on the other hand. Theonomy is able to transcend the tensions that exist between these other two positions:

"The words 'autonomy,' 'heteronomy,' and 'theonomy' answer the question of the nomos or the law of life in three different ways: Autonomy asserts that man as the bearer of universal reason is the source and measure of culture and religion - that he is his own law. Heteronomy asserts that man, being unable to act according to universal reason, must be subjected to a law, strange and superior to him. Theonomy asserts that the superior law is, at

¹Love, Power, and Justice, pp. 76f.

the same time, the innermost law of man himself, rooted in the divine ground which is man's own ground: the law of life transcends man, although it is, at the same time, his own."¹

Theonomy, then, would unite the unconditional meaning and import of a culture or of an ethic with the conditioned forms in which that culture or ethic appears. It unites religion, morality and culture. On the other hand, both autonomy and heteronomy are distortions. A culture which is strictly autonomous would be one which would "attempt to create the forms of personal and social life without reference to something ultimate and unconditional, following only the demands of theoretical or practical rationality."² Within such an autonomous culture there is the implication of a two-fold element: first there is

¹The Protestant Era, p. 63. "Autonomy" and "Heteronomy" are Kantian terms. "Theonomy" is more distinctly Tillich's contribution to ethics, although the word is not his alone. See, for instance, P.T. Forsyth's use of the term: "The God who rules us in Christ is not a foreign power. Theonomy is not heteronomy. He, our law, becomes also our life.", in "The Evangelical Churches and the Higher Criticism," Contemporary Review, LXXXVIII, (October, 1905), p. 578. See also Emil Brunner's The Divine Imperative, pp. 45ff (ET: London: Lutterworth, 1937), in which he seeks to find theonomy within Kant's autonomy.

²Loc. Cit.

the law, the nomos, which is to be carried out; secondly there is the self, the autos, which is asserted. In so far as the nomos makes an unconditioned demand to be carried out, autonomous culture can represent something of the unconditional. It can be an obedience to reason, to the logos structure of both mind and reality. Autonomy subjects itself to the unconditional demand for meaning. But it denies the unconditional meaning itself. It looks nowhere beyond the autos, the self.¹ The counter attitude is heteronomy. Its intention is to overcome the distortions in autonomy. "It rises against the hybris of autonomy, and submits itself to the unconditional meaning."² A heteronomous culture would be one which "substitutes the forms and laws of thinking and acting to authoritative criteria of an ecclesiastical religion or a political quasi-religion, even at the price of destroying the structures of rationality."³ This is its distortion: the submission of the centre of

¹e.g., Ibid., p. 50, and "The Philosophy of Religion," in What is Religion?, pp. 74f.

²"The Philosophy of Religion," in What is Religion?, p. 75.

³The Protestant Era, p. 63.

one's personality to an outside law results in the destruction of the centred-self. One would exist only under the will of a tyrant, perhaps a divine tyrant, but a tyrant nonetheless.¹ Heteronomy, in seeking to overcome the hybris of autonomy ends up creating its own hybris. Theonomy is the only possible way to express the proper relationship between the self and the nomos. "A theonomous culture," Tillich asserted, "expresses in its creations an ultimate concern and a transcending meaning not as something strange but as its own spiritual ground."² In other words:

"Theonomy is a condition in which the spiritual and social forms are filled with the import of the Unconditional as the foundation, meaning, and reality of all forms. Theonomy is the unity of sacred form and spiritual import in a concrete historical situation."³

Or, even more simply, theonomy is "an autonomy informed by a religious substance."⁴ Theonomy regards the

¹e.g., Love, Power, and Justice, p. 76.

²The Protestant Era, p. 63.

³"Basic Principles of Religious Socialism," (1923), in Political Expectations, p. 62.

⁴On the Boundary, p. 38.

dignity of both form and substance; autonomy and heteronomy do not. Autonomy sacrifices the religious substance whereas heteronomy is indifferent to form. In this way, theonomy transcends them both.

Ideally, that is in a state in which essentialization is finally and totally actualized, there is a complete interpenetration of religion, morality and culture. The distinction between these manifestations of man's self-actualization, either individually or in the historical dimension, are no longer decisive. In the ideal state "all culture is actualized religion, and all religion is actualized as culture."¹ Tillich himself believed that the most precise statement of theonomy was simply this: "Religion is the substance of culture and culture is the form of religion."² But this presupposes the ideal, and under the conditions of existence the ideal is seen only partially. Theonomy occurs and will continue to occur, but it will never be completely victorious. Nor will it be completely defeated. "Its victory is always fragmentary because of the existential estrangement underlying human history, and its defeat is always limited by the fact

¹"Basic Principles of Religious Socialism," p. 63.

²The Protestant Era, p. 63..

that human nature is essentially theonomous."¹

Neither autonomy nor heteronomy are without redeeming elements in Tillich's mind. In so far as heteronomy is a reaction against the hybris of autonomy it is good. It speaks with an authority that claims to represent the depths of reason, culture and morality. Its basis is the claim to speak in the name of the ground of being, addressing its word to an autonomy which has lost its depths and is thereby disabled and empty. "But as a reaction," Tillich concludes, heteronomy "is destructive, denying to reason the right of autonomy and destroying its structural laws from outside."² Tillich prefers autonomy to heteronomy in so far as it is closer to the ideal of theonomy. This is seen throughout his writings, first, in so far as he defines theonomy as "an autonomy with a religious substance," secondly, in so far as he regards heteronomy as inevitably destroying the centred-self, and perhaps most clearly, in the various ways he sees autonomy, heteronomy and theonomy occurring throughout history. Yet one should not overlook Tillich's understanding that heteronomous reactions to empty autonomous forms are a necessary movement

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 266.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 94.

within the dialectical between the two extremes. Nor should one forget that Tillich believed that both autonomy and heteronomy are distorted and that "each goes astray when their theonomous unity is broken."¹

Here is an example of the way in which Tillich sees these operations within history. Out of the world of Greek philosophy came...

"...the creation of a new theonomy under Christian influence (Clement and Origen), and the intrusion of heteronomous elements (Athanasius and Augustine). During the high Middle Ages a theonomy (Bonaventura) was realized under the preponderance of heteronomous elements (Thomas). Toward the end of the medieval period heteronomy became all-powerful (Inquisition), partly as a reaction against autonomous tendencies in culture and religion (nominalism), and destroyed the medieval theonomy. In the period of Renaissance and Reformation the conflict grew to new intensity. The Renaissance, which showed a theonomous character in its Neo-Platonic beginnings (Cusanus, Ficino), became increasingly autonomous in its later development (Erasmus, Galileo). Conversely, the Reformation, which in its early years united a religious with a cultural emphasis on autonomy (Luther's reliance on his conscience, and Luther and Zwingli's connection with the humanists), very

¹Loc. Cit. James Luther Adams agrees that Tillich judges heteronomy more severely than autonomy. See his Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science, and Religion, p. 249.

soon developed a heteronomy which surpassed even that of the later Middle Ages in some respects (Protestant orthodoxy.) In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in spite of some heteronomous remnants and reactions, autonomy won an almost complete victory..."¹

In this brief historical sketch, a preference for autonomy over heteronomy may be discerned. Heteronomy may be a justified reaction against an empty autonomy, but its destructive character, its tendency to deny reason altogether, is especially criticized. Theonomy has to fight on two fronts in all periods of history, including the present. Tillich wrote at a time when he saw the need for a new theonomy in the midst of strong manifestations of both autonomy and heteronomy:

"The double fight against an empty autonomy and a destructive heteronomy makes the quest for a new theonomy as urgent today as it was at the end of the ancient world. The catastrophe of

¹Ibid., p. 95. Tillich is neither precise nor definitive in his historical analysis at this point. He does not explain in any detail precisely why Clement is seen as a representative of theonomy and Augustine as heteronomous, for example. It is not the intention of this thesis to criticize Tillich's interpretation of history, but simply to show where, for whatever reasons, Tillich was able to see his abstractions in concrete manifestations. A careful study of Tillich's understandings of myth and cult, and a study of those persons and cultures that he saw to be particularly theonomous would yield a more complete understanding of his interpretation.

autonomous reason is complete. Neither autonomy nor heteronomy, isolated and in conflict, can give the answer."¹

The modern man, thought Tillich, "is the autonomous man who has become insecure in his autonomy."² He no longer has a consistent world view. Neither philosophy nor religion provide him with a way in which to fulfill his quest for unambiguous life. He is not ready to abandon his autonomy, but his autonomy is not one in which he feels self-assured and creative, "rather he possesses one that leaves him disturbed, frustrated and in despair."³ He can choose to turn to various forms of heteronomy. One form which Tillich saw as particularly destructive was that of National Socialism, a political quasi-religion which he interpreted and courageously fought against, as a grotesque form of heteronomy. Another heteronomous manifestation was the Roman Catholic Church, although at one point in his life Tillich saw the possibility of embracing it, albeit with reluctance.⁴ He saw

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 95f.

²The Protestant Era, p. 189.

³Ibid., p. 191.

⁴"Only once did I with any seriousness entertain the idea of becoming a Catholic. In 1933, before the awakening of German Protestantism to the meaning of

the Roman Catholic Church appealing to man in the midst of his broken autonomy to make his last act of autonomy the self-surrender to heteronomy. The Catholic Church could be very attractive. It alone is consistently heteronomous, it alone has an unbroken tradition and authority, "and it also has a strong sense of triumph in the face of...broken autonomy."¹ Furthermore, in spite of "an ever hardening crust," the Catholic Church had been able to preserve a genuine religious substance. It was a heteronomous form of religion but, for Tillich, not unambiguously so. It appealed because it correctly criticized an empty autonomy and because it did preserve a genuine religious substance. But, the man who has enjoyed autonomy could not easily give it up, felt Tillich, because it, too, had its elements of dignity and truth: it preserved the dignity of the centred-self. In short, modern man urgently needed a new, concrete theonomy. Heteronomy was not a

Nazism, I seemed to have only two alternatives: either the Roman Church or a nationalist paganism in Protestant dress. In deciding between these two heteronomies, I would have had to choose Catholicism. I did not have to make that choice because German Protestantism remembered its Christian foundation." On the Boundary, p. 39.

¹The Protestant Era, p. 191.

legitimate option in the quest for unambiguous life:

"The Protestant principle as derived from the doctrine of justification through faith rejects heteronomy (represented by the doctrine of papal infallibility) as well as a self-complacent autonomy (represented by secular humanism). It demands a self-transcending autonomy, or theonomy."¹

Tillich had hoped that Religious Socialism would provide German society with its theonomous character, and that Protestantism would serve as the vehicle for theonomy in the religious sphere. The years immediately following the end of the First World War were years in which Tillich saw a particular kairos. But he also saw that kairos go unfulfilled. Religious Socialism failed to capture the imaginations of German citizens, and Protestantism remained opaque to its own divine ground. Nevertheless, Tillich never gave up his quest for theonomy, although it has been suggested that he began to see it more and more in terms of eschatology or in terms of individual fulfillment.² However, whether in terms of the

¹Ibid., p. xxxi.

²See, for instance, The Religious Situation and The Protestant Era, and "Beyond Religious Socialism: How My Mind Has Changed in the Last Decade," The Christian Century LXVI (June 15, 1949), pp. 732-733 and "Existentialism and Religious Socialism," in

the corporate-historical or in terms of the individual, Tillich saw theonomy as the product of grace and revelation rather than as the product of man's strivings. Transparency to the ground of being and the complete self sacrifice of the medium of final revelation make it possible for that revelatory act to be decisive for the reunion of autonomy and heteronomy:

"The first element keeps autonomous reason from losing its depths and from becoming empty and open for demonic intrusions.....The other element of final revelation, the self-sacrifice of the finite medium, keeps heteronomous reason from establishing itself against rational autonomy."¹

The manifestation and acceptance of Jesus as the Christ is the event in which theonomy is created. "The presence of the divine ground as it is manifest in Jesus as the Christ gives a spiritual substance to all forms of rational creativity. It gives them

Christianity and Society XV (Winter, 1949-1950), pp. 8-11. David Hopper argues that Tillich's only major shift in his thinking was this move from history to the individual as a result of an unfulfilled kairos. See Tillich: A Theological Portrait, pp. 100ff. This same observation is found in Leibrecht, Op. Cit., pp. 17ff.

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 164.

the dimension of depth..."¹ Furthermore, Jesus' willingness to sacrifice everything finite within himself is the explicit act in which heteronomy is disavowed. No finite reality can claim ultimacy for itself.

The Church, if it is seen as the community in which New Being is known, however fragmentarily, "is the place where the new theonomy is actual."² The Church should be the community in which nothing is either autonomous or heteronomous but the integration of the two in a theonomy. However, this is not the case. The temptation within the Church, both in Protestantism as well as in Catholicism, is to yield toward the heteronomous. Even so, the Church is never without theonomous forces. From this community theonomy should pour into the whole of man's cultural and moral life; and it does so, however fragmentarily: "Culture is not controlled from outside the Church," Tillich said, which would be heteronomy, "nor is it left alone so that the community of the New Being stands beside it. Culture receives its substance and integrating power from the community of the New

¹Loc. Cit.

²Loc. Cit.

Being, from its symbols and its life."¹ This does not necessarily make that culture more moral or more creative or intellectually brighter. It means, rather, that these periods of culture in which theonomy is most evident "are more aware of the 'depth of reason,' of the ground of autonomy, and of the uniting centre without which spiritual life becomes shallow, disintegrates, and produces a vacuum into which demonic forces may enter."²

Therefore, the telos of man includes a quest for theonomy, a quest as it were for the awakening of the person to the ground of his being, to his essential being, to the "law" which is not over against him but which represents his true self. Since as a person he exists in community, in some sort of a balance between the poles of individualization and participation, man seeks for theonomy in the social as well as the personal realm. He seeks for the depths of communal life, he seeks for a social ethic that is united with its spiritual ground. He seeks for the union of religion, in the sense of the state of being grasped by the Spiritual

¹Ibid., p. 165.

²Loc. Cit.

Presence, and morality, in the sense of the "constitution of person as person in the encounter with other persons."¹ In the theonomous Spiritual Community there is no conflict between religion and morality. Kant had defended morals against religion, and Schleiermacher had defended religion against attempts to explain it away in terms only of morals, but both were expressing the conflict between religion and morals in the sphere of the autonomous-heteronomous. In the theonomous Spiritual Community morals and religion unite.

This can be seen, first of all, in that the moral imperative is an unconditional imperative because in it man finds the expression of his essential being. Tillich thought that "Affirming what we essentially are and being obedient to the moral imperative are one and the same act."² But why, he asks, should we affirm our essential self? Why not destroy one's self? His answer shows the essential union of the moral imperative with the transcendent union of man and God:

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 168f.

²Ibid., p. 169.

"The answer to this must be that the person becomes aware of his infinite value or, ontologically expressed, of his belonging to the transcendent union of unambiguous life which is the Divine Life; this awareness occurs under the impact of the Spiritual Presence. The act of faith and the 'act of accepting the moral imperative's unconditional character are one and the same act."¹

To use other words, (all Tillichian), in the ecstatic moment man becomes aware of being in union with God who is the Ground of his own being and thereby recognizes that he is in union with himself, his true self, unambiguously. In this moment he is free to actualize the moral imperative, he is free to act according to his true being, which is not a being existing in isolation from other beings, but is one who is truly a person because he is truly a participant. Therefore, in the ecstatic moment one is in touch with the motivating power of social ethics.

"The moral act, the act of personal self-constitution in the encounter with other persons, is based on participation in the transcendent union. This participation makes the moral act possible. By its Spiritual impact, the preceding transcendent union creates the actual union of the centred person with itself, the encountered world, and the ground

¹Loc. Cit.

of self and world. It is the quality of 'preceeding' that characterizes the Spiritual impact as grace: and nothing establishes the moral personality and community but the transcendent union which manifests itself in the Spiritual Community as grace."¹

In the Spiritual Community, morality is determined by grace, not by law. Only when we are estranged from our essential being does the moral imperative appear to us as law. When, however fragmentarily, there is a reunion of essence and existence, grace triumphs over law. Jesus, Paul and Luther, according to Tillich, said that the law is fulfilled only with joy, not with resentment and hate. "But joy cannot be commanded," he observed:

"The law brings us into a paradoxical situation: It commands, which means that it stands against us. But it commands something which can be done only if it does not stand against us, if we are united with what it commands. This is the point where the moral imperative drives towards something which is not command but reality... Morality can be maintained only through that which is given and not through that which is demanded; in religious terms, through grace and not through law. Without the reunion of man with his own essential nature no perfect moral act is possible."²

¹Ibid., pp. 169f.

²Theology of Culture, p. 142.

In short, only within transcendent union is a theonomous ethic possible, and only a theonomous ethic will truly serve the needs of man, the need to constitute the self in concord with all other selves.

Tillich rejects "theological ethics" as a "consciously prejudiced ethics." It tends to the heteronomous. He prefers, of course, "theonomous ethics" a term which allows for the autonomy of ethical investigations and allows as well for the dependence of such investigations "on a tradition which expresses an ultimate concern, at least indirectly and unconsciously. Autonomous ethics can be autonomous only with respect to scholarly method, not with respect to its religious substance."¹ He concludes:

"Theonomous ethics in the full sense of the phrase, therefore, is ethics in which, under the impact of the Spiritual Presence, the religious substance - the experience of an ultimate concern - is consciously expressed through the process of free arguing and not through an attempt to determine it. Intentional theonomy is heteronomy and must be rejected by ethical research. Actual theonomy is autonomous ethics under the Spiritual Presence."²

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 285.

²Loc. Cit.

Tillich takes with utter seriousness the Johannine characterization of the Spirit as like the wind that blows wherever it wishes (John 3:8). Autonomy cannot give way to heteronomy, but neither can it lose sight of its own divine ground.

Agape, which Tillich calls "the love which reunites centred person with centred person,"¹ contains and transcends the law. In agape, the law is accepted and transcended in its form as law. Love "does voluntarily what the law commands."² But, Tillich notes, love as the all-embracing law must be able to transcend the ambiguities of law. Once again, Tillich maintains that essentially love is not a law; it is reality. Love is the unconditional element in the moral imperative; it is "the unambiguous criterion for all ethical judgments"³ and is thereby the basis for the moral content, and it is the motivating force of morality. Spirit, love and grace are one and the same reality: "Spirit is the creative power; love is its creation; grace is the effective presence of

¹Ibid., p. 289.

²Loc. Cit.,

³Ibid., p. 290.

love in man."¹ When, through the impact of the divine Spirit, man is confronted with the reality that dwells in the ground of his being, he is confronted with agape, which is not something that he himself created or can create as a matter of his own will. The love that he encounters in his ground, the love that makes morality possible and effective, is a creation of the Spiritual Presence. Only through the impact of the Spiritual Presence, an impact known and accepted in the ecstatic moment, is unambiguous moral fulfillment possible.

Thomas Merton did not use the words "autonomy," "heteronomy" and "theonomy" in the same way that Tillich did. In fact, only the first of these words is a part of the normal Merton vocabulary. Tillich used "autonomy" and "heteronomy" in a way that was based on the ethical philosophy of Kant, and adds the word "theonomy" to represent a synthesis between the two. Merton was not referring to the Kantian usage, even implicitly, when he spoke of autonomy, or when he discussed the ideas that lie behind "heteronomy" and "theonomy." Nevertheless, throughout his writings Merton did refer often to the idea of autonomy, to

¹Ibid., p. 292. See also Theology of Culture, pp. 133-145.

the idea of God as an exterior force standing over against man, and the idea of the law of God being discovered within the law of the self, and like Tillich, he saw ambiguities in the idea of the complete autonomy of man, and saw the idea of an authoritarian God as antithetical to the true meaning of the Christian Gospel. Also, like Tillich, he saw the "law" of God as man's inner and essential self. We will look at each of these in turn.

Merton rejected the pole of total autonomy as an insufficient basis upon which to make moral decisions. On his own, man is unable to achieve those things for which he truly longs. An autonomy which rests in a total subjectivity defeats itself, in Merton's view, because man turned in on himself is inevitably destructive. When man regards himself, or his community, as a self-contained and self-sufficient entity, he accentuates the subject-object dichotomy and creates a world-view that leads only to strife and unlovingness. True humanism, rather than supporting this kind of "spurious" autonomy, should attempt to extricate man from it instead. A true humanism, one which Merton sees in the Church, helps man to see that he cannot understand himself as a self-sufficient subject within a world of objects without dire consequences. It helps make men aware of their

need for the world, for an "ethical minimum" which includes honesty, self-respect, respect for all men, and a "minimum of transcendence."¹ Without this kind of humanism, man runs amuck:

"Man, thinking of himself secretly as a completely free autonomous self, with unlimited possibilities (after all he is taught by his society that this is what he is), finds himself in an impossible predicament. He is 'as a God' and therefore everything is within reach. But it turns out that all that he can successfully reach by his own volition is not quite worth having. What he really seeks and needs - love, an authentic identity, a life that has meaning - cannot be had merely by willing and by taking steps to procure them. No amount of ingenuity can 'buy' these things - no psychological or sociological manipulation can encompass them, no inspirational religious self-help, no ascetic technique, no drug can do the trick."

"The things we really need," Merton concluded, "come to us only as gifts."² Complete autonomy is false; it has a Promethean element in it. It attempts to win that which cannot be won. It fails to understand the limits of man's finitude. It attempts to make man the final judge of himself and his creations. At best this autonomy leads to inevitable frustration;

¹Faith and Violence, pp. 65f.

²Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 224.

at worst it leads to destruction.

When man's autonomy is finally seen as the shallow, insufficient instrument that it is, there is a tendency to turn to the opposite pole. If man is not autonomous and is not a law (nomos) to himself (autos), then there must be an outside law to which he can turn. Merton describes this tendency to authoritarianism, or totalitarianism, in both the secular world as well as in the Church. Marxist totalitarianism served Merton as a secular example of such authoritarianism, and although he did not try to see Marxism as the only illustration of this tendency, nonetheless he saw a reoccurring process exemplified in the Marxist ideal: the autonomy of the individual is rejected, personal freedom is viewed with suspicion and intolerance, man makes choices only in conformity with the choices made for him by others.¹ The dignity of the individual person is disregarded. Ultimately, in Merton's view, this was doomed to failure. Any understanding of authority which did not regard the worth of the individual person was dismissed as "unrealistic." No authority can be a real authority (although it certainly can

¹See Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 151.

exert great and continuous power) if it does not derive its power from the interaction of persons on a common ground of reason. "The authority of the strongest," as Merton referred to totalitarian authority, "is no authority at all because it has no power to elicit the intelligent submission of man's inmost personal being."¹ An authority which is merely an external compulsion is no authority at all. However, it was in the realm of religion and within the context of the Church that Merton concentrated his analysis of and his criticisms of, a soul-destroying authoritarianism. He was especially critical of false authoritarianism within the monastic life, as the essays published in Contemplation in a World of Action indicate. The idea of the "Lord Abbot vested in pontificalia and graciously offering his ring to be kissed for a thirty days' indulgence," was strongly rejected, (but not without humour), not only because the modern young monk would not accept such a figure, but because "such authority never had any real inner strength." It was based entirely on external sanctions. "What is needed in monasteries," Merton suggested, "is a recognition of authority that

¹Seeds of Destruction, p. 164.

is strong with the strength of love and of Gospel truth."¹ This does not exclude the possibility of an abbot in the tradition of the Rule of St. Benedict, but it expands the idea of authority in both its inner strength and its practical application:

"This authority may be seen perhaps in the rare charismatic teacher, but we will be more practical if we look for it in the believing community, united in Christ, in the humility of Christian love and of the spirit, serving one another in the obedience of faith and gathered round one they have chosen to make the final practical decisions in running their community. Discipline in such a setting is less a matter of personal austerity and will...than of openness to the demands of the Spirit of Love, to the needs of one's brothers and of the community."²

Merton saw the Church emerging from a period of strong, external authoritarianism, one which stressed man's inability to make any decision but the one to acquiesce to the demands of authority: it was an attitude that assumed, like all forms of totalitarianism, that the wisdom of the collective was inherently superior to the wisdom of individuals, and that individuals had to surrender their freedom

¹Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 110.

²Loc. Cit.

in order to find even a modicum of salvation. Even amid the "brighter strokes" of this world-view, found, according to Merton, in the thought of Aquinas, Scotus, Bonaventure and Dante, and containing "the ground work for an optimistic Christian affirmation of natural and worldly values in the perspective of an eschatological love," there was still too much that was "static rather than dynamic, hierarchic, layer upon layer, rather than ongoing and self-creating, the fulfillment of a predetermined intellectual plan rather than the creative project of a free and self-building love."¹ Merton saw, amid the reforms epitomized in the pontificate of Pope John XXIII and the work of Vatican II, a new concept of authority becoming evident in the life of the Church, and with this, a new (or newly rediscovered) idea of grace and of the meaning of the "will of God."

The wrong idea of grace was exemplified by Paneloux in Camus' novel, The Plague. Merton agreed wholeheartedly with Camus' rejecting of this characterization: "Grace...is that which gives one the ability to submit to a God who acts like an arbitrary tyrant." Such an idea, for Merton, is not

¹Ibid., pp. 146f.

Christian since it states that "God is essentially unjust, and to be loved as such!"¹ This is rejected. God's will is not an arbitrary force "bearing down upon us with implacable hostility,"² and grace is not a matter of acquiescence to this external power:

"This is the thing so many Christians refuse to see. They think Christ's power to deliver us from sin is not a real liberation but an assertion of his own rights over us...Grace does not take hold of us as if we were planes or rockets guided by remote control. Yet there is a rather common tendency among spiritual men to imagine themselves as hollow, empty beings entirely governed and moved by a remote supernatural agency from outside and above themselves. This indeed pays homage to the idea that God is infinitely above man. But it entirely ignores the equally important truth of God's immanence within man."³

Authoritarianism, either in the hierarchical structures of ecclesiastical or secular government, or within man's understanding of his relationship with God, is essentially Promethean. Prometheus is a giant among men either by "the glamour of his

¹Albert Camus' The Plague: Introduction and Commentary, p. 37.

²New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 15.

³The New Man, pp. 32, 33f.

adventure," or "by the violence of his self-hate," either by his unbridled autonomy or his implicit turning to heteronomy. He who needs fire from outside himself is a condemned character.¹

Merton questioned an idea of God that inordinately stressed his transcendence, his total otherness, and his designation as "Absolute First Cause," or "Supreme Prime Mover." These ideas were not wrong, he insisted, but they were less than adequate to describe the whole reality of God as he is experienced in existence. Not only did such thought suppose a cosmology which was pre-Newtonian, but it failed as well to give proper attention to God's immanence. It failed to take mystical experience of God into account. Merton suggested that monastic theology had to begin to stress the immanence of God if it wished to remain true to the contemplative experience and remain true as well to the Christian historical tradition.

"Now it happens that the immanentist approach, which sees God as directly and intimately present in the very ground of our being (while being at the same time infinitely transcendent), is actually much closer to the contemplative tradition."²

¹Ibid., p. 23.

²Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 160.

An immanent approach to the doctrine of the being of God does not necessarily lead to pantheism or a blurring of the distinction between man's being and God:

"On the contrary, there is a distinct conflict in the realization that though in some sense He is more truly ourselves than we are, yet we are not identical with Him, and though he loves us better than we can love ourselves we are opposed to Him, and in opposing Him we oppose our own deepest selves."¹

God's will, Merton believed, is not exterior to man but is planted within man's own nature, and to say this is to say that the law of Love is our nature.² It is not an external command; if it were it would not be life-creating. Rather, it is a creative word which makes man into a new being.³ God's will "is not a force that presses down on man from the outside. It works on man from within himself and from within the ontological core of his own freedom." Continuing this line of thought, Merton wrote:

¹Ibid., pp. 160f

²Cf. The New Man, p. 108, and Seasons of Celebration, p. 224.

³Cf. Disputed Questions, p. 122.

"Made free, in the image of God, man's freedom contains in itself a demand for infinite freedom which can be met only by perfect union with the freedom of God, not only as an external norm, but as the source of our own love. Here philosophical notions of freedom necessarily break down and the perfect freedom of the Christian can be accounted for only by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit."¹

Truth cannot be imposed upon man from outside of himself. It cannot violate man's freedom, for man's freedom is that quality which makes it possible to speak of him as being made in the "image" of God. Truth and freedom are inseparable. The truth is within man, not exterior to him. It is not, however, to be discovered in what Merton calls the superficial self; it is discovered only in the depths of the true self. When man exists at that level, he is able to discover what Tillich called his "essential theonomy," and what Merton called, in words very similar to Tillich's, "autonomy by union with God."² And it is this Spirit-filled autonomy that forms the basis for man's moral acts:

¹Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 329.

²The New Man, p. 91.

"Once we enter again into contact with our own deepest self, with an ordinate self-love that is inseparable from the love of God and of His truth, we discover that all good develops from within us, growing up from the hidden depths of our being according to the concrete and existential norms laid down by the Spirit Who is given us from God. This mystical spontaneity (which begins with the free option of faith and grows with our growth in charity) sets the tone for our whole moral life. It is the inward promulgation of God's new law of charity in our hearts."¹

Merton rejects a "spurious" autonomy which is grounded in man's superficial self. Simultaneously he adamantly rejects any infringement on man's freedom and hence rejects superficial heteronomy as well. Like Tillich, he ends up with a theonomous synthesis, a synthesis known only in the deepest levels of man's being, but one which forms the basis for the totality of his actions and his creations. He calls for a theonomous understanding of the Church as well as of the self, and ultimately for a society which can manifest its theonomous essence.

The ramifications of this call for a "theonomy" for social ethics is seen throughout Merton's political writings, particularly in his high regard for the

¹Ibid., p. 134. It is to be noted that Merton's frequent use of the word "charity" is the translation of the Latin caritas which is the Greek agape.

witness and political action of Gandhi. In Merton's eyes Gandhi was successful, and had a very special importance for Christians, in so far as he applied "spiritual force to political action."¹ And this spiritual force was nothing less than the "ancient metaphysic of man, a philosophical wisdom which is common to Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity: that 'truth is the inner law of our being.'² Or, in other words, Gandhi based his political principles on theonomy. Gandhi's action was at once religious and political:

"His whole life, his political action, finally even his death, were nothing but a witness to his commitment. 'IF LOVE IS NOT THE LAW OF OUR BEING THE WHOLE OF MY ARGUMENT FALLS TO PIECES.'³

This, for Merton, was true political action, because it was action that arose from man's inner depths, the depths in which he is united with God and in which he discovers the law of love as the truth of the self rather than as an external command. A theonomous society was, therefore, as much a part

¹Seeds of Destruction, p. 228.

²Ibid., p. 231.

³Ibid., p. 234; cf. Merton's Introduction to Gandhi on Non-Violence.

of Merton's hope as was a theonomous individual, monastery or Church.¹

Of course, Merton was not as ready to label the Catholic Church heteronomous as Tillich was. As we have seen, he was quick to recognize abuses of authority within the Church, but he was not ready to label all such abuses as bereft of theonomous elements. Man must be free from external control, in Merton's view, but his ecclesiology allowed him to account for positive, necessary and ultimately freedom-producing forms of authority within the Church. Authority for Merton is like "power" for Tillich.² It is not necessarily heteronomous:

¹George Kilcourse (Incarnation as the Integrating Principle in Thomas Merton's Poetry and Spirituality) doesn't like Tillich's phrase, "Religion is the substance of culture; culture is the form of religion," (p. 242) and says that Merton disagreed with this stance and saw art and prayer as "distinct" autonomous experiences. (p. 243) However, it is the opinion of this writer that Kilcourse does not properly understand Tillich, nor does he understand Merton's hope that a Christian poet can, through his art, make an "open declaration of the mercy of God." ("Poetry and Contemplation: A Reappraisal," in A Thomas Merton Reader, p. 450.) Such a hope is a hope that a poem will reveal something of God, i.e., that it can be theonomous, or that the poem (culture) will be the form of revelation (religion). Merton rejected spurious autonomy in all realms of life. That the activity of artistic creation and the activity of prayer are distinctive exercises is not to negate their underlying theonomous unity.

²e.g., The definition of power in Love, Power, and Justice, especially pp. 11-13.

"Since I am a Catholic, I believe, of course, that my Church guarantees for me the highest spiritual freedom. I would not be a Catholic if I did not believe this. I would not be a Catholic if the Church were merely an organization, a collective institution, with rules and laws demanding external conformity from its members. I see the laws of the Church, and all the various ways she exercises her teaching authority and her jurisdiction, as subordinate to the Holy Spirit and to the law of love. I know that my Church does not look like this to those who are outside her; to them the Church acts on a principle of authority but not of freedom. They are mistaken. It is in Christ and in His Spirit that true freedom is found, and the Church is His Body, living by His Spirit."¹

It could be that Merton does what Tillich will not do, that is, equates a particular institution with the Spiritual Community. On the other hand, it is more likely that Merton is able to see the theonomous undergirding of the Catholic Church of his time in much the same way that Tillich could refer to certain eras of church history as theonomous. Merton, obviously, was able to recognize and accept the depth dimension that he saw in Catholicism, just as Tillich was able to see the depth dimension within the Protestant Principle. Furthermore, Merton did

¹Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 89.

not overlook or underestimate heteronomous features within the church; he recognized them and criticized them. Yet, he was able to accept the possibility of a particular type of authority rising out of theonomy. The acceptance of authority did not, for Merton, necessarily involve the surrender of his true, spiritual autonomy. "But it is right and just," he argued, "to accept a rule of authority that obeys truth, guarantees men's rights, and recommends itself to free men by its respect for liberty."¹ Superficial and empty autonomy can be sacrificed, he felt, and in fact must be sacrificed, if man's true autonomy in the Spirit is to be actualized. Any authority which is open to its own theonomous elements, and exists to enable others to seek those elements within themselves, is an authority that men can avoid only at great risk. The ultimate source of all authority, for Merton, is God. To give up an empty autonomy in order to accept what one hopes will be a theonomous authority is not, in Merton's mind, the giving up of freedom or liberty. On the contrary, it can lead to true freedom and liberty and enable one to put aside

¹Seeds of Destruction, p. 167.

the superficialities that have heretofore hindered his descent into his own depths. In the Spiritual Community law is not seen as an external force, but as an expression of the inner law of one's nature. The Catholic Church, in Merton's view, although it was not perfect, was based on the theonomous depths and its authority, although abused, represented the true nature of the individual.

Furthermore, Merton recognized that in the unambiguous, and perfectly realized Spiritual Community - that is, in heaven - law and love are perfectly reconciled.

"The Church must have her structure of law and discipline, like any other visible society of men on earth. In heaven there will be no law for the elect but God Himself, who is Charity. In heaven, obedience will be entirely swallowed up in love."¹ Merton shares Tillich's eschatological emphasis and his hope for the perfect unification of religion and morality. Furthermore, when Merton says that "Law is an expression of that 'justice' which is the living harmony of opposites....the expression of the true good which is the inner unity of life itself, the

¹"Love and Maturity," p. 47.

logos which is common to all,"¹ he indicated his basic affinity with Tillich. Law, when it reflects the logos, or when it expresses the balance between opposite poles, is not something over and against man; it is the expression of his true nature, individual and communal, and as such it should be obeyed, and can be obeyed. It should be obeyed in so far as it represents the moral imperative; it can be obeyed in so far as the moral imperative represents man's true being.

Tillich, it was stated earlier, felt that Catholicism and Protestantism differed in that Catholicism tried to give a specific content to the natural law. In general terms his criticism is accurate. However, the understanding of natural law as expressed in the writings of Merton, is remarkably similar to Tillich's interpretation. Merton did not stress the particulars of natural law. His interpretation was broader:

"...the natural law is not merely what is ethically right and fitting for fallen man considered purely in his fallen state: it is the law of his

¹"Herakleitos the Obscure," in A Thomas Merton Reader, p. 282.

nature as it came to him from the hand of God, the law imprinted in his nature by the image of God. Every man is made by his very nature, in the image of God. Hence the natural law is the law which inclines our inmost hearts to conform to the image of God which is in the deepest center of our being, and it also inclines our hearts to respect and love our neighbor as the image of God. However this concept of nature is only comprehensible when we see that it presupposes grace and calls for grace and as it were sighs and moans for grace. Actually our contradictions within ourselves make us realize that without grace we are lost."¹

Tillich, it will be recalled, saw the fulfillment of the law in the reunion of essence and existence, and thereby saw that the law was perfectly fulfilled in Jesus the Christ as the bearer of New Being. Furthermore, he called upon men to participate in the reality of the New Being. Merton concluded the paragraph just quoted in this way:

"In a word, then, I want with my whole heart to fulfil in myself this natural law, in order to fulfil the law of grace to which it leads me. And I want with my whole heart to realize and fulfil my communion of nature with my brother, in order that I may be by that very fact one with him in Christ."²

¹Seeds of Destruction, p. 259.

²Loc. Cit.

Merton sought his own theonomous depths, and in those depths, Merton sought the true and eternal sources for the proper relationship with his brother. In the theonomous depths in other words, Merton sought the source of a social ethic. It is not without significance that the paragraph just quoted was from a letter Merton wrote to Dorothy Day, one of American Catholicism's most renowned social activists. Autonomy and heteronomy cannot yield a truly viable social ethic. Only theonomy can.

7. The Solidarity of Mankind

Paul Tillich based his understanding of the solidarity of mankind within the context of the polarities of the self-integration of the person, namely, individualization and participation. It has already been shown¹ that he believed that a person can only become a fully mature person, or a "personality," in community with other persons, and that this is so because only within the encounter with

¹See above pp. 388-391.

other persons is it possible for one to recognize his own limits. The encounter of person with person determines the meaning of the person within his own finitude and destiny, and this meaning is actualized in the moral act. To be in community is essential to personality. Even when one is separated from the activities of the community he is still, essentially, a part of the community.¹

"Religious obligation, first of all," Tillich once wrote, "includes the practical acknowledgement of the unity of all men, expressed in oriental wisdom by the assertion that the other is thou."² This practical acknowledgement of man's ultimate unity with all other men is possible only by the theonomous impact of the Spiritual Presence. Only when essence and existence are no longer estranged is man able to recognize his brother as an integral part of himself. "Only through the impact of the Spiritual Presence is the shell of self-seclusion pierced,"³ and only

¹See Dynamics of Faith, p. 118; cf. The Courage To Be, p. 87.

²The Protestant Era, p. 186.

³Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 278.

by such an impact is man able to know his own inner truth:

"The other person is a stranger, but a stranger only in disguise. Actually his is an estranged part of one's self. Therefore one's own humanity can be realized only in reunion with him - a reunion which is also decisive for the realization of his humanity."¹

Non-theonomous solutions to the inherent problems of this unity fail. Man attempts to overcome the split between subject and object, by gravitating to either the pole of total individualization, in which an attempt is made to absorb the other into one's own personal centre, or to the pole of total participation, in which one surrenders his own personal centre to the other. In the first case, however, the centred-self of the other is destroyed, and in the second case, one's own personal centre is destroyed. Reunion of subject and object is not possible by the annihilation of one or the other. Only a theonomous impact can effectively bring about the reunion; only in theonomy can man know the essential truth of himself and the other self: "The stranger who is an

¹Ibid., p. 277.

estranged part of one's self has ceased to be a stranger when he is experienced as coming from the same ground as one's self."¹ The essential unity of man with man is such because each individual shares the same ground of being with all other individuals. It is only at the level of this ground that essential unity can be realized, and at the same time, since all individuals are essentially in union, and one cannot truly know himself apart from his unity with others, one cannot know the truth of his own personhood until he discovers the depths of his own and his brother's ground. One can neither know his brother, nor himself, nor their essential relationship, without a theonomous awakening.

"In the ordinary encounter of man with man, each appears as an isolated individual. Yet, if we enter the levels of personal existence which have been rediscovered by depth psychology, we encounter the past, the ancestors, the collective unconscious, the living substance in which all living beings participate. In our search for the 'really real' we are driven from one level to another to a point where we cannot speak of level any more, where we must ask for that which is the ground of all levels, giving them their

¹Ibid., p. 278. Underscoring supplied.

structure and their power of being."¹

Man discovers, in those depths, that the ground of his own levels is identical with the ground of the other person's levels. His own ultimate ground is the ground not only of his own reality, but of all reality, and at the "level" of that ground, he participates in union with all reality. This ground of all being is, for Tillich, what is meant by the word "God." In speaking of God as "personal," one must recognize that this is to say that God is not simply the "absolute individual," but that he is the "absolute participant" as well. Both terms are necessary to describe the reality of God's "personhood," and "this can only mean that both individualization and participation are rooted in the ground of the divine life and that God is equally 'near' to each of them while transcending them both."² The bearer of New Being is the one who is in perfect unity with God, that is to say,

perfect unity with his own ground. Logically it would follow that he who is the bearer of New Being would therefore be one who

¹Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality, p. 13.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 271.

is in perfect unity with all others, since all others share in that ground. This is precisely what Tillich says about Jesus the Christ: "Out of his unity with God he has unity with those who are separated from him and from one another by finite self-relatedness and existential self-seclusion."¹ Since all men, by the impact of the Spiritual Presence, can participate in New Being, all men can participate in the reunion of those who are existentially separated, that reunion which is implicit in New Being. The unity of men comes out of man's unity with God.

The proper understanding of the relationship between individualization and participation brought about by a theonomous glimpse of the common depths results in theonomous morality. When one recognizes that he and his neighbor participate in and are sustained by the same ground of being, he recognizes also that both he and his neighbor share a common destiny. Individual fulfillment and universal fulfillment are not separable, or, as we have already seen, "in the essence of the least actualized individual, the essences of other individuals and, indirectly, of all beings are present."² Therefore,

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 154.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 436; see above p. 469.

if one person harms another person, he harms himself as well.¹ To enslave another is to enslave the self.² And ultimately, if one condemns another to eternal death, he condemns himself as well, for the eternal destiny of the individual cannot be separated from the eternal destiny of the community in which he participates.³

In one of his sermons, Tillich summarized both the philosophical and the moral implications of his understanding of God as the ground of being common to all creatures:

"There is an ultimate unity of all beings, rooted in the divine life from which they emerge and to which they return. All beings, non-human as well as human, participate in it. And therefore they all participate in each other. And we participate in each other's having and in each other's not having. When we become aware of this unity of all beings, something happens to us. The fact that others do not have, changes the character of our having: it undercuts our security and drives us beyond ourselves, to understand, to give, to share, to help.

¹Ibid., p. 95.

²Love, Power, and Justice, pp. 77f.

³e.g., Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 317; Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 436; The Boundaries of Our Being, p. 38.

The fact that others fall into sin, crime and misery, alters the character of the grace that is given us: it makes us recognize our own hidden guilt; it shows us that those who suffer for their sins and crime suffer also for us, for we are guilty of their guilt and ought to suffer as they suffer."¹

In short, if one recognizes that the stranger is, in reality, a part of himself, he will care what happens to the stranger in his historical context. Awareness of the common ground of being in God enables man to transcend his individuality and to seek for the common good, and to recognize his own implications in that which is distorted in the other person as well as in himself. Furthermore, the doctrine of the solidarity of all mankind, and the idea of the essentialization of the individual in unity with all other beings "makes the concept of vicarious fulfillment understandable."² In so far as one man, Jesus the Christ, was united with the ground of being, all men are united with the ground of being through their participation in him. All men can find salvation through one man's par-

¹The Boundaries of our Being, p. 39.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 436.

ticipation in the divine. "There is no human condition into which the divine presence does not penetrate," Tillich preached. "This is what the Cross, the most extreme of all human conditions, tells us."¹ In so far as one man has sinned, we are all implicated; in so far as one man is reunited with God, we are all reunited.

The idea of the solidarity of all mankind is a central one in Merton's thought.² References to it can be found in all periods of his career. The process of salvation was one in which man was not only restored to his basic unity with God, but in Merton's view, was one that reestablished the basic unity between man and man. The man who is not restored to unity with other men cannot claim to be restored to full unity with God: and no one can find a true reunion with others apart from the reconciling action of God. In all of this it is proper to speak of re-union and re-establishment. Man's solidarity with his brother is an original fact of man's being. It is part of the essence of man from which he is estranged. "The original solidarity of man, on which

¹The Boundaries of Our Being, p. 39.

²See above pp. 295-299.

our perfect happiness and fulfilment depend," Merton wrote, "was destroyed by sin and man cannot find peace and unity within himself, or in society, until he is reconciled to God in Christ."¹ So, the doctrine of the Fall not only symbolizes man's estrangement from God, it also speaks of man's estrangement from his brother and from the truth of his own self. Furthermore, in as much as salvation restores the unity between man and God and is brought about by the action of grace, grace also is the restorative agent in man's reunion with his fellow man. The Spirit of God unites men with God and "also unites them to one another in Him."² This reunion is effected through participation in Christ, and, accordingly, whenever Merton says that all men are Christ, he is saying that all mankind is a unity:

"Therefore when you and I become what we are really meant to be, we will discover not only that we love one another perfectly but that we are the same Mystical Person, and that we are both living in Christ and Christ in us, and we are all One Christ."³

¹Basic Principles of Monastic Spirituality, p. 15.

²The Ascent to Truth, p. 149.

³Seeds of Contemplation, p. 48.

"When we all reach that perfection of love which is the contemplation of God in His glory, our inalienable personalities, while remaining eternally distinct, will nevertheless combine into One Person so that each one of us will find himself in all the others: and God will be the life and reality of all."¹

The union that exists between man and God is a union that cannot be existentially actualized until man is made conscious of it.² So, too, man needs a conscious realization of his basic unity with all mankind in order for him to begin to live in such a way as to make that union not simply a matter of abstraction. Man should not seek to discover or create a new unity, but rather, he should seek to rediscover the original unity in which he and his brother were created. Then, upon that discovery one also discovers that the entire world is within the deepest recesses of the self, and that through "a single metaphysical intuition of being and of goodness as such,"³ man can be at one with all existing beings, and alienation between man and man, and man and nature

¹Ibid., p. 53.

²See above pp. 280ff.

³The Ascent to Truth, p. 197.

can be overcome. "When I find the world in my own ground, it is impossible for me to be alienated from it."¹ To become aware of God as the ground of my being is to become aware of the ground of all beings. Then, one is able to say that his brother is his "other self."²

Therefore, Merton felt that he could make various political observations based upon his understanding of the "connaturality" of mankind. For instance, he applied it directly to the Vietnam war, in his Introduction to a Vietnamese translation of No Man Is An Island, and showed how the doctrine of the solidarity of mankind not only was violated in that particular war, but also how the doctrine demanded a response from man, a response that spoke of eventual salvation:

"A selfish life cannot be fruitful. It cannot be true. It contradicts the very nature of man. The dire effect of this contradiction cannot be avoided: where men live selfishly, in quest of brute power and lust and money, they destroy one another. The only way to change such a world is to change the thoughts and the desires of the men

¹Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 155.

²e.g., Disputed Questions, p. 102; The Living Bread, p. 141; cf. The Wisdom of the Desert, p. 18.

who live in it. The conditions of our world are simply an outward expression of our own thoughts and desires. The misfortune of Vietnam today is that the war there expresses not merely the thoughts and desires of the people of Vietnam but, unfortunately, the inner confusion of men in other nations in different parts of the earth. The sickness of the entire earth is now erupting in Vietnam. But perhaps also the sickness of the entire earth may be cured there..."¹

Or, another example, can be found in his writings about the racial conflict in American society. It is not enough, thought Merton, to assume that the white man and the Negro shared an equal essential dignity, nor simply to say that they are brothers. What is needed is a concrete acceptance and full realization of "the fact that different races and cultures are correlative. They mutually complete one another."² One race can only know its own truth in relationship to another race in just the same way that one man can only discover his own essence in relationship to another man:

"White calls for black just as black calls for white. Our significance as white men is to be seen entirely in the fact that all men are not white. Until this fact is

¹"Preface to the Vietnamese translation of No Man Is An Island," in Thomas Merton on Peace, p. 65.

²Seeds of Destruction, p. 61.

grasped, we will never realize our true place in the world, and we will never achieve what we are meant to achieve in it. The white man is for the black man: that is why he is white. The black man is for the white man: that is why he is black."¹

Merton sees that men must exist in a relationship of "correlative responsibility," which demands that men treat men, not as objects, but as persons sharing in the same essence and fulfilling each other. Man must recognize a "fruitful sense of polarity" with his brother, and in the same way that Merton saw a potentially fruitful polarity in the relationship between American and Vietnamese, between white man and black man, so too he saw it in the relationship between the monk and the atheist. Not only should they treat each other politely, Merton wrote, but that they should recognize "that they are indeed brothers," and that they share common concerns and have ground for fruitful and productive dialogue.² Merton eschewed the facile argument that the atheist was really, if only he had

¹Loc. Cit.

²Ibid., pp. 210f.

the eyes to see, a secret believer,¹ but nonetheless, believed firmly that all men are essentially one, and that unity was made manifest in Jesus Christ and that, therefore, all men could be called a part of Christ and treated as Christ. "The Christian therefore has the obligation to treat every other man as Christ Himself, respecting his neighbor's life as if it were the life of Christ, his rights as if they were the rights of Christ." And this is so, insisted Merton, even if the neighbor is "unjust, wicked, and odious."² The Christian, because of his belief that human nature is identical in all men and that that human nature has been and will continue to be the vehicle for the incarnation of the Logos, is obliged to maintain a relationship of love, justice, and "correlative responsibility" with all men, accepting differences as fruitful polarities, and respecting each man's person as the person of Christ. As has been shown, Merton did not see this doctrine of the solidarity of all mankind in Christ to be an abstraction. For him it was a concrete reality which

¹See, for example, "Apologies to an Unbeliever," in Faith and Violence, pp. 205-214.

²Seeds of Destruction, p. 126. An almost identical statement is made in Thomas Merton on Peace, p. 112.

formed the basis for man's ethical behaviour. Ethical speculation is grounded in the experience and realization of connaturality.¹

In a world that was replete with superficial pretenses of solidarity, Merton found that it was of fundamental importance that there exist, somewhere within the total community of men, those who sought to discover and live according to the true source of solidarity. This he saw as the peculiar vocation of the monk, although he by no means limited this vocation to monasticism. He asked his fellow monks to become more aware of and sympathetic toward various fellow travellers: hippies, those interested in Yoga and Zen, poets, those involved in the peace movements and members of small agrarian communities.² He was intrigued by such unorthodox manifestations of religion as the Shakers, the Cargo-cults, and American Indian Religion.³ Nevertheless, it was the

¹Ibid., p. 257.

²e.g., Contemplation in a World of Action, pp. 106f, and The Sign of Jonas, pp. 301f.

³See Merton's Introduction to Religion in Wood: A Book of Shaker Furniture by Edward Deeming Andrews and Faith Andrews, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1966, and "The Shakers," Jubilee 11 (January, 1964): the only published material of Merton's to date on the Cargo-cults is in The Geography of Lograire. On American Indians see "Ishi: A Meditation," in Thomas Merton on Peace, pp. 248-253, and "The Sacred City," Catholic Worker 34 (January, 1968), pp. 4-6.

Christian monastic tradition that provided Merton with his own locus for personal and communal maturity. His reoccurring plea was that monasteries keep from being over-run with the superficialities of mass-produced culture and the heteronomies of conventional religion and morality. As long as there were even a very few people seeking the true depths of human community, the entire human community was saved from total distortion. The monk did not have to produce anything; he did not have to be, in Merton's eyes, useful or worthwhile in any worldly sense.¹ The monk for Merton was "useless"; he was a marginal-man. But in so far as he was a solitary and in his solitude renounced false solidarity for the true solidarity grounded in God, he was a universal man.² In becoming one with God he could be, even in his solitude, more truly one with his brothers than those who, although living in the midst of humanity, were divided one from another. But this is possible only if the solitary is living "in Christ":

¹e.g., The Silent Life, pp. 9-14, and Contemplation in a World of Action, passim.

²e.g., "The Monk as Marginal Man"; The Asian Journal, pp. 305-308.

"There is no peace and no reality in an abstract, disincarnate, gnostic solitude. St. Peter Damian insists that since the Christian hermit is hidden in Jesus Christ he is therefore most intimately present...to all the rest of the Church. His isolation in solitude unites him more closely in love with all the rest of his brothers in the world."¹

Whenever one prays, all pray. The solitary, according to Merton, is one who can still say "Dominus vobiscum" in his solitude, just as the community can chant the psalms with their reoccurring singular pronouns.²

But prayer - the communion between man and God - is of the essence. Without it solidarity loses concreteness. It is prayer that keeps solitude from becoming abstract, disincarnate and gnostic, for it is in prayer that one communes with the ground of his being and discovers that the ground of his being is the ground of all reality, and that being at one with his own ground means that he is at one with the ground of all others, that he is truly "in love" with them.

"Those who are one with Christ are also one with another."³ The monk is one who seeks oneness with

¹Contemplation in a World of Action, p. 258.

²Loc. Cit. and also Bread in the Wilderness, p. 94; cf. The Living Bread, p. xxviii.

³Disputed Questions, p. 112.

Christ, not simply for his own sake, but because of the essential solidarity of all mankind, he seeks it for the whole world. But he is not alone in the quest for life in Christ. Whoever is living at that deepest level and is restored to unity with God, is the saviour of the entire cosmos. He is the one who is "holding everything together and keeping the universe from falling apart." It matters not if there are only a few such persons in the world, whoever they are, wherever they are, "they are the ones who keep the universe from being destroyed."¹ They are the ones who, because they are at one with the ground of being, live vicariously at that level for all of their brothers, and in them all are existentially reunited with the source of life.

Put in Tillich's terms, the one who lives in Christ is the one who, through the impact of the Spiritual Presence, is able to transcend the polarities of individualization and participation. Tillich, it should be recalled, believed that only the most individualized person was capable of entering into universal participation.² Accordingly, Tillich, along

¹Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 124, 200.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 35; see above p. 389.

with Merton, was able to see the immense value of solitude and withdrawal. He differentiated between "essential solitude" and "existential loneliness" and, since Spiritual maturity was a matter of essentialization, he saw that "a decisive symptom of Spiritual maturity is the power to sustain solitude."¹ But Spiritual maturity is not a matter of achieving solitude as an end in itself. Solitude makes participation possible:

"Being alone in essential finitude is an expression of man's complete centredness and could be called 'solitude.' It is the condition for the relation to the other one. Only he who is able to have solitude is able to have communion. For in solitude man experiences the dimension of the ultimate, the true basis for communion among those who are alone."²

Superficial solidarity, the kind of solidarity that Merton so often criticized, came under Tillich's critical eye as well. Participation with others on a basis that fails to seek the common ground of being is often very easy, but it is ultimately destructive of any worthwhile purpose. This is a danger that

¹Ibid., p. 249.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 82; cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 189.

Tillich saw to be especially inherent in ministry. To minister to another one must participate with and in the other. But if the participation is on a superficial level, ministry is truncated. Sometimes the problem in communication of the Gospel is not so much a lack of participation with others but too much of the wrong kind of participation:

"Ours is a society which tries with all its means, unconsciously and sometimes even consciously, to standardize everything by means of public communication which every moment fills the very air we breathe. So here participation is very easy! In fact, it is so easy that in order to communicate the Gospel we need non-participation. Ministers need withdrawal and retirement from these influences beating upon them every minute."¹

Merton understood the solidarity of mankind from his position of withdrawal and retirement. His defense of the essential importance of solitude has an experiential basis. Tillich, on the contrary, lived his entire life in the midst of society. Unlike Merton, he was no hermit. It is of interest, then, to hear the worldly philosopher-theologian speak with passion about the same thing of which

¹Theology of Culture, p. 206; cf. Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 189.

the monk-hermit spoke. What Merton knew from every-day experience, Tillich learned implicitly in his own life "on the boundaries," a life which he described as "fruitful" but "difficult and dangerous."¹ That the solidarity of humanity can be known, understood and actualized in solitude is eloquently and adequately stated in one of Tillich's sermons. The content of that sermon, if not the language as well, could easily be Merton's. The two men were in agreement:

"Now perhaps we can answer a question you may have already asked - how can communion grow out of solitude? We have seen that we can never reach the innermost centre of another being. We are always alone, each for himself. But we can reach it in a movement that rises first to God and then returns from him to the other self. In this way man's aloneness is not removed, but taken into the community with that which the centres of all beings rest, and so into community with all of them. Even love is reborn in solitude. For only in solitude are those who are alone able to reach those from whom they are separated. Only the presence of the eternal can break through the walls that isolate the temporal from the temporal. One hour of solitude may bring us closer to those we love than many hours of communication. We can take them with us to the hills of eternity.

"And perhaps when we ask - what is the innermost nature of solitude? - we should answer: the presence of the eternal upon

¹On the Boundary, p. 13.

the crowded roads of the temporal. It is the experience of being alone but not lonely, in view of the eternal presence that shines through the face of the Christ, and that includes everybody and everything from which we are separated. In the poverty of solitude all riches are present. Let us dare to have solitude - to face the eternal, to find others, to see ourselves."¹

The contemplative does not take a Plotinian flight from the alone to the Alone, but from the alone to the One in whom all are united. In this way both Merton and Tillich are able to see the intimate relationship between mystical prayer and human community. To be united to God in the ecstatic moment of mystical prayer is to be united, at the same time, to the innermost ground of one's neighbour.

¹The Boundaries of Our Being, pp. 22f.

Conclusion: Mysticism and Social Ethics

"Biblical, classical, and mystical Christianity agree in the assertion that the moral act, in order to be perfect or even possible, must follow from the union of God and man...He who does not participate in the good itself cannot be good."¹

In this way Paul Tillich succinctly states his understanding of the intimate relationship between mysticism and ethics; mysticism is an essential ingredient of religion; and religion gives the unconditional character to the moral imperative. When a moment of ecstasy occurs and a reunion of essence and existence is evidenced, however fragmentarily, man is reunited with the ground of his being, which is the divine ground in which he and all reality find their power of being and their solidarity. All reality stems from the same ground. Man's reunion with that ground is manifested, according to Tillich, in faith and in love, both of which point in the same direction. This would not necessarily be so if faith was understood as the acceptance of certain doctrinal statements. However, Tillich does not define faith in this

¹Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality, pp. 68f.

way. Faith, for him, is a matter of being ultimately concerned, and to be ultimately concerned implies love, that is "the desire and urge toward the reunion of the separated."¹ He who responds in faith to the impact of the Spiritual Presence responds also in love. "Faith implies love: love lives in works: in this sense faith is actual in works."² When faith is seen as ultimate concern, and when love is seen as the drive toward reunion, it can be further stated that man's existence in relationship to God is always an ethical existence. Man becomes one who is ultimately concerned about being reunited with his own ground, and because he and his brother share the same ground of being, he is ultimately concerned about reunion with his brother. If man, in a moment of mystical ecstasy, discovers his own divine ground, he is driven by the nature of what he discovers to a life of action. This is expressed in Tillich's oft-repeated understanding of participation in truth. One does not participate in truth simply by knowing the truth or understanding the truth or stating the truth; one does the truth. Cognition alone falls short of

¹Dynamics of Faith, pp. 113f.

²Ibid., pp. 115f.

full participation. Only by doing the truth does one really know the truth, for in doing the truth "the gap between the cognitive and the moral is conquered."¹ To participate in New Being is to live a life of active concern for all beings. Tillich holds that Jesus the Christ is the final revelation and as such is both exemplar and bearer of New Being. He thereby concludes that one is able to do the truth by remaining in Christ for he who is called the Christ is he who said, "I am the truth."² (John 14:6) Only in so far as one is able to participate in the New Being, the being revealed in Jesus the Christ, - that is the being in which essence and existence are reunited - is one able to know, do, and participate in the truth. Only in a theonomous situation in which New Being is manifested, is it possible to have an ethic that effectively reunites those who are estranged. In New Being faith and love are united. "The act of faith and the act of accepting the moral imperative's unconditional character are one and the same act."³

¹Morality and Beyond, p. 54.

²The Boundaries of Our Being, pp. 204f.

³Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 169.

Or, put in another way, Tillich says that "faith is the state of being grasped by the transcendent unity of unambiguous life" and that this faith "embodies love as the state of being taken into that transcendent unity."¹ Faith precedes love .only logically; experientially they are always together:

"Faith without love is a continuation of estrangement and an ambiguous act of religious self-transcendence. Love without faith is an ambiguous reunion of the separated without the criterion and power of the transcendent union."²

Therefore Tillich can state that in his understanding of theology, "The ethical element is a necessary - and often predominant - element in every theological statement."³ Although, as we have seen, he rejects the validity of a "theological ethic" because of its heteronomous implications, he sees that in as much as theology points to the theonomous element in morality and culture, as well as in religion, "every theological statement has ethical

¹Ibid., p. 137.

²Ibid., pp. 137f.

³Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 36.

implications."¹ The mystical and the ethical are inseparable. The mystical moment necessarily results in ethical activity, unless, of course, demonic distortions within the ambiguities of life so pervert the reception of God's revelatory act as to make its manifestations fall short of the criterion of Jesus the Christ. Even so, in spite of existential distortions, the ethical and the mystical interpenetrate, although existential distortions can cause ambiguities. If, however, a mystical experience is a genuine encounter with the divine ground, no matter how fragmentary, it is unambiguous, and as such it results in ethical activity. The manifestation of the Spiritual Presence within existence is faith and love, and the love that is manifested is the drive toward reunion, not only with God, but also with His entire creation.

In the mystical experience unambiguous self-actualization of life occurs. The polarities that are only ambiguously balanced under the conditions of existence find their fulfillment. The poles of individualization and participation are transcended and man finds the centre of his self in community with others. The poles of dynamics and form are transcended

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 284. See above, pp. 505f.

and man finds constructive growth to be a reality. The poles of freedom and destiny are transcended and man is able to transcend himself without losing the reality of himself.

However, this process always takes place both within the community and within history, and within these processes the community, as well as the personality, is actualized. All the life processes occur in what Tillich calls "bearers of history,"¹ either individuals or groups. The mystical experience may happen to a single individual in his solitude, but since he is a part of mankind, it is not something that he can claim to possess for himself. Revelation may be received by the individual, but it is not his. It is for others. "No individual receives revelation for himself," Tillich explained, "It is for his group, and implicitly for all groups, for mankind as a whole."² The essentialization of man is not to be seen apart from its occurrence within a community, nor apart from its occurrence within history, even though these occurrences are fragmentary and anticipate the final transhistorical essentialization. History is moving

¹Ibid., pp. 329-333.

²Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 141.

toward a goal, a telos, the symbol for which is the Kingdom of God. The inner-historical, inner-communal nature of the process of the self-actualization is not without its own ambiguities; nevertheless the aim is that of a "kingdom," that is, a community of persons. The aim of each individual act of self-integration or essentialization is a universal aim. Within its historical context, therefore, Tillich says:

"There is still self-integration but not as an end in itself; self-integration under the historical dimension serves the drive toward universal and total integration. There is still self-creativity, but not for the sake of particular creations; self-creativity under the historical dimension serves the drive toward that which is universally and totally new. And there is still self-transcendence, but not toward a particular sublimity; self-transcendence under the historical dimension serves the drive toward fulfillment through all the processes of life not withstanding the fact that while it runs toward the ultimate it remains bound to the preliminary, and in running toward fulfillment it defeats fulfillment. It does not escape the ambiguities of life by striving in all processes toward unambiguous life."¹

Where, because of the impact of the Spirit, the ambiguities of life are overcome fragmentarily, the universal implications of every single act of self-

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 353f.

actualization are present.

In another context Tillich differentiated between technical, mystical and historical realism. Technical reason as he defines it, goes beyond the here-and-now as it seeks to discover relationships between means and ends: mystical realism goes beyond the here-and-now in its search for essence. Historical realism seeks the transcendent within the here-and-now, it seeks for the essence under the conditions of existence. Therefore, in Tillich's thought, historical realism is superior to, and incorporates, the others.

"Historical realism transcends technological, as well as mystical, realism. Its decisive character is conscious of the present situation, of the 'here and now.' It sees the power of being, in the depth of 'our historical situation.' It is contemporaneous, and in this it differs from the technological as well as the mystical, idea of reality."¹

Technical reason, in other words, is analogous to autonomy: it fails to take "the depth dimension" into consideration. Mystical realism is analogous to heteronomy in as much as it sees the depth

¹The Protestant Era, p. 81.

dimension as totally distinct from the here-and-now. Historical realism is analogous to theonomy: it seeks the depths within that which is given. Mysticism, then, can only be realistic in the fullest sense if it does not divorce itself from historical, concrete situations. Contemporaneity is basic to a realistic approach to life. That which is eternal is to be found in the immediate moment, in the eternal now (a phrase Tillich borrowed from Meister Eckhart), and such a discovery is the mystical element of religious experience. The mystical is never separated from the historical without its becoming distorted and unrealistic. It is one with the historical in two senses: first it is such in so far as history is the place in which the divine Spirit is encountered, and secondly it is one with history in so far as man exists in a community which has a telos, namely, unambiguous essentialization and universal salvation.

As has been remarked, existence under the impact of the Spiritual Presence in the historical dimension is symbolized by the phrase "the Kingdom of God." In the same way that the Spiritual Presence was used to answer the questions implied in the ambiguities of the existential life of man, so "Kingdom of God" is the symbol that Tillich uses to answer questions implied in the ambiguities of history. Unlike the Eastern symbol of Nirvana, with which Tillich contrasts

it, the symbol of the Kingdom of God has four particular connotations. It is political, social, personalistic, and universal. The political connotation includes the idea that the Kingdom of God is both a realm in history and also the ruling activity of God. The social connotation includes the ideas of peace and justice and elevates all utopian schemes by the addition of the words "of God."¹ In the personalistic connotation Tillich sees the Kingdom of God as giving eternal meaning to the individual person. This is in contrast to those symbols "in which the return to the ultimate identity is the aim of existence," and the individuality of the person is annihilated. For Tillich "the trans-historical aim towards which history runs is not the extinction but the fulfillment of humanity in every human individual."² The universal connotation means that the Kingdom of God is not simply a kingdom of men, but that it involves life in all its dimensions.

It is within the context of the Kingdom of God that Tillich sees the final conquest of the ambiguities of life. Within history we find the ambiguities of

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 383.

²Loc. Cit.

life conquered only fragmentarily. The symbol of the Kingdom of God incorporates both the historical dimension and the hope for its eschatological fulfillment. The telos of all creation is the Kingdom of God in which there will be unambiguous self-integration, with the poles of individualization and participation in perfect unity; unambiguous self-creativity, with the poles of dynamics and form united in the divine creativity; and unambiguous self-transcendence, with the poles of freedom and destiny united in the divine freedom which is identical with the divine destiny. Therefore, morality, culture and religion will come to an end. Morality will come to an end because the ought-to-be will be reality. Culture will come to an end because theoria and praxis will be united and the truth will be done. Religion will come to an end in that God will be all in all. There is no temple in the heavenly city.¹

In the very last lecture Tillich delivered, he spoke of the whole history of religions as "a fight for the Religion of the Concrete Spirit."² Christianity's

¹Ibid., pp. 429f.

²The Future of Religions, (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 88.

unique contribution to that history is the picture of Jesus as the Christ, the final victor in the struggle between God and the demonic distortions within religion. Whenever religion in any of its forms turns away from the Concrete Spirit it becomes a demonic distortion of the eschatological direction of history. The Spirit is known in incarnation, and a mysticism which views concrete reality as a deception from which we must be saved in order to enter into a timeless contemplation of the Absolute, is a false and futile exercise. But such a mysticism is not Christian mysticism in Tillich's view. "One should remember," he reminded his readers, "that it was a mystic (Öttinger), who formulated all this when he said that 'corporality (becoming body) is the end of the ways of God.'"¹ For the Christian mystic there is no withdrawal from involvement in the struggles, pains, and joys of history, since the Christian mystic is one who recognizes that the Spirit who has encountered him is the Concrete Spirit. Also, because of his encounter with the Ground of all being, the mystic recognizes that man is essentially a part of every other man who has ever

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 214.

lived or whoever will live.¹ To deny the other is to deny one's self. The Christian mystic, furthermore, avoids a mysticism in which history is so misunderstood as to be rendered meaningless. What Tillich calls "non-historical interpretations of history" lead to a religion in which one lives reasonably and acts honorably within history, but in which there is "no impulse to transform history in the direction of universal humanity and justice."² If the essentiality of the finite and the concrete is denied, ethics become peripheral. Only theonomy, in which the depths of the ground are discovered within given, concrete reality, leads to agape. Non-historical types of mysticism can lead to compassion, even very noble compassion, but compassion lacks agape. Tillich defined compassion as "a state in which he who does not suffer under his own conditions may suffer by identification with another who suffers."³ But agape ("the love which reunites centred person with centred

¹On the practise of praying for the dead as a statement of solidarity see Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 446.

²Ibid., p. 375.

³Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 71.

person")¹ goes beyond this: agape includes "the will to transform the other one, either directly, or indirectly by transforming the sociological and psychological structures by which he is conditioned."² It leads to a willingness to accept the unacceptable and to try to transform it. This is possible only when the idea of the solidarity of man is seen in terms of participation rather than identity. In the idea of identity, the individual centred selves are swallowed up in one another; in the idea of participation, the individual identities are maintained, but differences are transcended under the impact of the Spiritual Presence. "One can say, in considerably condensed form, that participation leads to agape, identity to compassion."³ If one considers himself to be identical with his brother he can have compassion. But only if he can see himself and his brother as separate entities participating in the divine Ground which is Love, can there be the possibility of one seeking to transform the situation in which the other

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 289. See above p. 506.

²Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, p. 71.

³Loc. Cit.

is suffering. Theonomous ethics, in other words, seek not only to share in a common ground, but seek as well to discover something new within the conditions of existence. Theonomous ethics do not regard existence as negative, but as the locus for that which is new, as the place in which essence can become actualized. Theonomous ethics seeks a new creation.

Some ecstasies can drive persons away from reality, but one must be careful to distinguish between true ecstasy and self-intoxication. Tillich insists that "not everything that calls itself ecstasy is an experience of the really real. An ecstasy that drives us away from reality and the demands of the present is destructive, and, if it pretends to be holy, it is demonic."¹ However, in the same way that a person should not confuse a false ecstasy and a true one, one should not confuse the essence of society with its existential distortions. Tillich wrote in the midst of a society that tended to stress the gap between subject and object, and in its insistence on objectivity, tended to depersonalization. In this situation Tillich insisted on both the im-

¹The Protestant Era, p. 90.

portance of maintaining the centred-self and the need for that centred-self to seek salvation for the entire community. As we have already seen, solitude was regarded as a fundamental means of maintaining the centred-self. But solitude was for the sake of the community; withdrawal implied a subsequent return:

"The person as a person can preserve himself only by a partial nonparticipation in the objectifying structures of technical society. But he can withdraw even partially only if he has a place to which to withdraw. And this place is the New Reality to which the Christian message points, which transcends Christianity as well as non-Christianity, which is anticipated everywhere in history, and which has found its criterion in the picture of Jesus as the Christ. But the place of the withdrawal is at the same time, the starting point for the attack on the technical society and its power of de-personalization."¹

Christian action depends on man's withdrawal to Christ, the New Being. "Only out of the ground of the personal can the personal be saved," Tillich said. "Only those who withdraw from action can receive the power to act."²

¹"The Person in a Technical Society," in Social Ethics, ed. Gibson Winter, (London: SCM, 1968), pp. 135f.

²Ibid., p. 138.

Two poles, then, must be balanced. Man must withdraw from society and seek the ground of being; but he must return from his place of withdrawal and not allow himself to be tempted by a selfish, false, ecstasy. There must be withdrawal from existential distortions, but there can be no withdrawal from history. Not even the monk or the hermit can separate himself from history:

"Nobody who uses language is outside history, and nobody can withdraw from it. The monk and the hermit, who try to cut all social and political ties, are dependent on the history they want to avoid, and further, they influence the historical movement from which they try to separate themselves."¹

There is no withdrawal from history; there may only appear to be such a withdrawal. But there can be, and needs to be, a withdrawal from a belief that existential distortions are, in fact, manifestations of the essential. The Protestant Principle insists that man not make an equation between what is and what ought-to-be. Under the conditions of existence there will necessarily be distortions. Finite reality can not be equated with the infinite. Therefore, the Protestant Principle demands a withdrawal from a

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 369.

false understanding of reality, a withdrawal from any attitude that fails to seek the unconditional in the midst of the conditioned. It demands a withdrawal from strict autonomy or strict heteronomy; it demands a withdrawal to theonomy.

The theonomous experience is the mystical experience. It is the moment in which man finds reality transparent to its own divine ground. It is the moment in which he finds himself reunited with that ground, and inasmuch as his ground is the same ground in which all reality finds its power of being, it is the moment in which he becomes aware of the solidarity of all creation. In discovering the divine made transparent in his own reality, man discovers that to be at one with God is to be at one with the sufferings of the world. To participate in God is to participate in that Reality which, in the Cross of Christ, participated fully in the totality of human suffering. To participate in God is to participate with Him in the historical situation. To avoid history and to avoid community is to avoid the very essence of one's own self and, ultimately, to avoid God. The call to withdrawal is a call to the mystical experience of God and the mystical experience of God is a call to seek for the world's transformation and essentialization in and through Christ, the New Being.

In an earlier chapter it was demonstrated how the process of withdrawal from existential distortions, experience of essential reality, and a subsequent return from the place of withdrawal explained the relationship between Thomas Merton's life as a contemplative monk and his direct involvement in the political and social issues of his own times.¹ Both explicitly in his writings and implicitly in his life, the nature of the relationship between mysticism and social ethics is demonstrated. Stated as briefly as possible that relationship can be said to be based on the understanding that effective ethical behaviour is impossible apart from the reunion of God and man. In that reunion man is not simply reunited with the divine Being as One who is "totally Other," but he is united with the divine Being who is the ground of all beings. He is united, therefore, with his own ground, and in that reunion, discovers that he and all mankind, indeed all creation, share a solidarity because they share in the same divine ground. One withdraws from surface reality only in order to experience reunion with that ground, and that experience drives one to a life of active love, an existential expression of the essential unity of all beings in the divine ground.

¹See above pp. 290-321.

This summary of Merton's mystical-ethical theology bears remarkable similarity to what we have just seen to be Tillich's understanding of the mystical-ethical relationship. Although it would be repetitious and superfluous to give a detailed analysis of their respective theologies - this has been done throughout this chapter - it remains for us to indicate two specific points of affinity in their thought. The first point is in regard to the unity of faith and love; the second concerns history and the Kingdom of God. An analysis of these two points, along with occasional references to other ideas that they hold in common, will indicate that these two men offer interpretations of the relationship between mysticism and social ethics that are substantially the same.

Tillich held that faith implied love. They were both manifestations of participation in the New Being; faith was seen as the state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence and love was seen as the state of being taken into the transcendent unity created by the New Being. Both were experienced together; one without the other is the expression of a spiritual experience that has not been able to overcome the ambiguities of life. One without the other is the sign of a demonic distortion of the impact of the Spirit.

This close relationship between faith and love is a feature of Merton's thought as well as Tillich's. Faith for Merton, as for Tillich, has a logical priority. "Sanctity is not constituted only by good works or even by moral heroism," he wrote, "but first of all by ontological union with God 'in Christ.'" Virtues and good works "remain secondary to our new being."¹ Or, again, you cannot gather figs from thistles. "Hence, what matters above all is not this or that observance, this or that set of ethical practices, but our renewal, our 'new creation' in Christ." However, this is not all. "It is also a life in which, drawn to union with God in Christ by the Holy Spirit, we strive to express our love and our new being by acts of virtue."² If we are to love, we must first be united with God by faith. "It is faith that opens my heart to Christ and His Spirit, that He may work in me."³

Merton did not define faith as "ultimate concern" as did Tillich.⁴ Nevertheless, he insisted as strongly as Tillich did that love had to be based on faith, or

¹"Christ, the Way," p. 146; cf. Life and Holiness, pp. 70f.

²Ibid., p. 147.

³Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 170.

⁴In the one extant letter from Merton to Tillich in the Bellarmine College archives, Merton discusses

put in different terms, on acceptance of New Being. Morality that has not sought its depths in God is not, for Merton, a morality that can unambiguously define itself in terms of love. The old man - man in the Adamic nature - has fallen from the state in which he is capable of love. Only man who has become a new creation in the New Adam is able to love. "No work of mine can be called 'love' in the Christian sense, unless it comes from Christ,"¹ he said. It is to be noted that although Merton was highly respected by numerous activists in the American churches, he himself made a sharp differentiation between what he called "activism" and "Christian action." The first he saw as a flurry of activity that was doomed to failure because of its failure to seek its divine ground. The latter, on the contrary, was seen as action that finds its basis upon one's reunion with the divine ground and therefore was not

the understanding of faith as "ultimate concern." The stipulations of the Merton Legacy Trust do not allow quotations to be made from this letter, however, a summation of Merton's position is that he can accept faith as "ultimate concern" in terms of "Power of being" and as an expression of Christian hope. Merton, therefore, did not reject the idea of faith as "ultimate concern," although it was not an expression he used himself.

¹Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 170.

only efficacious, but was also an unconditional imperative. "What is needed now," Merton wrote in the midst of the moral crisis of the 1960's, "is the Christian who manifests the truth of the Gospel in social action, with or without explanation."¹ Yet, he warned, there was a new Christian consciousness emerging, and this new consciousness was being felt within Catholicism for the first time with impelling force. It was one which concerned itself "less and less with God as present in being (in his creation) and more and more with God's word as summons to action."² To regard God's word as a summons was not an idea that Merton wished to repudiate; rather he insisted that it was a dangerously one-sided understanding of the point of contact between man and God. It was dangerous, he felt, in that he could see it leading only to futile activism, and not to responsible, reforming Christian action. A theology that insists on repudiating anything that resembles the "metaphysical" or the "Hellenic" or the "mystical" would end up being too vague and subjective. "In theory it is excitingly charismatic," Merton wrote,

¹Thomas Merton on Peace, p. 222.

²Zen and the Birds of Appetite, p. 28.

"in practise it is sometimes strangely capricious."¹
It "eschews well-defined and concrete forms" and identifies itself with an undefined activity. In Tillich's terms it stressed dynamics at the expense of form. As an alternative to this activist theology, Merton, like Tillich, did not advocate a "mere re-affirmation of the ancient static and classic positions."²
The old metaphysics would neither be accepted by the majority of modern men, nor would it necessarily be adequate. Nevertheless, again like Tillich, Merton felt that any theology that had lost its ontological and its mystical grounding would result in an activism which would be active indeed, but which would never be able to come to grips with the radical nature of the problems facing both individuals and societies. A theology which failed to plunge to its ontological depths, Merton felt, would never lead to an ethic that would be able to get beyond the level of superficial behaviour. It should be noted at this point that Merton's reaction against the antimystical, activist theology that he encountered in the 1960's is very similar to Tillich's reaction against the moralism of

¹Ibid., p. 29.

²Loc. Cit.

the Ritschlian school of theology with its rejection of the mystical and its reduction of religion to the status of ethic's helpmate.¹

Merton occasionally used the term "eucharistic morality" to describe an ethic that was based upon one's discovery of his own true being as grounded in Christ. Ethical behaviour, he said, should be based neither on "the cold obligation of an impersonal law,"² nor should it be based on a desire to reap a reward.³ Man does not need to act in a Promethean way, trying to wrench from God that which has already been given to man by God's own act of love. Rather, ethics should be based solely on a response to what God has freely given to man, namely, reunion of man and God in Christ. Acts of virtue and good works are, for Merton, done not in order to achieve that reunion -- which in any case would be impossible -- but out of gratitude for the reunion that God has already established. Merton, therefore, called men to become

¹See Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 204, 257; and, Perspectives on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Protestant Theology, pp. 215-223.

²Life and Holiness, p. 82.

³See the advice Merton gave to a Papal Volunteer going to Brazil to mistrust "even unconscious expectations of reward." Seeds of Destruction, p. 237; cf. Thoughts in Solitude, p. 44.

aware of that union, and then to base a morality on a response of thanksgiving (hence "eucharistic" morality) to God rather than on the specious attempt to win favour or rewards.¹ A response-centred morality is a morality which finds its true basis in faith, not in works - in the prius of God's action, not in man's. True morality, for both Merton and Tillich, stemmed not from man's efforts, but from the appearance of, and response to, New Being.

The appearance of New Being is accepted through faith and, at the same time, is manifested in love. "One cannot be justified by a faith that does not do the works of love," Merton wrote, "for love is the witness and evidence of 'new being' in Christ."² This statement is reminiscent of Tillich's position that faith and love cannot be separated essentially; both are aspects of the same response to the impact of the Spiritual Presence. Tillich summarized this point when he said that the truth is to be done. Merton makes much the same point: man is called to act upon the truth that he has received in faith:

¹See Life and Holiness, pp. 82f; "Christ the Way," p. 150; Seasons of Celebration, pp. 144f.

²Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p. 170.

"It is not merely by thinking about the mysteries of faith that we can enter into them. We must dedicate our freedom to the course which they point out to us as the will of God... It is only by acting upon the truths of faith, conforming our lives to their consequences, that we can come to make them our possession."¹

Man can share fully in the life of Christ, and therefore in the truth of Christ, "not by figuring it out but by living as he did."² Merton can speak about acting "truths" and about acting the "truth." In the one case he implies that doctrinal statements are not meant merely to be propositions to which man responds simply by the use of the intellect, but are to be incorporated into the totality of one's life, and in the other case he implies that to participate and abide "in Christ" one must be ready to do the will of God, which is, specifically, to love one another.³ The truth must be known and acted upon; and that truth is love. Merton was convinced that in the 1960's the most effective way to preach the Christian Gospel was through action. This was not

¹The New Man, pp. 131f.

²Opening the Bible, p. 69.

³e.g., Life and Holiness, pp. 157f.

an inappropriate thought for a man who had taken a vow of silence. Merton believed that silence was necessary in order to preserve the purity of language and in order to continue to allow words to reveal their meanings. In a culture that was inundated with noise, actions could indeed speak louder than words. The world to which Merton addressed his remarks on Christian social action was "an irreligious world in which the Christian message has been repeated over and over until it has come to seem empty of all intelligible content..."¹ Therefore, the way to persuade and enlighten the world, cannot simply be through the use of more words: the world had such a plethora of words that it was increasingly difficult to separate truth from propaganda, events from pseudo-events. Therefore, while maintaining his belief that "the words of the Gospel still objectively retain all the force and freshness of their original life," Merton increasingly called Christians to speak by their actions, not merely by their words. "No matter how lucid, how persuasive, how logical, how profound our theological and spiritual statements may be, they are often wasted on anyone who does not already

¹Thomas Merton on Peace, p. 222.

think as we do," Merton wrote.¹ The Christian cannot afford the luxury of performing his apologetic and evangelical task simply through the use of the spoken or written word. Faith, for Merton, implied loving action; and although words were the essential and necessary means of articulating the various interpretations of the faith, they fell short of love. Faith implied love, and love implied action not words. In this way Merton could be supportive of activism within his own Church, while constantly and consistently warning those involved in action never to lose sight of their spiritual ground.

It is obvious, then, at least by implication, that Merton considered contemplation as a discipline that could never be divorced from the historical dimension. However, one need not rely only on this implicit understanding. Merton made numerous explicit statements concerning his conception of the precise relationship between the contemplative and the historic situation, and not surprisingly, these statements are consistent with the rest of Merton's thought, and coincide in general terms with Paul Tillich's approach

¹Loc. Cit. See also "Events and Pseudo-Events," in Faith and Violence, pp. 145-164.

to history and the Kingdom of God. Like Tillich, Merton saw the possibilities of various kairos in his own historical situation. Tillich looked for the kairos in the time immediately after the first World War, a time, he felt, when Germany and the world could begin anew to build a peaceful world. Merton saw the kairos in the midst of the civil rights movement of the 1960's, a time when men of all races could begin anew to live in brotherhood. Tillich saw the kairos within the context of theonomy; Merton saw it in the context of contemplation:

"Awareness of Christ implies...some awareness of history, not in the abstract academic sense, but in the concrete: an awareness of the crisis of our times in relation to Christ's plan for the salvation of man. A Christian consciousness is therefore a special kind of historical consciousness: an awareness of the kairos (the providential time of crisis and judgment) and of choice....a choice made in the context of historic crisis."¹

The "special" kind of historical consciousness is a consciousness which is aware of the depths of history, one which is not overwhelmed by images, myths, superstitions and ideologies, but one which is able to

¹"The Historical Consciousness," in Contemplative Review I (May, 1968), pp. 2f.

discern the workings of God in the midst of the events of the times. "Contemplatives," he wrote, "should have a genuine and deep historical consciousness, since Christ is in fact manifesting Himself in the critical conflicts of our time."¹ As a contemplative, Merton considered that it was his vocation to share with the world the special perspective that belonged to the contemplative, "the viewpoint of one who is not directly engaged in the struggles and controversies of the world," and thereby "hope to get a better view of the whole problem and mystery of man."² The contemplatives' viewpoint is only one viewpoint; it does not intend to negate the viewpoints of others, but to compliment them:

"A contemplative will, then, concern himself with the same problems as other people, but he will try to get to the spiritual and metaphysical roots of these problems - not by analysis but by simplicity."³

He can never divorce himself from history and from the needs of persons within history. However, Merton

¹Loc. Cit.

²Faith and Violence, p. 146.

³Ibid., p. 147.

saw his own relationship to history as a dialectical one: there is a simultaneous Yes and No. It is "at once acceptance and reversal." It is never a matter of an acquiescence to the manipulations of the power of politicians, it is never a "supine acceptance of a secularist mystique on its own terms."¹ Nor is it a rejection of history for some sort of non-historical ideal. Reversal of history and acceptance of history in Merton's thought must be understood within the context of his differentiation between the false, superficial world, and the true, divinely-grounded world. Within that context it can be seen that Merton is willing to accept history (as the locus of God's self-manifestations) and reverse history (to turn it away from its existential distortions) simultaneously. As he explained:

"The reversal comes from within history accepted, in its often shattering reality, as the focus of salvation and epiphany. It is not that the world of Auschwitz, Vietnam and the Bomb has to be cursed and repudiated as the devil's own territory. That very world has to be accepted as the terrain of love not in the condemnation of evil but in its forgiveness: and this is

¹Ibid., p. 258.

certainly not an easy truth when
we confront the enormity of evil!"¹

The mystic should not yield to the over-present temptation of spiritual pride. He should not fall prey to "a certain false mysticism which likes to gloat over the prospect of a Last Judgement in which the whole history of mankind will fall into oblivion under the anathema of an enraged God."² Such a view of the eschaton is contrary to Merton's theology on two fundamental points, namely, his doctrine of man and his understanding of God. In the first place, since Merton sees man as essentially united to all men, to see history as condemned means to see one's self as condemned as well. In the second place, the solidarity of men is the gift of God and the presence of God in the life of men. Therefore, to condemn all of history is to show a fundamental inconsistency in God. On both these points Merton is very reminiscent of Tillich, who, as we have seen,³ thinks it impossible for one to participate existentially in the condemnation of another and who also resists any attempt to introduce an eternal split in the Godhead. For Merton,

¹Loc. Cit.

²The Living Bread, p. 152.

³See above pp. 451, 469f.

the Parousia is not the condemnation but "the clarification and vindication of human history." It will not destroy history but fulfill it "explaining everything that was not clear, showing how all things worked together for the good of Christ and fulfilled the purposes of the Father."¹ Therefore, since history is the place where God is at work, to speak of man's union with God is to imply that man is united with Him in His historical activity. The message of the Bible, Merton said, was a message of salvation to "the poor, the burdened, the oppressed, the underprivileged." It was a call to man "to act as God's collaborator in setting up a definitive kingdom of justice and peace," in which the oppressed would find their essential dignity as persons made in the image of God appreciated and expressed within the structures of society. Merton accepts what he interprets to be St. Paul's "mystical view of history" as "the power of the Spirit 'driving' the redeemed to accomplish an historic destiny of uniting all mankind in peace and reconciliation."² If the mystical

¹The Living Bread, pp. 152f.

²Opening the Bible, p. 41. Merton makes explicit reference to I Corinthians 3:9; Collossians 1:39; Philippians 4:13; Ephesians 1:9-13, 15-23.

experience of God opens man to his own redemption, he is driven, as one redeemed, to seek the redemption of all mankind, in the concrete, historical, existential milieu. The goal is the Kingdom of God; and Merton, like Tillich, did not see that Kingdom as an entity separate and apart from the existential, fallen world. It is always concrete; to speak about the full manifestation of the Kingdom of God is not to speak of an abstract immortality:

"Eschatology is the vision of a totally new and final reality, a cosmic reversal that brings ultimate meaning and salvation to the fallen world. That reality is, in effect, the total integration of God and man in Christ - that is to say, in concrete and communal mankind united not by politics but by mercy."¹

Tillich, as we have seen, referred to the Kingdom of God as political, social, personalistic and universal. A review of what he meant by these terms will indicate the closeness of his views to those of Merton's. The Kingdom is in history, it includes peace and justice, it gives meaning to the individual person, and includes the whole of the created order. Merton concurs with Tillich on each of these points.

¹"Blake and the New Theology," p. 680f; cf. "A Life Free From Care," p. 225.

We have demonstrated how he regards eschatology as inner-historical, how he sees historical destiny as a society of "peace and reconciliation," how he sees redemption of the person as his unambiguous existential expression of the image of God, and how salvation is seen as the restoration of the entire cosmos, not simply one realm within the cosmos.¹ Contemplation, therefore, according to both Merton and Tillich, was neither an escape from the rigors of historical existence, nor a denial of its essential reality; for both men the contemplative or mystical life was the place from which one could begin to cooperate with God in His redeeming activity within the concrete realm of historical existence.

There are other indications of Merton and Tillich's basic agreement on the issue of the relationship between mysticism and social ethics. Tillich, in some of his earliest writings on religion, disagreed with the tendency to define two basic types of religion as the mystical and the prophetic. As we have seen, he saw that the mystical element was essential to all forms of religion, and defined the basic tendencies of religion in terms of the sacramental and the

¹See above p. 477.

"theocratic."¹ Merton, too, saw the "oversimplified" nature of the distinction between the mystical and the prophetic, and insisted that the contemplative and prophetic vocations belong together.² Both men, too, spoke of the points of difference and points of similarity between the Buddhist concept of Nirvana and its ethic of compassion and the Christian faith, although Merton tended to be more willing and less hesitant than Tillich to accept and to stress the similarities between the two traditions, pointing out, for instance, what he considered to be a basic agreement between the ethical implications of the Buddhist idea of Nirvana and the Christian idea of kenosis.³

But these points of affinity between Merton and Tillich are almost incidental. The basic consistency between their two positions has already been outlined in detail, not only in this section, but throughout

¹See Religionsphilosophie in What is Religion?, pp. 89-90; and also Theology of Culture, pp. 192-196. Friedrich Heiler's Prayer (ET: London: Oxford University Press, 1932), Chapter IV, is the classic statement of the division of the types of religion into the "mystical," and the "prophetic." See above p. 8f.

²See "This is God's Work," p. 7, in which Heiler is mentioned. See also "Renewal in Monastic Education," p. 248, and Faith and Violence, p. 67.

³On Tillich, see above pp. 561f. On Merton see Zen and the Birds of Appetite, especially p. 86.

this chapter, and can be summarized by saying that both men advocated a morality based on love rather than one based on obedience or duty. This would be a trivial observation were it not for some key words that these men introduce into their discussions. As early as 1922 Tillich wrote: "In social ethics, it is the new mysticism of love now stirring everywhere that signifies a theonomous overcoming of the autonomous ethical forms without a relapse into.... heteronomy..."¹ His use of the words "mysticism" and "theonomous" to qualify the word "love" points to the same truth that Merton insisted upon, namely, "love is impossible without freedom," and that freedom is impossible without "existential communion with God, in the Risen Christ."²

Ethics, to be truly effective, must be based upon love. Love, to be real, must be based upon freedom. Freedom, to be real, must be based upon one's undistorted, essential nature. One's essential nature must be based upon ultimate reality.

¹"On the Idea of a Theology of Culture," in What is Religion?, p. 172.

²The New Man, p. 133.

Ultimate reality is known in the mystical moment. In that moment one discovers that his own essential nature is grounded in the Ultimate. In the mystical moment he is aware that the essential nature of all reality is grounded in the same ground in which he discovered his own true self. In that moment he is free to love, because he is aware of the true nature of all his relationships, he is aware of the true nature of himself, and he is aware of the unconditional demand to actualize himself and his community. In that ground he discovers the self-manifestation of God, the criterion for which is the final and definitive revelation of God, Jesus the Christ; it is he who is the New Being, the one in whom essence is known under the conditions of existence, the one who is perfectly transparent to the divine ground. He is man's perfect exemplar. But he is more. In so far as all men share in the same divine ground to which he is transparent, all men share in the essentialization that is evident in him. He is therefore both exemplar and saviour. Existential communion with God is in and through the Christ.

Hence, the terms "mysticism," "theonomous," and "existential communion" qualify and define what Tillich and Merton agree in considering the fundamental nature of both religion and ethics. Mysticism is an essential ingredient of religion; and religion gives

the unconditional character to the moral imperative. Mysticism and all ethical behaviour, including social ethics, are intimately related: mysticism seeks the substance of ethics, and ethics expresses in existential form that which mysticism discovers, namely, the divine agape.

EPILOGUE

The theology which is found both explicitly and implicitly within the writings of Thomas Merton has been compared with that of Paul Tillich and numerous points of affinity have been discovered and elucidated. In addition to these theological similarities, there are also a number of similarities in the actual lives of these two men, even though they basically differ. Merton was a monk and an ascetic; Tillich was neither. Unlike Merton, Tillich was a theologian who was immersed in the secular world, both in its theoretical philosophies and in its way of life. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to find, throughout Tillich's works, a considerable number of references to monasticism and asceticism, not all of them negative. In so far as monasticism regards itself as superior to other Christian life styles, Tillich is critical.¹ (And so is Merton.) But Tillich is also appreciative of the contribution that monasticism has offered to Christian history. He saw the early monastic theologians

¹See especially, Systematic Theology, Vol. III, pp. 166f.

as forerunners of "the method of correlation."
 They attempted to show how the Christ is the answer to the questions implied in existence, especially in terms of human psychology. They "analysed themselves and the members of their small community so penetratingly that there are few present-day insights into the human predicament which they did not anticipate."¹ Furthermore, Tillich's sermon, "Holy Waste," could very well stand as a defense of monasticism:

"Has not Protestantism lost a great deal by losing the wasteful self-surrender of the saints and the mystics? Are we not in danger of a religious and moral utilitarianism which always asks for the reasonable purpose...?"²

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 30. Keefe implies that the monastic tradition and Tillich's method are related when he explicitly relates the method of correlation to Augustinianism, and sees "the quintessence of Augustinianism...an entire theological tradition...encapsulated in (Systematic Theology)."
 Keefe, Thomism and the Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), p. 1.

²The Boundaries of Our Being, pp. 187f. Rollo May records how Tillich, when very ill, was asked how he could cope with not being able to do anything. He replied, "It's not bad at all...I can lie here hour after hour and just be." May, Paulus, p. 34.

This does not differ at all from Merton's idea of the monk as the marginal-man, who, in a utilitarian world, demonstrates that there are other dimensions to man's being. Furthermore, Tillich was able to accept asceticism if it did not attempt to negate the reality of the concrete. Such an "ontological" asceticism is rejected on the basis of the Protestant Principle: "there is no Spirituality which is based on the negation of matter, because God as creator is equally near the material and the Spiritual."¹ Nevertheless, the "asceticism of self-discipline" is accepted; and although Tillich ascribes it to "the Jewish and Protestant spheres," in particular Paul and Calvin, his description of this type of asceticism describes what Merton meant by withdrawal: "It presupposes the fallen state of reality and the will to resist the temptation coming from many things which in themselves are not bad." Tillich concludes that "no humanity is possible without elements of this kind of asceticism."² Therefore, although Merton was the

¹Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p. 224.

²Loc. Cit.; Morality and Beyond, p. 36, and Dynamics of Faith, p. 61. However, in The Courage To Be (pp. 4f), Tillich describes as Aristotelian a type of asceticism which could also describe Merton: "Courage is the affirmation of one's essential nature, one's inner aim or entelechy, but it is an affirmation which has in itself the character of 'in spite of.' It includes the possible and, in some cases, the unavoidable sacrifice of elements which also belong to one's being but which, if not sacrificed, would prevent us from reaching our actual fulfillment."

the monk and practised his own version of Cistercian asceticism (he liked beer!), and Tillich was not particularly known for any ascetical tendencies in his own life,¹ the differences between the two men are not at all absolute. Both could appreciate the other's way of life.

There are a number of actual similarities in the two men's lives, and although most of them are of no great moment, they are of interest. Both men were interested in art and interested in the relationship between art and theology or spirituality.² Both men were specifically recognized for their contributions to the cause of world peace. In 1962 Tillich received the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade,³ and one year later Merton was the first recipient of the Pax Medal awarded by the Catholic Peace Fellowship.⁴

¹For a defence of Tillich's controversial "lifestyle" see John J. Carey, "Morality and Beyond: Tillich's Ethics in Life and Death," in Tillich Studies: 1975, pp. 104-115.

²On Merton's interest in Art see above p. 27; cf. Tillich's On the Boundary, p. 29 for an account of Tillich's similar appreciation for Italian mosaics.

³Tillich's acceptance address is in The Future of Religions, pp. 52-63.

⁴Merton's acceptance address is in Thomas Merton on Peace, pp. 257f.

Both men published essays in Fromm's War Within Man. Both became famous within the American milieu, although neither was American by birth. Finally, however, there is one point of affinity in their lives that is more than superficial. Both men recognized a particular kairos, and both called their fellow man to respond to that kairos. Both saw the kairos pass, were disappointed, and their disappointment played a role in their subsequent writings.

As we have seen, Tillich saw the moment of kairos immediately after World War I, and saw his hopes for that kairos destroyed with Hitler's rise to power in 1933. The German Church as well as the nation chose a grotesque and ultimately inhuman heteronomy rather than the possibility of a new theonomy.¹ Thomas Merton saw the kairos in the civil rights movement in America, and he too expressed great disappointment when it proved to be unfulfilled. He wondered if Christians were able to recognize their kairos. "Is it possible," he asked, "that when the majority of Christians become aware that 'the time has come' for a decisive and urgent commitment, that time has, in fact, already run out?" Merton immediately answered his own question,

¹See above p. 489.

and his answer was an expression not only of disappointment, but fear for the future:

"There can be no question now that the time for a certain kind of crucial Christian decision in America has come and gone. In 1962, and finally in 1963, there were 'moments of truth' which have now passed, and the scene is becoming one of darkness, anarchy and moral collapse."¹

According to the theories of both Leibrecht and Hopper,² the unfulfilled kairos wrought a change in Tillich's emphasis. He started writing not so much about the social and cultural implications of morality as he wrote about how the individual could survive in a meaningless and directionless world.

In 1949 Tillich wrote:

"Instead of a creative kairos, I see a vacuum which can be made creative only if it is accepted and endured and, rejecting all kinds of premature solutions, is transformed into a deepening 'sacred void' of waiting."³

¹"Religion and Race in the United States," in Faith and Violence, p. 130; also in The New Blackfriars 46 (January, 1965), p. 218.

²See above p. 498, fn. 2.

³"Beyond Religious Socialism," The Christian Century LXVI (June 15, 1949), p. 733.

And within a few years he published one of his most well-known and seminal books, The Courage To Be, a book that emphasized individual survival in a chaotic world.

The unfulfilled kairos wrought a change in Merton's emphasis, too. Not only did he enter the hermitage on a full-time basis in 1965, a movement not without its Jeremiah-like prophetic symbolism, he also declared that he would cease to write about world events.¹

Of course, he did not. In the same way that Tillich could say that although Religious Socialism was frustrated and destroyed as a programme by historical events, still as a prophetic message "there is nothing 'beyond religious socialism.'"² "In spite of some unavoidable disappointments," Tillich reflected, "politics remained, and will always remain, an important factor in my theological and philosophical thought."³ Merton too was disappointed but not silenced by the unfulfilled kairos. The same

¹See "Events and Pseudo-Events," in Faith and Violence, p. 145.

²"Autobiographical Reflections by Paul Tillich," in The Theology of Paul Tillich, edited by Kegley and Bretal, p. 13.

³Ibid., p. 19.

essay that announced his intention to remain silent was one in which Merton gave a long and profound critique of the failure of communication in a technological society that prides itself on mass-communication skills. He did not remain silent. However, for the remaining years of his life, his emphasis was focused more on the solitary, detached, holistic viewpoint of the contemplative, and the contribution that such a viewpoint can make in the world, rather than on specific events in political affairs. It is this recognition of a kairos (or what was hoped to be a kairos) and the subsequent personal sense of disappointment at its unfulfillment which marks the most important point of similarity in the lives of Tillich and Merton. It is an indication that both men's similarity in the theological realm can be seen as well in the realm of personal experience. These men thought in much the same way in regard to the relationship between mysticism and social concern, and they reacted in much the same way when they discovered that what they saw as truth was rejected by the world to which they spoke. They were both disappointed, but neither of them allowed that disappointment to curtail their prophetic messages; the messages themselves did not change, only the emphasis did.

As was mentioned earlier, Merton has never received a penetrating and detailed theological

analysis and critique.¹ Perhaps he never will. He was not a theologian by vocation; rather he was a monk who used theological language to explain facets of the monastic and contemplative life. In Merton one finds an experiential, ascetical and monastic theology rather than the work of a systematic theologian. In him one is exposed to the stream of consciousness of an intelligent, if not brilliant, monk. Since he did not produce a systematic theology, he has not been criticized as if he had. Most criticisms of Merton that are not criticisms of particular stances he took in regard to current political events are criticisms of either his way of life or the style of his writings. They are not, for the most part, criticisms of the speculative theology which forms the basis of his thinking. Therefore, we discover that he is criticized for being unsystematic² and unoriginal,³ or defended as an essayist⁴ with his

¹See above pp. 11f.

²by Baker, Op. Cit., p. 34; Jean LeClerq in his Introduction to Contemplation in a World of Action, p. xiv; and McNerny, Op. Cit., p. 85.

³by Bridges, Op. Cit., p. 69.

⁴by Voight, Op. Cit., p. 118.

own particular original synthesis.¹ He is criticized for being too prolific,² hurried in his writings,³ and for being too over-simplified in his social and political commentary.⁴ Some saw traces of arrogance in his writings, especially in The Seven Storey Mountain,⁵ and at least one critic thought that he was an ego-centric hypocrite, the cloistered monk who "enjoyed flattery and French cooking," and who, while "meditating on the ultimate emptiness....was remarkably full of himself."⁶ On the other hand, Merton had his defenders,

¹by Hinson, "The Catholicizing of Contemplation," p. 174; and Kelly, Op. Cit., p. 266: "He was an original thinker in the sense that his insights were strictly his own."

²by Marco Pallis, "Thomas Merton: 1915-1968," in Studies in Comparative Religions (Summer, 1969), p. 138; McInerny, Op. Cit., p. 16.

³McInerny, Op. Cit., p. 17.

⁴by Baker, Op. Cit., p. 113; Alice Mayhew, "Merton Against Himself," Commonweal 91, (October 17, 1969), p. 73; Kelly, Op. Cit., pp. 76, 255.

⁵e.g., Harvey Cox in The Seduction of the Spirit (New York: Touchstone, Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 110, and Monica Furlong, Travelling In (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), paperback edition 1973, p. 95. Cox also criticized Merton for his anti-city stance, Op. Cit., pp. 68, 83. (Merton had once publicly stated that he had not read The Secular City and did not intend to. See McDonnell, "An Interview with Thomas Merton," p. 34.) See above p. 130.

⁶Robert Evett, "A Worldly Monk in Search of Truth," Star News, (Washington, D.C., August 5, 1973).

if not his disciples. Eldridge Cleaver, the American black militant leader, was so moved by the description of life in Harlem that Merton had written in his autobiography that he quoted the man he called "Brother Merton" in his lectures to fellow Black Muslims.¹ The Berrigan brothers, leaders within the anti-Vietnamese War movement, looked to Merton as their spiritual leader and fellow traveller.² So did numerous civil rights leaders.³ His poetry was appreciated by highly acclaimed poets and critics,⁴ and his social commentary was praised by other observers of the American political and social scene.⁵ His

¹Cleaver, Soul on Ice: (New York: Ramparts (Dell), 1968), pp. 43ff. See above p. 43.

²See "Daniel Berrigan on Thomas Merton," in The Thomas Merton Life Center Newsletter (April, 1973), pp. 6-11, as well as poems by Daniel Berrigan in Continuum (Summer, 1969).

³For instance, Merton regularly published for Katallagete, a journal of Southern Baptist churchmen interested in Civil Rights.

⁴See Robert Lowell, "The Verses of Thomas Merton," Commonweal XLII (June, 1945), pp. 240-242; Mark Van Doren, "Thomas Merton," America 120 (January, 1969), pp. 21f.

⁵See Martin Marty, "To: Thomas Merton. Re: Your Prophecy," National Catholic Reporter (August 30, 1967), pp. 6f: "Recently I have had occasion to reread the book (i.e., Seeds of Destruction). What bothers me now is the degree of accuracy in your predictions and prophecies in general...Now it seems to me you were 'telling it as it is' and maybe 'as it

understanding of the relationship between Zen and the Christian mystical tradition was acclaimed by D.T. Suzuki,¹ the Buddhist scholar, and by no less a leader of Eastern religions than the Dalai Lama who is quoted to have said to Merton, "You have made me at last understand Christianity."² But none of these evaluations, either positive or negative, reach the level of scholarly, theological criticism; they remain comments on his person, his style, and his effect. A detailed theological critique of Thomas Merton's thought has yet to be attempted.

There are good reasons to believe that Merton's influence will continue to increase in the coming years. There are still volumes of unpublished materials

will be.' (Earlier Marty had criticized Merton for being too pessimistic.)

¹"I found Dr. Suzuki at his cheerful best. He said that on the day before my visit Father Thomas Merton had come to see him, and he spoke with great warmth of his unusually deep insight into Zen. He gave me an article on Zen by Father Merton to read, published a short time before in Continuum, saying, "There is more true understanding of Zen in this article than anything I have ever read by a Western writer." Mr. Lunsford Yandell, quoted by Christmas Humphreys in the Forward to Merton's "The Zen Revival" (London: The Buddhist Society, no date), no pagination. Also, see above p. 193.

²Quoted by Pallis, Op. Cit., p. 146. For Merton's description of his visit to the Dalai Lama see The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton, pp. 100-102, passim.

in the Thomas Merton Archives. There are hundreds of hours of taped lectures which will inevitably be edited and published. There is no reason to disagree with McInerny's assessment that Merton will never be known for one principle^d work (although The Seven Storey Mountain, perhaps regrettably, will continue to be his best known work) or even many particular writings, but will be known and appreciated by "the total impact of his life and thought."¹ McInerny compares him, in this respect, to Ralph Waldo Emerson who continues to have a significant place in American letters although he is not famous for any one or more particular books. Merton, like Emerson, was an essayist, and as more and more essays or informal lectures are published, his reputation should become increasingly enhanced. He was a charismatic, lively and witty author who, in a world that is experiencing the impelling need for a constructive social ethic at the same time that it is experiencing a renewed interest in both Mystik and Mystizismus, emerges as one who most explicitly formed a bridge between mysticism and social ethics. The contemplative monk who counseled the Berrigans and Joan Baez as well as Jacques Maritain and the

¹McInerny, Op. Cit., p. 123.

Dalai Lama is certain to have a continuing appeal. Therefore, it is important that his theology be criticized as well as expounded. Furthermore, if Robert L. Heilbroner is even remotely accurate in his prognosis of the future of civilisation, the theology of a man of Merton's scope needs elucidation. Heilbroner, an economist, suspects "that a major force for the transformation of a business civilization will be a new religious orientation."¹ This new type of religion, he hopes, will be able to overcome the extreme individualism of "business civilization," - an individualism which he feels is ultimately and universally destructive. In another article he particularly cited monasticism as a model for social change:

"Yet, when I take the measure of the changes that must be accomplished, both within the underdeveloped world and in the industrialized nations, I cannot find a plausible alternative to the ideal-type of a monastery - a tightly disciplined, ascetic religious order - as the model to which the evolving societies of the world will gradually approximate."²

¹Heilbroner, "Collapse of a Civilisation," The Observer Review (London: December 28, 1975), p. 15.

²Heilbroner, "Learning to Live with the Future," The Observer (London: December 29, 1974), p. 13.

Therefore, because of his basic monastic orientation, Merton's role in the future development of civilization should be particularly important (at least in Heilbroner's perspective). Also, Merton's grounding of social ethics in the solidarity of mankind appeals to Heilbroner's statement on ethics: "Indeed, the generalized capability of identification is the soil in which are rooted all possibilities of morality."¹ Therefore, if this one economist is even partially correct in his assessment of what is necessary for mankind to survive, Merton's wisdom has three points in its favour: it is religious, it is monastic, and it grounds morality in the "capability of identification." But Heilbroner is not the only economic prognosticator whose vision implies the continuing importance of a Mertonian wisdom. E.F. Schumacher, in his popular book, Small is Beautiful, echoes the kind of solution that Merton presented to his readers:

"Everywhere people ask: 'What can I actually do?' The answer is as simple as it is disconcerting: we can, each of us, work to put our own inner house in order. The guidance we need for this work cannot be found in science or technology, the value of which

¹Heilbroner, An Inquiry Into the Human Prospect (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975), p. 111.

utterly depends on the ends they
 serve; but it can still be found
 in the traditional wisdom of mankind."¹

In an age when economists speak of religion, monasticism and putting one's inner house in order, it is certain that a man like Thomas Merton will have continuing if not increasing influence. And when influential psychologists like Abraham H. Maslow can speak of life's "peak-experiences" as "transient states of absolute Being" in the midst of becoming, and can say that "self-actualization involves both contemplation and action necessarily,"² a detailed and thorough investigation of Merton's theological thought is an important contribution that theological scholarship can contribute to the modern quest for survival in the midst of a depersonalizing, technological world.

The intention of this paper has been to elucidate and expound that theology and to indicate how Tillich's theology helps to reveal the systematic basis of Merton's thought. The comparison with the theology of Paul Tillich serves also to point to one way in

¹Schumacher, Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered, (London: Blond and Briggs, 1973), p. 279.

²Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being (Second Edition) (New York: Von Nostrand Reinhold, 1968), pp. 154, 117.

which Merton's thought can be evaluated. Although Merton's thought has yet to receive detailed criticism, Tillich's most certainly has. Therefore, in so far as Merton is in agreement with Tillich, the critical discussions of the works of the latter can also be used to help understand the former. It has been the purpose of the last chapter of this paper to indicate that such an approach is a valid one; that the various discussions of Tillich's theology can also be applied to Merton's theology in so far as the two men agree. This paper has not proposed to make the actual application of these critiques to Merton, but rather to show that such an approach is possible, valid, and worthwhile. Any one of the points raised in that chapter can be studied and criticized in more detail, and the criticisms that have been made over the years against Tillich's ontology, anthropology, Christology and ethics can be reexamined to see where and how they may also apply to Merton.

The criticisms of Tillich's theology, therefore, provide a way to begin a critique of Merton. But the reverse can also be true: Merton provides a new way in which Tillich can be understood. Merton is a living example of many things of which Tillich wrote in his theology. He was a man who sought to experience the ground of his being, and who sought to experience unity with God and unity with mankind in that ground. He

was a man who sought to transcend the polarities which Tillich elucidated. In trying to be both an individual and a participant Merton ended up in the paradoxical situation of being a hermit who drank coffee with famous people. In his attempt to unite dynamics and form, he tried to express poetically that which he felt to be beyond the possibilities of language. In his endeavour to balance the polarities of freedom and destiny he sought his own inner freedom within the limits of the structures which he had accepted as representing his destiny. He was a man, according to his biographer, "both uninhibited and strictly disciplined."¹ He was, therefore, a man in whom the Tillichian process of self-actualization was a fragmentary, anticipatory, but nonetheless unambiguous reality. He was a man who possessed, in short, the courage to be. And he interpreted that courage, and his own being, as a gift given to him by God, known unambiguously in Christ, and internalized through the Spirit in the ecstatic moment of mystical contemplation.

Although it has been the purpose of this paper to indicate ways in which to understand Merton through the theology of Tillich, perhaps an unintended result

¹John Howard Griffin, "In Search of Thomas Merton," p. 20.

of this study has been to provide an understanding of Tillich through the life of Merton. If so, it should come as good news to at least one of Tillich's critics, Van Harvey, who considered himself to be numbered among the "unhappy lovers" of Tillich, those who admired Tillich's creativity but who did not have "the least idea of how to go about appropriating his vision and making it our own."¹ It is hoped that Thomas Merton can provide Van Harvey and other unhappy lovers of Tillich with an answer. Here is at least one way of going about appropriating that vision.

Finally, it can be implied that if Merton is to enjoy a continued influence, Tillich may very well have a similar influence. In the days when the "death of God" theology was popular, and metaphysics was in bad favour, it did not seem so. Tillich himself wondered if he was "so soon on the dustbin of history."² As far as he could tell, he had been passed by. Dietrich Bonhoeffer had said about the same thing twenty years earlier: Tillich was out of date. He wrote to Bethge, "Tillich set out to

¹Van A. Harvey, a review of Tillich's Systematic Theology, Vol. III, in Theology Today XXI, (October, 1964), p. 382.

²Quoted in Ved Mehta, Op. Cit., p. 58.

interpret the evolution of the world itself - against its will - in a religious sense, to give it its whole shape through religion. That was very courageous of him, but the world unseated him and went on by itself..."¹

Perhaps that is so. But the "world come of age" may do well to listen again to see if it had not, perhaps, unseated him too quickly. It has been questioned, and will continue to be questioned, whether the ontology upon which he developed his system will actually support an historically-oriented ethic of social reform - whether or not the approach to theology which he advocated could, in fact, make a difference in the world.² However, a similar theology with a strong orientation to ontology gave rise to an ethic of social change in Merton. His life and witness become, as it were, a pragmatic vindication of his own theology since his theoretical ethic, his personal ethic, and his social ethic were so interpenetrating and of one piece. Therefore, in so far as it has been shown that there are similarities

¹Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, (ET: London: SCM, 1953), pp. 147.

²e.g., N.H.G. Robinson, Op. Cit., p. 287, and A.G.B. Woollard, Progress: A Christian Doctrine?, p. 34.

between the theology of Merton and the theology of Tillich, it follows that Merton's life is a pragmatic vindication of Tillich's theology as well as his own. Tillich spoke the same Yes to the necessity for social concern that Merton spoke, and he spoke a similar No to the No that Merton spoke to an activism that had lost touch with the ground of its being and meaning. Leibrecht saw this in Tillich when he wrote:

"Though he had powerfully asserted his religious concern for culture and social action in Europe, where cultural relativism had spread among the theologians, he found that in the new country he had to warn against and say No to the confidence of an easy confusion of human and divine spirit in much of American theology. Too often religion seemed on the verge of being totally absorbed by ethics, social action and other concerns. Having incessantly demanded action from his quietist brethren in Germany, Tillich found himself speaking out in America against active Martha in favor of contemplative Mary, who, after all, had chosen 'the better part.' Activism is not religion and sometimes it is the demand of the hour to wait. If American theology has learned one basic lesson from Reinhold Niebuhr, that despite all, man is a sinner, it has learned another basic lesson from Tillich: God is ultimate concern, and confusing Him with other concerns, even the best-intended ones, will mean disaster for theology, culture and politics."¹

¹Leibrecht, Op. Cit., p. 20; cf above pp. 305f on the same dialectic in Merton's apologetic thrust.

For Tillich, as well as for Merton, one's ultimate concern does not detract from the penultimate ones. On the contrary; to be so involved in the penultimate that one loses sight of the divine depths is a futile and unconstructive involvement - it is as if one were not involved at all. This is the message of both Tillich and Merton. After Vietnam and Watergate and the plethora of governmental and business scandals, one wonders whether this message is actually out of date.

APPENDIX

Some Representative Poems of Thomas Merton

FOR MY BROTHER:
REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION, 1943

Sweet brother, if I do not sleep
 My eyes are flowers for your tomb;
 And if I cannot eat my bread,
 My fasts shall live like willows where you died.
 If in the heat I find no water for my thirst,
 My thirst shall turn to springs for you, poor traveller.

Where, in what desolate and smokey country,
 Lies your poor body, lost and dead?
 And in what landscape of disaster
 Has your unhappy spirit lost its road?

Come, in my labor find a resting place
 And in my sorrow lay your head,
 Or rather take my life and blood
 And buy yourself a better bed -
 Or take my breath and take my death
 And buy yourself a better rest.

When all the men of war are shot
 And flags have fallen into dust,
 Your cross and mine shall tell men still
 Christ died on each, for both of us.

For in the wreckage of your April Christ lies slain,
 And Christ weeps in the ruins of my spring:
 The money of Whose tears shall fall
 Into your weak and friendless hand,
 And buy you back to your own land:

The silence on Whose tears shall fall
 Like bells upon your alien tomb.
 Hear them and come: they call you home.

LANDSCAPE

I

A Personage is seen
Leaning upon a cushion
Printed with cornflowers.

A Child appears
Holding up a pencil.

"This is a picture
(Says the Child to the Personage)
Of the vortex."

"Draw it your own way,"
Says the Personage.

(Music is heard
Pure in the island windows
Sea-music on the Child's
Interminable shore, his coral home.)

Behind a blue mountain
Covered with chickenfoot trees,
The molten sun appears,
A heavy, painted flower.

A Personage is seen
Leaning upon the mountain
With the sun in one hand
And a pencil in the other.

"This is a picture
(Says the Personage to the Child)
Of the begining of the world."

"Or of its end!" cries the Child
Hiding himself in the cushions.

2

A Woman appears
Leaning upon the Child's shoulder.
He looks up again.

"This is my Mother
(Says the Child to the Personage)
Older than the moon."

(Grecian horses are heard
 Returning from the foam
 Of the pure island's windows,
 And the Child's horizons.)

"My Mother is a world
 (Says the Child to the Personage)
 Printed with gillyflowers."

"Paint her your own way"
 (Says the Personage to the Child).
 And, lifting up his pencil,
 He crosses out the sun.

THE STRANGE ISLANDS

ELEGY FOR JAMES THURBER

Thurber, they have come, the secret bearers,
 At the right time, though fools seem to have won.
 Business and generals survive you
 At least for one brief day.

Humor is now totally abolished.
 The great dogs of nineteen sixty one
 Are nothing to laugh at.

Leave us, good friend. Leave our awful celebration
 With pity and relief.
 You are not called to solemnize with us
 Our final madness.

You have not been invited to hear
 The last words of everybody.

EMBLEMS OF A SEASON OF FURY

DRY PLACES

No cars go by
 Where dogs are barking at the desert.
 Yet it is not twenty years since many lamps
 Shed their juices in this one time town
 And stores grew big lights, like oranges and pears.

Now not one lame miner
Sits on the rotten verandah,
Works in the irons where
Judas' shadow dwells.
Yet I could hew a city
From the side of their hill.

O deep stone covert where the dusk
Is full of lighted beasts
And the mad stars preach wars without end:
Whose bushes and grasses live without water,
There the skinny father of hate rolls in his dust
And if the wind shift one leaf
The dead jump up and bark for their ghosts:
Their dry bones want our penniless souls.

Bones, go back to your baskets.
Get your fingers out of my clean skin.
Rest in your rainless death until your own souls
Come back in the appointed way and sort out from your
remains.

We who are still alive will wring a few green blades
From the floor of this valley
Though ploughs abhor your metal and your clay.
Rather than starve with you in rocks without oasis,

We will get up and work your loam
Until some prayer or some lean sentence
Bleeds like the quickest root they ever cut.

For we cannot forget the legend of the world's childhood
Or the track to the dogwood valley
And Adam our Father's old grass farm
Wherein they gave the animals names
And knew Christ was promised first without scars
When all God's larks called out to Him
In their wild orchard.

THE TEARS OF THE BLIND LIONS

SOLEMN MUSIC

Use your numbered line
To describe constellations
Hunter and Capricorn
And heavenly Bears
Amid Sanctus sounds
And transports
The golden fury of wires

The lighted years
 Of distant space
 Are all made human
 By modes of music
 The questioning vox humana
 The disciplines of chant

Take your compasses
 To measure flight
 Expanding silences
 And pay attention
 To the stillness of the end
 Or the beginning
Sanctus
 The abyss of brass
 The sapphire orchestra

Bear the hot
 Well-fired shot
 Roaring out
 Of the cool dark

And go to meet
 In the wet estranged country
 The midnight express
 Bringing Plato, Prophets, Milton, Blake,
 The nine daughters of memory

But use your own numbered line
 To go down alone
 Into the night sky
 Hand over hand
 And dig it like a mine.

CABLES TO THE ACE

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

The standard bibliographies for the works of Merton are:

Dell'Isola, Frank: Thomas Merton: A Bibliography (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956), covering up to 1956.

Breit, Marquita: Thomas Merton: A Bibliography (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press and The American Theological Library Association, 1974), covering the years 1957-1973.

This bibliography does not pretend to be exhaustive. Included here will be only those works which have been of fundamental importance in the preparation of this thesis. Breit and Dell'Isola should be consulted for the complete and definitive bibliographic material on Thomas Merton.

1. WORKS BY THOMAS MERTON

"Action and Contemplation in St. Bernard" Collectanea Ordinis Cisterciensium Reformatorem, XV, No. 1. Janvier, 1953, pp. 26-31; XV, No. 3. Juillet, 1953, pp. 203-216; XVI, No. 2. Avril, 1954, pp. 105-121.

Albert Camus' 'The Plague': Introduction and Commentary. (New York: Seabury Press, 1968).

"Answers on Art and Freedom" Lugano Review 1 (1965), pp. 43-45.

"As Man to Man" Cistercian Studies 4 (1969). No. 1, pp. 90-94.

The Ascent to Truth (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1951). Citations in this thesis are from a paperback edition (New York: The Viking Press, 1959).

"The Ascetic Life, Experience of God and Freedom." Cistercian Studies 9 (1974), No. 1, pp. 55-65.

- The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton. Edited by Naomi Burton, Brother Patrick Hart, O.C.S.O., James Laughlin, and Amiya Chakravarty. (New York: New Directions, 1973).
- Basic Principles of Monastic Spirituality. (Trappist, Kentucky: Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani Press, 1957). Also published in London the same year by Burns, Oates and Washbourne.
- The Behavior of Titans. (New York: New Directions, 1961).
- "Beyond the Sacred: A Letter to the Editor." Commonweal 87 (January 19, 1968), p. 479.
- "Blake and the New Theology." Sewanee Review 76 (Autumn, 1968), pp. 673-682.
- Bread in the Wilderness. (New York: New Directions, 1953).
- Breakthrough to Peace. Edited with an Introduction by Thomas Merton. (New York: New Directions, 1962).
- "Building Community on God's Love." Sisters Today 42 (December, 1970), pp. 185-193.
- "A Buyer's Market for Love?" Ave Maria 104 (December 24, 1966), pp. 7-10, 27.
- Cables to The Ace. (New York: New Directions, 1968).
- "Can We Survive Nihilism?" Saturday Review 50 (April 15, 1967), pp. 16-19.
- "The Catholic and Creativity: Theology of Creativity." American Benedictine Review 11 (September-December, 1960), pp. 197-213.
- "Challenge of Responsibility." Saturday Review 48 (February 13, 1965), pp. 28-30.
- "Christ, the Way." Sponsa Regis 33 (January, 1962), pp. 144-153.
- "Christian Freedom and Monastic Formation." American Benedictine Review 13 (September, 1962), pp. 289-313.
- "Christian Humanism." Spiritual Life 13 (Winter, 1967), pp. 219-230.

- "The Christian in Time of Change." The Rambler 10 (Highland Falls, New York: October 15, 1965), p. 1.
- "The Christian Message in a Changing World." UMC News 1 (Summer, 1964), No. 1, pp. 1-2.
- "Christian Morality and Nuclear War." The Way (U.S.) 19 (June, 1963), pp. 12-22.
- "Christian Solitude: Notes on an Experiment." The Current (Harvard) 7. (February, 1967), pp. 14-28.
- "Christianity and Mass Movements." Cross Currents 9 (Summer, 1959), pp. 201-211.
- "The Church in World Crisis." Katallagete (Summer, 1967), pp. 30-36.
- "Introduction" to The City of God, by St. Augustine. (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. ix-xv.
- "Classical Chinese Thought." Jubilee 8 (January, 1961), pp. 26-32.
- The Climate of Monastic Prayer. (Spencer, Massachusetts: Cistercian Publications, 1969), published also as Contemplative Prayer.
- "Community Politics, and Contemplation." Sisters Today 42 (January, 1971), pp. 241-246.
- "Concerning the Collection in the Bellarmine College Library." The Thomas Merton Studies Center, Vol. I (Santa Barbara: Unicorn Press, 1971), pp. 13-15.
- "A Conference on Prayer." Sisters Today 41 (April, 1970), pp. 449-456.
- Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander. (New York: Doubleday, 1966), and also published in England by Burns and Oates (1968).
- "Contemplation and Ecumanism." Season 3 (Fall, 1965), pp. 133-142.
- Contemplation in a World of Action. (New York: Doubleday, 1971). Also published in Great Britain by George Allen and Unwin (1971).

- "The Contemplative Life in the Modern World."
The Mountain Path (October, 1965), pp. 223-227.
- Contemplative Prayer. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969). (Originally The Climate of Monastic Prayer,) Also published in Great Britain in 1973 by Darton, Longman and Todd, London.
- "Contemplatives and the Crisis of Faith." With J-B. Porion and Andre Louf. Cistercian Studies 2 (1967), No. 4, pp. 269-273.
- "Creative Silence." The Baptist Student 48 (February, 1969), pp. 18-22.
- "Day of a Stranger." Hudson Review 20 (Summer, 1967), pp. 211-218.
- Disputed Questions. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1960). Also published in London by Hollis and Carter (1961) and in Toronto by Ambassador Books (1960).
- Elected Silence. (London: Hollis and Carter, 1949), and originally published as The Seven Storey Mountain.
- Emblems of a Season of Fury. (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1963).
- "Events and Pseudo-Events." Katallagete (Summer, 1966), pp. 10-17.
- "Examination of Conscience and 'Conversatio Morum'". Collectanea Ordinis Cisterciensium Reformatorum 25 (1963), pp. 355-369.
- Exile Ends in Glory: The Life of a Trappistine, Mother M. Berchmans. (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1948).
- "The Face: Tertullian and St. Cyprian on Virgins." Cistercian Studies 6 (1971), No. 4, pp. 334-342.
- Faith and Violence: Christian Teaching and Christian Practice. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968).
- "Father Louis' Own Evaluation of His Books." (Unpublished) in Collected Essays, Vol. I, p. 15, at The Abbey of Gethsemani and the Bellarmine College Collection.
- Figures for an Apocalypse. (New York: New Directions, 1948).

Gandhi on Non-Violence. Edited with an Introduction by Thomas Merton. (New York: New Directions, 1965).

The Geography of Lograire. (New York: New Directions, 1969).

"Guerric of Igny's Easter Sermons." Cistercian Studies 7 (1972), No. 1, pp. 85-95.

He Is Risen. (Niles, Illinois: Argus Communication, 1975).

"Hesychasm." A review of Heschasme et priere by Irene Hausherr, S.J. Cistercian Studies 3 (1968), No. 2, Article No. 141.

"The Historical Consciousness." Contemplative Review 1 (May, 1968), pp. 2-3.

"How It Is: Apologies to an Unbeliever." Harpers 233 (November, 1966), pp. 36f.

"The Humanity of Christ in Monastic Prayer." Monastic Studies 2 (1964), pp. 1-27.

"I Have Chosen You." Sponsa Regis 30 (September, 1958), pp. 1-6.

The Inner Experience. (Unpublished) Located in The Bellarmine College Collection.

"Ishi: A Meditation." Review of Ishi, Last of His Tribe. Theodora K.B. Kroeber. Catholic Worker 33 (March, 1967), pp. 5-6, and Peace News (London: June 30, 1967), p. 6.

"Is Mysticism Normal?" The Commonweal 51 (November 4, 1949), pp. 94-98.

"Is the World a Problem? Ambiguities of the Secular." Commonweal 84 (June 3, 1966), pp. 305-309.

"Lactantius." Cistercian Studies 7 (1972), No. 4, pp. 243-255.

The Last of the Fathers. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1954). Also published in Great Britain by The Catholic Book Club, London.

"Letter from Thomas Merton - February, 1962." A Penny a Copy: Readings from the "Catholic Worker". Thomas C. Cornell and James H. Forest (eds.). (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

- "Letters to a White Liberal." Blackfriars 44 (November, 1963), pp. 464-477; (December, 1963), pp. 503-516.
- "Life and Contemplation: Conscience of a Christian Monk." (Chappaqua, New York: Electronic Paperbacks, 1972).
- "Life and Contemplation: Reflections on a Buddhist Monk." (Chappaqua, New York: Electronic Paperbacks, 1972).
- "A Life Free From Care." Cistercian Studies 5 (1970), No. 3, pp. 217-226. Also published as "Life and Solitude, The Hermit's Legacy: Life Without Care." (Chappaqua, New York: Electronic Paperbacks, 1972).
- Life and Holiness. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963). Also published in Great Britain. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1963).
- Preface to the Korean Edition of Life and Holiness. Hyeondaeineui sinany saenghwal. Translated by Jeong-Jin Kim. (Seoul: Kaetoric Chulpansa, 1965), pp. 9-14.
- "The Life That Unifies." Sisters Today 42 (October, 1970), pp. 65-73.
- The Living Bread. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956).
- "Love and Maturity." Sponsa Regis 32 (October, 1960), pp. 44-53.
- "Love and Solitude." Preface to the Japanese edition of Thoughts in Solitude. The Critic 25 (October-November, 1966), pp. 30-37.
- A Man in the Divided Sea. (New York: New Directions, 1946).
- "Man is a Gorilla with a Gun: Reflections on an American Best Seller." Review of African Genesis by Robert Ardrey. New Blackfriars 46 (May, 1965), pp. 452-457.
- Marthe, Marie, et Lazare. Translated by Juliette Charles Du-Bos. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1956).

"Mircea Eliade: A Critical Observer of the Archetypal Myth." A review of From Primitives to Zen. National Catholic Reporter 3 (August 23, 1967), p. 9.

Introduction to The Monastic Theology of Aelred of Rievaulx: An Experimental Theology. By Amedee Hallier. (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), pp. vii-xiii.

"Monastic Vocation and Modern Thought." Monastic Studies 4 (1966), pp. 17-54.

"Monk as Marginal Man." Center Magazine 2 (January, 1969), p. 33.

My Argument with the Gestapo: A Macaronic Journal. (New York: Doubleday, 1969). Originally entitled The Journal of My Escape From the Nazis. (Unpublished).

Preface to The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing: A Modern Interpretation. By William Johnston. (New York: Desclee, 1967), pp. ix-xiv.

Mystics and Zen Masters. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967). All quotations are from the Delta Paperback edition. (New York, 1967).

"The Negro Revolt." Review of A Different Drummer, by William M. Kelley. Jubilee 11 (September, 1963), pp. 39-43.

"Negro Violence and White Non-Violence: Letter to Dr. Martin E. Marty." National Catholic Reporter 3 (September 6, 1967), p. 8.

"Neither Caliban nor Uncle Tom." Liberation 8 (June, 1963), pp. 20-22.

The New Man. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Gudahy, 1961). Quotations are from the Mentor-Omega paperback edition (New York: 1963). Also published in Great Britain. (London: Burns and Oates, 1961).

New Seeds of Contemplation. (New York: New Directions, 1961). Recently published in Great Britain as Seeds of Contemplation. (Wheathampstead: Anthony Clarke, 1972).

No Man Is an Island. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955). All quotations are from the Dell paperback edition. (New York: Dell Paperback, 1957).

Introduction to No More Strangers by Phipip Berrigan, SSJ, (New York: Macmillan, 1965), pp. vi-xx.

Review of Non-Violence: A Christian Interpretation, by William Robert Miller, in Commonweal 81 (December 4, 1964), pp. 357-359.

"Note on the New Church at Gethsemani." Liturgical Arts 36. (August, 1968), pp. 100-101.

"Notes on Love." Frontier 10. (Autumn, 1967), pp. 211-214.

"Notes on Prayer and Action." The Light 1. (April-May, 1967), pp. 1, 3.

"Nuclear War and Christian Responsibility." Commonweal 75. (February 9, 1962), pp. 509-513.

Opening the Bible. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1970). Published in Great Britain by George Allen and Unwin (London: 1972).

Original Child Bomb: Points for Meditation to Be Scratched on the Walls of a Cave. (New York: New Directions, 1962).

"Orthodoxy and the World." A Review of two books by Alexander Schmemmann, in Monastic Studies 4 (1966), pp. 105-115.

"The Other Side of Despair: Notes on Christian Existentialism." The Critic 24. (October-November, 1965), pp. 12-33.

"The Ox Mountain Parable of Meng Tzu." Commonweal 74. (May 12, 1961), p. 174.

"Peace and Protest." Continuum 1. (Autumn, 1963), pp. 509-512.

"Poetry and the Contemplative Life." The Commonweal 46. (July 4, 1947), pp. 280-286. Also published in Figures for an Apocalypse.

"Poetry and Contemplation: A Reappraisal." Commonweal 69. (October 24, 1958), pp. 87-92. Also published in Selected Poems and A Thomas Merton Reader.

- The Power and Meaning of Love. (London: Sheldon Press, 1976).
- "Prayer and Conscience." Sisters Today 42. (April, 1971), pp. 409-418.
- "Prayer, Personalism, and the Spirit." Sisters Today 42. (November, 1970), pp. 129-136.
- "Prayer, Tradition, and Experience." Sisters Today 42. (February, 1971), pp. 285-293.
- "Presuppositions to Meditation." Sponsa Regis 31. (April, 1960), pp. 231-240.
- Raids on the Unspeakable. (New York: New Directions, 1966).
- "Rain and the Rhinoceros." Holiday 37. (May, 1965), pp. 8, 10, 12, 15-16.
- "Rebirth and the New Man in Christianity." (Unpublished) This essay forms the basis for the Preface to the Japanese edition of The New Man.
- "Red or Dead: The Anatomy of a Cliché." (Nyack, New York: Fellowship Publications).
- Redeeming the Time. (London: Burns and Oates, 1966).
- "Reflections on the Character and Genius of Fénelon." Letters of Love and Counsel. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964), and Fénelon Letters (London: Harvill Press, 1964).
- "Reflections on Some Recent Studies of Saint Anselm." Monastic Studies 3. (1965), pp. 221-234.
- "Religion and Race in the United States." New Blackfriars 46. (January, 1965), pp. 218-225.
- Introduction to Religion in Wood: A Book of Shaker Furniture. by Edward Deeming Andrews and Faith Andrews. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1966), pp. vii-xv.
- "Renewal in Monastic Education." Cistercian Studies 3. (1968), No. 3, pp. 247-252.
- "The Sacred City." Catholic Worker 34. (January, 1968), pp. 4-6. Also The Center Magazine 1. (March, 1968), pp. 72-77.

"Saint Anselm and His Argument." American Benedictine Review 17. (June, 1966), pp. 238-262.

"Saint Bernard and America." Saint Bernard and the Church, Vol. I. (Saint Joseph's Abbey, Spencer, Massachusetts, 1955).

"Schema XIII: An Open Letter to the American Hierarchy." Unity 2. (Montreal: July-August, 1965), No. 4, pp. 1, 3-4; and in Worldview 8 (September, 1965), pp. 4-7.

Seasons of Celebration. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965).

The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959). Published also in Great Britain. (London: Hollis and Carter, 1959). Quotations will be from the paperback edition. (New York: Dell Paperback, 1960).

Seeds of Contemplation. (New York: New Directions, 1949). Also published in Great Britain. (London: Hollis and Carter, 1949). A revised edition was published in December, 1949.

Seeds of Contemplation. Preface to the Japanese edition. Kanso no tane. Translated by Yasumo Kikawa. (Kyoto: Veritas Publishing Company, 1965), pp. 9-13.

Seeds of Destruction. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1964).

"Seeking God." Sponsa Regis 28. (January, 1957), pp. 113-121.

"Seeking our Redeemer." Sponsa Regis 28. (February, 1957), pp. 141-149.

Selected Poems of Thomas Merton. (New York: New Directions, 1967).

"The Self of Modern Man and the New Christian Consciousness." The R.M. Bucke Memorial Society Newsletter-Review 2. (April, 1967), No. 1, pp. 17-21.

The Seven Storey Mountain. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1948). First published in Great Britain as Elected Silence and later as The Seven Storey Mountain. (London: Sheldon Press, 1975). All quotations will be from the paperback edition. (New York: Signet, 1952).

Preface to the Japanese Edition of The Seven Storey Mountain (Nanae no yama). Translated by Kudo Tadishi (Tokyo: Toyo Publishing Company, 1965), pp. 9-13.

"The Shakers." Jubilee 11. (January, 1964), pp. 36-41.

"The Shelter Ethic." Catholic Worker 28. (November, 1961), pp. 1f.

"The Shosoneans." Review of The Shosoneans: The People of the Basin - Plateau. By Edward Dorn in Catholic Worker 33. (June, 1967), pp. 5-6.

The Sign of Jonas. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1953). All quotations will be from the Doubleday-Image paperback edition. (New York: 1956).

"The Significance of the Bhagavad Gita" in The Bhagavad Gita as It Is. A.C. Bhaktivendanta Swami (ed.). (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 18-22.

Silence in Heaven: A Book of the Monastic Life. (New York: Studio Productions, 1956). Also published in Great Britain by Thames and Hudson (London: 1956).

The Silent Life. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957). Also published in Great Britain by Burns, Oates and Washbourne (London: 1957). All quotations are from the Dell paperback edition (New York: 1959).

Spiritual Direction and Meditation. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1960). Also published in Great Britain by Burns and Oates (London: 1961).

"Spirituality for the Age of Overkill." Continuum 1. (Spring, 1963), pp. 9-12.

The Strange Islands. (New York: New Directions, 1957). Also published in Great Britain by Hollis and Carter. (London: 1957).

"Symbolism: Communication or Communion?" The Mountain Path (India) 3. (October, 1966), pp. 339-348; also published in Monastic Exchange 2. (Summer, 1970), pp. 1-10 and in New Directions in Prose and Poetry 20. James Laughlin (ed.). (New York: New Directions, 1968), pp. 1-15.

- The Tears of the Blind Lions. (New York: New Directions, 1949).
- Review of The Technological Society by Jacques Ellul in Commonweal 81. (December 4, 1964), pp. 357-359.
- "Teilhard's Gamble: Betting on the Whole Human Species." Commonweal 87. (October 27, 1967), pp. 109-111.
- "Terror and the Absurd: Violence and Nonviolence in Albert Camus." Motive 29. (February, 1969), pp. 5-15.
- Thirty Poems. (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1944).
- "This Is God's Work." Sisters Today 42. (August-September, 1970), pp. 1-7.
- Thomas Merton on Peace, edited with an introduction by Gordon C. Zahn. (New York: McCall, 1971).
- Thomas Merton on Zen. (London: Sheldon, 1976).
- A Thomas Merton Reader, edited by Thomas P. McDonnell. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962). Revised edition published by Doubleday-Image (New York, 1974).
- Thoughts in Solitude. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1958). Published in Great Britain by Burns, Oates and Washbourne (London: 1958). All quotations are from the Dell paperback edition (New York: 1961).
- "The Transforming Union in St. Bernard and St. John of the Cross." Collectanea Ordinis Cisterciensium Reformatorem, Avril 1948, pp. 107-117; Juillet 1948, pp. 210-223; Janvier 1949, pp. 41-52; Octobre 1949, pp. 353-361; Janvier 1950, pp. 25-38.
- "The Universe as Epiphany: The Spirituality of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin." (unpublished). In The Bellarmine College Library Collection.
- Comment in War Within Man by Erich Fromm. (Philadelphia: Peace Literature Service of American Friends Service Committee), pp. 44-50.
- The Waters of Siloe. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949), published in Great Britain as The Waters of Silence (London: Hollis and Carter, 1950).

The Way of Chunag Tzu. (New York: New Directions, 1965). All quotations are from the British edition. (London: Unwin Books, 1970).

"We Have To Make Ourselves Heard." Catholic Worker 28. (May, 1962), pp. 4-6; (June, 1962), pp. 4-5.

What Are These Wounds? The Life of a Cistercian Mystic, Saint Lutgarde of Aywieres. (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1950).

"What is Contemplation?" (Notre Dame, Indiana: Holy Cross, 1948). Also published in Great Britain. (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1950).

"Where the Religious Dimension Enters In." The Center Letter. (1968), No. 3, p. 6.

The Wisdom of the Desert: Sayings From the Desert Fathers of the Fourth Century. Translated by Thomas Merton. (New York: New Directions, 1960). Also published in Great Britain. (London: Hollis and Carter, 1961) and (London: Sheldon Press, 1974).

Review of Word and Revelation by Hans Urs von Balthasar. Commonweal 81. (December 4, 1964), pp. 357-359.

Zen and the Birds of Appetite. (New York: New Directions, 1968).

"The Zen Revival." (London: The Buddhist Society).

"Zen: Sense and Sensibility." Review of Zen Catholicism: A Suggestion. by Aelred Graham. America 108. (May 25, 1963), pp. 752-754.

2. WORKS BY PAUL TILLICH

"An Afterword: Appreciation and Reply." Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought. Thomas A. O'Meara and Celestin Weiser, eds. (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1965), pp. 301-311.

"Autobiographical Reflections." The Theology of Paul Tillich. Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall, eds. (New York: Macmillan, 1959), pp. 3-21.

"Beyond Religious Socialism." The Christian Century 46. (June 15, 1949, No. 24, pp. 732-733.

Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

The Boundaries of Our Being. (London: Collins Press, 1973), comprising The New Being, The Eternal Now and On the Boundary.

Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

The Courage To Be. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1952).

Dynamics of Faith. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957). All quotations are from the paperback edition. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958).

The Eternal Now. (New York: Scribners, 1963).

"Existentialism and Religious Socialism." Christianity and Society 15. (Winter, 1949-1950), No. 1, pp. 8-11.

The Future of Religions. (New York: Harper and Row, 1966). Jerald G. Brauer, ed.

A History of Christian Thought. (London: SCM, 1968). Carl E. Braaten, ed.

The Interpretation of History. (New York: Scribners, 1936). Translated by N.A. Rasetki and Elsa L. Talmei.

"Letter to Thomas Mann." The Intellectual Legacy of Paul Tillich. James R. Lyons, ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969), pp. 101-107.

Love, Power and Justice. (London: Oxford Press, 1954). All quotations are from the Oxford paperback edition. (London: Oxford Press, 1960).

Morality and Beyond. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964). All quotations are from the paperback edition. (London: Fontana, 1969).

The New Being. (New York: Scribners, 1955).

Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development. Translated by Victor Nuovo. (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1974). Originally presented as a thesis at the University of Halle as Mystik und Schuldbewusstsein in Schellings philosophischer Entwicklung.

On the Boundary. (New York: Scribners, 1966). The British edition (London: Collins Press, 1967), contains an introduction by J. Heywood Thomas. Originally a chapter in The Interpretation of History.

"On 'Peace on Earth'." Social Ethics: Issues in Ethics and Society. Gibson Winter, ed. (London: SCM, 1968), pp. 225-232.

"The Person in a Technical Society." Social Ethics: Issues in Ethics and Society. Gibson Winter, ed. (London: SCM: 1968), pp. 120-138.

Perspectives on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Protestant Theology. Carl E. Braaten, ed. (London: SCM, 1967).

Political Expectation. James Luther Adams, ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

The Protestant Era. (London: Nisbet, 1951).

"Rejoinder." Journal of Religion 46. (January, 1966), No. 1. Part II, pp. 184-196.

The Religious Situation. (New York: Henry Holt, 1932). Translated by H. Richard Niebuhr.

"Reply to Interpretation and Criticism." The Theology of Paul Tillich. Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall, eds. (New York: Macmillan, 1959), pp. 329-349.

The Shaking of the Foundations. (New York: Scribners, 1948).

Forward to The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ by Martin Kahler. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), pp. xi-xii.

Systematic Theology. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; London: Nisbet). All quotations are from the British edition. Vol. I (1951), Vol. II (1957), Vol. III (1964).

Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue. D. MacKenzie Brown, ed. (London: SCM, 1965).

Theology of Culture. (London: Oxford Press, 1959).
All quotations are from the paperback edition.
(London: Oxford, 1964).

Comment on War Within Man by Erich Fromm. (Philadelphia: Peace Literature Service of the American Friends Service Committee, 1963), p. 33.

What is Religion? Translated by James Luther Adams. (New York: Harper and Row, 1969). All quotations are from the paperback edition. (New York: Harper, 1973).

"The World Situation." The Christian Answer. Henry P. Van Dusen, ed. (London: Nisbet, 1946), pp. 19-71. This essay has been published as a book, The World Situation. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965).

3. SECONDARY SOURCES

A. Works About Merton

Allchin, A.M. "A Liberator, A Reconciler." Continuum 7. (Summer, 1969), pp. 363-365.

"Solitude and Communion in the Life of Thomas Merton." Christian 2. (Whitsun, 1974), No. 1, pp. 81-90.

Baker, James Thomas-Thomas Merton Social Critic. (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1971).

"The Two Cities of Thomas Merton." Catholic World 211. (July, 1970), pp. 151-155.

Bailey, Raymond The Evolution of the Mystical Thought of Thomas Merton. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1974).

- Thomas Merton on Mysticism. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1975).
- Belford, Lee A. "Thomas Merton: Saint-Scholar." The Witness. (January 2, 1969), pp. 7-8.
- Bourne, Russell "The Rain Barrell." Continuum 7. (Summer, 1969), pp. 361-363.
- Berrigan, Daniel "Daniel Berrigan on Thomas Merton." The Thomas Merton Life-Center Newsletter. (April, 1973), pp. 6-11.
- "The Funeral Oration of Thomas Merton as Pronounced by the Compassionate Buddha." (poem) Catholic Worker.
- "The Trappist Cemetery-Gethsemani Revisited." (poem) Continuum 7. (Summer, 1969), pp. 313-318.
- Burton, Naomi "I Shall Miss Thomas Merton." Cistercian Studies 4. (1969), No. 3, pp. 218-225.
- "The Path to Seven Storey Mountain." More Than Sentinels. (New York: Doubleday, 1964).
- Cardenal, Ernesto "Coplas on the Death of Merton." New Directions in Prose and Poetry 25. James Laughlin, ed. (New York: New Directions, 1972), pp. 26-39.
- Davis, Robert M. "How Waugh Cut Merton." Month (April, 1973), pp. 150-153.
- Day, Dorothy "Thomas Merton, Trappist: 1915-1968." Catholic Worker 34. (December, 1968), pp. 1f.
- "The Death of Two Extraordinary Christians." Time 92. (December 20, 1968), pp. 64-65.
- DePinto, Basil, O.S.B. "In Memoriam: Thomas Merton, 1915-1968." The Cistercian Spirit: A Symposium in Memory of Thomas Merton. M. Basil Pennington, ed. (Spencer, Massachusetts: Cistercian Publications, 1969), pp. vii-x.

- Dumont, Charles, O.C.S.O. "A Contemplative at the Heart of the World." Lumen Vitae 24. (December, 1969), pp. 633-646.
- "Encounter con un monje post-conciliar: Tomas Merton." La Prensa Literaria (Nicaragua). (May 28, 1967): LB, 2B.
- Evet, Robert "A Worldly Monk in Search of Truth." Star News. (Washington, D.C.: August 5, 1973).
- Forest, James H. "The Gift of Merton." Commonweal 89. (January, 1969), pp. 463-465.
- Gibbard, Mark "Thomas Merton - Contemplative." Twentieth-Century Men of Prayer. (London: SCM, 1974), pp. 69-79.
- Glimm, James York "Exile Ends in Satire: Thomas Merton's Cables to the Ace." Githara 11. (November, 1971), pp. 31-40.
- Graham, Aelred, O.S.B. "Thomas Merton: A Modern Man in Reverse." The Atlantic Monthly 191. (January, 1953), pp. 70-74.
- Grayston, Donald "The Making of a Spiritual Classic: Thomas Merton's Seeds of Contemplation and New Seeds of Contemplation." Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses 3. (1973-1974), No. 4, pp. 339-356.
- "Nova in Novibus: the New Material in Thomas Merton's New Seeds of Contemplation." Cistercian Studies 10. (1975), Nos. 3, 4, pp. 190-206.
- Griffin, John Howard A Hidden Wholeness: The Visual World of Thomas Merton. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970).
- "In Search of Thomas Merton." Thomas Merton Studies Center, Vol. 1. (Santa Barbara, California: Unicorn Press, 1971), pp. 17-24.

- Hart, Patrick, O.C.S.O. "Foreward" and "Postscript" to The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton. Naomi Burton, Patrick Hart, James Laughlin, and Amiya Chakravarty, eds. (New York: New Directions, 1973), pp. xxi-xxix, 257-259.
- Thomas Merton, Monk: A Monastic Tribute. ed. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1974).
- Haughton, Rosemary "Bridge Between Two Cultures." Catholic World 209. (May, 1969), pp. 53-54.
- Hill, Joseph G. "Nuclear War and Christian Responsibility." Reply to Thomas Merton's article in Commonweal 75 (February 9, 1962), in Commonweal 76 (April 20, 1962), p. 84.
- Higgins, John J. Merton's Theology of Prayer. (Spencer, Massachusetts: Cistercian Publications, 1971), and also published as Thomas Merton on Prayer. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday-Image, 1975). References in this thesis are usually from the latter volume.
- Hinson, E. Glenn "The Catholicizing of Contemplation: Thomas Merton's Place in the Church's Prayer Life." Cistercian Studies 10 (1975), Nos. 3,4, pp. 173-189.
- "Merton's Many Faces." Religion in Life 42. (Summer, 1973), pp. 153-167.
- Kelly, Frederic Joseph, S.J. Man Before God: Thomas Merton on Social Responsibility. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1974).
- Kilcourse, George Incarnation as the Integrating Principle in Thomas Merton's Poetry and Spirituality. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1974).
- Kirkorian, Y.H. "The Fruits of Mysticism." The New Republic 121. (September, 1949), pp. 17-18.

- Lax, Robert "A Catch of Anti-Letters."
Correspondence between Thomas Merton
and Robert Lax. Voyages 11. (Winter-
Spring, 1968), Nos. 1, 2, pp. 44-56.
- Leclercq, Jean, O.S.B. Introduction to Contemplation
in a World of Action. Thomas Merton.
(London: George Allen and Unwin,
1971), pp. ix-xxii.
- Lowell, Robert "The Verses of Thomas Merton."
The Commonweal 42. (June 22, 1945),
pp. 240-242.
- Malits, Elena Journey into the Unknown: Thomas
Merton's Continuing Conversion.
(Ann Arbor, Michigan: University
Microfilms, 1974).
- Mann, Andrews "Thomas Merton: Man, Mystic, Enigma."
Newsletter Review 6. R.M. Bucke
Memorial Society (Spring, 1973), Nos.
1, 2, pp. 6-22.
- MacCormick, Chalmers "The Zen Catholicism of Thomas
Merton." Journal of Ecumenical Studies
9. (Fall, 1972), pp. 802-818.
- Marty, Martin E. "To: Thomas Merton. Re: Your
Prophecy." National Catholic Reporter 3.
(August 30, 1967), p. 6.
- "Sowing Thorns in the Flesh." Review
of Merton's Seeds of Destruction.
Book Week 2. (January 17, 1965),
p. 4.
- New Theology No. 7: The Recovery of
Transcendence. Introduction with
Dean G. Peerman. (London: Macmillan,
1970), p. 14.
- Mayhew, Alice "Merton against Himself." Commonweal 91.
(October 17, 1969), pp. 70-74.
- McCarroll, Tolbert "A Quiet Life: The Contemporary
Spiritual Significance of Fr. Louis
Merton." Cistercian Studies 8.
(1973), pp. 198-209.
- McGreggor, Bede, O.P. "Thomas Merton on the Contemplative
Life." New Blackfriars 53. (October,
1972), pp. 470-476.

- McDonnell, Thomas P. "An Interview with Thomas Merton." Motive 27. (October, 1967), pp. 32-41.
- McInerney, Dennis Q. Thomas Merton: The Man and His Work. (Spencer, Massachusetts: Cistercian Publications, 1974).
- Thomas Merton and Society: A Study of the Man and His Thought Against the Background of Contemporary American Culture. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1969).
- Moffitt, John "Thomas Merton: The Last Three Days." New Theology. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman. (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 125-134, No. 7.
- Nouwen, Henri J.M. Pray to Live - Thomas Merton: A Contemplative Critic. (Notre Dame, Indiana: Fides, 1972).
- Pallis, Marco "Thomas Merton, 1915-1968." Studies in Comparative Religion 3. (1969), pp. 138-146.
- Parsons, Linda "Comments on Mann's Article about Merton." Newsletter-Review 6. R.M. Bucke Memorial Society (Spring, 1973), Nos. 1, 2, pp. 22-23.
- Prince, Raymond, M.D. "Editorial." Newsletter-Review 6. R.M. Bucke Memorial Society (Spring, 1973), Nos. 1, 2, pp. 1-2.
- Rice, Edward The Man in the Sycamore Tree: The Good Time and Hard Life of Thomas Merton. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970). References are to the paperback edition. (Doubleday-Image, 1972).
- Steindal-Rast, David F.K. "Recollections of Thomas Merton's Last Days in the West." Monastic Studies 7. (1969), pp. 1-10.
- Van Doren, Mark "Thomas Merton." America 120. (January 4, 1969), pp. 21-22.

- Voight, Robert J. Thomas Merton: A Different Drummer. (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications, 1972).
- Zahn, Gordon C. "Original Child Monk: An Appreciation." Thomas Merton on Peace. (New York: McCall, 1971), pp. ix-xli.

B. Works about Tillich

- Adams, James Luther Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science and Religion. (New York: Harper and Row, 1965). References and to the paperback edition. (New York: Schocken Paperback, 1970).
- Introduction to Political Expectations by Paul Tillich. (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. vi-xx.
- Introduction to What is Religion? by Paul Tillich. (New York: Harper and Row, 1969). References are to the paperback edition. (New York: Harper, 1973), pp. 9-24.
- Bense, Walter F. "Tillich's Keiros and Hitler's Seizure of Power: The Tillich-Hirsch Exchange of 1934-35." Tillich Studies: 1975. John J. Carey, ed. (Tallahassee, Florida: The North American Paul Tillich Society, 1975), pp. 39-50.
- Braaten, Carl E. "Paul Tillich and the Classical Christian Tradition." Perspectives on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Protestant Theology. By Paul Tillich. (London: SCM: 1967), pp. xii-xxxiv.
- Carey, John J. "Morality and Beyond: Tillich's Ethics in Life and Death." Tillich Studies: 1975. John J. Carey, ed. (Tallahassee, Florida: The North American Paul Tillich Society, 1975), pp. 104-115.

- Dourelly, John P. Paul Tillich and Bonaventure. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975).
- "Tillich's Evaluation of the Development of Western Christian Thought: Ontologism or Schizophrenia," in Tillich Studies, 1975. John J. Carey, ed. (Tallahassee, Florida: The North American Paul Tillich Society, 1975), pp. 2-13.
- Edwards, Paul "Professor Tillich's Confusions" in Philosophy of Religion: Contemporary Perspectives. Norbert Schidler, ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 186-203.
- Emmet, Dorothy "The Ground of Being." Journal of Theological Studies 15, Part 2, (October, 1964), pp. 280-292.
- Ford, Lewis S. "The Three Strands of Tillich's Theory of Religious Symbols," in The Journal of Religion 46. (January, 1966), No. 1, Part II, pp. 104-130.
- "Tillich and Thomas: The Analogy of Being," in The Journal of Religion 46. (April, 1966), No. 2, pp. 229-245.
- "Tillich's Tergiversations Toward the Power of Being," in The Scottish Journal of Theology 28. (1975), No. 4, pp. 323-340.
- Giannini, Robert E. "Paul Tillich's Understanding of Mysticism." Cistercian Studies 10. (1975), Nos. 3, 4, pp. 139-172.
- Hamilton, Kenneth The System and the Gospel: A Critique of Paul Tillich. (London: SCM, 1963).
- Harvey, Van E. A Review of Tillich's Systematic Theology, Vol. III. Theology Today 21. (October, 1964), pp. 379-382.

- Homans, Peter "Transference and Transcendence: Freud and Tillich on the Nature of Personal Relatedness," in The Journal of Religion 46. (January, 1966), No. 1, Part II, pp. 148-164.
- Hopper, David Tillich: A Theological Portrait. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1968).
- Keefe, Donald J., S.J. Thomism and the Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich: A Comparison of Systems. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971).
- Kegley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W., eds. The Theology of Paul Tillich. (New York: Macmillan, 1959).
- Kelsey, David H. The Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1967).
- Killen, R. Allan The Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich. (J.H. Kok N.V. Kampen, 1956).
- Kucheman, Clark A. "Professor Tillich: Justice and the Economic Order," in The Journal of Religion 46. (January, 1966), No. 1, Part II, pp. 165-183.
- Leibrecht, Walter "The Life and Mind of Paul Tillich," in Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Paul Tillich. Walter Leibrecht, ed. (London: SCM, 1959).
- Lounibos, John B. "Paul Tillich's Structures of Liberation," in Tillich Studies: 1975. John J. Carey, ed. (Tallahassee, Florida: The North American Paul Tillich Society, 1975), pp. 63-75.
- Lyons, James R., ed. The Intellectual Legacy of Paul Tillich. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969).
- MacLeod, Alistair M. Paul Tillich: An Essay on the Role of Ontology in His Philosophical Theology. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973).

- Martin, Bernard Paul Tillich's Doctrine of Man.
(London: Nisbet, 1966).
- May, Rollo Paulus: Reminiscences of a
Friendship. (New York: Harper
and Row, 1973).
- McKelway, Alexander J. The Systematic Theology of Paul
Tillich. (Richmond, Virginia:
John Knox, 1964).
- Morrison, Roy D. "Tillich's Appropriation of Jacob
Boehme," in Tillich Studies:1975.
John J. Carey, ed. (Tallahassee,
Florida: The North American Paul
Tillich Society, 1975), pp. 14-26.
- O'Meara, Thomas A. and Weisser, Celestin D., eds.
Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought.
(London: Darton, Longman and Todd,
1965).
- Ramsey, Paul Nine Modern Moralists. (Englewood
Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall,
1962), pp. 181-196.
- Reisz, H. Frederick, Jr. "Ambiguities in the Use of
the Theological Symbol 'Spirit'
in Paul Tillich's Theology," in
Tillich Studies: 1975. John J.
Carey, ed. (Tallahassee, Florida:
The North American Paul Tillich
Society, 1975), pp. 89-103.
- Robertson, John C., Jr. "Tillich's 'Two Types' and
the Transcendental Method," in The
Journal of Religion 55. (April,
1975), No. 2, pp. 199-219.
- Scharlemann, Robert P. Reflection and Doubt in the
Thought of Paul Tillich. (New
Haven, Connecticut: Yale University
Press, 1969).
- "Tillich's Method of Correlation:
Two Proposed Revisions," in The
Journal of Religion 46. (January,
1966), No. 1, Part II, pp. 92-102.
- Schwanz, P. "Plotin und Tillich." Kairos 14
(1972), No. 2, pp. 137-141.

- Smith, D. Moody, Jr. "The Historical Jesus in Paul Tillich's Christology." The Journal of Religion 46. (January, 1966), No. 1, Part 11, pp. 131-147.
- Stone, Ronald "Christian Ethics and the Socialist Vision of Paul Tillich," in Tillich Studies: 1975. John J. Carey, ed. (Tallahassee, Florida: The North American Paul Tillich Society, 1975), pp. 51-62.
- Tait, L. Gordon The Promise of Tillich. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1971).
- Tavard, George H. Paul Tillich and the Christian Message. (New York: Scribners, 1962).
- Thomas, J. Heywood Paul Tillich. (London: Carey Kingsgate, 1965).
- Tillich, Hannah From Time to Time. (New York: Stein and Day, 1973).
- Weigel, Gustav "Recent Protestant Theology," in Theological Studies 14. (1953).
- Wheat, Leonard F. Paul Tillich's Dialectical Humanism. (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970).

4. MISCELLANEOUS WORKS

- Ahlstrom, Sydney E. A Religious History of the American People. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972).
- Aquinas, Thomas Summa Theologiae. References are to the English edition, published in 60 volumes by the Dominican Friars. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoods, from 1964).
- Aresteh, A. Reza Final Integration in the Adult Personality. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965).

- Augustine, St. Confessions. References are to the English translation. (London: Burns and Oates, 1954).
- Aumann, Jordon, O.P. Appendicies- to Vol. 46 of Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologiae. "Action and Contemplation." (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1966), pp. 85-123.
- Barbour, Ian G. Issues in Science and Religion. (London: SCM, 1966).
- Barr, James The Bible in the Modern World. (London: SCM, 1973).
- Old and New in Interpretation. (London: SCM, 1966).
- Barth, Karl Church Dogmatics. References are to the English translation. (Edinburgh: T and T Clark), Vol. I, Part 2 (1956), Vol. II, Part 2 (1957), Vol. III, Part 3 (1960), Part 4 (1961), Vol. IV, Part I (1956), Part 2 (1958), Part 3, 2nd half (1962).
- Baum, Gregory "Religious Experience and Doctrinal Statement," in New Dimensions in Religious Experience. George Devine, ed. (New York: Alba House, 1971), pp. 3-11.
- Bellah, Robert "New Religious Consciousness." The New Republic 171. (November 23, 1974), No. 21, pp. 33-41.
- Bergson, Henri The Two Sources of Morality and Religion. ET(Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956).
- Bernard, St. Sermons On the Canticle of Canticles. ET(Dublin: Browne and Nolon, 1920), 2 Vols.
- On The Love of God. ET(London: J.M. Dent, 1916).
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich Christology. ET(London: Collins Fontana, 1971).

- Letters and Papers From Prison.
ET(London: SCM, 1953).
- Bridges, Hal American Mysticism: From William James to Zen. (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).
- Brown, James Subject and Object in Modern Theology. (London: SCM, 1955).
- Brunner, Emil The Divine Imperative: A Study in Christian Ethics. ET(London: Lutterworth, 1937).
- Man in Revolt. ET(London: Lutterworth, 1939).
- The Mediator. ET(Philadelphia: Westminster, 1937).
- Die Mystik und das Wort. (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1928).
- Bultmann, Rudolf Essays: Philosophical and Theological.
ET(London: SCM, 1955).
- Faith and Understanding - I
ET(London: SCM, 1969).
- Butler, Guthbert, O.S.B. Western Mysticism. (London: Constable, 1922).
- Cairns, David The Image of God in Man (revised edition). (London: Collins Fontana, 1973).
- Camus, Albert The Plague. ET(London: Hamish Hamilton, 1948).
- Chanteloup, R.E. "Hawks and Doves: An Analysis of a Catholic Attitude Toward Nuclear War." Sociological Analysis 31. (1970), pp. 23-35.
- Cleaver, Eldridge Soul On Ice. (New York: Dell Ramparts, 1968).
- The Cloud of Unknowing. Translated by Clifton Wolters. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961).
- Copleston, F.C. A History of Philosophy, Vol. II. (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1950).

- Cox, Harvey The Secular City. (New York: Macmillan, 1965).
- The Seduction of the Spirit. (New York: Simon and Schuster - Touchstone, 1973).
- Dionysius the Aeropagite The Divine Names and the Mystical Theology. Translated by C.E. Rolt. (London: SPCK, 1920).
- Dumont, Charles "Experience in the Cistercian Discipline." Cistercian Studies 10. (1975), No. 2, pp. 135-138.
- Eckhart, Meister Meister Eckhart (Pfieffer). ET(London: Watkins, 1924).
- Eichrodt, Walther Theology of the Old Testament, Vol. II. ET(London: SCM, 1967).
- "Experience of God." Cistercian Studies 9 (1974), Nos. 2, 3, pp. 90-93.
- Evans, Illtud "The Other Dimension: Truly Human in Christ." Christian 1. (Easter, 1973), No. 1, pp. 31-43.
- Flanagan, M.R. "Trappists," in The New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 14. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), pp. 261-264.
- Forsyth, P.T. "The Evangelical Churches and the Higher Criticism," in Contemporary Review 88. (October, 1905).
- Fromm, Erich War Within Man. (Philadelphia: Peace Literature Service of American Friends Service Committee, 1963).
- Furlong, Monica Travelling In. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971). References are to the 1973 paperback edition.
- Gilson, Etienne The Mystical Theology of St. Bernard. ET(London: Sheed and Ward, 1940).
- The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy. ET(London: Sheed and Ward, 1936).
- Gregory of Nyssa* *see p. 650*
- Griffin, John Howard Black Like Me. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961).

- Hallier, Amédée The Monastic Theology of Aelred of Rievaulx. (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969).
- Harkness, Georgia Mysticism: Its Meaning and Message. (Nashville: Abingon, 1973).
- Heilbroner, Robert L. "Collapse of a Civilization." The Observer Review 28. (London, December 28, 1975), pp. 15, 25.
- An Inquiry Into the Human Prospect. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975).
- "Learning to Live with the Future." The Observer Review 29. (London, December 29, 1974), p. 13.
- Heiler, Friedrich Prayer. ET(London: Oxford University Press, 1932).
- Huxley, Aldous Ends and Means. (London: Chatto Windus, 1937).
- The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell. Published in one volume. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959).
- Ignatius of Loyola, St. The Spiritual Exercises. ET (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1936).
- Illich, Ivan Celebration of Awareness. (London: Calder and Boyars, 1971).
- Inge, William Ralph Christian Mysticism. (London: Methuen, 1899).
- The Philosophy of Plotinus (Third Edition), 2 Vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1929).
- James, William The Varieties of Religious Experience. (London: Longmans, Green).
- John of the Cross, St. The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross. Translated and edited by E. Allison Peers. Three volumes in one. (Wheathampstead: Anthony Clarke, 1984).
- John XXIII, Pope Mater et Magistra. ET(London: The Catholic Truth Society, 1963).

- Pacem in Terris. ET(London: The Catholic Truth Society, 1963).
- Johnston, William The Mysticism of The Cloud of Unknowing: A Modern Interpretation. (New York: Desclee, 1967).
- Julian of Norwich Revelations of Divine Love. ET by Grace Warwick. (13th edition) (London: Methuen, 1949).
- Kee, Alistair, ed. Seeds of Liberation. (London: SCM, 1973).
- Kirchmeyer, Jean "Grecque Eglise: L'Image et la Ressemblance," in Dictionnaire de Spiritualité. M. Viller et. al., eds. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1967), pp. 814-822.
- Knowles, David The English Mystical Tradition. (London: Burns and Oates, 1961).
- Lampe, G.W.H. Essays on Typology. (London: SCM, 1957).
- Lamarche, Paul, et. al. "Image et Ressemblance," in Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, Vol. 7, M. Viller et. al., eds. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1970), pp. 1401-1472.
- Landes, Thomas "The Monastic Life and the Secular City." Sewanee Review 77. (Summer, 1969), pp. 530-535.
- Leary, Timothy The Politics of Ecstasy. (New York: Putnam, 1968).
- Lekai, L.J. "Cistercians," in The New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 3. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), pp. 885-889.
- Lossky, Vladimir In the Image and Likeness of God. ET(London: Mowbrays, 1975).
- The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church. ET(London: James Clarke, 1957).

- Louf, Andre and J-B Porion and Thomas Merton:
 "Contemplatives and the Crisis of Faith." Cistercian Studies 2. (1967), No. 4, pp. 269-273.
- MacMurray, John Persons in Relations. (London: Faber and Faber, 1961).
- MacQuarrie, John Existentialism. (London: Hutchinson, 1972).
"Social Ethics," in A Dictionary of Christian Ethics, John MacQuarrie, ed. (London: SCM, 1967), pp. 324-325.
- Maritain, Jacques Art and Scholasticism. ET(London: Sheed and Ward, 1934).
The Degrees of Knowledge. ET(London: Geoffrey Bless, 1937).
Scholasticism and Politics. ET (London: Geoffrey Bless, 1940).
- Mascall, E.L. He Who Is: A Study in Traditional Theism (Revised edition). (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1966).
- Maslow, Abraham H. Toward a Psychology of Being. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1968).
- Mehta, Ved The New Theologian. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966).
- Niebuhr, Reinhold The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. II. (New York: Scribners, 1943).
- O'Brien, Elmer Varieties of Mystic Experience. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964).
- Otto, Rudolf The Idea of the Holy. ET(London: Oxford University Press, 1950). (Second edition).
Mysticism East and West: A Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism. ET(New York: Macmillan, 1932).

- Panikkar, Raimundo "Sunyata and Pleroma: The Buddhist and Christian Response to the Human Predicament," in Religion and the Humanizing of Man. (Plenary Address - International Congress of Learned Societies in the Field of Religion, September, 1972, Los Angeles). James M. Robinson, ed. (Council on The Study of Religion, 1975), pp. 71-90.
- Peers, E. Allison Spirit of Flame: A Study of St. John of the Cross. (London: SCM, 1943).
- Picard, Max The World of Silence. ET(London: Harvill, 1948).
- Porion, J-B., and Andre Louf and Thomas Merton. "Contemplatives and The Crisis of Faith." Cistercian Studies 2. (1967), No. 4, pp. 269-273.
- Robinson, N.H.G. The Groundwork of Christian Ethics. (London: Collins, 1971).
- Rollmann, Hans "Mysticism and Social Responsibility." St. Luke's Journal of Theology 17. (September, 1974), pp. 56-64.
- Ruysbroeck, Jan The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage - The Sparkling Stone - The Book of Supreme Truth. ET (London: J.M. Dent, 1916), edited by E. Underhill.
- Ryan, Patrick "Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise On the Making of Man." Cistercian Studies 9. (1974), No. 4, pp. 389-393.
- Saword, Anne "Note on William of St. Thierry's Use of Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise On The Making of Man." Cistercian Studies 9. (1974), No. 4, pp. 394-398.
- Schelling, F.W.J. Samtliche Werke, Vol. VI, K.F.A. Schelling, ed. (Stuttgart, 1860).
- Schumacher, E.F. Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered. (London: Blond and Briggs, 1973).

- Smut, J.C. Holism and Evolution. (London: MacMillan, 1927).
- Sommerfeldt, John R. "The Social Theory of Bernard of Clairvaux," in Studies in Medieval History. (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1971), pp. 35-48.
- Southern, R.W. Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).
- Stace, W.T. Mysticism and Philosophy. (London: Macmillan, 1961).
- Teresa of Avila, St. The Life of St. Teresa of Avila, ET(Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957).
- Thomas, George F. Religious Philosophies of the West. (New York: Scribners, 1965).
- Thomas a Kempis The Imitation of Christ, Preface by H.P. Lidden. (London: Robert Scott, no date).
- Tinsley, E.J. "Mysticism," in A Dictionary of Christian Theology, Alan Richardson, ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), pp. 225-226.
- "Parable, Allegory and Mysticism," in Vindications, A. Hanson, ed. (London: SCM, 1966), pp. 153-192.
- The Imitation of God in Christ. (London: SCM, 1960).
- Toynbee, Arnold A Study of History, Vol. III. (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).
- Troeltsch, Ernst The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches, Vols. I and II. ET(London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931).
- Trethowan, Illytd Mysticism and Theology. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1974).
- Tygart, C.E. "Religiosity and University Student anti-Vietnam War Attitudes." Sociological Analysis 32. (1971), pp. 120-129.

- Underhill, Evelyn Mysticism (12th Edition).
(New York: E.P. Dutton, paperback
edition, 1961).
- Ward, Benedicta Introduction to The Prayers and
Meditations of Saint Anselm. (Har-
mondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp.
27-85.
- Watts, Alan W. The Joyous Cosmology. (New York:
Pantheon, 1962).
- Winter, Gibson, ed. Social Ethics: Issues in Ethics
and Society. London: SCM, 1968).
- Woolard, A.G.B. Progress: A Christian Doctrine?
(London: SPCK, 1972).
- Wu, John C.H. The Golden Age of Zen. (National
War College in cooperation with
The Committee on the Compilation
of the Chinese Library, 1967).
- Yule, Robert "Article Review: Recent Writings
on Christian Spirituality."
Scottish Journal of Theology 28.
(1975), No. 6, pp. 588-598.
- Zahner, R.C. "Can Mysticism Be Christian?"
New Blackfriars 46. (October, 1964),
pp. 21-31.
- The Catholic Church and World Religions.
(London: Burns and Oates, 1964).
- Drugs, Magic and Makebelieve.
(London: Collins, 1972).
- At Sundry Times: An Essay in the
Comparison of Religions. (London:
Faber and Faber, 1958).
- Mysticism: Sacred and Profane.
(London: Oxford University Press,
1957).
- Gregory of Nyssa From Glory to Glory: Texts from
Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings,
selected and edited by Jean Daniélou.
ET(London: John Murray, 1962).